

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Faculty Publications, Department of History

History, Department of

---

1998

## Controlling the Clergy: The Oversight of Basel's Rural Pastors in the Sixteenth Century

Amy Nelson Burnett

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, [aburnett1@unl.edu](mailto:aburnett1@unl.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/historyfacpub>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

---

Burnett, Amy Nelson, "Controlling the Clergy: The Oversight of Basel's Rural Pastors in the Sixteenth Century" (1998). *Faculty Publications, Department of History*. 108.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/historyfacpub/108>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the History, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications, Department of History by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

# Controlling the Clergy

## The Oversight of Basel's Rural Pastors in the Sixteenth Century

by AMY NELSON BURNETT

Recent research has highlighted Heinrich Bullinger's role in shaping the institutional structures of the Zurich church, and particularly his use of the synod for overseeing clerical discipline.<sup>1</sup> Bullinger's forceful personality and his fruitful personal relationships with several members of the Zurich Senate, combined with his lengthy tenure of office, gave him an unusually strong position from which to direct the Zurich church and to oversee its personnel.<sup>2</sup> The Basel church was not so fortunate in the half-century after the death of its «founding father,» Johannes Oecolampadius, in 1531. Oswald Myconius, the Basel Antistes from 1531–1552, was acutely conscious of his own deficiencies and oversensitive to any perceived slight from his counterparts in Zurich and Geneva.<sup>3</sup> Myconius' successor, Simon Sulzer, was increasingly handicapped by doctrinal strife within the city and by Basel's alienation from its fellow evangelical Swiss cities, both the result of Sulzer's Lutheran leanings. Only after Sulzer's death in 1585 and the selection of Johann Jakob Grynaeus as the new Antistes did the Basel church gain a leader whose organizational skills and unquestioned orthodoxy gave him the same authority that Bullinger had enjoyed in Zurich. During his first fifteen years in office, Grynaeus consolidated the various methods used by his predecessors to create an effective hierarchical structure for clerical oversight. How did this structure evolve in a church that lacked a charismatic and influential leader for much of the sixteenth century?

In theory at least, the basis of clerical discipline in Basel, as in Zurich, was the synod. The Basel Reformation Ordinance of 1529 specified that synods were to be held semiannually, although after Oecolampadius' death in 1531, the synods met only once a year for the remainder of the decade. The purpose

<sup>1</sup> Kurt *Maeder*, Bullinger und die Synode, in: Bullinger-Tagung 1975. Vorträge, gehalten aus Anlass von Heinrich Bullingers 400. Todestag, ed. Ulrich Gäbler and E. Zsindely, Zürich 1977, 69–76; Pamela *Biel*, Doorkeepers at the House of Righteousness: Heinrich Bullinger and the Zurich Clergy, 1535–1575, Bern 1991 (Zürcher Beiträge zur Reformationgeschichte 15); Bruce *Gordon*, Clerical Discipline and the Rural Reformation. The Synod in Zürich, 1532–1580, Bern 1992 (Zürcher Beiträge zur Reformationgeschichte 16).

<sup>2</sup> Erland *Herkenrath*, Bullingers Beziehungen zur politischen Führungsschicht Zürichs, in: Bullinger-Tagung 1975, ed. Gäbler and Zsindely, 63–67.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. his reaction to the *Consensus Tigurinus*, worked out by Bullinger and Calvin without any input from Basel; Uwe *Plath*, Calvin und Basel in den Jahren 1552–1556, Zurich 1974 (Basler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft 133), 25–28; Paul *Wernle*, Calvin und Basel bis zum Tode des Myconius, 1535–1552, Basel 1909, 75–79.

of the synod, according to the Reformation Ordinance, was to give each minister the opportunity to report unacceptable beliefs or behavior on the part of his colleagues to the appropriate authorities.<sup>4</sup> The protocols from the earliest synods state that each of the pastors attending the meeting was certified as «suitable for preaching the word of God and accepted as pastors,» although a few pastors were approved only on condition that «they study further» and told that if they did not do better at the next synod, they would be removed from their posts.<sup>5</sup>

Over time, however, the synodal certification of the pastors seems to have become a formality. Increasingly over the course of the 1530s the synod became an opportunity for all of the clergy «in Stadt und Land» to complain about their parishioners: they were not attending church, they were guilty of religious sins such as blasphemy and swearing as well as moral offenses like drunkenness and gambling. They showed no respect for the pastors, for the word of God, or for the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The pastors were especially concerned about the young people who did not attend catechism instruction, and they complained that those who did come to the catechetical services were not old enough to understand what was being taught.<sup>6</sup> The blame for these failings was implicitly placed on the magistrate: the church ordinances and other statutes were not being enforced, the rural officials were negligent in their duties, and the ban was not being imposed.<sup>7</sup>

Initially the Senate was willing to work with the pastors and regularly referred their grievances to a committee for further consideration, but by 1537 it had lost patience with the pastors' constant stream of complaints. In a sharply-worded rebuke to the clergy gathered in synod that year, the Senate's representatives noted that the pastors' complaints made it seem like the problems in the parishes were entirely the fault of the magistrate. Despite the importance of the office of preacher, there were never any complaints made about the pastors, their wives and children, «so that one would think that they all live in highest innocence.» Nevertheless, it could not be denied that some of them «lived such irresponsible lives, others were so incapable in teaching, some governed their wives and children so poorly,» that their ministries bore

<sup>4</sup> Aktsammlung zur Geschichte der Basler Reformation in den Jahren 1519 bis Anfang 1534, eds. Emil *Dürr* and Paul *Roth*, Basel 1921–1950 [hereafter ABR], 3: 387.

<sup>5</sup> Quote from fall synod, 1529, ABR 4: 208–11; cf. ABR 3: 483–485 (spring, 1529) and ABR 4: 417–19 (spring, 1530).

<sup>6</sup> This point was mentioned in seven out of the eight complaint lists from 1529–1538.

<sup>7</sup> The lists of complaints are a prominent part of the synodal records from May, 1532 (ABR 6: 81–83, Nr. 101), May 1533 (ABR 6: 257–65, Nr. 272–273), Aug. 1535 (Basel Staatsarchiv [hereafter BStA] Kirchen Akten A9: 155r–163v), June 1536 (BStA Kirchen Akten A9: 165r–168r) and June 1537 (BStA Kirchen Akten A9: 172r–174v).

no fruit. The Senators pointed out these problems, «not that we hereby excuse our own negligence, but because it is good also to punish these faults, so that the one party, complaining of its own poverty,<sup>8</sup> presents itself without guilt and thinks that only the magistrate has sinned.» Indeed, the magistrate had defended some of its less capable pastors before their parishioners and had shown patience with their faults. This state of affairs could not continue; henceforth the Senate would be willing to accept the pastors' list of grievances only if the pastors first submitted to a strict censure.<sup>9</sup>

This rebuke chastened the pastors somewhat, for the following year they modified the tone of their grievance list, stating that it was presented merely in order to inform the magistrate of problems in the church, rather than to accuse or criticize anyone.<sup>10</sup> Such assurances did not impress the Senate, however, for in 1539 it issued a new synodal and ban ordinance prescribing how the yearly synods were to be called and conducted. Although the ordinance acknowledged that the synod would include discussion of problems facing the church and how to deal with them, it was clear that the primary purpose of the gathering was to examine the teaching and conduct of each pastor. Ministers who did not attend the synod, who were found sorely lacking as a result of the examination, or who refused to accept admonition given at the synod were to be removed from office. Only after the clergy had been examined would the Senators listen to the pastors' concerns and suggestions «for the improvement of the church;» they would then pass their own recommendations on to the full Senate.<sup>11</sup>

The pastors objected to the ordinance's prescription of this publicly-conducted censure, but to no avail, for the Senate refused to modify the procedure.<sup>12</sup> Most of the pastors had little to fear from the censure, however, for the censures that survive from the synods of the 1540s show few complaints about their conduct.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, although the pastors continued to complain about the dire state of affairs in their parishes, the Senate was unmoved by those complaints. As a Senate committee told the pastors in 1542, «although it is true that we have many rebellious and malicious people, it is (God be praised) also true that the affairs of religion, and Christian being and conduct

<sup>8</sup> One of the specific complaints presented for the first time in 1537 was the poverty of the rural clergy, who were unable to support their family on their salaries. The pastors had asked that they be given additional support from the income generated by church property now administered by the magistrate.

<sup>9</sup> BStA Kirchen Akten A9: 176r–179r.

<sup>10</sup> Universitätsbibliothek Basel [hereafter BUB] MsKiAr 22a, Nr. 34, fol. 251v–257v.

<sup>11</sup> 1539 Synodal- und Bannordnung, BUB MsKiAr 22a, Nr. 35.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the account of the synod held in June, 1542, BStA Kirchen Akten C3: 38r–42r, and the official response to the pastors' complaints, Sept. 11, 1542, BStA Kirchen Akten C3: 45r–48r.

<sup>13</sup> Censures from 1542, BStA Kirchen Akten C3: 374–42; 1545 in Kirchen Akten C3: 57r–60v.

is in a better state here than in many other places, both under the papacy and where the Gospel is preached.»<sup>14</sup>

The new complacency of the Senate may have been due to its use of another mechanism, a general visitation, to gather information about the condition of the church in its rural territories. The first Protestant visitation in Basel's rural territories actually dated to before the official adoption of the Reformation: in the fall of 1528, Oecolampadius had his deacon visit the parishes with evangelically-minded clergy.<sup>15</sup> At the first synod, held in May of 1529, the rural pastors had requested another visitation, but instead of calling a general visitation the Senate appointed the Liestal pastor Hans Bruwiler as dean or superintendent of the rural church and ordered him to meet four times a year with all of the clergy.<sup>16</sup> There was no further mention of visitations until the synods of 1537 and 1538, when the pastors again requested that yearly visitations be conducted in the rural districts by the Antistes, so that reform measures could more easily be promoted there.<sup>17</sup> Finally the Senate decreed in 1538 that a visitation should be held in all of the rural districts, in place of the second yearly synod prescribed by the Reformation Ordinance, «so that [the urban pastors] will learn what is necessary to amend the administration of the church, its ministers and anything else and be able to improve them.»<sup>18</sup>

In accordance with the Senate's decree, Oswald Myconius was sent to visit the rural churches in 1539.<sup>19</sup> The need for more formal guidelines resulted in the drafting of a brief ordinance in preparation for the second visitation, held in April, 1541.<sup>20</sup> The visitation was to be conducted by two Senators and one of the city's pastors. These officials did not visit every parish but went only to the main village in each district, where they met with the Obervogt or district governor and all of the pastors and village officials from that district. The most important element of the visitation was the censure, not only of the pastors

<sup>14</sup> BStA Kirchen Akten C3: 45r–48r; copy in BUB MsKiAr 23a, Nr. 98, fo. 291r: “Dan wiewol waar, dz wir vil widerspenniger muotwilliger Leuten haben, so ist doch (Gott hab Lob) auch waar, dz die sachen der Religion, auch Christenlichs wesens vnnd wandels, allhie besser stehe, dann an vil anderen orten, im Bapstumb, und da dz Evangelium geprediget wirt.”

<sup>15</sup> Karl *Gauss*, *Geschichte der Landschaft Basel und des Kantons Basellandschaft*. Vol. 1: *Von der Urzeit bis zum Bauernkrieg des Jahres 1653*, Basel 1932, 434; cf. Oecolampadius' open letter to the pastors in: *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads, zum vierhundertjährigen Jubiläum der Basler Reformation*, ed. Ernst *Staehelein*, Leipzig 1927–1934 (QFRG 10, 19), 2: 239–248, Nr. 610.

<sup>16</sup> ABR 3: 485.

<sup>17</sup> BStA Kirchen Akten A9: 172r–174v; Kirchen Akten A9: 188r–193r.

<sup>18</sup> BUB MsKiAr 22a, Nr. 34, fo. 258r–260r.

<sup>19</sup> No record of his findings has survived; the only record of this visitation is in a brief list of earlier visitations compiled in 1601; BStA Kirchen Archiv HH 2, Nr. 8b, pp. 218–220 (see note 21).

<sup>20</sup> BUB Ms KiAr 23a, Nr. 93.

but also of the local officials. In essence, the visitations resembled synods held on the local level. There was one important difference, however, between the visitation and the general yearly synod: by extending the censure to include district and local officials, the visitation put pressure on these secular officials to enforce the edicts governing the religious and moral conduct of the laity.

Such a use of the visitation would be possible only if detailed records were kept of the findings, but for the remainder of Myconius' tenure as Antistes, documentation of synods and visitations fell to a bare minimum. No reports were kept of the three visitations held in 1546, 1549 and 1551, and very little was preserved from the only two synods to be held before Myconius' death in 1552.<sup>21</sup> The situation changed dramatically with the selection of Simon Sulzer as his successor. In April of 1554 a visitation was held in the rural districts, and all urban and rural pastors met in synod the following year. In 1557 a synod was held for the urban clergy, and a delegation was sent to visit the rural pastors. Synods were also held in 1558 and 1559 for all of Basel's pastors.<sup>22</sup>

In accordance with the Synod Ordinance of 1539 these synods included a censure of the clergy,<sup>23</sup> but again the censures were perfunctory. There were no complaints about most of the pastors, and the few offenses mentioned were trivial: some pastors' sermons were too long, others were spending too much time in the city or not devoting enough time to their studies. The reports concerning the rural parishes were not so positive. On the contrary, both the district officials and the rural pastors repeated the same litany of complaints that had been submitted at the synods of the 1530s. And as the pastors attending the synods of the 1530s had done, the new generation of Basel clergy also drew up lists of synodal articles for the Senate recommending stricter enforcement of morals legislation and closer oversight of local and district officials to see that they performed their duties. They also presented a series of recom-

<sup>21</sup> This is not just a case of documents disappearing over the intervening centuries. In 1601 the rural deans reported to the Kirchenrat that after searching the records of the Sigau chapter, they found only the dates and names of the visitors for the three visitations; BStA Kirchen Archiv HH2, Nr. 8b, "De modo procedendi..." The two synods were held in 1545 and 1550.

<sup>22</sup> 1554 visitation noted in BStA Kirchen Archiv HH2, Nr. 8b, and visitation instruction in Kirchen Akten A9: 387r–389r; 1555 synod participants and articles, Kirchen Akten A9: 391r–96v; 1557 synodal articles from the city synod and visitation articles from the rural districts, Kirchen Akten C3: 86r–87r. The visitors were Marcus Bertschi, pastor of St. Leonhard, and Senator Heinrich Petri. Petri was also a Scholarch, one of the three senators responsible for oversight of the university and church. Bertschi had visited the rural districts in 1546 and was accompanied by Scholarch Balthasar Han in 1549 and 1551, Kirchen Archiv HH2, Nr. 8b. 1558 synod participants in Kirchen Akten A9: 410r–412v and synodal articles in Kirchen Akten C3: 90r–v; 1559 synod participants and protocol in Kirchen Akten C3: 63r–64v and 91r–96r.

<sup>23</sup> Censure for 1559 synod, BStA Kirchen Akten C3: 91r–94r; undated censure from between 1554–59 (probably 1558), BStA Kirchen Akten A9: 82r–86r.

mendations concerning the administration of the church's wealth for poor relief, for funding schools, and for assisting those pastors who were too old or sick to carry out their duties.<sup>24</sup> It is clear that the leadership of the Basel church was using the synods and visitations not only to gather information about the state of the church but also to «encourage» the magistrate to enact certain policies.

The Senate did not regard these recommendations by the clergy any more favorably than had their counterparts of the previous generation – in part because they cast doubts on the Senate's accountability in dealing with church funds. In October of 1560 all the city pastors were summoned to hear a stinging response from representatives of the Senate. They were chastised for slandering honorable people with their sermons, using the pulpit to «drag in recent news or other things,» and in general for «concerning themselves too much with secular things, like recent news, foreign affairs and secular business that belongs to the magistrate, and thereby neglecting their studies.» The Senate was willing to work with the clergy to abolish vice, but the failings of the clerical estate also had to be addressed.<sup>25</sup> The Senate's edict was clearly meant to put the pastors in their place, and to remind them that the ultimate authority in ecclesiastical affairs was the magistrate, and not the clergy gathered in synod.

The Basel pastors evidently learned their lesson, for there were no comparable synods held during the next two decades. The church's leaders had good reason to avoid the holding of a synod, since a meeting of the entire clerical corps would have worsened the growing doctrinal disagreements in the city by bringing the opposing parties out into the open. In 1563 Sulzer had signed the Augsburg Confession while brokering a reconciliation between Johann Marbach and Girolamo Zanchi in Strasbourg, a move which prompted an outcry among Reformed church leaders in Switzerland and resulted in a complete breakdown in Sulzer's relations with Heinrich Bullinger and the Zurich church. Basel's alienation from its Reformed Swiss allies was increased in 1566, when Sulzer prevented the Basel church from endorsing the Second Helvetic Confession.<sup>26</sup> Sulzer's actions did not go unopposed in Basel, however, and the city's clergy were increasingly divided between his supporters and his opponents. The only synod to meet during this period, called in the wake of a doc-

<sup>24</sup> Cf. the summary of synod articles from 1557–59, BStA Kirchen Akten C3:66r–74v.

<sup>25</sup> BStA Kirchen Akten C3: 98r–102r; copy in BUB MsKiAr 23a, Nr. 117 (the first of three edicts reissued in April, 1572).

<sup>26</sup> On these two incidents and their ramifications for the Basel church, see Amy Nelson *Burnett*, Simon Sulzer and the Consequences of the 1563 Strasbourg Consensus in Switzerland, in: ARG 83, 1992, 154–179; and Hans *Berne*, Basel und das Zweite Helvetische Bekenntnis, in: Zwa 15, 1979, 8–39.

trinal dispute that rocked the university and church in 1571, was carefully orchestrated to prevent further public disagreement among the pastors.<sup>27</sup>

Rather than holding further synods, the Senate chose to call a visitation, held in 1572, to examine the state of the rural churches. For the first time, detailed protocols were kept of the visitation in each district, but these protocols suggest that the visitors did not go looking for specific problems, nor did they find anything that they considered worrisome. As with the synods of the 1550s, the overall view of the pastors was positive, and even the reports concerning the laity had few serious complaints.<sup>28</sup> The tone of the visitation reports in general and the specific types of complaints noted in them imply that the standards set by the visitors for both the clergy and the laity were none too rigorous. The visitation was still intended more as a source of information than as an instrument of either social or confessional control.

The visitors of 1572 may have been too sanguine about the state of the rural church, however. By the end of the decade the rural pastors were complaining that vice was increasing out of hand. They argued that it was necessary to hold another visitation which would impress on the laity the importance of obeying the Senate's edicts and would encourage the local and district officials to better enforcement of those edicts.<sup>29</sup> At the same time the doctrinal tensions among the clergy had again reached the point where the Senate felt it necessary to intervene. The result was another synod in May of 1581, where for the first time complaints were raised about several pastors (including Sulzer) believed to harbor Lutheran sympathies. The Senate clearly did not wish the doctrinal antipathies to continue; it not only repeated but also intensified the criticisms of the clergy it had first made in 1560.<sup>30</sup>

The synod of 1581 marked a turning point for the city's church. Over the next decade, the magistrate and the church leaders in the city again began to take a vital interest in the rural church. In 1582 a team of visitors was sent to each of the districts in the rural territories. For the first time several of the pastors and parish officials complained about the use of magic and the consultation of wise women, the practices surrounding burials, and the holding of

<sup>27</sup> As one participating pastor, Jakob Ryter, later noted, «sed qua in illa synodo nihil memoria dignum peractum est...Spatio enim trium horatum finita est. Quid enim dignum effici potest in tam angusto temporis intervallo?» BStA Kirchen Archiv HH 1,1, fo. 8r. On the doctrinal controversies that were the backdrop for this synod, see Gottfried *Linder*, *Simon Sulzer und sein Antheil an der Reformation im lande Baden, sowie an den Unionsbestrebungen*, Heidelberg 1890, 130–139.

<sup>28</sup> BStA Kirchen Archiv HH4, Nr. 1.

<sup>29</sup> The Waldenburg chapter submitted a list of complaints to the magistrate in Oct., 1580: BStA Kirchen Archiv A 13, Nr. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Summary of the 1581 synod, BUB MsKiAr 22a, Nr. 107, fo. 549r–v; cf. Johann Jakob Grynaeus' more partisan description of the events in a letter to Rudolf Gwalther, MsKiAr 22a, Nr. 108, fo. 550r–551v. The Senate's address in BStA Kirchen Archiv A 24, Nr. 2.



spinning bees.<sup>31</sup> Since none of these problems had appeared in the 1572 visitation report, it is apparent that the visitors were now asking specifically about them.<sup>32</sup> The use of a list of questions in 1582 was a significant step towards making the visitations a more effective means of social and clerical control. The questions highlighted practices that the visitors considered to be problematic but that individual pastors might not have thought significant enough to report voluntarily in the past. It also gave a more uniform view of the rural parishes and made comparison between parishes easier, since all the pastors and parish officials were asked the same questions.

The 1582 visitation turned up other complaints, particularly concerning the practice of usury, but also about such vices as swearing, blasphemy, and dancing. Nevertheless, despite these problems the overall impression of church life in Basel's rural territories was encouraging. Several pastors said that they had no complaints with their congregations, and many reported that their parishioners were diligent in attending worship (although a few complained that they arrived late to worship). Again, the parish officials were generally satisfied with their pastors; their most frequent complaint was that their pastor's sermons were too long.<sup>33</sup>

While the 1572 visitation had concentrated particularly on questions of conduct by both clergy and laity, the visitors in 1582 were also concerned with the clergy's doctrinal orthodoxy and the adequacy of religious instruction for adults. Pastors were admonished to teach according to the Basel Confession (the city's official confession of faith, adopted in 1534) and were warned not to sign the Formula of Concord. They were also told to read the sections of the catechism from the pulpit at the conclusion of the sermon, so that those who did not attend catechism instruction would regularly hear the basics of their evangelical faith.

In view of the rarity with which either synods or visitations were held,

<sup>31</sup> BStA Kirchen Archiv HH4, Nr. 2–4; copies in Kirchen Akten E1. On the social significance of spinning bees and the church's opposition to them, see Hans *Medick*, *Village Spinning Bees: Sexual Culture and Free Time among Rural Youth in Early Modern Germany*, in: *Interests and Emotions. Essays on the Study of Family and Kinship*, ed. Hans Medick and David Sabean, Cambridge 1984, 317–339.

<sup>32</sup> A model visitation instruction from 1582 stated that the visitors should question each pastor «auß seinem Rodell,» BUB MsKiAr 22a, Nr. 111, fo. 562r. It is unclear whether earlier visitors had used lists of questions that were asked of each pastor, but the variety of answers given in 1572 suggests that the interrogation was more open-ended. The only topics mentioned by a majority of pastors in 1572 were frequency of attending worship and catechism services and the officials' negligence in enforcing the Senate's mandates. It is quite possible that the pastors were asked specifically about these two issues, but both complaints are so general that they give little indication either of the religious beliefs of the laity or the specific vices that were not being punished.

<sup>33</sup> In response, the visitors recommended that Sunday sermons be kept to one hour, while the weekday sermon should not last more than half an hour.

Basel's church leaders had to rely on another method to supervise the rural pastors: the regular meetings of district and general chapters of the rural clergy. Most of Basel's rural territory had belonged to the rural chapter of Sisgau before the Reformation.<sup>34</sup> As part of Basel's Protestant church the general chapter of Sisgau was subdivided into three district chapters roughly corresponding to the administrative districts (Vogteien) of the territory.<sup>35</sup> These district chapters were small: Waldenburg had seven parishes, Liestal/Münchenstein had nine, and Farnsburg had eleven parishes. As mentioned above, the Senate had appointed a new dean, Hans Bruwiler, for the entire chapter in the spring of 1529, but he had proven unable or unwilling to carry out his duties. At the fall synod of 1529, Bruwiler was reminded of his responsibilities to summon the clergy to a general convent, but the following spring the pastors complained that Bruwiler had not called a meeting and asked that a new dean be appointed.<sup>36</sup> At the 1535 synod the pastors asked that they be allowed to elect three district deans to supervise the rural church, a proposal which the Senate approved, while reserving the right to confirm the pastors' candidates.<sup>37</sup> For the next two decades the three district deans bore the brunt of the supervisory responsibilities for the rural parishes, and the position of «primary dean» for the entire Sisgau chapter was left vacant after Bruwiler's death in 1540.<sup>38</sup>

In 1562 the Senate approved new statutes for the Sisgau chapter providing for the appointment of a new «primary dean» by the Kirchenrat, a body comprised of the four parish pastors in the city and the three Scholarchs (the senators responsible for oversight of university and church).<sup>39</sup> The statutes further required that each district chapter meet twice a year to discuss issues of concern and for the purpose of fraternal admonition. A general convent of all rural

<sup>34</sup> On the development, structure and function of the rural chapters in the diocese of Basel, see Jean *Burcklé*, *Les chapitres ruraux des anciens evesches de Strasbourg et de Bâle*, Colmar 1935.

<sup>35</sup> The Farnsburg district and chapter were coterminous, the Waldenburg chapter was comprised of the districts of Waldenburg, Homburg and Ramstein, and the Liestal chapter included both the city of Liestal and the districts of Münchenstein and Riehen. For a description of the parishes in the rural territories, see Karl *Gauss*, *Basilea Reformata. Die Gemeinden der Kirche Basel Stadt und Land und Ihre Pfarrer seit der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart*, Basel 1930, 20–35.

<sup>36</sup> Fall 1529 synod, ABR 4: 208–211, Nr. 227; complains from the spring 1530 synod, ABR 4: 419–420, Nr. 473b.

<sup>37</sup> 1535 synod, BStA Kirchen Akten A9: 155r–163v; the Senate's response, Kirchen Akten C2: 12r–13v.

<sup>38</sup> The synods of the 1540s include reports from the deans of each of the district chapters; in 1542 they were referred to as Superattendenten (BStA Kirchen Akten C3: 41v). The successor to the dean of the entire Sisgau chapter was called the «primarius decanus» in later documents.

<sup>39</sup> According to an account written in the early 1590s, the rural pastors had twice opposed the imposition of a primary dean but were eventually forced by the magistrate to accept the authority of Leonhard Strübin in 1562; BUB MsKiAr 22a: 249r.

pastors was to be held every two years in order to consider problems facing the church; their findings and suggestions were to be forwarded to the Kirchenrat.<sup>40</sup> The 1562 statutes thus placed the chief responsibility for oversight of the rural clergy on the primary dean and the three district deans.

In 1582 these statutes were revised to strengthen further the power of the deans. The new statutes specified the disciplinary measures to be taken against any pastor whose conduct or teaching needed correction, they clarified the procedures for administering admonition or punishment, and they established the method of appeal for individual pastors. The procedure roughly followed the scriptural model for church discipline (Matthew 18:15–17), with admonition being given in three stages of increasing severity. Pastors who rejected all admonition, even that of a general chapter, were referred to the Kirchenrat in the city, but the Kirchenrat would not hear a case unless the dean and his chapter had first attempted to resolve the problem.<sup>41</sup> This procedure meant that only the most serious problems would be brought to the attention of the secular and ecclesiastical authorities in the city.

The trend towards greater supervision of the clergy only accelerated after Johann Jakob Grynaeus became Antistes in 1586. Like his predecessors, Grynaeus began his tenure as Antistes with a burst of energy: in the ten years after assuming office, he conducted three visitations, held one general synod for all clergy in Basel and another solely for the urban pastors, and regularly attended or sent another representative of the Kirchenrat to the general convents of the rural pastors. The tone of these meetings was much different from that of the synods of the 1550s. The earlier synods had reflected the solidarity of the clergy vis-à-vis the magistrate and a sense that they could recommend ecclesiastical policy to the Senate. In the 1580s and 1590s the perception of the clergy as an undifferentiated group was replaced by a sense of hierarchical authority. At its head, Grynaeus was both the representative of the magistrate's authority and the conduit through whom the clergy passed its complaints and recommendations on to the Senate.<sup>42</sup> The position of primary dean had again been left vacant after the death of its incumbent in 1582, but in 1588 the office was combined with that of Antistes, to give Grynaeus direct responsibility over the rural church. In addition, the district deans were now held more rigorously to the requirement that they hold regular chapter meetings and report problems to the Kirchenrat.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> «Die alten oder ersten Statuten...gemeiner Brüedern vnd Kilchendienern,» BUB MsKiAr 22a, Nr. 56, fol. 345r–348v.

<sup>41</sup> Drafts and copies of the 1582 statutes in BStA KirchenAkten F6, Nr. 7–10.

<sup>42</sup> His position was thus analogous to that of Bullinger in Zurich, cf. *Maeder*, Bullinger und die Synode.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. the 1601 visitation, in which all deans were asked whether they visited their clergy and held chapter meetings as required by the chapter statutes. On the merging of primary dean with the office of the Antistes, see *Gauss*, Basilea Reformata 20.

Grynaeus himself believed that the only way to eliminate the last vestiges of Lutheran sympathies from the Basel church was through zealous oversight of its clergy. As a consequence, the censure of the clergy, both in doctrine and conduct, took on a new importance in the synods and visitations. The records of both are much more detailed than those held under Grynaeus' predecessors. It was no longer sufficient simply to note that there was no complaint about a pastor. The synod and visitation protocols now recorded what text he used for his Sunday and weekday sermons, how frequently he held catechism instruction, whether he willingly visited the sick and carried out his other pastoral duties, and whether he accepted the teachings contained in the Basel Reformation Ordinance of 1529 and the Basel Confession of 1534. Despite the higher standards of doctrine and conduct to which the pastors were held, there were few complaints made about the Basel clergy in the visitations, synods and general chapters. Indeed, most of the pastors seem to have shared their leaders' expectations concerning doctrine and conduct.

The regular meetings of both district and general chapters also became more important as a means of supervising the teaching and conduct of the clergy. Again, supervision was assisted by improved documentation: during the 1590s each of the district chapters began to keep records of its sessions, and Grynaeus himself carefully wrote down the agenda and the decisions made during the weekly meetings of the Kirchenrat. The protocols of the general chapters, synods and visitations were also transcribed in the official record book of the Kirchenrat.<sup>44</sup>

The concern with doctrinal orthodoxy that emerged in the early 1580s only increased over the course of the 1590s. It culminated at a general convent of the Sisgau chapter in March, 1598, which was called specifically for the purpose of establishing doctrinal unity among the rural pastors.<sup>45</sup> To ensure doctrinal consensus, the magistrate sent Grynaeus, his chief assistant Johann Tryphius, and theology professor (and Grynaeus' son-in-law) Amandus Polanus to make sure there was no confusion or ambiguity in the interpretation of the city's official confession. At the general convent, the individual articles of the Basel Confession were read aloud and the city theologians explained their «proper» interpretation to the rural pastors. At the end, each was asked if he agreed with the contents of the Confession as so interpreted. Those pastors suspected of inclining to Lutheranism were asked particularly about their

<sup>44</sup> BStA Kirchen Archiv (Kirchenratsprotokolle) D 1,1 & 1,2 contain copies of the city and rural synods of 1590, the general chapters of Aug. 1593 and Oct. 1595, the general synod of June, 1597, and the visitations of 1587, 1589, 1601. The acts of the district chapters begin for Farnsburg in 1592, for Liestal in 1593 and for Waldenburg in 1599. In each case, a new dean was chosen for these chapters the year before the records begin, and it seems likely that the new deans shared Grynaeus' view about the importance of documentation.

<sup>45</sup> The official protocol, with marginal corrections by Grynaeus, BUB MsKiAr 22c: 16–49, Nr. 4; the summary presented to the Senate, in Tryphius's hand, BStA Kirchen Akten C2: 68r–74r.

views on the Lord's Supper. Two months later, the Senate issued an edict requiring all clergy to sign the new church ministers' ordinance which, among other things, prohibited them from praising either the papacy or the Formula of Concord, ordered them to report any pastor who «caused disagreement in doctrine, whether privately or openly,» to the appropriate authorities, and required them to pledge their loyalty «to the Christian lordship of Basel, the ministry in the city and the dean in the rural territory.»<sup>46</sup>

As had happened under both Myconius and Sulzer, visitations and synods disappeared during the latter half of Grynaeus' tenure. There were no more visitations or general synods held during Grynaeus' lifetime, and the church records contain only a few references to general convents of the rural clergy.<sup>47</sup> Their disappearance was perhaps the result of their success: the close supervision over the clergy exercised via the synods, visitations and general chapter meetings of the 1580s and 1590s had eliminated doctrinal divisions and set clear standards for clerical behavior, while the elaboration of a hierarchical disciplinary structure and the increasingly detailed documentation at the level of both district chapter and Kirchenrat made it easier to oversee individual pastors.

Once the hierarchical structure had been established, the magistrate itself saw little need for spending money on a general visitation. The Senate was acutely aware of the costs incurred by the visitations, particularly by the common meal for all participants held at the close of each day's session, and even when the visitation was seen as necessary, it counted its pennies. The Senate's concern about costs was evident during the visitation of April, 1594, held at a time when the inhabitants of the rural territories were dangerously close to rebellion as the result of the imposition of a new tax (the so-called «Rappenkrieg»<sup>48</sup>). The visitation enabled the Senate's representative, Andreas von Speyr, to ascertain the loyalty of peasants and local officials in the rural districts, but in his report back to the Senate von Speyr was apologetic about the expense, justifying it by stating that since two recently-appointed pastors had been officially installed in their positions as part of the visitation, they had saved the cost of a separate ordination service.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> 1597 Kirchendienerordnung, BStA Kirchen Akten B1, fo. A4v. When the ordinance was issued in Dec., 1597, it was intended for new pastors, but in May of 1598 all pastors were required to sign the ordinance to signal their acceptance of it; cf. Grynaeus' description of the debate before the Senate in the Kirchenrat Protokolle, BStA Kirchen Archiv D 1,1: 484–87.

<sup>47</sup> In 1605 Grynaeus had each rural pastor submit in writing a status report for his parish, but these reports differed widely in the amount of detail each pastor provided. Thirteen of these reports are preserved in BUB, most of them in the volumes of Grynaeus' correspondence (G II 5–12).

<sup>48</sup> On the Rappenkrieg, see Paul *Burckhardt*, *Geschichte der Stadt Basel von der Zeit der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart*, Basel 1942, 43–44; a lengthier and more detailed account in *Gauss*, *Landschaft Basel* 585–655.

<sup>49</sup> BStA Kirchen Akten E1. A total of 43 men attended the meal held in Sissach on the second day of the week-long visitation.

The Senate also saw little need for a general synod. Because it brought together all clergy in city and rural territory, the general synod had at least the appearance of being a more «democratic» assembly, able to present a united front to the Senate when submitting its grievances. The Senate preferred to rely on the hierarchical structure established by the statutes of the Sisgau chapter, which subordinated each pastor to his district dean, each district chapter to the general chapter, and the entire rural church to the Kirchenrat. Moreover, the magistrate saw major events such as a general synod or visitation as «extraordinary» and unnecessary for the normal running of the church.<sup>50</sup> The city pastors may not have agreed with the Senate's assessment, but they had no authority to call either a visitation or a synod on their own.

From the very beginning the pastors had opposed making the public censure of the clergy a central part of the synods and visitations. The chapter statutes of 1582 acknowledged that the censure had in the past «caused gross mistakes, discord, envy and hatred among many brothers but brought about few improvements.»<sup>51</sup> The hierarchical structure of the rural church benefited the rural clergy to the extent that it removed the process of clerical discipline from the public eye. The rural deans had the authority to intervene before potential problems became serious enough that they had to be dealt with in public at the synods or visitations and hence brought to the attention of the magistrate. The effectiveness of the admonitory process is indirectly revealed by occasional comments such as that made by the Waldenburg dean Jakob Gugger during the 1601 visitation, that problems among the pastors in his district «had been resolved, according to the contents of the statutes, at a special meeting and should not be revealed again in the general convent or visitation.»<sup>52</sup>

In summary, although synods and visitations were an important component of clerical oversight in Basel, they were not held regularly enough after 1540 to provide continual close supervision of the rural clergy. More significant for overseeing the rural church was the elaboration, over the last third of the century, of a hierarchical structure that gave the district deans authority over the pastors in their chapters and made each dean accountable to the Antistes and Kirchenrat in the city. Grynaeus' contribution was to make use of synods, visitations and general chapters to enforce doctrinal uniformity and to see that the central link in the hierarchy, the district deans, were carrying

<sup>50</sup> Cf. the meeting of March 9, 1593 in the Kirchenratsprotokolle, BStA Kirchen Archiv D 1,1, in which Grynaeus reported to the city pastors the Senate's response when asked why it didn't call a synod or visitation for the rural churches. He was told «quod omnia mediocria esse in urbanis et provincialibus Ecclesiis videantur, non existimare necessariam esse.»

<sup>51</sup> «Ordnung und statuten Gemeiner Brüederen vnd Kilchendiener des Capitels im Sissgoüw und gantzer landschafft Basel, 1582;» BStA Kirchen Archiv HH3, fo. 4v.

<sup>52</sup> BStA E1, 1601 visitation, fol. 13r.

out their responsibilities both towards the pastors under them and towards the ecclesiastical authorities above them. Where Bullinger laid the foundations for clerical discipline in Zurich, Grynæus put the finishing touches on the structures introduced by his predecessors in Basel.

Prof. Amy Nelson Burnett, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Department of History,  
612 Oldfather, Lincoln, NE 68588-0327