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# Generational Conflict in the Late Reformation: The Basel Paroxysm

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## Generational Conflict in the Late Reformation:

**The Basel Paroxysm** Since the tumultuous 1960s, social scientists have been fascinated by the theme of generational conflict. Building on the theoretical structure first proposed by Mannheim in the 1920s, developmental and social psychologists and sociologists have examined a wide range of questions related to generational change, youth movements, and life-cycle course. Historians, too, have applied Mannheim's insights to the past, following the example of Mannheim himself, who explained the nineteenth-century struggle between conservative and liberal values in Germany in terms of generational identity.<sup>1</sup>

The application of generational theory to history is not without its critics, but even those who have expressed reservations about the methodology still acknowledge that Mannheim's concept of social generations provides a useful analytical tool for understanding historical change. The concentration, particularly during the late 1960s and early 1970s, on youth movements and the generation gap has meant that generational analysis has focused on modern history and the fairly recent past. The twentieth century, in particular, seems tailor-made for generational analysis, given the number and frequency of major life-shaping events, moving from fin-de-siècle Europe through World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War, and culminating in the student protests of the Vietnam era, which some

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1 Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *idem* (ed. Paul Kecskemeti), *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1952), 276–322. See, for example, the special issues of journals devoted to generational change and the life cycle: *Journal of Social Issues*, XXX/2 (1974), 1–201; *ibid.*, XXX/3 (1974), 1–205; *Daedalus*, CVII (1978), 1–203; *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, XII (1984), 1–211. Neither social scientists nor historians have been receptive to José Ortega y Gasset's quantitative approach to generational theory, best summarized by Julián Marías, *Generations: A Historical Method* (University, Ala., 1967).

have portrayed as the latest incarnation of youth revolts typical of industrialized society.<sup>2</sup>

Generational theorists appear to assume that generational conflict did not exist within traditional society because of its much slower rate of social change. Indeed, if the term *social generation* is meant to apply to all of those born within a certain span of years, then it is difficult to speak of significant change between generations in premodern Europe. If, however, the term is reserved for the intellectual trendsetters of premodern Europe, distinct generational change is evident during certain times. The impact of the Renaissance and the Reformation on European intellectual and cultural life seems to call out for some type of generational analysis.<sup>3</sup>

It is striking that there have been so few efforts to apply generational theory to the intellectual changes of the early modern period. Grafton and Jardine and, more recently, Rummel have described the transformation of humanism throughout the course of several generations. Spitz pointed to the generational divide within the humanist movement—the younger generation becoming reformers and the older generation remaining loyal to the Catholic church; Tracy located this divide more precisely between those born before 1480 and those born afterward. Jones traced the reaction of different generations to the long English Reformation, concluding that change happened slowly, over the course of several generations, with different versions of “the Reformation” existing at the same time. In a different context, Chrisman found generational differences in the printed works produced in Strasbourg throughout the sixteenth century. Although both Spitz and Chrisman refer to Mannheim, none of these scholars have

2 Alan B. Spitzer, “The Historical Problem of Generations,” *American Historical Review*, LXXVIII (1973), 1353–1385. For an overview of historians’ use of generational theory, see Anthony Esler, *Generations in History: An Introduction to the Concept* (Williamsburg, 1982); *idem*, *Generational Studies: A Basic Bibliography* (Williamsburg, 1979).

3 Esler is dismissive of “literary generations,” arguing for “generationally-defined slices of the population as a whole” (*Generations in History*, 46–47). Elsewhere, he compares generational consciousness to *mentalité*, as a reflection of deeper structures of understanding. See Esler, “‘The Truest Community’: Social Generations as Collective Mentalities,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, XII (1984), 99–112. A more restricted approach to the definition of a generation may be necessary, however, for analyzing major cultural change during the early modern period, when the gulf between the educated elite and the masses was pronounced. This is not to imply a complete separation between elite and popular culture in the sixteenth century, but humanist education created a significant difference in outlook between the two groups.

used the conceptual framework developed by social scientists to interpret the relationship between generational change and social change.<sup>4</sup>

To Mannheim, a social generation comprised those of similar chronological age (membership in the same birth cohort) and shared historical experience or “generational location.” The members of a birth cohort are shaped by significant social and historical events that they experience at roughly the same stage of life. They also move through different phases of the life cycle and into—and out of—age-defined roles at approximately the same time. Although they may be contemporaneous, different social generations live in different subjective eras and have their own understanding of life and the world.<sup>5</sup>

Historical events occurring during a cohort’s childhood and adolescence are particularly important for shaping later values and behavior. Mannheim emphasized the importance of the later teenage years as a time of personal experimentation and reflection, during which the young question inherited values. Developmental and social psychologists have argued more specifically that the biological, psychological, and social maturation of adolescence, which can stretch from the early teens to the mid-twenties, is central to the formation of values and outlooks.<sup>6</sup>

4 Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986); Erika Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995); Lewis W. Spitz, “The Third Generation of German Renaissance Humanists,” in Archibald A. Lewis (ed.), *Aspects of the Renaissance: A Symposium* (Austin, 1967), 105–121; James D. Tracy, “Humanism and the Reformation,” in Steven E. Ozment (ed.), *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research* (St. Louis, 1982), 33–57; Norman Jones, “Living the Reformations: Generational Experience and Political Perception in Early Modern England,” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, LX (1997), 273–288; Miriam U. Chrisman, *Lay Culture, Learned Culture: Books and Social Change in Strasbourg, 1480–1599* (New Haven, 1982), 37.

5 Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations,” 288–292. More recent research uses the term *birth cohort* to avoid confusing Mannheim’s concept of social generation with the more usual association of generation with lineal descent; Norman B. Ryder, “The Cohort as a Concept in the Study of Social Change,” *American Sociological Review*, XXX (1965), 843–861; David I. Kertzer, “Generation as a Sociological Problem,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, IX (1983), 125–149. Life-cycle phases and age-defined roles are termed, respectively, the cohort and the age (or maturational) effects of generational difference. Researchers working within the theoretical framework of age stratification conceptualize these effects differently but acknowledge the importance of both historical circumstance and aging for differences between generations. Matilda White Riley, “Age Strata in Social Systems,” in Robert H. Binstock and Ethel Shanass (eds.), *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences* (New York, 1985; 2d ed.), 369–411.

6 T. Allen Lambert, “Generations and Change: Toward a Theory of Generations as a Force

Mannheim also stressed the importance of “intermediary generations” for the transmission of cultural values. The young learn not from members of the oldest cohort but from those who are closer to them in age and experience. Contiguous cohorts play an important role in mitigating the consequences of differences between older and younger cohorts. Influences do not always go from the older to the younger, however. Generations are in a constant state of interaction. Under certain circumstances, the older generation may become increasingly receptive to the ideas of the younger one.

Mannheim admitted that not every generation develops a sense of self-awareness. Generational consciousness develops in response to social, cultural, and historical change. The faster the pace of this change, the greater is a cohort’s sense of difference from its predecessors. Conversely, the members of a generation that does not develop its own “generation style” may either attach themselves to an earlier generation or identify themselves with an emerging younger generation.

It would be tempting to consider the outbreak of the Reformation as an episode of generational conflict, the ramifications of which continued during the next several generations of the sixteenth century. This article, however, focuses instead on a more limited instance of generational conflict, both temporally and geographically. Moreover, it looks not at the first generation of reformers but at their successors—or, more precisely, at their successors’ successors—at a time of transition from the second to the third generation of Protestant clergy.

The “Basel Paroxysm,” a conflict over the Lord’s Supper that shook the Basel church in 1570/71, illustrates the generation gap between the witnesses of the first Eucharistic controversy of the 1520s and those who grew up after the second controversy had broken out in the early 1550s. On one side of the conflict, Simon Sulzer, the leader of Basel’s church, invoked the irenic spirit of Martin Bucer, his teacher, in an effort to maintain peace within the city’s church. On the other side, a young pastor named Heinrich Erzberger claimed to be the true spiritual heir of Johann Oecolampadius, Ulrich Zwingli’s colleague and the founder of

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in Historical Process,” *Youth and Society*, IV (1972), 21–45; Margaret M. Braungart, “Aging and Politics,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, XII (1984), 79–98.

Basel's church. The arguments that the two parties advanced, and the eventual outcome of the Paroxysm, reveal the importance of generational change and the depth of generational conflict a half century after the Reformation.<sup>7</sup>

**BASEL, BUCER, AND SULZER** The heart of the controversy was the question of how to interpret the city's official statement of faith, the Basel Confession of 1534. By the standards of the 1530s, the Confession was Zwinglian, and the marginal glosses of its earliest printed editions made the Zwinglian interpretation of the article on the Lord's Supper even more obvious. Nevertheless, the Confession's position on the Eucharist took account of Bucer's efforts during the 1530s to bring about concord between the Swiss and the Lutherans. The article made a concession to the Lutherans by using Bucer's formulation that Christ's true body and blood were represented and offered in the Lord's Supper. More significantly for the future, it did not clearly condemn the Lutheran position, and it was silent on certain points that would become important during the second Eucharistic controversy. For example, it said nothing about ubiquity, referring only obliquely to Christ's body which had ascended into heaven. Although it implied the rejection of both oral manducation and the reception of Christ's body and blood by the impious, it did not specifically mention those issues that would become shibboleths in the debate between Lutheran and Reformed theologians in the coming decades.<sup>8</sup>

The Basel Confession had a privileged position in the city's church, but it was not the only confession adopted by the city. When Bucer returned home from the negotiations that resulted in the Wittenberg Concord of 1536, Basel sent two of its pastors, Simon Grynaeus and Andreas Carlstadt, to confer with the Strasburghers about their meeting with Luther. Armed with an "Explication of the Wittenberg Articles" written by Bucer, the

7 The controversy was termed the "Paroxysmus Basiliensis" by Jakob Christoph Rytter (1543–1610), who was a pastor in one of Basel's rural villages at the time. He rose to become parish pastor of Liestal, the only city within Basel's territory, and archdean of the rural clergy.

8 Walther Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther, Ihr Streit über das Abendmahl nach seinen politischen und religiösen Beziehungen, II. Vom Beginn der Marburger Verhandlungen 1529 bis zum Abschluß der Wittenberger Konkordie von 1536* (Gütersloh, 1953), 319–320. Karl Rudolf Hagenbach, *Kritische Geschichte der Entstehung und Schicksale der ersten Basler Konfession* (Basel, 1857; 2d ed.), describes the genesis of the Confession (26–31), and reprints the article on the Lord's Supper with marginal glosses (43–44).

pair returned to Basel at the end of July. Bucer's "Explication," which gave a decidedly Zwinglian slant to the Wittenberg Concord, apparently satisfied the Baslers. They officially accepted it on August 2, and Oswald Myconius—Antistes, or leader of the Basel church—tried (unsuccessfully) to persuade the other Swiss churches to adopt it as well.<sup>9</sup>

Bucer's influence in Basel during the 1530s was echoed in Bern, largely through his connections with Sulzer. Born in 1508, Sulzer was in his early teens when evangelical doctrines were first being proclaimed in Switzerland. After attending schools in Lucerne and Basel, Sulzer made his way to Strasbourg, where he came to the attention of Bucer and Wolfgang Capito. Bucer kept an eye on Sulzer for the next few years and did what he could to advance the latter's career, warmly commending him to Bern's Council when Sulzer returned home in 1533.<sup>10</sup>

By the early 1540s, Sulzer had become one of the leaders of Bern's church. As pastor, he was the staunchest proponent of Bucer's view of the Lord's Supper against attacks by the Zurich-leaning faction within the ministry. Conflicts between the two parties wracked Bern for much of the decade, and in 1548, the Council decided to end the doctrinal quarrels by removing Sulzer from office. He moved to Basel, where he was soon appointed as a parish pastor. When Myconius died in 1552, Sulzer was chosen to succeed him.<sup>11</sup>

Sulzer's new church had an official theological position that agreed with his Bucerian understanding of the Lord's Supper. The

9 Bucer, "Erlüderung der Witembergischen Articklen durch die predicanten von Straßburg gegeben," in Robert Stupperich et al. (eds.), *Martin Bucers Deutsche Schriften* (Gütersloh, 1960–) (hereinafter BDS), VI/1, 218–226; Ernst Bizer, *Studien zur Geschichte des Abendmahlsstreits im 16. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt, 1962), 122–128. The copies of the "Explication" in Basel give the date as August 2, 1537, but by this time, the Wittenberg Concord was virtually a dead letter in Switzerland. The year should be 1536 (BDS VI/1, 217–218). The date of 1537 first appears in a copy of the Concord and "Explication" made by the Basel pastor Jacob Truckenbrot in January 1558, Kirchen Akten A9, 404r–410v, Basel Staatsarchiv (hereinafter BSA).

10 In April 1530, the Bern Council sent a stipend to Strasbourg for Sulzer and asked Bucer and Capito "to report to us if he is doing well and if there is any hope he will achieve something" (Rudolf Steck and Gustav Tobler [eds.], *Aktensammlung zur Geschichte der Berner Reformation* [Bern, 1923], 1253). Letter from Bucer dated Oct 12, 1533, in Adolf Flury, "Die bernische Schulordnung von 1548," *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für deutsche Erziehungs- und Schulgeschichte*, XI (1901), 176–178. In 1536, Bucer wrote to the Bern Council that Sulzer would soon be experienced enough to assume leadership of Bern's church (J. V. Pollet, *Martin Bucer: Etudes sur la Correspondance avec de nombreux textes inédites* [Paris, 1962] II, 419, n. 6).

11 Sulzer's debt to Bucer is clear from his confession on the Lord's Supper, signed in Bern in 1541 (MsKiAr 22a, 280r–282r, Universitätsbibliothek Basel [hereinafter BUB]).

leaders of the Reformed churches elsewhere in Switzerland, however, regarded him with deep hostility because of his Bucerian sympathies. In 1563, the clergy and Council of Zurich, in league with Bern and Schaffhausen, tried unsuccessfully to pressure the Basel Council to remove Sulzer from office because he had signed the Strasbourg Consensus. Three years later, Sulzer was able not only to prevent Basel's adoption of the Second Helvetic Confession but also to forestall a proposal that the new confession's preface state that the teachings of the Basel Confession accorded with it. Although Sulzer claimed that the Second Helvetic Confession and the Basel Confession agreed with each other, he avoided any official statement of that agreement. At a time when the possibility of compromise between Lutheran and Reformed churches was becoming a virtual impossibility, Sulzer hoped to prevent any movement away from a Bucerian interpretation of the Basel Confession. His desire to avoid adopting a more clearly Reformed position benefited from the fact that many Baslers felt a patriotic loyalty to their own confession.<sup>12</sup>

THE "PAROXYSMUS BASILIENSIS"     The growing tensions between Lutheran and Reformed churches outside of Basel guaranteed that such a compromise could not last. The conflict reached Basel via its university. In the fall of 1570, several quarrels broke out between stipendiates from German Lutheran territories and those from Swiss Reformed cities, who were all preparing to enter the ministry. Over the course of December, reports reached Zurich that German students in Basel had called Zwingli and his followers arch-heretics on two different occasions. One of the Germans had struck a Basler who had tried to defend Zwingli. The Zurich students reported that the Germans had gone unpunished and had even been publicly recognized as ministers of God, but the Basler who had defended Zwingli was subsequently deprived of his stipend. This was clearly a matter of national pride to them; they were particularly incensed that Sulzer had stated before an assembly of students that "Zwingli had caused more harm than good to Switzerland."<sup>13</sup>

12 Burnett, "Simon Sulzer and the Consequences of the 1563 Strasbourg Consensus in Switzerland," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, LXXXVIII (1992), 154-179; Hans Berner, "Basel und das Zweite Helvetische Bekenntnis," *Zwingliana*, XV (1979), 8-39.

13 Hagenbach describes the Paroxysm as "a conflict insignificant in relation to other movements in the church but remarkable particularly from a psychological aspect." He relies en-



The university's officials feared the political repercussions of these incidents. They repeatedly told the Zurich students that the matter had been settled and that the incidents did not need to be reported to their home church. Encouraged by one of the professors on the arts faculty, the Zurich students ignored these admonitions, providing a detailed account, along with the names and ages of witnesses, to their patrons back home. In Zurich, Rudolf Gualther, Sulzer's most bitter opponent, drafted a memorandum to be presented to the Zurich Council in the name of the city's pastors protesting the events in Basel. Gualther clearly hoped that Zurich would take the opportunity to pressure Basel into removing Sulzer from office.<sup>14</sup>

Gualther's campaign was overtaken by new events in Basel: The quarrel shifted from the university to the city's church. In a sermon delivered on Christmas Day, Erzberger, the twenty-four-year-old assistant pastor of Basel's parish church of St. Peter, turned a discussion of Christ's incarnation into an attack on the Lutheran doctrine of ubiquity. He boldly accused his ecclesiastical superiors and elders of allowing such errors to creep into Basel. The Basel church had "lost its original form" from the days of "the upright and blessed man Oecolampadius who, after God, was the reformer and founder of our church, a form which can also be seen in our Basel Confession as in a mirror—and bend it as you will, it will not offer a hand to your error." Since no one else would take a stand against these errors, the duty fell to him, despite his youth. If the Lutheran doctrines of ubiquity, Christ's essential presence in the bread and the oral manducation of his body in the Lord's Supper were indeed to be established in Basel, "against [the teachings of] our own Confession," then Erzberger would resign his post rather than hypocritically accept them or, even worse, promote them.<sup>15</sup>

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tirely on the account of Heinrich Erzberger, one of the protagonists (*Kritische Geschichte*, 99–127). The account in Gottfried Lindner, *Simon Sulzer und sein Antheil an der Reformation im lande Baden, sowie an den Unionsbestrebungen* (Heidelberg, 1890), 130–139, is based on broader (although uncited) documentation. Neither account recognizes the role played by Bucer's "Explication" in the controversy. The student reports in E II 371b, 1235r–1240v, Zurich Staatsarchiv.

14 Simler Sammlung (hereinafter ss) 123, 84, Zurich Zentralbibliothek. Gualther's deep animosity toward Sulzer was clear already after the 1563 Strasbourg Consensus.

15 Although the Lord's Supper was celebrated each week in one of Basel's four parish churches, the Reformation ordinance of 1529 specified that all rural churches celebrate the

Erzberger's self-conscious references to his youth are the first clue to the generational tensions that would divide the Basel clergy. Forestalling those who might interpret his actions as those of a rash young man, he asserted that he might be young, but the doctrine that he defended had been a part of the Basel church since before the time of his hearers. Nor did he shrink from the potentially explosive consequences of his convictions: "I heartily desire to nourish peace, but there are two kinds of peace, the one [that is] the truth with God, and the other apart from the truth against God, and this one we don't want but would rather have everything fall apart or in ruins before we should injure or betray God's honor in the least."<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately for Erzberger, neither the church's leadership nor the Basel Council saw things in the same light. The day after the sermon, Ulrich Koch, the senior pastor of St. Peter, tried in vain to persuade Erzberger to retract his statements. Johann Füglin, a fellow pastor, attacked him publicly in a sermon as well. In response to Erzberger's accusation that Füglin had "fallen away" from the Zwinglian doctrine into Lutheran errors concerning the sacrament, Füglin called Erzberger a beardless young "mushmouth." The next day Füglin repeated the insult and said that "he [Füglin] hadn't fallen away from the truth but had been saved from the devil's error."<sup>17</sup>

In an attempt to restore order and church unity, Basel's Council immediately summoned all thirteen of the city pastors to meet with the Deputies—the three Council members responsible for overseeing the church and university—to affirm their adherence to the Basel Confession. Their individual responses shed a revealing light on the doctrinal affinities of the city pastors,

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sacrament on Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas. Hence, it would have been expected for Erzberger to preach about the Lord's Supper on Christmas. See Emil Dürr and Paul Roth (eds.), *Aktensammlung zur Geschichte der Basler Reformation in den Jahren 1519 bis Anfang 1534* (Basel, 1921–1950) III, 395. His sermon is reprinted in J. R. Linder, "Eine Predigt M. Heinrich Erzbergers, Diacon zu St. Peter in Basel, gehalten am Weihnachtstage 1570," *Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie*, XL (1870), 461–472. The published sermon is excerpted from Erzberger's much longer account of the events that followed the sermon (MS Falk 819, BUB).

16 Linder, "Predigt," 469–471.

17 According to the *Schweizerische Idiotikon: Wörterbuch der schweizerdeutschen Sprache* (Frauenfeld, 1881–1990), IV, 181, Füglin's term, *Bappenmul* (*Pappenmaul*), connotes a child who cannot speak clearly because his mouth is filled with pap. The sermons' contents were described in a letter from a Zurich student to Heinrich Bullinger, head of Zurich's church, in January 1571 (SS 123, 83).

particularly when considered in relation to the informal hierarchical structure and the personnel of Basel's church.

Basel's pastors were divided roughly into three groups. At the top were the senior pastors of the city's four parish churches, followed by the pastors of the three filial churches associated with the cathedral. At the bottom of the hierarchy were the six pastors who served as assistants in the parish churches and as preachers in the Cathedral and the Spital. But there was also a hierarchy of age within the clergy. The city pastors belonged to several birth cohorts. Three were in their sixties and had been in their teens at the outbreak of the Reformation: Sebastian Lepusculus (b. 1501), who was both the Hebrew professor at the university and the Cathedral preacher; Hans Uebelhart (b. 1504), pastor of one of the filial churches; and Sulzer. The middle group of pastors was divided into two cohorts. The older two pastors were both born in the mid-1520s: Koch, who was Sulzer's brother-in-law and Erzberger's immediate superior as senior pastor of St. Peters, and Jacob Meyer, pastor of the second filial church and husband of Agnes Capito, the daughter of Wolfgang Capito and stepdaughter of Bucer. Three more pastors had been born in the first half of the 1530s: Füglin, senior pastor of St. Leonhard; Johann Brandmüller, the senior pastor of St. Theodore; and Lukas Just, the pastor of the third filial church. The remaining five pastors, all of them assistants serving under one of the four senior pastors, were born in the 1540s. Erzberger was not the youngest of these. Ulrich Falckner, the Spital preacher, was the same age, while Samuel Koch—Ulrich Koch's son and, like Erzberger, an assistant pastor at St. Peter's—was a year younger (see Table 1).<sup>18</sup>

Both a distinct generational division and a strong family bloc are thus evident among Basel's pastors. Sulzer, the head of the church, was seventeen years older than Ulrich Koch, the oldest pastor from the middle group. A smaller age gap of eight to ten years separated the two cohorts within this middle group. The youngest cohort of pastors was separated from the younger pastors of the middle group by five to ten years. Both older pastors of the

18 Koch was born in 1525, Meyer in 1526, Füglin and Brandmüller in 1533, and Just in 1535. Information on Basel's pastors is derived from Karl Gauss, *Basilea Reformata: Die Gemeinden der Kirche Basel Stadt und Land und ihre Pfarrer seit der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart* (Basel, 1930).

Table 1 Basel's Pastors by Birth Cohort

BORN	URBAN PASTORS	RURAL PASTORS
Before 1510	3	3
1510–1519	0	1 <sup>a</sup>
1520–1529	2	1 <sup>a</sup>
1530–1539	3	8
1540–1549	5	12
Total	13	25

<sup>a</sup>Birthdate unknown; youngest possible birth cohort estimated by subtracting twenty-five years from date of first position in Basel church.

middle group and one from the youngest cohort were allied with Sulzer through ties of family and education.<sup>19</sup>

Only Sulzer and two others were old enough to remember the first Eucharistic controversy; the youngest had been teenagers or younger when the second Eucharistic controversy erupted. Similarly, whereas the oldest cohort could remember a time when the cities of southern Germany had sided with Zwingli against the Lutheran interpretation of the Lord's Supper, the youngest cohort had reached adulthood as those cities were accepting the Augsburg Confession in order to enjoy the legal protection extended by the Peace of Augsburg, which inevitably led to the confluence of political and confessional identity.

Given these differences in age and life experience, it is not surprising that the oldest and the youngest cohorts reacted to the controversy caused by Erzberger's sermon in different ways. Their replies to the Deputies' questions fell into three categories. Sulzer, both Kochs, and the two younger pastors of the middle cohorts (Just and Brandmüller) chose to avoid any explicit discussion of doctrine; they simply expressed their regret over the turmoil caused by Erzberger's sermon and stated that they held to the city's Confession.

Four other pastors made more ambiguous statements that favored a Bucerian, or even Lutheran, interpretation of the sacrament. Meyer asserted that he "was not ashamed of his preceptors, Bucer and Melancthon." Ulrich Han, a young pastor who was

19 The gap of several years between each group of pastors eliminates one of the problems associated with generational analysis, namely, knowing when to draw lines that place those born in contiguous years into separate generations. See Spitzer, "Historical Problem," 1355–1356.

Füglin's assistant, stated his belief in the Gospel's statement, "take and eat, this is my body," a phrase that recalled Luther's emphasis on the words of institution. In his description of this meeting Erzberger called Han a hypocrite who hoped to be promoted to senior pastor for supporting Sulzer. Erzberger was more forgiving of Falckner, "a good and simple man," who said that he agreed with Han. According to Erzberger, the most clearly Lutheran position was taken by Füglin, who "made his confession according to a ubiquitarian fashion" but also expressed his loyalty to the Basel Confession.

The remaining four pastors interpreted the Confession's article on the Lord's Supper in a Zwinglian sense. The Zwinglian bloc was comprised of both the oldest and the youngest pastors without family ties to Sulzer. Both Lepusculus and Uebelhart, who were contemporaries of Oecolampadius and strong supporters of Zwingli in the 1530s, repeated the standard Zwinglian position that the sacrament was "food for the believing mind." Jonas Grasser, a young pastor who was Brandmüller's assistant, also "held Christ's body and blood to be the spiritual food and drink of souls." Erzberger explicitly accepted the Basel Confession as interpreted in accordance with Oecolampadius' teaching, proclaiming his sorrow "that in the church of Basel we should debate whether or not we accept the teaching of Oecolampadius, our first Reformer." Responding directly to Füglin's earlier insult, he stated that despite his youth, God's grace had allowed him to recognize that the doctrine of ubiquity was nonsense.<sup>20</sup>

The three different interpretations of the Basel Confession show how problematical the older statement of faith had become as a doctrinal guide by the 1570s. The Confession's silence on those aspects of the Eucharistic controversy that had become prominent since the 1550s—particularly the doctrine of ubiquity—meant that if the pastors so chose, they could maintain at least a façade of agreement. Erzberger's adamant insistence on a Reformed interpretation of the article upset this precarious balance, and, accordingly, both civic and ecclesiastical authorities put pressure on him to make peace with his fellow pastors.

At year's end, Erzberger was summoned to appear before the four presiding officers of the Council. Burgermeister Bonaventure

20 "Ein erdichtet ding," MS Falk 819, 15–16, BUB.

von Brunn presented him with a list of ten inflammatory statements drawn from the Christmas sermon and criticized him harshly for causing such offense out of “fleshly motives.” Erzberger responded by comparing himself to the young St. John, who was called before the Jewish Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, and he cited St. Paul’s words to Timothy that no one should despise his youth. He had seen Sulzer’s party grow so strong that those students in the College who opposed his teachings “were hated and robbed of their stipends.” As a minister of Christ, he felt obligated to speak out publicly. In his own defense, Erzberger asserted that the doctrine taught by Oecolampadius, endorsed at the Bern Disputation of 1528, and contained not only in the Basel Confession but also in the Reformation Ordinance of 1529, the city’s catechism, and its liturgical agenda could not be reconciled with the Lutheran position on the Lord’s Supper. He then listed eight specific points on which the Basel Confession and Oecolampadius’ writings disagreed with the Lutherans.<sup>21</sup>

By pitting Oecolampadius against Luther, Erzberger went back to the earliest years of the Eucharistic controversy, when the lines between the two sides had been sharply drawn. His eight articles presented the two alternatives in just such stark contrast. Readers without theological training—like the Councilmen—might not have grasped the technical differences between terms like *natural*, *true*, *substantial*, or *essential* as applied to Christ’s body, but they would certainly have understood that Luther did not agree with Oecolampadius, and, hence, with the Basel Confession. Nevertheless, Erzberger was unable to convert the City Fathers to his interpretation of the Basel Confession.

A few days later, he was summoned before the full Council, this time with Sulzer, Koch, and Füglin. Erzberger repeated his position, and after his eight articles on the Lord’s Supper were read aloud, each of the three senior pastors addressed the Council. Sulzer began by describing the course of the Eucharistic controversy after Oecolampadius’ death, citing Luther’s approval of the Basel Confession, Myconius’ leadership of the Basel church, and

21 MS Falk 819, 18, BUB. Erzberger was alluding to the apostles’ famous statement, when commanded not to preach, that “we must obey God rather than man,” Acts 5:27–29, and to 1 Tim. 4:12. He inserted the eight articles within his description of his appearance before the officials, dating them December 30, 1570. It is unclear whether he drew up the articles beforehand or wrote them down and submitted them afterward (MS Falk 819, 25–26, BUB).

especially Bucer's efforts to bring about the Wittenberg Concord of 1536. Sulzer's understanding of the Lord's Supper, even according to Erzberger's hostile account, was more nuanced than the simple black-and-white presentation that Erzberger had used. Echoing the terminology of both the Basel Confession and the Wittenberg Concord, Sulzer denied that Christ's body was enclosed in the bread, and he made a distinction between the unworthy and the impious. He closed his speech with the dramatic statement that if he could not teach that "with the bread and wine the true body and true blood of Christ are offered and received in the Lord's Supper, then he would take his aged mother by the hand and go wherever God led him."<sup>22</sup>

Koch reminded the Council that it had stood behind him and Sulzer during the conflict over the signing of the Strasbourg Consensus. He attributed Erzberger's ideas to his study of "Genevan theology"—thus implying that Erzberger's doctrinal loyalty was not to the church of Oecolampadius but rather to that of Jean Calvin and Theodore Beza, his successor. Füglin stated that it was a trick of the devil to attack the Lord's Supper. He accepted the Basel Confession but had come to recognize the error of his earlier Zwinglian views. Like St. Augustine, however, he was not ashamed to confess that he had been wrong. Erzberger was still young, and the Lord might yet enlighten him in the same way that He had enlightened Füglin.

In his response, Erzberger dismissed Sulzer's account of the first Eucharistic controversy: He was too young to know much about it. In any case, Bucer "had worked very hard on this tedious controversy; he received very little thanks and didn't accomplish much." Erzberger stood by his assertion that the Basel Confession could not be reconciled with the Lutheran interpretation of the Lord's Supper. Koch's reference to "Genevan theology" was merely a smokescreen: Erzberger had formed his own convictions "through God's grace." Furthermore, Erzberger regarded Füglin's "Lutheran enlightenment" as little more than opportunistic hypocrisy. He told the Council that it must either allow two different doctrines in one church or endorse only one of them. In either case, he would remain loyal to Oecolampadius' doctrine. If the

22 The Basel Confession approved by Luther was not the confession debated herein, but the Second Basel (First Helvetic) Confession, adopted by the Swiss cities in March 1536 in preparation for negotiations with Luther. Bizer, *Studien*, 112–113. Sulzer's dramatic conclusion used the wording of the Wittenberg Concord (MS Falk 819, 34–35, BUB).

Council chose the former course, thus endorsing Lutheran doctrine, he would resign and cause no further unrest.<sup>23</sup>

The Council turned the matter over to the XIII, the most powerful committee within the city government. Erzberger was ordered not to preach until the matter had been settled, but the Council refused to accept his resignation, evidently out of fear that his removal from office might generate public sympathy for his cause. The Council had good reason to worry about public opinion. That very day, an anonymous letter had been posted in the Fishmarket, containing a Latin poem written in Greek letters: “O Füglin, Füglin, you apostate. After you returned from Strasbourg, infected with Marbach’s heresy, you gave great offense to your hearers, who had had such great hope in you.” Most Baslers would not have been able to read this part of the poem, but its final line, “Believe, you fool!” was in German, and the public appearance of the letter undoubtedly provided fuel for controversy among the citizenry.<sup>24</sup>

For the next three weeks, the XIII agonized about how best to resolve the conflict. The Deputies again met with the four senior pastors, this time without Erzberger, to ask whether they would abide by the Basel Confession. All of them answered affirmatively, but the loose coalition between the “middle generation” of pastors and Sulzer’s party was beginning to unravel. Brandmüller, who as senior pastor of St. Theodor was equal in rank to Sulzer’s supporters Koch and Füglin, attempted to defend Erzberger by stating that it was a misuse of the Basel Confession to “discover the Lutheran opinion” in it. For this effort, he was summoned to appear before the Deputies and told to meet with the other senior pastors and reach an agreement with them.<sup>25</sup>

23 MS Falk 819, 35–39, BUB.

24 According to Erzberger, the Council told him that it “did not intend to release him, did not want to release him, and [he] should not understand [their action] as such, nor boast about it, but it is [his] lords’ decision that [he] should not enter the pulpit until the matter has been settled” (MS Falk 819, 39, BUB). The letter’s educated use of both Latin and Greek suggested that a university student authored it, but the university’s regents were unable to identify him (MS Falk 819, 40–41, BUB). Füglin’s visit to Johann Marbach, the head of Strasbourg’s church, in September 1569, may have been the final step in his “conversion” to the Lutheran doctrine of the Eucharist (Sulzer to Marbach, September 6, 1569, Johann Fecht [ed.], *Historiae Ecclesiasticae . . . Supplementum . . . epistolae ad Joannem, Erasmus et Philippum Marbachios . . .* [Frankfurt, 1684], 294–295).

25 According to Erzberger, “no day went by when they did not discuss and diligently air [the matter], considering both pros and cons” (MS Falk 819, 45, BUB). Minutes of Brandmüller’s interrogation, Kirchenakten A9, 21r–v, BSA.



Reports of the dispute spread among the rural pastors as well. Two of them asked Erzberger to present his side of the controversy in writing, in case the Council should call them to give their opinions. Erzberger was only too happy to respond, this time stressing the importance of doctrinal unity among the Swiss, the incompatibility of the Basel Confession with Lutheran doctrine, and summarizing his own beliefs in seven articles.<sup>26</sup>

The situation became even more complicated when an official delegation arrived from Zurich with a sharp protest that Basel had allowed students at the university to insult not only Zwingli but also Oecolampadius. The delegation asked the Council either to endorse the Second Helvetic Confession directly or to state clearly that this confession agreed with the Basel Confession. The Basel Council temporized, stating that the reports concerning the conflict among the students had been exaggerated and that Zurich should not be overly concerned. The Council acknowledged the basic agreement between the two confessions, but it refused to state this agreement in any official way, either by signing the Second Helvetic Confession or by endorsing it in a preface to the Basel Confession.<sup>27</sup>

The divisions within the clergy, the growing threat of discord among both the university students and the city's inhabitants, the potential involvement of the rural clergy, and the external pressure from Zurich put the Basel XIII in a difficult situation. The timely discovery of Bucer's "Explication of the Wittenberg Articles" in their archives seemed to provide the perfect solution to their problem. Not only did it interpret the Concord in a way acceptable to the Swiss, but it had already been officially accepted by the Basel clergy. As such, it could be given an authoritative position alongside the Basel Confession. Sulzer, Koch, and Füglin were overjoyed at the document; Brandmüller expressed his reservations. Both parties submitted their written opinions of the "Explication" to the Council.<sup>28</sup>

26 MS Falk 819, 40–43, BUB.

27 Zurich's official protest, January 10, 1571, Kirchenakten A9, 467r–471r, BSA; Basel's official response, February 7, 1571, 477r–478r, *ibid.* Erzberger dated the appearance of the Zurich delegation before the Basel Council as January 15 (MS Falk 819, 44, BUB).

28 Sulzer brought the Wittenberg Concord to the attention of the Council. While defending his understanding of the sacrament, he referred to "Bucer's Concord, which is kept in the chancery," suggesting that the Council should look for it (MS Falk 819, 34, BUB). Compare Myconius' statement to Bullinger, after Grynaeus' and Carlstadt's return from Strasbourg,

The memorandum written by Sulzer and his allies took refuge in generalization, avoiding any significant theological discussion. The “Explication” made clear that the sacrament contained “not empty signs as reminders of or as thanksgiving for [Christ’s] absent [body] but rather of his truly present body . . . given with the bread and wine to his believing companions at table.” The “Explication” also rejected the local enclosure of Christ’s body in the bread, transubstantiation, “and all other papistic horrors and idolatry.” Its distinction between the unworthy and the impious accorded with both the words of St. Paul and the teachings of Oecolampadius. Finally, it avoided the errors, on the one hand, of separating Christ’s true body and blood from their sacramental signs “as far as the heavens are from the earth” (a Reformed slogan used by Erzberger against his opponents) and, on the other hand, of understanding the sacrament in a “crude and natural measure and manner.” The memorandum also blamed the failure of Bucer’s earlier efforts at concord on “our own ingratitude and sin,” although it implied criticism of those who had not accepted it (that is, the other Swiss churches). Nevertheless, the Concord had brought together those German churches that had once been divided, allowing them to live in “good peace, love and unity” with the Basel church. Concerning the Swiss churches that had not accepted the Concord, the memorandum stated that the Basel church continued to “honor, love, and bear with them with godly patience . . . since we do not disagree on other essentials of the faith.” This was hardly a ringing endorsement of Swiss unity.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast, Brandmüller’s memorandum focused almost exclusively on the theological disagreements. He asserted that his loyalty to the Basel Confession precluded acceptance of Lutheran doctrine. The Basel Confession did not say that the true, real, essential, and natural body of Christ was in the sacrament, but that it was a sacrament of his body. It did not say that the true body of Christ was food for the body eaten with the mouth, but that it was eaten by the believing mind only. It did not bind the body of Christ to the bread, but stated the opposite—that the natural, true, and essential body of Christ was not enclosed in the bread.

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concerning the Swiss view of the “Explication,” July 31, 1536: “Ut ego iudico, sententiam nostram exprimit declaratio, sed verbis praestigiosis. . . . Miror an Lutherus ita sentiat; si sentiat, accessit ad nos, non nos ad ipsum” (cited in Bizer, *Studien*, 151 n. 2).

29 Sulzer’s memorandum, February 2, 1571, Kirchenakten A9, 472r–476v, BSA.

Brandmüller maintained that the “Explication” pertained not to the Basel Confession but to the Augsburg Confession. Although he opposed nothing in the “Explication,” he saw no need to endorse an “alien” confession, particularly since the Basel Confession was “much clearer and understandable and presented in a way that even a child can understand.”<sup>30</sup>

Despite Brandmüller’s protests, the XIII summoned the eight remaining clergymen (Erzberger was not invited) and asked their opinion of the “Explication.” All of them agreed to accept it as being in agreement with the Basel Confession. Uebelhart, one of the more outspoken Zwinglians, preferred to remain by the Basel Confession without further interpretation, but since the “Explication” specified five times that the body and blood of Christ were received through faith and that it was food for the believing mind, he assented to it.<sup>31</sup>

The Council now resolved that all discussions of the Lord’s Supper were to be in accordance with the Basel Confession and “the declaration accepted on August 2, 1537 . . . as according with and similar to our Confession.” Those who refused to abide by the resolution would lose their posts. The eleven pastors who had accepted the “Explication” were required to sign a document in testimony of that acceptance. Brandmüller agreed to sign as well, after he was assured by one of the Deputies that he did not need to use the terminology of the “Explication,” as long as he preached in accordance with the Basel Confession.<sup>32</sup>

Two weeks later, the rural pastors were assembled to hear the Council’s representatives read the mandate requiring signature of the new concord. In Erzberger’s picturesque language, they were told, “birds eat, or they die.” The rural pastors responded by asking for some time to consider the matter. Once again, generational differences influenced the pastors’ reactions to the “Explication.” The age difference among the rural pastors was even more striking

30 Kirchenakten A9, 22r–23r, BSA. Brandmüller wrote that he gave his memorandum to the Council on February 7 (ss 123, 94, February 18, 1571).

31 Report of this meeting, Kirchenakten A9, 479r–v, BSA. According to Brandmüller, Uebelhart naively believed that acceptance of the “Explication” would force the Lutheran pastors to preach more in accord with the Basel Confession, and “would not teach so crassly about the Lord’s Supper as they had before” (ss 123, 94).

32 The Council’s mandate, Kirchenakten A9, 490r–493v, BSA, with signatures at the end; MsKiAr 23a, 365r–v, BUB, dates the mandate as February 19, 1571. Erzberger gives the date of signing as February 21 (MS Falk 819, 72, BUB). Brandmüller’s assent, MS Falk 819, 75, BUB.

than it was in the city church. Three of the twenty-five rural pastors were born c. 1500; one of them, Leonhard Strübin, was the archdean of the rural chapter and thus the leader of the rural clergy. Two of the pastors with unknown birth dates may have been born as late as 1515 and 1522, but they had both been ministers elsewhere before coming to Basel and so were probably older. Of the remaining twenty pastors, eight were born between 1530 and 1535, and the remaining twelve were born between 1539 and 1549. There were, in essence, only two generations—a small group born before the outbreak of the Reformation and a much larger group born after 1530.<sup>33</sup>

The tremendous gap in age between the numerous pastors born after 1530 and the older pastors would have inclined the younger men to see themselves as a bloc. As Erzberger described the events, the pastors agreed “unanimously” not to accept the new concord and to remain true to the old confession. Their plan was foiled, however, when Strübin betrayed the secret discussions of his fellow pastors to the Deputies, who demanded that each of them sign the “Explication.” Four pastors initially refused, but they eventually yielded to the inevitable.<sup>34</sup>

Thus did the Paroxysm come to an end. Because Erzberger refused to accept the “Explication,” his position at St. Peter’s was officially given to another pastor who did sign it. Erzberger was nominated for a vacant professorship on the university’s arts faculty, but he did not receive the post. Erzberger blamed his rejection on the scheming of his opponents. He went to Paris, where he narrowly escaped death during the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of Protestants by Catholics the following year. After returning to Basel, he became a pastor in nearby Mulhouse, where he died in 1576.

**CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES** Even though Erzberger’s challenge to Sulzer’s leadership was unsuccessful, it pointed to significant tensions within the Basel church. The root cause of the conflict was theological—a reflection of the growing divide be-

33 Almost all of these pastors had matriculated at the University of Basel. For their birthdates, see Hans Georg Wackemagel (ed.), *Die Matrikel der Universität Basel* (Basel, 1956), II. In the absence of a student’s birth date, his minimum age has been estimated by assuming him to be at least twenty-five years old upon taking office.

34 MS Falk 819, 80–81, BUB.

tween the Protestant confessions in the later sixteenth century—but it was complicated by other factors, including personal animosities and external political pressures. Even more fundamentally, it grew out of the generational structure of the Basel church. It was a classic example of how the members of two different generations interpreted events according to their differing life experiences.

The Paroxysm has been regarded as a victory of the Lutheran faction in Basel, but the final settlement could hardly be called Lutheran. It was not just the Wittenberg Concord that was adopted in Basel in 1571, but also Bucer’s “Explication” of the Concord—in other words, a reading of the Concord intended to make it more acceptable to the Swiss. Bucer’s “Explication” was the confessional mirror image of the Lutheran interpretation later given to the Wittenberg Concord by the authors of the Formula of Concord. Erzberger pointed to the Swiss orientation when he stated that the Zwinglian pastors who signed the “Explication” did so with a clearer conscience than Sulzer and his allies. Moreover, the majority of Basel’s clergy accepted the “Explication” only reluctantly, obviously preferring to interpret their Confession according to the writings of Oecolampadius.<sup>35</sup>

Oecolampadius’ authority may have served as a rallying point for Erzberger and his supporters, but it also obscured the fact that the issues throughout the controversy were not the same as those faced by Basel’s first Reformer. The formulation of ubiquity that particularly incensed Erzberger was a component of the Lutheran Christology developed in the wake of the second Eucharistic controversy, a generation after Oecolampadius’ death. Ironically, neither side seems to have recognized that they were not fighting the same battle. Sulzer had witnessed the first Eucharistic debate himself. He clearly hoped that Bucer’s formula, which had dampened the strife during the 1530s, could perhaps do the same in the 1570s. Erzberger, who had experienced only the increasingly bitter polemics between Lutherans and Reformed after mid-century, was familiar with the more precisely defined doctrines of both sides. Accordingly, he was speaking for his generation of theology students when he dismissed Bucer’s concord efforts as ancient history.<sup>36</sup>

35 James M. Kittelson, with Ken Schurb, “The Curious Histories of the Wittenberg Concord,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, L (1986), 119–137; MS Falk 819, 73, BUB.

36 On the relationship between ubiquity and Christology, see Theodor Mahlmann, *Das*

Whatever the theological disagreements may have been, they had little weight with Basel's Council. Both Burgermeister Bonaventure von Brunn and Deputy Heinrich Petri seem to have been favorably inclined toward Erzberger as an individual, but neither showed much desire to get involved in the doctrinal dispute. Rather than agreeing with Erzberger's view that the two positions were absolutely opposed to each other, the Council favored Sulzer's stress on peaceful co-existence. As a consequence, they preferred to leave the city's confession of faith as broad as possible. Bucer's "Explication" appealed to them precisely because it could be signed by all of Basel's pastors. Above all, the Council was concerned with domestic tranquillity. It sharply criticized the pastors who had created dissension, "especially since they daily teach us in their sermons that we should lay aside all envy and hatred from among ourselves and should love one another."<sup>37</sup>

The Council's stance was all the more important in view of the personal rivalries, heightened by ties of kinship, that contributed substantially to the virulence. Sulzer, his brother-in-law Ulrich Koch, and Ulrich's son Samuel formed one family group. Allied to them by theological inclination and, perhaps, by personal ambitions were Meyer, Füglin, and Han. Erzberger's evident hostility toward Sulzer and his allies had deep roots; it may even have dated from his childhood. His father had been pastor of the filial church of St. Alban, near the edge of the city, for many years until his transfer in 1562 to the filial church of St. Martin, close to the cathedral. His place at St. Alban was taken by a nephew of Sulzer's. Although the shift to St. Martin was ostensibly a promotion, it also placed the elder Erzberger more directly under the supervision of the cathedral's pastor. Heinrich clearly felt that his father had not wanted to move.<sup>38</sup>

The younger Erzberger also seems to have felt personally betrayed by Füglin's conversion to Lutheranism. Füglin, who was fourteen years older than Heinrich and belonged to the intermediate cohort between the two Erzbergers, had been one of Hein-

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*Neue Dogma der lutherischen Christologie: Probleme und Geschichte seiner Begründung* (Gütersloh, 1969).

<sup>37</sup> MS Falk 819, 69–72, 76–80, BUB; Kirchenakten A9, 490r, BSA.

<sup>38</sup> The issue of the elder Erzberger's promotion came up during Heinrich's initial meeting with Ulrich Koch, MS Falk 819, 11, BUB. Erzberger's father died in 1566.

rich's professors at the university. In his defense before the Council's leaders, Erzberger recounted how the two of them had once been united in their opposition to Sulzer. Nevertheless, Sulzer had been able to change Füglin's mind, and with the zeal typical of a convert, Füglin seems to have become the most clearly Lutheran of Basel's pastors. The vituperation exchanged from the pulpit testifies to the bitterness that existed between the two former allies.<sup>39</sup>

Adding more fuel to the fire were the political ramifications of the controversy and the potential of an open breach with Zurich—the original fear of university officials and church leaders when quarrels among the university students escalated in 1570. When the threatened intervention occurred, however, the Basel Council refused to be intimidated, reiterating its earlier refusal to endorse the Second Helvetic Confession either directly or indirectly. Sulzer would not have referred so positively to Basel's ties with German churches and downplayed its alliance with the Swiss churches in writing if he were not aware of the Council's sympathies. Sulzer's sense of solidarity with the churches of his south German neighbors reflects the older system of cultural, economic, and political ties that had bound Basel to the empire at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The Zwinglian party was hardly ignorant of the political implications of confessional identity. Erzberger and the Zurich delegation—as well as the university students who had started the controversy—all identified “Swiss” with “Zwinglian.” So far as they were concerned, Basel, as a member of the Swiss Confederation, owed its doctrinal allegiance to the other Swiss churches. The younger generation of pastors were all born in Basel, at a time when Basel was closely identified with Zwingli and Zurich and well after the city's entrance into the Swiss Confederation in 1501. These young men felt no compelling reason to maintain ties with south Germany, especially since this region had become more Lutheran in the wake of the Peace of Augsburg. Brandmüller expressed his fear of the political consequences when he wrote to Gualther that soon Basel would have preachers “who no longer recognized as brothers our most dear evangelical confederates and neighbors in Switzerland.” As he put it, “I am not Swiss (although

39 MS Falk 819, 19, 29, BUB.

I have lived here for twenty years) but was born in Swabia; nevertheless I have more Swiss blood in my little finger than [Sulzer] has in his whole body."<sup>40</sup>

Brandmüller's gradual emergence as the senior spokesman for the Zwinglian party highlights the role of generational difference in the course of the Paroxysm. Basel's clerical corps in 1571 had an extremely small number of pastors belonging to the generation between Sulzer, born a decade before the beginning of the Reformation, and a gradually increasing number of clergy born after 1530. Compared to both earlier and later cohorts, the number of men born between 1510 and 1529 who held posts in the Basel church was small, and most of them had either died or left the ministry by 1570.<sup>41</sup>

The absence of pastors belonging to the birth cohorts from the 1510s and 1520s is directly traceable to the crisis in university education that accompanied the spread of the Reformation in the 1520s. Matriculation at German universities fell dramatically over the course of that decade. At Basel University, matriculations fell from sixty in 1521 to one in 1528, leading to the University's temporary closure in 1529. One unintended consequence of this drastic decline was a shortage of pastoral candidates born in the 1510s—and therefore of university age in the 1520s and early 1530s—who could meet the high educational standards set by the Reformers for the new Protestant clergy.<sup>42</sup>

The pool of potential pastors grew only slowly, despite efforts by Protestant magistrates everywhere to provide for the education of future pastors. Although Basel's Council established a stipendi-

40 ss 123, 94. Brandmüller was responding to a letter from Gualther of February 16, 1571, in which the Zurich pastor had pointed out the dangers of Basel's distancing itself from its Swiss allies by not signing the Second Helvetic Confession (ss 123, 93).

41 Eleven pastors were probably born in the 1510s, and another seventeen were born in the 1520s. By contrast, thirty-two clergy were born before 1500, thirty-eight between 1500 and 1509, thirty in the 1530s, and thirty-five in the 1540s. Moreover, the average career length for the cohorts from the 1510s and 1520s was much shorter than that for those of the surrounding cohorts: 22.8 years for those born before 1500, 18.1 years for those born between 1510 and 1509, 9.7 years for those born in the 1510s, 13.8 years for those born in the 1520s, 16.5 years for those born in the 1530s, and 20.5 years for those born in the 1540s.

42 Arno Seifert, "Das höhere Schulwesen: Universitäten und Gymnasien," in Notker Hammerstein (ed.), *Handbuch der deutschen Bildungsgeschichte I: 15. bis 17. Jahrhundert: Von der Renaissance und der Reformation bis zum Ende der Glaubenskämpfe* (Munich, 1996), 256–258; Ernst Staehelin, "Die Entstehung der evangelisch-theologischen Fakultät in Basel," in Otto Scheel (ed.), *Festschrift für Hans von Schubert zu seinem 70. Geburtstag* (Leipzig, 1929), 137–154.



ary system in 1532 to support young men preparing for the ministry, the system did not function well during the first fifteen years of its existence. Few of the stipendiates supported by the Council during the 1530s and 1540s—those who would have been born in the 1520s and early 1530s—actually entered the service of the city's church. The stipendiary system was reorganized in 1547, however, and by the early 1560s, it was producing a steady supply of young university-educated Baslers for the ministry. These were the pastors who had been born in the 1540s—Erzberger's contemporaries.

The shortage of pastors born during the two decades immediately preceding and following the Reformation meant that there were no intermediate cohorts to soften the differences between the oldest and the youngest generations of the clergy. Sulzer and his contemporaries were closer to the pastors in office at the time of the Reformation with regard to geographical origin, training, and experience than to the younger generation, who were all native Baslers, had lived and studied together at the same college within Basel's university, and had reached maturity under the watchful eye of Basel's academic and ecclesiastical establishment. Hence, the doctrinal conflict of late 1570 was exacerbated by the generation gap between the two sides.

Thanks to the lack of city pastors born in the 1520s and 1530s, the older two pastors from these cohorts, Koch and Meyer, understandably gravitated toward the eldest generation. The choices of the younger pastors in this middle group are more interesting. Both Brandmüller and Füglin originally shared the Reformed doctrinal convictions of their younger colleagues in the city and of those pastors born after 1530 who served the rural parishes. As one of the oldest, and the most highly ranked, among this younger set of pastors, Brandmüller naturally emerged as their leader. Füglin's affiliation with the older generation is more surprising, but it demonstrates that at the level of the individual, generational identification could be of less importance than theological conviction or professional opportunism.<sup>43</sup>

The Basel Paroxysm raises questions about the importance of generational change for the late Reformation. Schilling character-

43 Just, the third pastor, was junior enough in standing that he could survive by keeping a low profile. In later years, he was a staunch supporter of Reformed Orthodoxy in Basel.

ized the 1570s as a decade of sharp polarization between confessions. The new militancy of the 1570s may have been due, in part, to the ramifications of increased persecution of Reformed Protestants in western Europe, but it could also have been stimulated by the increasing number of clergy, both Reformed and Lutheran, who were the products of the changes in pastoral education and training envisioned by the Reformers and implemented by their successors. Although Basel may have been unusual in the severity of the generation gap that separated the leaders of its church from the rank and file of its pastors, it surely was not alone in experiencing a gap, given the general breakdown in education during the 1520s and the slow establishment of stable institutional structures to support and train new clergy. Presumably, the increase in the number of university-trained clergy and the rapid homogenization of their social background and educational experiences that first became evident in Basel at the end of the 1560s occurred at about the same time in other areas as well, with minor variations due to local circumstances.<sup>44</sup>

The extremely small number of pastors born in the 1510s and 1520s also had an effect on the pace of confessionalization at the local level. Until well into the 1560s, Basel's rural and urban parishes were staffed by men who, for the most part, were contemporaries of the first reformers. As the men of this generation died, they were replaced by pastors who were young enough to be their children. There was no gradual succession of cohorts but rather an almost complete generational break, and the transition between the generations occurred within a fairly short period. Given their extensive preparation for the pastorate, it might be expected that the new generation of pastors were more effective proponents of Protestant doctrine and discipline among their parishioners, and, indeed, Basel's visitation records show an improvement both in level of religious knowledge and performance of certain religious duties among the laity by the end of the sixteenth century. Much of this improvement is due to the dedication of the cohort of pas-

44 Heinz Schilling, "Die Konfessionalisierung im Reich: Religiöser und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Deutschland zwischen 1555 und 1620," *Historische Zeitschrift*, CCXLVI (1988), 1–45. Concerning the changes in education and training, see Burnett, "Preparing the Pastors: Theological Education and Pastoral Training in Basel," in Lee Palmer Wandel (ed.), *Festschrift for Robert M. Kingdon* (Kirksville, forthcoming). For a Lutheran parallel, see Charlotte Methuen, "Securing the Reformation through Education: The Duke's Scholarship System of Sixteenth-Century Württemberg," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, XXV (1994), 841–851.

tors appointed to parishes during the later 1560s and early 1570s. Again, the case of Basel was probably not unique, and it serves as a reminder that ecclesiastical records need to be interpreted in conjunction with an examination of the clergy who produced them. Rather than looking at confessionalization as a slow but steady phenomenon, it may be more accurate to view it as proceeding in fits and starts, in tandem with the aging and replacement of successive generations of Protestant pastors.<sup>45</sup>

The Basel Paroxysm made visible the deep generational divisions among the city's clergy. The older generation may have been able to impose an ambiguously worded formula on their younger colleagues in 1571, but the inevitability of aging made the concord untenable in the long run. Although the next several pastors to enter the Basel ministry accepted the "Explication," the requirement to sign it was rescinded in 1578. After the deaths of Sulzer and Koch in 1585, the leadership of the Basel church passed to Johann Jakob Grynaeus. Born in 1540, Grynaeus would oversee the establishment of Reformed doctrine in Basel. By the end of the century, there was no one left in the Basel church who remembered Bucer's efforts at concord, or who regarded them as relevant. Sulzer's hope for concord based on a broad interpretation of the Eucharist was an old man's dream that evaporated as a new generation assumed power.

45 Burnett, "Basel's Rural Pastors as Mediators of Confessional and Social Discipline," *Central European History*, XXXIII (2000), 67–86.