

A Response to Philip Benedict's 'Of Church Orders and Postmodernism'

JESSE SPOHNHOLZ

In this discussion of *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* Philip Benedict reviewed Jesse Spohnholz's book, *The Convent of Wesel: The Event That Never Was and the Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 2017). While Benedict praises Spohnholz's research and contributions as they pertain to the religious history of sixteenth-century Europe, he criticizes Spohnholz for borrowing from scholarship associated with the 'archival turn' and postmodernist critiques of constructivist empiricism. In this response, Spohnholz defends his approach and its relevance for questions about writing the history of the Reformation in the twenty-first century. Spohnholz stresses the shared historical and methodological perspectives between himself and Benedict (and others), comments on the historical significance of his study, and clarifies the book's intended audiences.

In dit discussiedossier van *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review* recenseert Philip Benedict het boek van Jesse Spohnholz, *The Convent of Wesel: The Event That Never Was and the Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 2017). Hoewel Benedict Spohnholz' bijdrage tot het onderzoek over de religieuze geschiedenis van het zestiende-eeuwse Europa prijst, bekritiseert hij diens gebruik van de 'archival turn' en de postmodernistische kritieken van het constructivistisch empirisme. In zijn repliek verdedigt Spohnholz zijn benadering en de relevantie van zijn monografie voor vraagstukken rond het schrijven van de geschiedenis van de Reformatie in de eenentwintigste eeuw. Spohnholz benadrukt de historische en methodologische perspectieven die hijzelf en Benedict (alsook andere onderzoekers) delen. Daarnaast commentarieert hij het historische belang van zijn studie en licht hij het beoogde lezerspubliek van zijn boek toe.

Researching and writing *The Convent of Wesel* was exhilarating. It felt like my own Sherlockian adventure. Solving this puzzle required hunting down evidence in archival and print materials in multiple countries and languages, which were often organized in ways that confounded my efforts. One key moment for me came when I first learned that Abraham Kuyper, an editor of a collection of sixteenth-century sources I had long relied upon, had also been one of the most polarizing political figures in late-nineteenth-century Dutch history, and that his scholarly interest in sixteenth-century Protestant refugees had been connected to his controversial political and religious objectives. To avoid aligning myself with protagonists of the past with different goals than my own, I began reading Neo-Calvinist theology, archival and memory studies, nineteenth-century historical manuals and, yes, scholarship that was influenced by postmodernism and postcolonialism – all subjects I had never studied before. These readings helped me find a solution by learning first to recognize hurdles to solving the mystery that I had not previously seen.

I came to see my exploration of this mystery as a salient example that suited the scholarly moment I saw around me. By the 2010s, when I started to research *The Convent of Wesel* in earnest, potent critiques of Eurocentrism had transformed historical research and teaching broadly. How the Reformation fits into this new world has not always been clear, in part because the Reformation played a central role in older stories of Western civilization that have become increasingly regarded as old fashioned (or worse). Solving this mystery offered me an opportunity to contribute to this discussion. How could we, as professional historians, provide a fertile intellectual atmosphere to uncover more new histories from the sixteenth century beyond older narratives? It seemed to me that we would need to start by being attuned to ways in which many modern understandings of the sixteenth century had been shaped by interventions made by individuals in the intervening centuries. Would one need Indrani Chatterjee, Raymond Craib, Hayden White, Carolyn Steedman, Prasenjit Duara or Michel-Rolph Trouillot (to name some authors who provided me with inspiration) to solve the mystery of the Convent of Wesel? By no means. The tools of classic historicism suited me just fine for Part I of my book, chief among them the contextualization of events, the systematic criticism of sources, understanding the contingency of outcomes and searching for evidence that explains causality.¹ Rather than being beguiled by postmodernism, I merely count myself among the open-minded historians looking for inspiration beyond conventional reading lists within my subfield. The perspectives I gained from those new readings allowed me to see more clearly how understanding centuries of historical perspectives – layer upon layer – could explain the emergence of the mystery

1 These tools even fit within the historical guide of the famed empiricist Geoffrey Elton.

See Geoffrey Elton, *The Practice of History* (London 1967).

in the first place, the focus of Part II. They also helped me to think about how this example might offer useful perspectives for newer students of the sixteenth century seeking to develop histories suitable for the twenty-first century.

While the idea of *reformatio* existed in the sixteenth century – and predated Martin Luther – the idea of *the* Reformation, in an epochal sense, emerged out of a nineteenth-century Hegelian conception of historical progress.² Among professional historians, Leopold von Ranke played a key role in connecting the Reformation (as epoch) to nineteenth-century values such as nationalism and individualism.³ Following him, many nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century European and Euro-American scholars often similarly measured the Reformation – and all of world history – relative to modern Western standards. I found Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* helpful in seeing alternatives.⁴ Chakrabarty pointed to the problem that intellectuals in former European colonies treated modern Western ideas – which were historically produced – as ahistorical and universal. I came to see this perspective as useful for pre-modern European histories too. When we actively try to see subjects outside pre-existing historical narratives, sometimes we can develop previously unseen perspectives or alternative interpretations.

Appreciating the value of such views does not entail dismissing earlier historicist scholarship. As has been the case with so many historians before me, my effort has been to expand upon questions of contextualization, causality, source criticism and scholarly bias that Ranke placed squarely within the realm of historical inquiry. Many critiques of historicism that I was familiar with – including (but not limited to) Herbert Butterfield in 1931, Charles Beard in 1935, Lucien Febvre in 1950, Edward Hallett Carr in 1961, Hayden White in 1973, Joan Wallach Scott in 1986 and Prasenjit Duara in 1995 – were to a greater or lesser extent involved in a process of

2 Constantin Fasolt, 'Hegel's Ghost: Europe, the Reformation, and the Middle Ages', *Viator* 39:1 (2008) 345-386. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1484/j.viator.1.100125>; Berndt Hamm, 'Abschied vom Epochendenken in der Reformationsforschung. Ein Plädoyer', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 39:3 (2012) 373-411. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3790/zhf.39.3.373>; Ethan Shagan, 'Can Historians End the Reformation?', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 97:1 (2006) 298-306. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14315/arg-2006-0115>; Thomas Kaufmann, 'Die Reformation als Epoche', *Verkündigung und Forschung* 47:2 (2002) 49-62. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14315/vf-2003-0104>.

3 Leopold von Ranke, *History of the Reformation in Germany*, two volumes (New York 1966). For a useful discussion of Hegel and Ranke, see Frederick C. Beiser, 'Hegel and Ranke: A Re-examination', in: Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (eds.), *A Companion to Hegel* (Malden 2011) 332-350. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444397161.ch16>.

4 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, second edition. Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton 2008). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400828654>.

‘out-Ranke-ing Ranke’. None, including Ranke, claimed to offer a method guaranteeing epistemological certainty or absolute objectivity. But many have challenged the assumptions of scholarship that preceded them, encouraged new forms of source criticism, urged an appreciation of new contexts, widened the array of sources worthy of study and embraced new understandings of causality. *The Convent of Wesel* draws on this long tradition of scholarship in applying historians’ tools to this mystery.

What is novel about *The Convent of Wesel* is not that it uses any new tools of historical inquiry, but that it does this so intensively and expansively around just one piece of evidence across space and time. As a result, as many elements that shape historical interpretation as I could manage became visible for the reader. I hope that the end product is both accessible to non-specialists and capable of reaching across subfields (chronologically and geographically designated) that could benefit from more dialogue with one another. I also found that I needed to expose all those elements to explain the surprising appearance and endurance of this mystery, and to explain my solution. In the process, I found it effective to use concepts from authors whose work is associated with postmodernism. I borrowed White’s language about emplotment in Chapter 5, for instance, because it offered a useful way to explain what I meant about the ordering of evidence in histories and archives. But methodologically and epistemologically, I was using conventional tools of historicism.

In terms of my historical conclusions too, my book draws on earlier scholarship. I am not the first to warn about the dangers of prefiguring the Reformation.⁵ I am also not the first to emphasize contingency of outcomes in the Dutch Reformation.⁶ Nor am I the first to highlight that confessional boundaries remained porous well into the sixteenth century.⁷ That is what surprised me most about the mystery, and compelled me to both intensify and broaden my reading. Despite these historiographical insights offered 40, 50, 60 and 70 years ago, the Convent of Wesel remained, either as a stand-in for Dutch Protestant views or as an institutional moment in Reformed confessionalization in the northwest of the Holy Roman Empire. My question became: how could this idea survive despite the problems with the evidence *and* a scholarly consensus capable of embracing what the evidence demonstrated? The answer requires us – and thereby allows us – to see just

5 Philip Abrams, *Historical Sociology* (Shepton Mallet 1982) 305-314.

6 Influentially, Jan Juliaan Woltjer, *Friesland in hervormingstijd* (Leiden 1962); Alastair Duke, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries* (London 1990).

7 Ernst Walter Zeeden, *Die Entstehung der Konfessionen: Grundlagen und Formen der*

Konfessionsbildung im Zeitalter der Glaubenskämpfe (Munich 1965); Willem Nijenhuis, ‘Variants within Dutch Calvinism in the Sixteenth Century’, in: *The Low Countries History Yearbook. Acta Historiae Neerlandicae* xii (Dordrecht 1979) 48-64. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-011-6803-8_3.

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Zum Besten der Restauration der Willibrod-Kirche.

Erinnerung an Wesel
und an die



dreihundertjährige Jubelfeier
der Gründung der Presbyterial-Verfassung
am 3. November 1868.

Ansicht von Wesel im 16. Jahrhundert.

Conserva domine Wesaltam inclytam,

Hospitium ecclesiae tuae.

Stonkley
Bibliothek
n. s. Stige

Stonkley
Bibliothek
n. s. Stige

XX 678 500496

SEAL OF THE PRESBYTERIAL SYNOD OF WESSEL
SIGILLUM SYNODI PRESBYTERIALIS WESALII

SEAL OF THE PRESBYTERIAL SYNOD OF WESSEL
SIGILLUM SYNODI PRESBYTERIALIS WESALII

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An advertisement for the tercentennial of the Synod of Wesel in 1868, currently held at the National Library of the Netherlands in The Hague. This advertisement is also depicted on the cover of Spohnholz's book © National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague, kw 84 G6. Photo by Jesse Spohnholz.

how hard it can be to systematically and exhaustively apply the tools of historicism. I came to see *The Convent of Wesel* as an opportunity to offer non-specialist readers (especially advanced undergraduate and graduate students) with a perspective that might help them pursue new questions and adopt new frames of reference, by suggesting that we can be better prepared to see what lies hidden behind old paradigms by explicitly looking directly at, and then around, through, over and under them.

To demonstrate this, after presenting my solution in Part I, I raised a question: how did modern historians and record-keepers come to perpetuate ideas that lacked evidence to support them? The problem is a challenge for all historians seeking to understand events that happened over 400 years ago, as Benedict has astutely pointed out elsewhere.⁸ How do we prepare ourselves and our students to meet these challenges? This problem hangs over many concepts we use to understand the religious history of sixteenth-century Europe. That is true for the difference between modern terms such as Reformation and confession, which do not have the same meaning as the sixteenth-century words *reformatio* or *confessio*, whose connotations were changing during the sixteenth century as well.⁹ A similar problem hangs over sixteenth-century epithets such as ‘Lutheran’ and ‘Calvinist’. Initially, these words were condescending, because they insinuated that another’s ‘truth’ merely reflected the subjective beliefs of an erring mortal, not the real truth offered by the messiah. It was only by the mid-1560s that someone such as the Braunschweig pastor Joachim Mörlin would proudly proclaim, ‘I am Lutheran and want to die as a Lutheran by God’s will’.¹⁰ By the early seventeenth century, the moniker ‘Lutheran’ had become more common as a positive expression of identity. Once such confessional identities had developed, as Ralf-Peter Fuchs has shown, individuals often retrospectively remembered confessional categories as discrete and totalizing as early as possible.¹¹ Advocates of Reformed orthodoxy such as Simeon Ruytinck

8 As he wrote in 2017, ‘old paradigms overturned leave ghost traces behind, and it is very hard for historians to escape the sheer weight of the intellectual traditions in which they are formed’, Philip Benedict, ‘Global? Has Reformation History Even Gotten Transnational Yet?’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 108:1 (2017) 56. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14315/arg-2017-0108>.

9 On confession, Cornelis Augustijn, *Kerk en belijdenis* (Kampen 1969). On reformation, see Heiko Oberman, *The Reformation: Roots and Ramifications*, translated by Andrew Colin Gow (Grand Rapids 1994) 23–52. For concepts

such as *doctrina*, *ecclesia* and *fides*, see Natalia Nowakowska, *King Sigismund of Poland and Martin Luther: The Reformation before Confessionalization* (Oxford 2018).

10 Thomas Kaufmann, *Konfession und Kultur: Lutherischer Protestantismus in der zweiten Hälfte des Reformationsjahrhunderts* (Tübingen 2006) 102.

11 Ralf-Peter Fuchs, ‘The Production of Knowledge about Confessions: Witnesses and their Testimonies about Normative Years in and after the Thirty Years’ War’, in: Jason Philip Coy, Benjamin Marschke and David Warren Sabean (eds.), *The Holy Roman Empire, Reconsidered* (New York 2010) 93–106.

(described in Chapter 5 of my book) were engaged in a parallel process. During the nineteenth century, when supporters of Reformed orthodoxy warmly embraced the moniker ‘Calvinist’, another process of retrospective crystallization happened.¹² It is perfectly acceptable to use these terms in their modern scholarly meanings. But when historians label sixteenth-century Reformed Protestants as ‘Calvinists’ and supporters of the *invariata* as ‘Lutherans’, we need to take care not to inadvertently weigh in on debates that remained unresolved in the later 1560s.¹³

Benedict and I fully agree that early modern producers and keepers of records collected and arranged sources to promote doctrinal, ecclesiastical and liturgical unity. I sought to convey their energy and enthusiasm to do so in my book. I also found it instructive to ask: unity on whose terms? ‘Unity’, like ‘order’, is both aspirational (and almost never fully achieved) and subjective, as one person’s unity is another’s schism. Within the Netherlandish Reformed movement, there remained considerable *disunity* in the 1560s. Benedict and I also agree that records of Reformed churches offer some of the best evidence about nonconforming individuals and women that we have from the sixteenth century.¹⁴ Our work and that of others has also demonstrated that those records reveal values of the church officers who produced them. But views expressed at ecclesiastical organizational meetings such as Reformed synods might not sufficiently demonstrate the agreement of those churches’ officers. Take, for instance, the synod held in Emden in October 1571. This meeting happened, and proved influential in later decades. But it was only attended by a small group of delegates, since some of the most important Netherlandish Reformed churches could not send delegates, and its preparations and proceedings were marked by disagreements. Plus, its provisions were not universally accepted or applied in the years that followed.¹⁵ The example of the Convent of Wesel is more extreme, of course, but the problem is similar. Historians studying such organizational meetings

12 Jesse Spohnholz and Mirjam G.K. van Veen, ‘The Disputed Origins of Dutch Calvinism: Religious Refugees in the Historiography of the Dutch Reformation’, *Church History* 86:2 (2017) 398-426. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640717000567>.

13 See Matthias Pohlig, ‘Wahrheit als Lüge – oder: Schloss der Augsburger Religionsfrieden den Calvinismus aus?’, in: Andreas Pietsch and Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger (eds.), *Konfessionelle Ambiguität: Uneindeutigkeit und Verstellung als religiöse Praxis in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Gütersloh 2013) 142-169.

14 Philip Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven 2002)

460-489; Jesse Spohnholz, ‘Exile Experiences and the Transformations of Religious Cultures in the Sixteenth Century: Wesel, London, Emden, and Frankenthal’, *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 6:1 (2019) 43-67. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/jemc-2019-2002>.

15 Willem Nijenhuis, ‘The Synod of Emden 1571’, *Ecclesia Reformata Volume II. Studies in the Reformation* 16 (Leiden 1994) 101-124. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004381957_008; Eduard Simons, ‘Ein rheinisches Synodalschreiben aus dem Jahr 1576’, *Zeitschrift des Bergischen Geschichtsvereins* 36 (1903) 145-151. My thanks go to Peter Gorter for this reference.

should be cautious before accepting professions of agreement at face value, lest we miss other germane historical developments.

These lessons also apply to how historians relate to archives, a point brought home to me after an archivist first denied me access to the original 1568 articles because they were too important to Dutch church history. I respect the need to preserve precious evidence from the past and appreciate that archivists later welcomed me back. But that day is when I started thinking with greater focus about archives. Looking beyond implicit narratives of archives does not mean treating archives as abstract agents of history or simply acknowledging the reasons why people built that archive in the first place. Rather, it means (as I endeavored to do) exploring the choices and decisions made by archivists and record-keepers that conditioned later interpretations of evidence. Recently, Liesbeth Corens has offered another example of how early modern record-keeping shaped historical discourses.¹⁶ Around 1700, English Catholics began an impressive effort to collect primary sources from their history as a way of creating what Corens calls a ‘counter-archive’ to English government officials’ efforts to preserve historical sources that stressed their State’s Protestant past. While many Catholic collectors were part of the diaspora in Spain, Italy, the Southern Netherlands and France, they only collected sources relating to Catholics in England. They thus archived themselves right out of the history – a process that explains why modern historians long underestimated their importance. Corens’s English example contrasts to the French Protestant tradition that Benedict studies. Huguenots who fled after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) recorded mythologized narratives of their diaspora, often ignoring inconvenient elements of that history. That legacy led to the creation of nineteenth-century Huguenot societies in Prussia, England, the Netherlands and North America, and leaves deep historical marks on history-writing about Huguenots even today.¹⁷

As for how his perspective about remembering and archiving the Reformation relates to *The Convent of Wesel*, for the period before the eighteenth century, I focused on those key moments in the archival context of these articles that affected ideas about them, not the other forms of record-keeping to which Benedict refers. These were the initial archiving of the articles at Austin Friars in 1569 (page 94), Simeon Ruytinck’s turn to the archive in 1618 (page 125), the creation of a new archive for the Dutch Reformed churches after the Synod of Dordt (1618–1619) that excluded the articles (page 131), the transfer of the Latin original to a church archive in South Holland (page 131), and Johannes Gysius’s sending of copies to archives in Dordrecht, Breda and Wesel (page 132), all of which took place

16 Liesbeth Corens, *Confessional Mobility & English Catholics in Counter-Reformation Europe* (Oxford 2019). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198812432.001.0001>.

17 A point made in several contributions in Philip Benedict, Hugues Daussy and Pierre-Olivier Léchoat (eds.), *L’identité huguenote. Faire mémoire et écrire l’histoire (xvi^e–xxi^e siècle)* (Geneva 2014).



This gold coin was minted by the municipal government of Wesel for the quadricentennial of the Convent of Wesel in 1968. It depicts the stranger from Matthew 25:35 depicted on the two gilded chalices that the Netherlandish Reformed community gave to Wesel's city council in a public ceremony in 1578. © City Archive Wesel, M1, No.3. Photo by Jesse Spohnholz.

before Quintinus Noortbergh produced his inventory (pages 140-143). All the while, of course, office holders in Reformed churches were collecting and distributing other church records, as Benedict points out. But it was not until the ‘National Synod of Wesel’ found its way into dominant historical narratives of the Dutch Reformation – a process that took place through a back-and-forth between record-keeping and history-writing over two centuries – that such kinds of record-keeping became critical to spreading forms of knowledge about the articles that my book traces.

All this said, Benedict asks how this book encourages us to rethink sixteenth-century church-building. He is absolutely right that it points to Genevan and French influence on early Netherlandish Reformed church-building.¹⁸ As he and I both point out, my study highlights that Netherlandish Reformed churches were borrowing from presbyterial-synodal precedents in ‘Francophonia’ (to use Benedict’s clever term)¹⁹ well before 1568. Still, as Frederik Knetsch has argued, Dutch Protestant leaders never simply copied institutional frameworks developed elsewhere.²⁰ Rather, they adapted them to the political, ecclesiastical, social, cultural and economic realities they faced. As Arie van Deursen and Leon van den Broeke have demonstrated, the classis played a more important role for Reformed churches in the highly urbanized but politically decentralized Dutch Republic than similar bodies did in Reformed churches in France.²¹

In the period I focused on for this book – the 1560s – my approach in *The Convent of Wesel* also highlights that the Netherlandish Reformed churches were diverse ecclesiastically, theologically and liturgically, and

18 The story of Calvin’s centrality to the Dutch Reformation was influentially spread by Neo-Calvinist church historians such as Abraham Kuyper in the Faculty of Theology at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam – the very institutional home where I was warmly welcomed as I wrote much of *The Convent of Wesel*. I am less inclined than Benedict to call Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer a Neo-Calvinist. He died in 1876, before Kuyper had articulated a coherent Neo-Calvinist agenda, though the two men both advocated Reformed orthodoxy and anti-revolutionary principles.

19 Philip Benedict, ‘The Spread of Protestantism in Francophone Europe in the First Century of the Reformation’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 109:1 (2018) 7-52. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14315/arg-2018-1090102>.

20 Frederik Reinier Jacob Knetsch, ‘Church Ordinances and Regulations of the Dutch

Synods “Under the Cross” (1563-1566) Compared with the French (1559-1563)’, *Studies in Church History Subsidia* 8 (1991) 187-203. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143045900001642>. For a similar argument about French Reformed churches relative to Geneva, see Glenn Sunshine, *Reforming French Protestantism: The Development of Huguenot Ecclesiastical Institutions, 1557-1572* (Kirkville 2003). I admit that adding the word ‘merely’ to the sentence on page 103 that Benedict cites would have improved its clarity.

21 Arie van Deursen, *Bavianen en Slijkgeuzen: Kerk en kerkvolk ten tijde van Maurits en Oldenbarnevelt* (Franeker 1998); Leon van den Broeke, *Een geschiedenis van de classis: Classicale typen tussen idee en werkelijkheid (1571-2004)*. Theologie en geschiedenis (Kampen 2005).

Register.



I. Authentieke Synodale Actes van Wesel, vanden
jare 1586.
of.

Certa quaedam Capita seu Articuli, quos in Ministerio
Ecclesiae Belgicae Ministri ejusdem Ecclesiae partim
necessarios, partim viles esse judicarunt. Wesel. 3 Nov.
1568. — — — — — pag. j — 26.

II. De Acten van de Kerkvergadering van Emboen. a^e
1571. of.

Die Acten of Handelingen der Versameling der Neder-
landse Kerken, die onder het Cruys sitten, en der geener,
die door Duitsch- en Oostrijcs-Land bestroijt zijn,
gehouden te Emboen den 4. Octob. a^e 1571. En
daar zijn gevoegt particuliere of besondere questien.
— — — — — pag. 27 — 42.



This is the first page of the handwritten archival inventory produced by Quintinus Noortbergh in 1737, referred to in Spohnholz's book on pp. 140-144. It indicates that the articles from Wesel in 1568 refer to the 'Authentic Synod Acts from Wesel Anno 1568'. © Utrecht Archives with special thanks to Kaj van Vliet, Oud Synodaal Archief, 1401.1. Photo by Jesse Spohnholz.

shaped by a variety of international influences, despite church officers' frequent recourse to the language of unity. Many Netherlandish Reformed surely promoted Geneva- and French-style institutions. But William of Orange selected the most prominent Netherlandish advocate for English-style episcopalianism, Adrianus Saravia, as his military chaplain for his widely watched 1568 campaign.²² Many Netherlandish Protestants also supported signing the Augsburg Confession. Saravia was among this group, as was Franciscus Junius, the other military chaplain serving Orange in his 1568 campaign.²³ Many with these views were wary of theological precisionism they felt threatened the broader Protestant challenge to Rome. Others supported signing the *Augustana* for strategic reasons; they hoped to adopt a biconfessional arrangement like the Peace of Augsburg in the Netherlands (which was still formally part of the Reich) or to gain support from powerful Protestant princes in the Holy Roman Empire.²⁴ It was precisely because these alternative futures for the Dutch Reformation looked conceivable as Orange began his military campaign in autumn 1568 that Petrus Dathenus and Herman Moded felt so much urgency to promote a church that aligned with Geneva, the French Reformed churches and the church of the Palatinate. But, as I argue in Chapter 3, not even all the signatories to these articles seem to have understood their signing in the same ways that Dathenus and Moded did. At this moment, many possible futures still existed. My approach also casts light on the ways in which the Electoral Palatinate first began influencing the shape of Netherlandish Reformed Protestantism in the 1560s. Taken together, the book highlights the diverse and international influences on Netherlandish religious cultures, some features of which get lost when historians adopt only local, regional or national frameworks – another point upon which Benedict and I agree.²⁵ I endeavored to weave

22 Willem Nijenhuis, *Adrianus Saravia (c. 1532-1613)* (Leiden 1980).

23 Tobias Sarx, *Franciscus Junius d.Ä. (1545-1602): Ein reformierter Theologe im Spannungsfeld zwischen späthumanistischer Irenik und reformierter Konfessionalisierung* (Göttingen 2007). See also Nijenhuis, 'Variants within Dutch Calvinism'.

24 Nijenhuis, 'The Synod of Emden 1571'; Maximilian Lanzinner, 'Der Aufstand der Niederlande und der Reichstag zu Speyer 1570', in: Heinz Angermeier and Erich Meuthen (eds.), *Fortschritte in der Geschichtswissenschaft durch Reichstagsaktenforschung. Vier Beiträge aus der Arbeit an den Reichstagsakten des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen 1988) 102-117; Benjamin J. Kaplan, "'In Equality and Enjoying the Same

Favour": Biconfessionalism in the Low Countries', in: Thomas Max Safley (ed.), *A Companion to Multiconfessionalism in the Early Modern World*. Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 28 (Leiden 2011) 101-109. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004216211_006; Jurjen Vis, *Jan Arentsz: De mandenmaker van Alkmaar, voorman van de Hollandse reformatie* (Hilversum 1992) 82-83. In 1568 some hoped that French Reformed would also sign the Augsburg Confession, see Jonas van Tol, *Germany and the French Wars of Religion, 1560-1572*. St Andrews Studies in Reformation History 12 (Leiden 2018). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004330726>.

25 Benedict, 'Global?', 61.

such historiographical interventions quietly into the chapters for specialists, leaving the conclusion to consider the book's message for non-specialists.

I continue to work to see what new narratives emerge when I apply the lessons of *The Convent of Wesel* to my research and writing. My current project seeks to understand sixteenth-century Protestant refugees beyond and across political and confessional boundaries.²⁶ I hope that *The Convent of Wesel* might also inspire others to uncover historical narratives that have been there all along but require new perspectives to come to light. To conclude, I thank Benedict not only for the extensive attention he has given my book, but also for providing me with inspiration through his earlier books and articles as I sought to find my own path as a scholar. I hope that my books and articles might similarly offer some nuggets that future historians might use to ask and answer new questions as well.

Jesse Spohnholz is Professor of History and Director of the Roots of Contemporary Issues Program at Washington State University. His research focuses on social practices of religious coexistence in Reformation-era Germany and the Netherlands, the experiences of religious refugees living through the confessional conflicts of the sixteenth century and historical memory of the Reformation. His other books include *The Tactics of Toleration: A Refugee Community in the Age of Religious Wars* (Newark 2011) and *Ruptured Lives: Refugee Crises in Historical Perspective* (Oxford 2020). He is currently co-director, with Mirjam van Veen, of the research project, 'The Rhineland Exiles and the Religious Landscape of the Dutch Republic, c.1550-1618' funded by the Dutch Research Council and based at the VU Amsterdam. E-mail: spohnhoj@wsu.edu.

26 These principles guide my collaboration with Mirjam van Veen, titled 'The Rhineland Exiles and the Religious Landscape of the Dutch Republic, c.1550-1618' and supported by a research

grant offered by the Dutch Research Council (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek).