

Basel's Long Reformation: Church Ordinances and the Shaping of Religious Culture in the Sixteenth Century

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The Reformation was fully settled in Switzerland by the early 1530s. That, at least, is the impression given by the critical editions of sources concerning the Reformation published in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century. Strickler's six volumes of documents on the Swiss Reformation end in 1532, as does Steck and Tobler's source collection for the Reformation in Bern.¹ Egli's volume of sources on Zurich goes no further than 1533.² The six volumes of documents dealing with the Basel Reformation cover the longest period, extending up to the publication of that city's official confession in early 1534.³ The unsuspecting observer might conclude from these published editions that once the Reformation had been officially adopted and the larger political questions settled in the wake of the Second Kappel War, the most interesting phase of the Reformation had come to an end.

This assumption may reflect the viewpoint of the generation of scholars who produced these critical editions, but it does not correspond to the view generally accepted today. The distinction once made between «the Reformation» and «the confessional era» has proven to be problematic once one moves away from the political settlements that granted legal status to the Protestant churches to consider broader changes to social structures and mentalities. What was once seen as two distinct phases has increasingly come to be referred to in the English-speaking world as «the long Reformation.»⁴

Historians have debated how best to characterize the developments of the two centuries that followed Luther's posting of the ninety-five theses. The

¹ Johannes Strickler (ed.), *Actensammlung zur Schweizerischen Reformationsgeschichte in den Jahren 1521–1532, im Anschluß an die gleichzeitigen eidgenössischen Abschiede Zurich 1878–1884; repr. 1989; Rudolf Steck and Gustav Tobler, ed., Actensammlung zur Geschichte der Berner Reformation 1521–1532, Bern 1923.*

² Emil Egli (ed.), *Aktensammlung zur Geschichte der Zürcher Reformation in den Jahren 1519–1533, Nieuwkoop 1973.*

³ Emil Dürr and Paul Roth (eds.), *Actensammlung zur Geschichte der Basler Reformation in den Jahren 1519 bis Anfang 1534, Basel 1921–1950 [hereafter ABR].*

⁴ Lorna Jane Abrey first used the term in the title of her dissertation, eventually published as *The People's Reformation: Magistrates, Clergy, and Commons in Strasbourg, 1500–1598*, Ithaca 1985; cf. the titles of two recent texts intended especially for students, Peter G. Wallace, *The Long European Reformation*, New York 2004, and Jeffrey R. Watt (ed.), *The Long Reformation*, Boston 2006, as well as Nicholas Tyacke (ed.), *England's Long Reformation, 1500–1800*, London 1998.

paradigm of confessionalization was formulated in the 1980s as a way to understand the more encompassing transformation of politics, religion, society, and culture that took place during this period. That paradigm has in turn been undermined by the gradual accumulation of studies that look at the impact of the Reformation at the local or territorial level over the course of several generations.⁵ More recently, Thomas Kaufmann has proposed the term «confessional culture» to refer to the specific cultural configurations shaped by each of the confessional churches of the early modern period.⁶ This term is most useful, however, when applied to a group that is already relatively homogenous. Kaufmann acknowledges the diversity within German Lutheran confessional culture, but this diversity pales in comparison to that which existed within the Reformed tradition: one need only consider the significant differences between French Huguenots, Scottish Presbyterians, and the Swiss Reformed. While they shared certain characteristics derived from their common adherence to Reformed Protestantism, the culture of each group was equally influenced by factors outside the sphere of religion.⁷ And just as the territorial structure of the Empire contributed to pluralism within German Lutheran confessional culture, so Swiss Reformed culture developed somewhat differently in each of the Protestant members of the Swiss Confederation.

In order to focus more specifically on aspects of culture most directly influenced by confession, and to acknowledge the pluralism attributable to geographical and political circumstances, I prefer to use the term «religious culture» when examining the long-term outworking of the Reformation at the local or territorial level. I define the term as the customs, practices, and other outward behaviors, both collective and individual, that are prescribed or endorsed by the institutional church, generally in conjunction with the secular government, as well as those beliefs, values, norms, expectations, and patterns of interpretation that underlie, are associated with, and result from those behaviors. This combination of outward actions and inward attitudes had larger implications for broader areas such as politics, social structure, education, and the arts, but I would exclude these areas from the definition because they draw attention away from the aspects of culture most immedi-

⁵ The literature on confessionalization is enormous. A brief overview as well as references to the relevant works can be found in Ute *Lotz-Heumann*, The Concept of «Confessionalization»: a Historiographical Paradigm in Dispute, in: *Memoria y Civilización* 4 (2001), 93–114; and Stefan *Ehrenpreis* and Ute *Lotz-Heumann*, *Reformation und konfessionelles Zeitalter*, Darmstadt 2002.

⁶ Thomas *Kaufmann*, *Konfession und Kultur. Lutherischer Protestantismus in der zweiten Hälfte des Reformationsjahrhunderts*, Tübingen 2006, 3–26.

⁷ The diversity within the Reformed tradition is well documented by Philip *Benedict*, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism*, New Haven 2002.

ately and directly affected by the Reformation. Likewise, there were aspects of religious belief and praxis that were only loosely related to or may have been rejected by the institutional church, but the increasing ability of both church and state to oversee religious life at the local level led to the marginalization of these aspects over the course of time.

The institutionalization of the evangelical movement and the formation of a specific religious culture was a gradual process that took place at different rates in different places, depending on a variety of factors, not only religious but also political and personal. Among the most valuable sources for the study of this process are the church ordinances and other official decrees that defined orthodoxy, established religious ceremonies and practices, and regulated oversight of both clergy and laity within the newly reformed churches.⁸ If, as the Reformed were wont to claim, church discipline functioned as «the nerves of the church,» then church ordinances comprised the skeleton around which all other aspects of church life grew.⁹ Or to switch metaphors, they functioned like a colony of coral around which the flora and fauna of a coral reef gather and flourish. In the same way, legislation prescribing belief and behavior established the framework within which local religious cultures developed.

Scholars studying the territories of the Holy Roman Empire have been fortunate in that the church ordinances of the sixteenth century are available in the critical edition initiated by Emil Sehling at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁰ In contrast, students of the Swiss Reformation must work almost entirely with unpublished archival material and rare early modern imprints. The critical edition of the church ordinances of Basel and Zurich now being prepared will contribute significantly to a deeper understanding of the religious culture of each city-republic and will enable comparison not only between the two but with developments in the territories of the Empire as well. In order to highlight the importance of this project, this essay will demonstrate what a study of church ordinances tells us about the long Reformation and the shaping of religious culture in the city-republic of Basel.

Before describing the variety of church ordinances issued in Basel, however, it is necessary to define terms. I use the term «church ordinance» broadly to include any edict, resolution, or other official decree issued by the magistrate in its role as guardian of the church.¹¹ Some of these were issued in

⁸ For an overview, John Witte, Jr., *Law and Protestantism: The Legal Teachings of the Lutheran Reformation*, Cambridge 2002, 177–96.

⁹ Raymond A. Mentzer, Jr., «Disciplina nervus ecclesiae»: The Calvinist Reform of Morals at Nîmes, in: *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18 (1987), 89–115.

¹⁰ Ernst Sehling (ed.), *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts* Göttingen/Leipzig/Tübingen 1902.

¹¹ My definition here and in more detail below is strongly influenced by the types of documents

printed form by Basel's Council, others exist only in manuscript copies or as resolutions noted in the records of Council meetings. Although the decisions and decrees were adopted by the Council, most of them – and particularly the lengthiest and most far-reaching – were written by committees comprised of both churchmen and Council members. With only few exceptions, they were issued in response to concerns brought before the Council by the clergy. They are thus very concrete examples of the interrelationship between ecclesiastical and secular authority in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Basel's church ordinances can be grouped into several different categories. The first and most obvious group is that which best fits the traditional definition of a church ordinance: legislation that defines correct doctrine, introduces new ecclesiastical ceremonies or modifies existing ones to correspond to those doctrinal standards, and institutes measures to oversee selection and performance of the clergy and to regulate the moral conduct of the laity.

Basel's first church ordinance, issued at the beginning of April 1529, was intended as the constitution of the city's church. Like many of its counterparts elsewhere, Basel's Reformation Ordinance combined a restructuring of the city's church with assumption of control over marriage and provisions against immoral conduct ranging from the denigration of the sacraments to ostentatious dress. Prominent among its provisions was the examination of the clergy to ensure that they were qualified to perform their pastoral responsibilities. The ordinance reorganized the city's parish structure, subordinating the formerly independent parishes of St. Alban, St. Martin, and St. Ulrich to the cathedral parish, which was thus extended to cover the eastern half of the city. It also specified the times and places of public worship, although it said nothing specifically about the forms such worship would take. Similarly, it outlined the duties of the city's parish pastors and their assistants and obligated them to teach in accordance with God's word, but its doctrinal statements remained fairly general. Its most specific statements concerned baptism and the Lord's Supper and were intended to counter the opposing views of Catholics, Anabaptists and Lutherans.¹²

It did not take long for the church's leaders to become aware that the Reformation ordinance was incomplete, and so over the next few decades the Council issued a series of decrees and ordinances intended to supplement it. The most notable omission from the Reformation Ordinance was any procedure regulating the exercise of church discipline. Already in the spring of 1530 Johann Oecolampadius urged the Council to restore the practice of

included in *Sehling's* edition (n. 10); see *Sehling's* discussion in the foreword to Vol. 1, pp. VIII–IX.

¹² ABR 3:383–409.

excommunication to its proper, scriptural form, and at the end of the year the Council issued a pair of ban ordinances, one for the city and the other for the rural churches, that prescribed the appointment of lay *Bannherren* for each parish and outlined the procedure for church discipline.¹³ The question of who had the right to impose the ban proved to be controversial, however. Over the next several years the Council continued to issue «improvements» to the original ordinance that confirmed the authority of the *Bannherren* and defined more clearly the roles of pastors, *Bannherren*, and magistrate in imposing a sentence of excommunication.¹⁴ The last of these modifications came in 1553 and was occasioned by a query from the Genevan church and Council asking about the exercise of the ban in the city. It clarified once and for all that the Council, and not the pastors or *Bannherren*, bore the final responsibility for imposing a sentence of either excommunication or civil punishment.¹⁵

In addition to the ban ordinance and its various modifications, there is another group of publications that can be seen as appendices to the Reformation Ordinance of 1529, filling in the silences concerning doctrine and ceremonies left by the Reformation Ordinance. This group consists of the various editions of the Basel liturgical agenda and the Basel Confession published over the course of the sixteenth century. The first edition of the agenda actually predated the Reformation Ordinance. Published in 1526, it established the basic structure for the ceremonies of baptism and the Lord's Supper and presented a liturgy for the visitation of the sick. These ceremonies were modified slightly and an order for marriage was added to the 1537 edition of the agenda, which became the standard service book in Basel for the rest of the century. Also included in the 1537 agenda was a short catechism attributed to Oecolampadius. Later editions of the agenda included not only this catechism but also a lengthier adaptation of it by Oswald Myconius. These catechisms thus acquired quasi-official status within the Basel church. Last but not least, the Basel Confession, adopted in 1534 and reprinted several times over the sixteenth century, provided a broader pres-

¹³ ABR 5: 60–64; For the background, Walther *Köhler*, *Zürcher Ehegericht und Genfer Consistorium*, Leipzig 1932–42, 1: 274–294; Ernst *Staehelin*, *Das theologische Lebenswerk Johannes Oekolampads*, Leipzig 1939, 506–22; Olaf *Kuhr*, «Die Macht des Bannes und der Buße». *Kirchenzucht und Erneuerung der Kirche bei Johannes Oekolampad (1482–1531)*, Bern 1999, 171–95, 207–31.

¹⁴ 10 June 1531, ABR 5: 236–7; ABR 6: 119–20; Aug. 1538, Öffentliche Bibliothek der Universität Basel [hereafter BUB] MsKiAr 22a, fo. 258r–60r; provisions concerning the ban in the synodal ordinance of Nov. 1539, BUB MsKiAr 22a, 272r; 19 Nov. 1539, Staatsarchiv des Kantons Basel-Stadt [hereafter BStA] Kirchen Akten A9, 375v–376v; *Staehelin*, *Lebenswerk* (n. 13) 523–25; *Köhler*, *Zürcher Ehegericht* (n. 13) 293–303.

¹⁵ BStA A 6 (Schwarzes Buch), 162v–63r; copy in BUB MsKiAr 23a, 96. Details in Uwe *Plath*, *Calvin und Basel in den Jahren 1552–1556*, Zurich 1974, 94–111.

entation of the city's official faith than that contained in the Reformation Ordinance.¹⁶ Although neither agenda nor Confession can be described as church ordinances, their goal of defining orthodoxy and shaping ecclesiastical practices meshed with the overall goals of the Reformation Ordinance and corresponded to elements of church ordinances issued by other cities and territories.

A third category consists of legislation concerned specifically with the churches in Basel's rural territories. The first of these was the *Acta Liechstalensia*, the morals ordinance issued in August 1540. As its subtitle proclaimed, the *Acta* was a codification «of all previously issued Christian mandates» which would enable their uniform enforcement by *Obervögte*, *Schultheisse*, and pastors.¹⁷ Its provisions concerned worship attendance, catechization, and the selection and duties of the *Bannherren*, as well as the more secular concerns of lavish wedding celebrations, parish festivals (*Kilbinnen*), gambling, and the supervision of taverns.

More important for the regulation of the church was the *Kirchendienerordnung* issued in 1561.¹⁸ This ordinance revived the supervisory structure and corporate identity of the rural pastors that had existed in the pre-Reformation chapter of Sissgau, the district of the medieval diocese of Basel that corresponded most closely with Basel's rural territory. The rural clergy as a whole were divided into three district chapters corresponding to the administrative divisions of the territory. Each of these district chapters had its own dean, who was in turn subject to the authority of the primary dean of the entire Sissgau chapter. Each district chapter was to meet twice a year, and every two years the primary dean was to call a general meeting of the whole Sissgau chapter to address problems involving doctrine or practice and to report their concerns to the secular and ecclesiastical authorities in the city.¹⁹ In 1578 a new ordinance was drafted for the rural chapter that reaffirmed the authority of the primary dean and the three district chapter deans. It also laid out new procedures to be followed in disciplining the clergy and dealing with conflict among pastors or between pastors and the laity. This draft was finally confirmed by the Council at the end of 1582.²⁰

¹⁶ On the liturgical agenda and the catechisms, Amy Nelson Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation: Ministers and Their Message in Basel, 1529–1629*, New York 2006, 48–55.

¹⁷ BUB MsKiAr 22a, 290r–292v.

¹⁸ Background for this and the following paragraphs in Amy Nelson Burnett, *Controlling the Clergy: The Oversight of Basel's Rural Pastors in the Sixteenth Century*, in: *Zwa* 25 (1998), 129–142.

¹⁹ «Die alten oder ersten Statuten nach der Reformation Gemeiner Brüedern vnd Kilchendienern des Capitls in Sißgöw,» BUB MsKiAr 22a, 345r–348r. The ordinance specified that these reports should go to the city pastors and the *Deputaten*, the three *Ratsherren* plus the *Stadtschreiber* who were collectively responsible for overseeing church and school affairs.

²⁰ «Ordnung und statuten Gemeiner Brüederen vnd Kilchendiener des Capitels im Sissgöüw,»

A fourth group of documents is related to the statutes for the rural church in that they also were concerned primarily with the oversight of the clergy. These are the ordinances prescribing the calling of and procedures for synods issued in 1539 and 1571 and for visitations issued in 1541, as well as the instructions for visitors from 1554 and 1582. The Reformation Ordinance had called for synods to be held semiannually, as was the case in Zurich, but after Oecolampadius' death in 1531 they were held only once a year. A major conflict concerning the relationship of university, church, and magistrate that broke out in 1538–39 led to the issuance of a new synodal ordinance in November 1539 which sharpened the provisions regulating the censure of the clergy that was a regular part of the synods.²¹

A little more than a year later the Council decided that there should be a yearly visitation for the rural churches and so issued a brief ordinance outlining the procedure to be followed by the visitors.²² The visitation ordinance did not mention any connection to the synod, but over the next two decades the synods and visitations were apparently seen as accomplishing roughly the same goals, since only one of them was held in any given year.²³ In 1554 the Council issued instructions to its visitors that summarized the message that the Council's representative was to deliver in each parish.²⁴

The string of fairly regular synods and visitations ended in 1559. Although the lack of sources make it hard to document, they may have been replaced by the district and general chapter meetings of the rural clergy prescribed in the 1562 *Kirchendienerordnung*.²⁵ Not until 1571 was another general synod held that included both rural and urban clergy. In view of both the long hiatus since the last general synod and the doctrinal conflicts within the church that were the immediate cause of the synod's convocation, the Coun-

draft from 1578, BStA Kirchen Archiv HH 3; as adopted in 1582, BStA Kirchen Akten F6, no. 9.

²¹ BUB MsKiAr 22a, 267r–271v; the ordinance also specified that there would be only one synod each year. See *Burnett*, *Teaching the Reformation* (n. 16) 68–77; Amy Nelson *Burnett*, «Kirchen ist uff dem Radthus»? Conflicting Views of Magistrate and Ministry in Early Reformation Basel, in: Luise *Schorn-Schütte* and Sven *Tode* (eds.), *Debatten über die Legitimation von Herrschaft: Politische Sprachen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Berlin 2006, 49–65.

²² BUB MsKiAr 23a, 278r.

²³ Synods were held in 1542, 1545, 1550, 1555, 1557, 1558, and 1559; visitations in 1546, 1549, 1551, and 1554. There are no records of either a synod or a visitation held in 1543, 1544, 1547, 1553, and 1556; there is a description of an undated synod that may have been held in either 1548 or 1552, based on the list of participants, BUB MsKiAr 23a, 289r.

²⁴ Visitation instructions for 1554, BStA Kirchen Akten A9, 387r–389r.

²⁵ No records of these meetings survive, but Christian *Wurstisen* mentions a meeting of a rural synod in May, 1562, R. *Luginbühl* (ed.), *Diarium des Christian Wurtisen, 1557–1581*, in: *Basler Zeitschrift 1* (1902), 53–145, at 74; the Liestal pastor Johann Rudolf Wildysen referred to a general convent of the rural pastors in May 1564, *Staatsarchiv des Kantons Basel-Land, Kirchenbücher, Liestal 1*, 214.

cil issued a new synodal ordinance that outlined the procedure to be followed, which did not differ greatly from that of 1539.²⁶ A decade later, the visitation instructions from 1554 were re-issued for the newly-called visitation. At that time the Liestal *Stadtschreiber* also drafted more lengthy instructions for the visitors outlining the schedule for the visitation and the procedure to follow in each of the five villages that they would visit. His instructions were probably intended to inform a new generation of visitors of the procedure that had been followed in earlier visitations.²⁷ When synods and visitations began to be held more frequently after Johann Jakob Grynaeus became head of Basel's church in 1586, the records demonstrate that they followed the same procedures that had been established in the 1540s and 1550s.

The fifth category of church ordinances consists of edicts and decrees concerning the structure and administration of the church. Few of these decrees were officially published, and the decisions can be found only in the records of Council sessions or, by the end of the century, in the minutes of the weekly meetings of the *Kirchenrat*, the four parish pastors from the city and theology professors who met to discuss matters of concern to the church.²⁸ These edicts were almost always issued in response to specific situations or problems within the church, but they occasionally assumed greater importance because they were reissued and so were viewed as transcending the time and place in which they were first adopted. One example of this is the resolution read to the pastors in the fall of 1560 rebuking them for the discord among them, their polemic from the pulpit, and their public criticism of individual Council members. The Council presented this resolution as both a reminder and a reinforcement of the provision in the Reformation Ordinance that pastors were to proclaim only the pure word of God from the pulpit and to rebuke sins in general rather than denouncing individual cases of sin. Twelve years later, in the wake of yet another controversy that had divided the city's pastoral corps, the Council again read the 1560 resolution to the pastors.²⁹ As in Zurich, the line between the free preaching of

²⁶ The copy of the synod ordinance in BUB MsKir 23a, 96–8 bears the remark, «hat 17 Artikel, ist aber wenig verschieden von der Ordnung 1539.» On the conflict that led to the calling of the synod, Amy Nelson Burnett, *Generational Conflict in the Late Reformation: The Basel Paroxysm*, in: *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32 (2001), 219–244.

²⁷ The 1582 re-issue, BStA Kirchen Akten A9, 518r–522v; the unofficial guidelines for the visitors from 1582, BUB MsKiAr 22a, 558r–562v.

²⁸ An early and undated exception is the *Diaconordnung*, BUB MsKiAr 22a, 341r–v; Protokolle of the *Kirchenrat* from 1586, BStA Kirchen Archiv D 1,1. One or more of the *Deputaten* would sometimes attend these meetings.

²⁹ 1560 Ratserkanntnis in BStA Kirchen Akten C3, 98r–102r; 1572 re-issue in BUB MsKiAr 23a, 363r–366v.

God's word and the use (or misuse) of the pulpit for personal and political reasons proved hard to define.³⁰

Also included within this category are edicts and decisions that laid down procedures or principles that became an integral part of how the church functioned on a day-to-day basis. Most of these changes were prompted by the pastors but had to be approved by the magistrate. Thus, for example, the pastors had to ask the magistrate to allow change to the preaching schedules or the duties of pastors and their assistants. Over time the pattern of worship services in the city was modified by the transformation of the Tuesday morning sermon into a special prayer service, the reservation of Sunday afternoon services to catechetical preaching, and the spread of Saturday vespers services to all four of the parish churches. Some of these changes the pastors seem to have introduced by themselves, without the backing of the Council. Thus after a decade of effort Grynaeus was able to increase the frequency of catechization from the four times a year prescribed in the Reformation Ordinance to once or even twice a month. For other matters, though, the pastors needed the public support of the magistrate. The Reformation Ordinance specified that children were to be examined by the pastor before receiving their first communion, but this prescription was apparently only rarely enforced through the sixteenth century. Only at the beginning of the seventeenth century is there evidence that pastors were regularly performing this examination, and it took an edict from the Council in 1622 to reinforce the pastor's authority to do so.³¹

The decisions of the Council endorsed changes not only in the practice of the ministry but also in its structure. In 1539, for instance, in the wake of the university controversy, the Council decreed that the leadership of the city's church should be shared by the city's four parish pastors, who would preside in rotation over the regular meetings of the city's clergy. Almost fifty years later the Council ended this practice and placed sole authority in the hands of the cathedral pastor, Johann Jakob Grynaeus, as a way to strengthen his control over the church.³² Again, neither decision was formally published as part of a church ordinance, but the Council's decision concerning the leadership of the city's church obviously had significant consequences for ecclesiastical administration.

The final category is comprised not of a different type of church ordi-

³⁰ On the case of Zurich, Hans Ulrich *Bächtold*, *Heinrich Bullinger vor dem Rat. Zur Gestaltung und Verwaltung des Zürcher Staatswesens in den Jahren 1531 bis 1575*, Bern 1982, 15–18, 37–45.

³¹ The Tuesday prayer services were a feature already by 1541, the vespers services in St. Peter and St. Leonhard in 1613; *Burnett*, *Teaching the Reformation* (n. 16) 55–7; 226–33.

³² *Burnett*, *Teaching the Reformation* (n. 16) 74–5, 215; the edict of 1539 in BStA Ratsbücher B4, *Erkenntnisbücher* 1 (1525–44), 158v–159r; of 1587 in BUB MsKiAr 23b, fol. 45–7.

nance but is rather the group of earlier edicts, ordinances and other documents that were re-issued over the course of the 1590s and served to codify the doctrinal and legal basis of Basel's church at the end of the sixteenth century. The first of these was *Das geistliche und herzliche Kleinod der Kirchen Gottes in Stadt und Landschaft Basel*, compiled by Antistes Grynaeus and published in 1590. It contained in one volume the Basel confession, catechism, and liturgical agenda, as well as a short interrogation for children before they received their first communion. In 1595 the *Acta Liechstalensia* was re-printed, and two years later the Council re-confirmed the *Kirchendienerordnung* of 1582.³³ This confirmation was necessary to indicate that the Sissgau statutes had not been revoked or replaced by a new *Kirchendienerordnung* that was also issued in December 1597.³⁴ The new ordinance listed ten articles on which every new pastor was to be examined before being placed in his first parish. The articles asked about the individual's vocation to the ministry, his acceptance of correct doctrine as contained in the Bible and the Basel Confession, his readiness to carry out all of the responsibilities of the ministry and to live an exemplary life, and his intention to obey his ecclesiastical superiors. More controversially, in May 1598 the Council decreed that all of Basel's pastors then in office should also subscribe to the new *Kirchendienerordnung* as indication of their acceptance of its ten articles and of the Basel Confession more generally. Despite resistance from a few of the rural pastors and their supporters, the Council prevailed and the signatures were duly obtained.³⁵

Obviously, legislation concerning the church continued through the seventeenth century, but the publications, decrees and ordinances of the 1590s served at the time as a summing up and a public statement of the beliefs, practices, and expectations regarding conduct for both the clergy and the laity as members of Basel's church. As such, they make a convenient stopping place, allowing us to turn our attention to the broader question of what these ordinances tell us about the longer-term impact of the Reformation in Basel.

To begin with, this overview of Basel's church ordinances reveals two contrasting developments. On the one hand there was an evident desire for continuity with the structures instituted in the early days of the Reformation; on the other there was the significant degree of change that took place

³³ See the note at the end of the copy in BStA Kirchen Archiv HH3.

³⁴ BStA Kirchen Akten B1.

³⁵ Two printed copies of the 1597 *Kirchendienerordnung* in BStA Kirchen Akten B1, the first with the subscriptions of the city pastors, along with a description of the signing, and the second with the signatures of the pastors from the Liestal district chapter; description of the debate over the required subscription in the BStA Kirchen Archiv D 1,1 (Kirchenratsprotokolle I), 484–87.

over the course of the sixteenth century. The first development is manifested by the re-issuing of edicts and ordinances, under the apparent assumption that the structures and practices put in place by an earlier generation were sufficient for dealing with the problems of the present. In some cases this assumption may have been justified. Visitation reports from the early seventeenth century contain some of the same complaints about gambling, dancing, cursing and swearing, behavior at parish festivals, and the like that had been voiced in the first visitations held immediately after the official adoption of the Reformation. The authorities believed that successive generations of Baslers had to be made aware of the edicts' contents, and successive generations of officials had to be encouraged to enforce those edicts. The visitation reports give the impression, however, that the people did not heed, and the officials did not impose, the sanctions specified in the edicts.

In other ways the desire for continuity could be more problematic, for Basel's ecclesiastical traditions were themselves open to interpretation. Already in 1539 the Council cited the alleged departure from the procedures for the examination of the clergy prescribed by «that faithful, God-fearing man, Dr. Oecolampadius of blessed memory,» as an excuse to introduce a more rigorous censure of the clergy in its 1539 synodal ordinance.³⁶ Oswald Myconius complained to his friends that Oecolampadius would never have agreed to the type of examination that the Council now required, but his protests had no effect.³⁷

More importantly, the world did not stand still outside of Basel, and sooner or later the desire to adhere to traditions dating back to the early years of the Reformation would clash with the need to adapt to the changing realities of an increasingly confessionalized climate. The catechism attributed to Oecolampadius provides a good illustration of this. By the end of the century it had assumed an almost iconic status, which posed problems because it did not accord fully with the emerging theology of Reformed Orthodoxy – specifically, the Reformed numbering of the Ten Commandments and the interpretation of Christ's descent into hell. The leaders of the church met with resistance from some of the older parish pastors when they modified the section on the Decalogue to match what had become the Reformed norm, so that the prohibition against graven images would be a separate commandment and the former ninth and tenth commandments would be joined in one long tenth commandment against coveting. Power relations being what they

³⁶ BUB MsKiAr 22a, 267r.

³⁷ Myconius to Wolfgang Capito, 23 Dec. 1539, summarized in Olivier Millet, *Correspondance de Wolfgang Capiton (1478–1541). Analyse et index (D'après le Thesaurus Baumianus et autres sources)*, Strasbourg 1982, 256–7 no. 722; cf. the synodical articles from 1542 and the Council's response, BStA Kirchen Akten C3, 43v–44r, 47r–v; Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation* (n. 16) 73–7.

are, however, these older pastors were forced to accept the changes, and by the early seventeenth century their colleagues were reporting that the children in their parishes were learning the «long tenth commandment.»³⁸

Identification with the traditions of the early Reformation continued to play a role in shaping Basel's religious culture, but in the long run, the second development, the changes in both ecclesiastical structures and religious practices, proved to be more significant. The evolution of institutional structures is best illustrated by the increasing centralization of ecclesiastical administration and the gradual development of a hierarchical system of clerical oversight. Over the course of the sixteenth century the meetings of the clergy shifted from a relatively democratic gathering of equals to a more formal structure that subjected the rural clergy to the deans of their district, then to the general chapter, and finally to the *Kirchenrat* in the city.³⁹

Reformed doctrine and practices could also give rise to questions that the medieval church had not had to address and that therefore required new solutions. Most poignant in this regard was the problem of providing for the widows and children of deceased pastors. This issue first appears in the synod and visitation records from the 1550s, as the first generation of Reformed pastors either died or were so weakened by age that they could no longer carry out their duties. With no spare cash to provide pensions to support the pastors' families, the church authorities had no choice but to try to share out the work among all the other ministers. The 1562 *Kirchendienerordnung* required neighboring clergy to provide pastoral care for parishioners for six months after a pastor died, so that his widow and family would have a grace period in which to stabilize their financial situation (usually by the widow's remarriage). The *Kirchendienerordnung* of 1582 extended this period of vacancy to a year and introduced provisions concerning the legal guardianship of the deceased pastor's under-age children and specifying the division of the inheritance between the widow and children.

The pastors' families were not simply an issue after the pastor's death, however. Because the clergy were to be models of Christian comportment to their parishioners, both *Kirchendienerordnungen* contained provisions concerning their family life. Pastors were to live honorably and at peace with their wives, children and servants. Both pastors and their wives were to dress appropriately and to behave with restraint at public celebrations, such as the weddings that they were expected to attend (the pastor was specifically enjoined to pray before the meal!), and cases of marital discord were to be dealt with by the district chapters. With regard to family life while the pastor was alive and financial support after his death, the more specific provisions of

³⁸ Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation* (n. 16) 95, 216–7.

³⁹ Burnett, *Controlling the Clergy* (n. 18).

the 1582 ordinance demonstrate that church leaders were being forced to formulate procedures that responded to real-life problems in the present and that would prevent such problems in the future.⁴⁰

Perhaps most striking in this brief summary of continuities and changes is the fact that by the early seventeenth century, many of the provisions of the Reformation Ordinance had been modified or replaced – or were simply ignored. The reason for this is not hard to find. Even more so than later ordinances, the Reformation Ordinance was the product of a very specific point in time. This is particularly true of its doctrinal contents. The ordinance's lengthy denunciation of the sacrifice of the mass and its warnings against those who despised the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper reflect the bitter conflicts with Catholic clergy in the city and the influence of Anabaptist «hedge preachers» in the countryside. Although individual but high-placed Catholics and small pockets of rural Anabaptists continued to be a problem throughout the sixteenth century, neither group posed a significant challenge to Basel's established church by mid-century. Later ordinances and edicts were seen as refinements and modifications that adapted the church to the needs of the day, and there was no need to go back to renew the older and more general provisions of the Reformation Ordinance. For Basel's church, the Reformation Ordinance may have signaled the end of the first phase of the Reformation, but it was much more important for marking the beginning of the long-term transformation of religious culture in the city-republic.

How that transformation was effected is told in the church ordinances of the sixteenth century – their provisions concerning preaching and pastoral care, their evolving regulation of worship and religious instruction, and their gradual development of a means to oversee both clergy and laity. And the impact of these ordinances can be seen in the reports from the visitations and synods conducted over the course of the century: little change at first, but gradual penetration of new beliefs and practices after mid-century that resulted by the early seventeenth century in a religious culture quite different from that described in the earliest visitation records.⁴¹

It is necessary at this point to restate my concern specifically with religious culture rather than with culture more broadly defined. Basel's citizens and subjects did not by any means become the model Christians that their pastors may have wanted. The clergy continued to complain about the same

⁴⁰ 1562 ordinance, BUB MsKiAr 22a, 346v–47r; 1582 ordinance BStA Kirchen Archiv HH 3, 7v–9v.

⁴¹ *Burnett*, *Teaching the Reformation* (n. 16) 221–59; Amy Nelson *Burnett*, *Basel's Rural Pastors as Mediators of Confessional and Social Discipline*, in: *Central European History* 33 (2000), 67–85.

forms of moral misconduct that, for instance, the Liestal Acts legislated against, but they did not view that misconduct as an aspect of religious culture, since they saw it as the duty of the state, not the church, to act against it. Similarly, at the end of the century the pastors began to report cases of behavior concerning practices they had earlier ignored, such as visiting a soothsayer or making a pilgrimage to a shrine in a neighboring Catholic area to seek healing. This was clearly the type of marginalized behavior that religious authorities were trying to suppress, but it comprised only a small part of the religious culture that had developed in Basel. More important is the fact that seventeenth-century Baslers practiced their religion differently than their ancestors had. They attended church to hear sermons, not to see the miraculous consecration of the Host or to receive divine protection for the day; the children could repeat the Reformed understanding of the sacraments and recite their prayers in German; and, at least according to their pastors, most Baslers died knowing that their salvation rested on their faith and not on their reception of the viaticum. Many elements of late medieval beliefs about the supernatural continued, but they existed within a Reformed framework of interpretation.⁴²

Basel's case is not unique. Richard Weiss's description of the outlines of Protestant popular culture in Switzerland looks at a later period, but the foundation for this culture was laid during the course of the sixteenth century.⁴³ In each of the Reformed city-republics, the process of replacing one religious culture with another extended over several generations and was accomplished within the institutional and religious framework established by those cities' church ordinances. Basel was in fact fairly typical in issuing a variety of edicts and ordinances over the course of the sixteenth century, aimed at fine-tuning the church's administrative and supervisory structure, regulating worship and religious instruction, and prohibiting certain forms of behavior.

One might therefore argue that the older source collections do not even begin to tell the story of the Reformation in Switzerland. If we want to know what really happened after the break with the medieval church, we need to look at the institutions and practices put in place by the church ordinances issued in the century or more after the Reformation. Only then can we examine the impact of those structures on local religious culture and draw informed conclusions about the contours of the Long Reformation in Switzerland.

⁴² Cf. R. W. *Scribner's* discussion of how Protestants changed but did not eliminate beliefs about magic, *Magic and the Formation of Protestant Popular Culture in Germany*, in: Lyndal *Roper* (ed.), *Religion and Culture in Germany (1400–1800)*, Leiden 2001, 323–45.

⁴³ Richard *Weiss*, *Grundzüge einer protestantischen Volkskultur*, in: *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* 61 (1965), 75–91.

Abstract

In their role as guardians of the city-republic's church, Basel's Council issued a series of edicts and decrees that defined orthodoxy, set standards of conduct, and established supervisory mechanisms for both clergy and laity. These church ordinances shaped the structures of the church in response to new problems and changing circumstances over the course of the sixteenth century and so provided the institutional framework for the development of a Reformed religious culture.

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