

THE ENTRY OF BASLE INTO THE SWISS CONFEDERATION, 1501¹

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BASLE in 1500 was at one and the same time a bishopric, an imperial city and ruler of a small, but significant, territory. Geography was bound to decide much of its policy, for its existence and prosperity depended upon the Rhine which it controlled at a critical point. The river could be crossed by the ancient bridge which linked the city with Klein Basle. German speaking, it was the southern outpost of the Holy Roman Empire and from the Emperors the city had received notable privileges.² Its immediate neighbour was the often hostile state of Solothurn,³

¹ A lecture delivered in the Library series of public lectures.

² Most of the essential documents are printed in R. Thommen, *Urkundenbuch der Stadt Basel*, Band ix (Basle, 1905), and in *Amtliche Sammlung der älteren eidgenössischen Abschiede*, Band ii, Abteilung 2, hsgbn. A. P. von Segesser (Lucerne, 1869). R. Wackernagel, *Geschichte der Stadt Basel*, 3 vols. (Basle, 1907-24), is based upon full knowledge of the city archives but is marred in places by excessive admiration and affection for everything German. A good summary account is A. Heusler, *Geschichte der Stadt Basel* (Basle, 1935). Andreas Heusler, *Verfassungsgeschichte der Stadt Basel* (Basle, 1860) remains an indispensable guide to the administration. There is disappointingly little about 1501 in *Basler Chroniken*, 8 Bde., Leipzig, 1872 ff., a fact in itself significant. W. Oechsli, "Orte und Zugewandte" (*Jahrbuch für schweizerische Geschichte*, Bd. xiii (1888)), is still authoritative. E. Bonjour and A. Bruckner, *Basel und die Eidgenossen* (Basle, 1951), deal with wider issues. The general outline of events is set out in J. Dierauer, *Geschichte der schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft*, Bd. ii (Gotha, 1913), and E. Gagliardi, *Geschichte der Schweiz*, Bd. i (Zürich, 1939).

³ The word *Ort* is usually, but rather ineffectively, rendered as "canton". "State" gives a truer notion of the high degree of independence of the constituents of the old Confederation. Solothurn occupied a subordinate position in the Confederation. It had been admitted as an ally (*zugewander Ort*) on special terms in 1353; its connection with Berne secured its acceptance as a member in 1481 and it gained considerably in repute by its participation in the Swabian war, 1499. (J. I. Amiet, *Solothurn im Bunde der Eidgenossen* (Solothurn, 1881); Bruno Amiet, *Die Solothurnische Territorialpolitik von 1344 bis 1532* (Solothurn, 1929); *Jahrbuch f. solothurn. Geschichte*, Bd. 1 and 2, I know only from the summary in Bruno Amiet, *Solothurnische Geschichte*, i (Solothurn, 1952), 378-88).

itself in close alliance with Berne and used by Berne in its forward-looking expansionist policy.

To the west was the Free County of Burgundy, part of the inheritance of the Emperor Maximilian, coveted by the French monarchy, and recently occupied by Swiss, chiefly Bernese, forces. To the east was the Aargau, since 1415 the first of the Swiss "common lordships", where a complex of rights and jurisdictions, noble, ecclesiastical and civil, overlapped, and to which the Habsburgs had not explicitly relinquished their claims. It was this occupation of the Aargebiet which had first brought Basle into direct contact with the confederation. Four towns, known as the Forest Cities (Waldstädte), Rheinfelden,¹ Säkingen, Laufenburg, and Waldshut, were of interest to all parties, and although most direct Habsburg rights there had been parted with for cash, they had not been completely given up.

Basle's closest relations were with Alsace and the Black Forest, including the Sundgau and the Breisgau, where flourishing walled towns such as Mülhausen, Breisach, Ensisheim, Colmar, Neuenburg, and Schlettstadt watched anxiously over the trade routes. This area was, in a sense, the Habsburg homeland, *die vorderösterreichischen Stammlände*, but authority was shared between the cities, the Austrian-appointed *Landvogt*, monasteries, churches and minor land-owners, including many nobles who lived by loot and defied ejection from their hill-top castles. It was here that Basle was most vulnerable, since her trade was almost entirely with the north, so that peace and security in those parts were her most urgent need.

In Alsace and in Switzerland alike, the situation had been radically affected by the successes, failure, and early death at Nancy in January 1477 of Charles the Bold. Previously, as a result of the Treaty of St. Omer (9 May 1469), the weak and often absentee Sigismund of Austria had been displaced by the duke of Burgundy, who was regarded by the Swiss as a French prince and whose renewed threats to enforce all the Habsburg rights

¹ In Rheinfelden alone Basle had special and direct interests (Wackernagel, i 373, 592, ii, i, 21-22). For the Forest Cities see Karl Schib, *Die vier Waldstädte*, and Anton Senti, *Die Herrschaften Rheinfelden und Laufenburg*, in Friedrich Metz, *Vorderösterreich* (Freiburg i. B., 1959), ii. 348-436.

that he had acquired alienated and alarmed everyone. It was this which had enabled Louis XI to bring about the overthrow of his life-long rival.¹ Having regained his possessions, Sigismund parted with them to Maximilian in 1490 in return for a pension, and thus Habsburg and imperial rights were again joined. Alsace in fact remained in Austrian hands until the *chambres de réunion* secured it for Louis XIV. These events had made the Swiss Confederation for the first time aware of its own strength and potentialities. In an age when efficient standing armies were unknown, the Swiss infantry, disciplined, strong, with admirable cross-bowmen and irresistible pikemen, had destroyed the forces of a great power, had acquired fabulous booty and with it a knowledge and appreciation of a higher and more civilized standard of living than that to which they had been accustomed. If this was to be maintained, continued successful aggression, or else hired service abroad, became necessary.

The Swiss Confederation was, and long remained, unique in the world : without any of the attributes even of a medieval state, with no monarch or personal head, no common coinage, no flag, no Estates, no common seal, no legal code, no judges, no commander-in-chief, nonetheless it could and did protect its members, wage successful war—defensive or offensive—annex and govern territory, and settle most of its own internal disputes by negotiation and arbitration. The representatives of the constituent independent republics² met frequently in cumbrous diets in which Zürich and Berne were the most powerful voices but where decisions were expected to be unanimous. It was little more than a chance association of partners free to separate, and with precedents for doing so, but held together by strong ties of historic sentiment. No one yet appreciated in the fifteenth century that the Confederation was in fact a great power, although the king of France, the Pope and the emperor alike were becoming more and more anxious to secure Swiss military help which could, indeed, decisively tip the balance of power in the west.

The elimination of Burgundy as a major political factor created a vacuum which had to be filled. Alsace and Franche-Comté

¹E. Toutey, *Charles le Téméraire et la ligue de Constance* (Paris, 1902), pp. 312-16. ² Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Lucerne, Zürich, Glarus, Zug, Berne.

could easily have become parts of an enlarged Swiss Confederation, perhaps to the advantage of western Europe, but this would have meant a triumph for the western expansionist policy of Berne at the expense of Zürich, primarily interested in south Germany, and of the central Swiss, concerned about communications with Lombardy. If Basle were to join the Confederation at this juncture, the already predominant Germanic element in it would be reinforced and thus the differences between eastern and western Switzerland, where Berne now represented the steadily increasing French influence and had French-speaking subjects must be accentuated. It would also add to the city-state weight as against that of the countryside, for a major cause of friction within the Confederation had long been the rivalry between Zürich, Berne, and Lucerne on the one side and the Alpine communities of Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Zug, and Glarus on the other.

Basle was at one and the same time a city of some 10,000 inhabitants,¹ and an episcopal see whose wealthy bishop controlled a diocese that extended from Delle to the Aar. The bishop had formerly been lord of the city (*Stadtherr*) and still exercised some important residual powers, while as Father in God he had the usual spiritual rights of excommunication and interdict and he was also a considerable landowner within the city walls. Much of the history of Basle, as of similar episcopal cities, had been one of conflict between Church and State, in which the civic authorities had had to struggle hard for every concession. In particular, the bishop claimed to appoint (or at any rate to exercise a veto on) the Schultheiss, which was a reason why this official disappeared from effective authority before 1501.

With every new bishop, the city came to terms by a *Handfeste* on the basis of which bishop and city council would sometimes

¹ H. Ammann, "Die Bevölkerung von Stadt und Landschaft Basel am Ausgang des Mittelalters" (*Basel Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, Bd. 49 (1950), p. 37). It may have amounted to as much as 15,000 in 1459 (E. Bonjour, *Die Universität Basel* (Basle, 1960), p. 33, following R. Wackernagel, *Gesch. der Stadt Basel*, ii, i. p. 351) but this is doubtful. The figure 25,000 given by P. Burckhardt, *Basels Eintritt in der Schweizerbund* (Basle, 1901), p. 4 is quite impossible. Cf. H. Ammann, *Die Bevölkerung der Westschweiz im ausgehenden Mittelalter*, in *Festschrift Emil Welti* (1937).

join forces. As the citizens grew wealthier, they were able to lend the bishop money and in return secured by pledge or purchase his possessions in Sisgau, Liestal, Waldenburg, Homberg and elsewhere.¹ The Cathedral Church of St. Mary was the most notable building in the city, and the canons, almost exclusively of noble birth, exempt from taxation and from the jurisdiction of the *Bürgermeister*, were regarded with jealousy and suspicion. The bishop was seldom resident in Basle; after 1460 he was frequently in opposition to the newly-founded university.² The Council of Basle had brought renown and money to the city but otherwise had little lasting effect. Seculars quarrelled with regulars, the monks of St. Albans and St. Leonhards resented the growing numbers and popularity of the Franciscans (*Barfüsser*), Dominicans (*Prediger*), and Austin Friars, and the exactions of the church courts, as elsewhere, were sources of complaint. Yet there is little evidence of serious anti-clerical feeling or of popular heresy. Much church plate, costly vestments, and jewelled reliquaries testified to a generous laity. In spite of their differences, in general, city and bishop had often co-operated to secure what both parties needed, independence and peace. As against the hostile neighbouring nobility, they had interests in common and at most times an acceptable *modus vivendi* was operative.

Basle was a trading centre and a *Zunftstadt*; ³ its manufactures were exchanged for food and luxuries; without physical security it could not exist. Most important of all was the river, which was to it all that the Thames was to sixteenth-century London, the chief channel of commerce, along which traffic must be safe from armed interference and tolls must be as few and as definite as possible. Basle, with its bridge to Klein Basle ⁴ across the

¹ Wackernagel, iii. 55.

² E. Bonjour, *Die Universität Basel*, p. 50.

³ The four chief gild-organizations were *Kaufleute*, *Krämer*, *Weinleute*, *Hausgenossen*. Others, in all fifteen organizations, included, Bakers, Smiths, Shoemakers, Tanners, Tailors, Butchers, Carpenters, Builders, Saddlers, Spurriers, Weavers, Spinners, Skinners, Gardeners and Fishmongers. Wackernagel, ii, no. 413-15 has a convenient list.

⁴ The bishop surrendered his secular authority in Klein Basle in 1375 to Duke Leopold of Austria who, at a price, transferred it to Basle Stadt in 1392 (Wackernagel, i. 325).

river, recognized the advantages of freedom of trade and made great efforts to secure this. The chief enemies, after the elimination of the Burgundian *Landvogt* of the Sundgau, Peter von Hagenbach,¹ were the robber barons who lived largely by armed attacks on merchants and their goods. These varied from the powerful count of Thierstein whose resources were as considerable as those of Basle itself and whose influential family connections made him the equal, at times, of the Habsburgs, to the common road highwayman who attacked only the isolated traveller. Safe behind their almost impregnable castles, sometimes claiming to be enforcing their own prescriptive legal rights, all that they were, and stood for, was intolerable to the rising citizen class.

Members of neighbouring noble families often had houses inside the city walls and were influential there. The Münch family, for example, lords of Münchenstein, played a large, if diminishing, part in civic affairs and frequently had a seat on the Council. They claimed to molest only the enemies, or potential enemies, of the city; but, in general, their influence declined steadily in the fifteenth century, and after 1479 their presence was unwelcome. The interests of Basle were in security of communications, those of the nobility were not.

In common with other imperial cities, Basle, with its bishop, ruled country territory (*Landgebiet*) which it was anxious to enlarge and which contained subjects to be taxed, recruited for military service, and placated.

The first appreciable signs of interest in Basle on the part of the Swiss states leading to suggestions for closer co-operation came in 1467 when Mülhausen was in financial difficulties and barely succeeded in escaping submission to Sigismund of Austria. The war with Burgundy which followed the replacement of Sigismund by Charles the Bold was fought partly over, and partly from, Basle territory and suitably equipped Basle contingents had experience of fighting side by side with Swiss sol-

¹ Hildburg Brauer-Gramm, *Der Landvogt Peter von Hagenbach* (Göttingen, 1957), usefully reviews his relations with Basle. This largely supersedes C. Nerlinger, *Pierre de Hagenbach et la domination bourguignonne en Alsace, 1469-1474* (Nancy, 1890).

diers¹ and acquitted themselves well. Further, during and after the Burgundian campaigns, volunteers on irregular looting expeditions, and mercenaries hired by French and imperial agents, often crossed Basle territory on their way north or west. Although they could be excluded from the city, which caused ill-feeling, or controlled within its walls, which raised questions of jurisdiction, they expected to live off the countryside they traversed and were much disliked and feared.

The free imperial cities, of which Basle was one, immediately dependent upon the emperor, had long been a source of pride to Germany. Within these cities most day-to-day matters were regulated by customary law, but over and beyond this was the Roman Law with its inconvenient assumptions of imperial omnipotence. The emperor provided the supreme appellate tribunal and could issue a sentence of outlawry which, however inoperative in immediate practice, could have serious consequences in litigation, from which mercantile communities were seldom wholly free. In addition to this legal complication, like other imperial cities—and Basle was content in 1488 to be thus described *simpliciter*, without the addition of “free”²—Basle owed suit and service upon proper demand. This involved attendance at the Imperial Diets, and the provision of armed men when required for military service against the infidel or for an escort when the emperor went to Rome for coronation. In general, Basle had usually evaded or escaped these obligations. Only when some issue affecting its immediate interests was likely to be discussed, and therefore rarely, were Basle representatives sent to the Reichstag: similarly, the excuse that every soldier was needed at home for the protection of citizens and property was commonly used to refuse military service unless the campaign directly concerned the city.

In the fourteen-eighties the city council used this special relationship with the emperor with great skill to diminish still

¹ August Bernouilli, “Basels Anteil am Burgunderkriege”, *Basler Neujaahrblätter*, 76, 77, 78 (Basle, 1898-1900): R. von Fischer, *Die Feldzüge der Eidgenossen diesseits der Alpen vom Laupenstreit bis zum Schwabenkrieg: Schweizer Kriegsgeschichte*, ii. 142, 160, 163, 169, puts the Basle contribution into proper perspective.

² Wackernagel, ii, i. 134. This strengthened the city council against the bishop.

further the power of the bishop.¹ To this end a small contingent was sent to join the expedition against Matthias Corvinus of Hungary in 1486, and Maximilian was supported in the Netherlands in 1488.

So far as the members of the Swiss Confederation were concerned, the purposes of the original *Niedere Vereinigung* of 1474 against Burgundy had been attained with the relief of Nancy, and the death of Charles the Bold, and the return of Alsace to Sigismund. They therefore withdrew in 1483.²

Basle, however, still needed protection, and in August 1493, after an interview at Ensisheim between Maximilian and representatives of Basle, a new Lower Union for freer trade, peace and defence was made to last fifteen years.³ The participants were the cities of Strassburg, Mülhausen, Colmar, Schlettstadt and Basle, the bishops of Strassburg and Basle, and Maximilian ("der heilige römische rich tütscher nacion"), together with Alsace, the county of Pfirt, the Black Forest, the Sundgau and the Breisgau.

At the same time, Maximilian and his advisers were actively engaged upon projects for the constitutional and administrative reorganization of the empire. After the Diet of Worms (1495) the emperor claimed the right to levy *der gemeine Pfennig* which Basle, even while occasionally sending money in lieu of military service, refused to pay. Indeed, it was the well meant, but ill thought out, efforts of Maximilian to make the imperial authority more of a reality⁴ by retrenchment and reform (including the erection of the *Reichskammergericht* into an effective instrument of government and the levying of general taxation) that combined with more powerful local factors to decide Basle that the time for a break-away had come. Maximilian had also to meet the opposition of France and the Swiss.

New imperial aspirations and ancient Habsburg claims in the Aargau and elsewhere, which had never been wholly renounced, were joined in Maximilian with the tradition of Burgundian

¹ E. Bonjour and A. Brucker, *Basel und die Eidgenossen* (Basle, 1951), p. 34.

² A. W. Matzinger, *Zur Geschichte der niederen Vereinigung* (Zürich, 1910), p. 213.

³ *Ibid.* p. 343.

⁴ For a convenient summary see *The New Cambridge Modern History*, i (Cambridge, 1957), 199-202.

expansion inherited through his marriage with Mary, daughter of Charles the Bold. From the Sundgau, the Breisgau, the Black Forest and the *Waldstädte* he could block Swiss expansion and was poised for a further advance.

This the Confederation and its allies were determined to anticipate, and advantage could be taken of the renewed friendship with Louis XII of France, Maximilian's new opponent in Italy, embodied in the treaty of Lucerne, 16 March 1499.¹

When this was completed, the Swiss Federation was already formally at war with the Empire. The Swabian war, so significant for the future, started over a trivial dispute between the Graubünden (Chur) and the Tyrol about the possessions of the monastery of Münster. Basle soon learnt with alarm that three Swiss army groups were advancing against the Vorarlberg, the Swabian civic league and the Lower Union. This placed the city in a most serious difficulty. It dared not fulfil its obligations to the Lower Union, for participation in the war might mean destruction. Neutrality, which was the policy decided upon,² meant unpopularity with both sides and renunciation of participation in the peace terms. It was a most unhappy situation.

As an imperial city, there was an obligation to defend the empire which had been accepted in 1475 when a Basle force appeared outside Neuss, while with the Swabian cities ties of interest and of friendship were close. Yet to support either was at the very least to invite occupation by the Swiss forces, with, at best, reduction to the status of a common lordship; at worst, sack and destruction, such as had befallen the equally strongly fortified city of Dinant in 1467, might be followed by subjection to Solothurn. There were other factors to be taken into consideration. Basle had been an active member and almost the organizer of the original *Niedere Vereinigung* as an association of

¹ J. S. C. Bridge, *History of France* (Oxford, 1929), iii. 55; E. Rott, *Histoire de la représentation diplomatique de la France auprès des cantons suisses* (Berne, 1900), i. 93, 119, 121.

² Hans Frey, "Über Basels Neutralität während des Schwabenkrieges", *Basler Beiträge zur vaterländische Geschichte*, Bd. 10 (Basle, 1875). The relevant documents for Basle are printed by Karl Horner as "Regesten und Akten zur Geschichte des Schwabenkriegs" in *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, iii (Basle, 1904), 89-241.

cities and governments formed to maintain the *status quo* in the Sundgau. This area was now in danger, this time from the south : it was not so much for the future of Swabia as of Alsace that Basle feared and it was very much involved in the affairs of the second Lower Union.¹ The personal sympathies of the leading Basle citizens were German, and in so far as local feelings were involved Basle was prepared to forget ancient rivalries if only aggression could be halted. Strassburg was active at the other end of the Union and with Strassburg there was long-standing rivalry. Now, solemn promises made in the past, sometimes in return for benefits received, called for an active support which was not forthcoming.

The leaders and instigators of the Swiss attack on the Sundgau in 1499 were Berne and Solothurn, and with the latter Basle had many issues to settle. First and foremost, if there was to be any change in the status of Rheinfelden this must not be to the disadvantage of Basle, which had invested money there and which wanted the Rhine towns to be free to choose their friends. Without easy access to the Black Forest and Alsace, or even with Solothurn in possession of Liestal, Pratteln and Münchenstein, Basle's independence of action would be lost. It was a very delicate situation out of which the city emerged with dignity rather than prestige and with urgent need to re-assess the future.

Popular songs² indicated how disliked Basle's policy of non-intervention was by the Swiss soldiers ; like Blücher looking at London, some had thought of the plunder that had been lost by the refusal of their leaders to coerce the city. It was further urged with some justice and bitterness that the casualties of the decisive battle of Dornach,³ 22 July 1499, would have been lessened or prevented by a suitably timed sortie from the city,

¹ Some additional considerations affecting Basle are put forward by R. Janeshitz-Kriegl, "Geschichte der ewigen Richtung", in *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins*, cv (1957), 150-224, 409-55.

² R. v. Liliencron, *Die historischen Volkslieder der deutschen vom 13. bis 16. Jahrhundert*, ii (Leipzig, 1865), 147 ff. ; Ludwig Tobler, *Schweizerische Volkslieder* vol. ii (Frauenfeld, 1882-4).

³ A. Bernoulli, *Basler Chroniken*, vi (Leipzig, 1902), 11-12 (*Die Anonyme Chronik des Schwabenkrieges*) and the authorities cited by Dierauer, *Geschichte der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft*, ii. 404, n. 101.

whereas instead it had tried to make profits out of the sale of war commodities.

It was the Swiss military triumph in the Swabian war that brought with it the victory of the federalist sympathizers, Peter Offenburg, Ludwig Kilchman, Lienhard Grieb, and Niklaus Rüschi in the city council, which in turn led to the events that followed. This had been preceded by a characteristic gesture—the nobles, more class-conscious than ever in that chivalry-ridden age, perceived that their authority in local politics had greatly diminished and that the leaders of the craft guilds intended to displace them entirely. Led by the Rieher family, they departed as a group for their country estates, often heavily mortgaged, thus leaving the field clear for the revision of the constitution in 1498. Bürgermeister Hans Imer von Gilgenberg, believed to be in secret communication with Austria, was obliged to vacate his office and, with the conclusion of the service of Hartung von Andlau, a nobleman had been chief citizen,¹ for the last time.

All this had the effect of intensifying local consciousness and likewise local selfishness; such pro-imperial sentiment as remained had little upon which to feed. The common people, singularly ignorant about external affairs and European realities, were increasingly in favour of a public demonstration of friendship and solidarity with the victorious Federation. The rejection of the aristocratic element, and the control of the Council by the guilds, made the path into the Swiss Confederation much smoother. The most obviously pro-Austrian element had been eliminated from power, and the craft-guilds now directly controlled the common assembly ("die Gemeinde"), the great Council ("der große Rat") and the executive ("die Heimlicher", "die Dreizehner").² Nobles with Austrian-sounding titles would have been decidedly unacceptable to the Confederation, but an ally controlled by a civic oligarchy of elected guildsmen suited Zürich admirably, since it paralleled its own arrangements, and it was likewise acceptable to Berne where any suggestion of popular government was suspect. It cannot be said that the advent of

¹ A. Heusler, *Geschichte der Stadt Basel* (Basle, 1935), pp. 91-92. Von Gilgenberg had been obliged to become a simple citizen in order to be an office holder.

² Bruckner and Bonjour, *op. cit.* p. 23.

Basle made for Swiss democracy, for this term has no useful application to Switzerland before the nineteenth century, but it certainly strengthened traditional methods of local self-government, a school of potential democracy. The leaders of the guilds were anxious to rehabilitate trade as well as enhance still further their own political power. Some cannot fail to have noticed that, in other states, money was freely distributed by agents of France, Milan, and the Pope to secure a free hand in the hiring of mercenaries. An extension of this practice to the councillors of Basle might not be unwelcome to more than a few. Maximilian, it was ever clearer, was bound by interest, policy and sentiment soon to be engaged again in war with France, which might easily mean that Basle would be involved in disastrous opposition to Berne, Freiburg and Solothurn at the very least. And Maximilian had no money and nothing to offer.

Mülhausen, some twenty miles north-west, was Basle's counterpart in Alsace and, since 1466, in co-citizenship with Berne and Solothurn. In many ways it had been responsible for bringing about the declaration of war on Charles the Bold, after which it felt safe as against France and prospered after the settlement of its debts. In 1491 Mülhausen had abandoned the connection with Berne and had joined the Swabian League.¹ After 1499 it was anxious for the security that only the Swiss Confederation could afford. This came about indirectly through Basle. One result of Basle's admission to the Confederation was that in 1501, having duly secured the consent of the other *Orte*, Basle made an alliance with Mülhausen, which in January 1515 was accepted as an ally by the Confederation.² But for the Reformation it would almost certainly have become a full equal member.

Paradoxically one reason for Basle's exertions on Mülhausen's behalf was that this city must not be permitted to take too much of a lead in Alsatian affairs which it might well do if its greater neighbour, Strassburg, became wholly involved with the Empire and if Basle, its counterpart in the south, chose isolation and obscurity. Berne had no intention of relinquishing any part of its hold upon the Savoyard lands in the Vaud and at any moment

¹ Dierauer, *op. cit.* ii. 273.

² Oeschli, *Orte und Zugewandte*, pp. 88-91.

another successful expedition thither, or against Franche-Comté,¹ might be launched. The Burgundian campaigns had demonstrated that war could be extremely profitable and that profits brought problems. The temptation to the soldiers to retire home with the loot was very great and the smaller states were most unwilling to be used as catspaws to aid Bernese imperialism. The moralists were beginning to have their doubts about war that was not entirely defensive, others deplored the growth of corruption, others emphasized the need for men to remain to do the work on the farms. All this was difficult to reconcile with consistent Confederate advance and the occupation of conquered territory.

The danger of civil war over what had been won had been averted in 1481 by the mystic genius of Niklaus von der Flüe (Brüder Claus) and out of his intervention had come the *Stanser Verkommnis*, including a common understanding about the division of the spoils of war. Only as representatives of a full member of the Confederation could the new men on the Basle Council hope to share in the profits of any future successful military enterprise, all too likely soon to arise out of what Maximilian called "les differens estans entre nous et le roy de France."² Exposed Basle must be at all times, whether as the southern corner bastion of Germany, an advanced post for French aggression, or the first bulwark of Swiss defences. Policy, power and profit powerfully pulled in favour of the latter. Maximilian pointedly ignored attempts by the city to get in direct touch with him on relatively small matters³ and it was made abundantly clear that it could not hope to influence imperial policy. Further, if the bishop was to remain in the relative subordination and obscurity into which he had fallen he must not be able to claim imperial assistance nor must Mülhausen be put into a position to interrupt supplies coming south. Basle was poor and small; it would be as vulnerable to the pressure of a food-blockade as the central states were in 1529-31.⁴

¹ R. Maag, *Die Freigrafschaft Burgund und ihre Beziehungen zu der schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft vom Tode Karls des Kühnen* (Zürich, 1891), pp. 1-3, 9.

² J. Chmel, *Urkunden, Briefe und Actenstücke zur Geschichte Maximilians*, i (Stuttgart, 1845), no. clxxx, 215. ³ Wackernagel, ii, i. 176.

⁴ E. Gagliardi, *Geschichte der Schweiz* (Zürich, 1939), ii. 371.

With Zürich as the chief instigator, confederate pressure on Basle to become a member of the Eidgenossenschaft increased at the same time as the international situation made it demonstrably advantageous. Peace for as long as possible, the minimization of war expenses and trade interruptions, a voice in any peace settlement, full independence as the recognized equal of Berne and Zürich, themselves once imperial cities of less renown than *inclyta Basilaea*—there was much to be gained by such a policy.

It was a decision which, once taken, could not be recalled. If a marriage was to be contracted with the Eidgenossen it must be indissoluble—that much was certain from the outset. It meant, also, securing the individual assent of each component as well as the goodwill of the whole. The necessary negotiations were conducted with great skill by Lienhard Grieb,¹ supported by Peter Offenburg and Überzunftmeister Ludwig Kilchman, emphasis being laid from the first upon the fact that Basle was in danger of attack and needed the support of her neighbours to stand between them and their enemies. In any case they could promise that if Maximilian or his allies attacked the Swiss, or if Swiss territory were in danger of hostile violation by an expedition on its way against south Germany, Basle would resist by force. During the Swabian war the neutrality of Basle had, in fact, been of considerable value to the Swiss; its future adherence could be invaluable, for it held the key to the Sundgau and the Breisgau. Equally, as viewed from the city Rathaus, a renewal of the war with the emperor would probably mean the annexation of a devastated Sundgau as a *gemeine Herrschaft*, and this would be so doubly disadvantageous that even its possibility helped the council to insist that in future Basle must be in a position to bid from strength.

From the beginning of the negotiations it was made clear that Basle would come in only on terms of complete equality; there must be no element of subordination in its position, even one as mild and disguised as that of Glarus.² Only as a full member,

¹ A. Heusler, *Geschichte der Stadt Basel* (1934), p. 92; Wackernagel, ii, i. 180.

² Glarus had to come to the aid of the other states when summoned but itself had to ask for assistance of the necessity for which the others would judge (*Oechsli, Orte und Zugewandte*, p. 6).

ein völlig gleichberechtigter Ort, with a regular seat and voice in the Diet on all Federal concerns, with a proper share in the prizes of warfare and with precedence over Freiburg and Solothurn, would Basle abandon the Holy Roman Empire. Maximilian was now aware of the position and had sent an ineffective letter explicitly requiring the city to proceed no further.¹

The Lände (Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Zug, Glarus) were opposed to any enlargement of the Confederation, particularly by a city-state, Solothurn was openly and actively hostile,² resenting Basle's claim to precedence and foreseeing its hopes of expansion to the Rhine thwarted, but the wisdom and weight of Lucerne, Berne and Zürich carried the day. After long-drawn-out negotiations, starting seriously in January, helped forward consistently by Zürich, the terms of a *Bundesbrief* were agreed upon at the Lucerne Diet, 8 and 9 June 1501.³ It embodied principles accepted by the council at Basle in March and was drawn with great care and skill. The opening words are essential to its comprehension :

We the Schultheissen, Ammänner, councils, citizens, countrymen and the whole community of the common confederation, cities and districts herein named, to wit Zürich, Berne, Lucerne, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden . . . , Zug with its appurtenances, Glarus and Freiburg and Solothurn on the one part, and we the Bürgermeister and Council together with the Sechsern, as the Great Council is called, and the whole community of the city of Basle on the other part. . . .

Thus it was not in the form of, or intended to represent, a treaty between two parties ; it simply stated the terms upon which Basle was received into the Confederation.⁴ By it the city of Basle was admitted into perpetual federation,⁵ to share in the

¹ Wackernagel ii, i. 183.

² Friedrich Meyer, "Die Beziehungen zwischen Basel und den Eidgenossen" (*Basler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft*, Bd. 39 (Basle, 1951), p. 87).

³ The best text is in *Urkundenbuch*, ix, no. 272, 196, which differs only in minor textual points from that in the *Amtliche Sammlung der ältern eidgenössischen Abschiede*, iii, no. 2, 121. For an acute commentary on its main provisions see A. Heusler, "Glossen zum Basler Bundesbriefe von 1501", in *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, iii (Basle, 1904), 68-74.

⁴ H. Nabholz, L. v. Muralt, R. Feller, E. Bonjour, *Geschichte der Schweiz* (1932), i. 298.

⁵ "einer getruwen ewigen puntniss und fruntschafft". The emphasis on the perpetual nature of the agreement is deliberately repeated: "unser ewig nachkommen . . . ir ewig nachkommen inn unser Eydgnosschafft . . . ewiglich by uns und wir by inen" . . . (*Urkundenbuch*, ix. 197).

government of annexed lands, cities and castles, and in the distribution of war profits.¹ Its own possessions were guaranteed, armed help was assured in case of need,² its laws and good customs upheld, trade was to be free,³ subject to the customary tolls, and citizens were safe from arbitrary arrest.

On these terms Basle accepted its position as the full equal state, *gleichberechtigt Ort*, with a full seat in the Diet "to sit with our representatives and share counsel, deliberation and action, by word and deed, like any other Ort of our confederation"⁴ that had been originally demanded. To this long document, the Magna Carta of Basle, the seals of all the states were appended, each affixed with silken cords of the appropriate conventional colours. It is a measure of the value attached to the document that eleven original copies still survive.

Although some of the articles were in traditional common form and looked back to similar agreements made with Zürich in May 1351⁵ and Berne in 1353,⁶ when, however, the Confederation bore a very different aspect, there was one important innovation. This was the provision that in the event of an internal dispute between other members of the Confederation—"das gott ewiglich welle verhuten"—Basle should endeavour to bring about an understanding, but if this were impossible it should remain neutral—"still sitzen". At the same time full rights of participation in all matters concerning the whole Federation were assured.⁷ One sovereign right was abandoned for all time, that of indiscriminate freedom to declare war. The new *Ort* might

¹ This was an essential concession and the indispensable *quid pro quo* offered to the city. "Und ob ettwas, was das were, es syent stett sloss oder herrschafften . . . beschechen" (ibid. 199).

² "nach ordnung harkomen und gewonheit in unser Eydgnosschafft gebrucht"—a grim phrase in the light of the Burgundian war (ibid.).

³ ". . . einandern veylen kouff zulassen und by unsern zollen geleiten und nutzungen sampt und sonders, wie wir von alter geubt haben" (ibid. 201).

⁴ "by unsern anwelten sytzen und mit ratt und gettat als ein ander ortt unser Eydgnosschafft helffen raten bedencken und handeln" (ibid. 198).

⁵ *Historisch-Biographisches Lexicon der Schweiz*, vii. 698a; A. Largiader, *Geschichte von Stadt und Landschaft Zürich*, i (Zürich, 1945), 138-41.

⁶ 6 March 1353 (R. Feller, *Geschichte Berns* (Berne, ii 1949), p. 162).

⁷ Thus Basle was able to join Zürich in the *christlichen Burgrecht* and take a minor part in the Kappel war, while keeping strictly within the terms of the contract.

not undertake hostile action¹ without the concurrence of the Diet, and in the event of a dispute between Basle and another *Ort*, Confederate arbitration was to be sought and accepted. No new alliances might be entered into without the consent of a majority of the *Orte*, an unusual recognition that unanimity might not be attainable. The existing rights of the Papacy, the Holy Roman Empire, the bishop of Basle, and of alliances already entered into, were recognized as acceptable.²

One apparently minor point, yet a *sine qua non*, was settled, as it were incidentally, but certainly not accidentally. The proceedings of the Swiss Diets were conducted with great punctilio and formality with the closest attention paid to precedence. Basle was to be the ninth constituent state, thus ranking before Solothurn and Freiburg. These two areas, although reluctantly admitted to the Confederation in December 1481, partly as an intentional act of defiance to Savoy, had not until 1495 been accepted as regular members of the Diet,³ although the close connection with Berne had saved them from being reckoned as "Zugewandte" or as subjects ("Unterthanen"). By giving them rank and place after Basle their position was henceforward regularized and Schaffhausen was able to secure admission two months later (10 August 1501), coming after them in order of precedence and bringing the number of *Orte* to twelve. The oath of allegiance was intended to be taken very seriously. It was an essential component of the cement that held society together. To its religious and moral sanctions was added impressive publicity. On 13 July, the commemoration day of the Emperor Henry "the Saint", patron of Basle, the ten states, represented by their leading citizens, officials all, whether *Bürgermeister*, *Ammann*, or *Seckelmeister*, were greeted at the *Aeschentor* of Basle by chosen youths chanting "Here is Swiss soil, territory

¹ "mit nyemand krygelich uffrur anheben" (ibid. 199).

² "vor den heiligen stull zu Rom, das heilig romisch rich als von dess richs wegen und unsern herren den bischoff zu Basel, so zu zitten ist, und sin gotzhuss" (*Urkundenbuch*, ix. 204).

³ Oechsli, *Orte und Zugewandte*, 37, 41; B. Amiet, *Solothurnische Geschichte*, i. 360-2, 390-1. The deliberate and consistent insertion of "und" before the mention of each of these two states throughout the Basle document should be noted.

and its very stones in possession." Then followed the official civic welcome by Peter Offerburg, Statthalter des Bürgermeisters and Friedrich Hartmann, Oberstzunftmeister. Then came high mass in the Cathedral and the public oath-taking in the market place.

The maximum publicity was essential. In the absence of any centralizing institution except the Diet, such ceremonies of oath-taking served the purpose of public demonstrations of national coherence, an occasion for parade and festivity in which all could join and a protection against allegations of ignorance and against lapse by desuetude.

The oath was renewed after some discussion ¹ on 11 July 1507, 28 July 1514, 8 July 1520 and 30 September 1526. By the time the next quinquennium had arrived, the battle of Kappel had decided that Switzerland was to be a land of two conflicting faiths. Catholics were unwilling to be associated with heretics in what was essentially a religious ceremony ² and the Catholic states insisted that the traditional invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints should not be omitted. This was unacceptable to the Evangelicals, and the picturesque ceremony passed, in the Protestant states, into a popular and romantic memory of the first oath of 1271 which was supposed to have called the Confederation into being.³

The special contribution of Basle to the Swiss tradition was in the spheres of neutrality and mediation. Neutrality ⁴ meant, at first, doing nothing, deliberate inaction, "sitting still" as the current phrase went, and even this negative neutrality was something so unaccustomed as almost to constitute a new concept in politics. It was later to spread to the Swiss Confederation as a

¹ Oechsli, *Orte und Zugewandte*, p. 51.

² In 1526 Solothurn had been unwilling to swear alongside heretical Biel, part of the bishopric of Basle and converted to the Zwinglian doctrine in 1525 by Thomas Wytttenbach of Berne (Oechsli, *op. cit.* p. 401).

³ Wackernagel, iii. 4 and notes.

⁴ The Oxford English Dictionary gives 1494 (Fabyan's *Chronicle*) as the earliest use in English of the word "neutrality" in approximately the modern sense. In Switzerland, apparently, the word "neutralitet" first occurs in 1536 (E. Bonjour, *Swiss neutrality* (English translation, 1946), p. 12, and *Histoire de la neutralité suisse* (Neuchâtel, 1946), pp. 12, 375).

whole and to be its peculiar contribution to the nineteenth-century world, the word undergoing some change of meaning in the process.

From the days of the Council of Basle (where it was possible to be neutral as between the supporters of Eugenius IV and his opponents) the city-state had urged abstention from warfare by precept and example. As between Austria and the Swiss Confederation this had been possible, occasionally almost easy. But the Burgundian war proved that this attitude was no longer practical politics since the growing power of the Confederation could now secure decisions and objectives by force of arms and had no hesitation about doing so. The weakness and tergiversation of Frederick III had shown that the Holy Roman Empire could do nothing effective even had he wished. For Basle neutrality paid, and if the price of future neutrality was to be perpetual alliance with the Bund this was well worth it, provided its concomitants—substantial internal freedom and a fair share in the indispensable external trade—were maintained.

Not that the Eidgenossenschaft in 1501 had renounced expansionist hopes. Until Marignano (1515) its armies were irresistible and its policy aggressive, although the jealousies of separate states militated against individual annexations and “common lordships” were increasingly burdensome, and even without religious differences would have been sources of division.

Within the new Confederation, Basle did much to offset Berne, which had been in every way its inferior in the fourteenth century, but which was now ruler of the Oberland and of the Vaud as far as the lake of Geneva, and which had unrelinquished ambitions in Franche-Comté. Now, in the Diet, Berne had to contend with an additional opponent and one whose peace efforts were continuous. Thus, although Franche-Comté might easily have been Swiss at any time between 1477 and 1511,¹ and access

¹ The French king in 1479 had paid 150,000 gulden to secure the withdrawal of Swiss forces from Franche-Comté and the right to recruit men, “validi et bellicosi viri”. (R. Maag, *Die Freigrafschaft Burgund und ihre Beziehungen zu der schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft* (Zürich, 1891), pp. 24-36, correcting B. de Mandrot, “Relations de Charles VII et de Louis XI avec les cantons suisses”, *Jahrbuch für schweizerische Geschichte* (1888), p. 6). This money was divided among the eight Orte together with Freiburg and Solothurn. Basle had received nothing and would not be eligible for future distributions unless received as an Ort and not as Zugewandt (Oechsli, op. cit. pp. 28-29).

to its salt mines was necessary for the Bernese economy, it nonetheless represented more French-speaking territory, whereas if its neutrality could be secured this should be sufficient.¹

Basle found unexpected support from Zürich which, under Hans Waldmann, had been as bellicose as the rest. The earliest, or almost the earliest, of Zwingli's writings is *The Fable of the Ox and the beasts* (*Das Fabelgedicht vom Ochsen*),² a medieval version of *Animal Farm*, which is a plea against foreign military service, pensions, and extra-Swiss adventures, all of which have harmed the Swiss morally and politically.³ This attitude, which involved dropping the French alliance and with it lucrative pensions, was accepted as Zürich's policy after 1519, which meant that Zürich Basle and Schaffhausen could veto further military adventures.

The City Council at Basle supported these Zwinglian sentiments and encouraged the powerful minority to whom they were acceptable. But even the Basle Council was unable to prevent a good deal of foreign recruiting within its own borders, still less the passage of mercenaries, already levied and paid for, through their territory to France or the Empire. The temptation to enter foreign service was very great. Most of the Swiss states were poor; life was hard, food and clothing difficult to come by. Families tended to be large and healthy; there was little demand for hired agricultural labour, and farms (to use a convenient but hardly correctly analogous term) soon could not be subdivided further. There was little surplus for export, and metal and salt must be imported. Hence the attraction, particularly to the *Lände*, of military service with the Pope or a great power.⁴ Basle itself, living by exchange, transport and local manufactures, was prosperous when compared with Lucerne, Zug, Biel or Thun, and could provide for its own population. Apprehensively, therefore, but also sincerely, its vote was for peace⁵ and since it

¹ Maag, *op. cit.* pp. 47, 48.

² *Huldreich Zwinglis sämtliche Werke* (*Corpus Reformatorum*, vol. xxxviii), ed. E. Egli and G. Finsler (Leipzig, 1905), i. 1 ff.

³ O. Farner, *Huldrych Zwingli. ii. Seine Entwicklung zum Reformator* (Zürich, 1946), pp. 74-88.

⁴ This argument was admirably and forcibly set out by R. Feller (Nabholz, v. Muralt, Feller, Bonjour, *Geschichte der Schweiz* (Zürich, 1938), ii. 20-22).

⁵ E. Bonjour, "Basel im Bunde der Eidgenossen", in *Die Schweiz und Europa* (Basle, 1955), pp. 149-56.

acted in a measure as Berne's banker it could exercise financial pressure there as well.

In the fifteenth century Basle—*Basilea mediatrix*—had frequently acted as mediator in internal disputes between its neighbours or had provided facilities for investigation and arbitration. When the number of cantons increased to thirteen with the accession of Appenzell in 1513, the need for skilled judgement and arranged compromise increased, with Basle well to the fore. By the accession of Basle, the Confederation was strengthened financially, militarily, strategically, and morally. 1501 was a critical year. The real danger in the future lay not in the traditional enemy, the Austrian Habsburgs, but in the too-eager friend, France. By 1516 France had become the “perpetual” ally of the Confederation, which wisely surrendered its opportunities in the Milanese in exchange for French gold, trade and friendship. Basle, German in outlook and history, on a German river, feared and thwarted French domination. It could do so because it was part of the Federation, but in doing so it saved more than itself. Ultimately Berne, too, came round to the same viewpoint. When Berne and Basle were both Protestant states, and Francis I persecuted Lutherans, while the bishop of Basle at Pruntrut intrigued against his own former cathedral city, Bernese military protection was available for Basle, which was thereby encouraged and enabled to stand firm for its own independence. In conjunction with the Bund, Basle was safe and when the Bernese alliance saved Geneva (never part of the old Confederation) as well, Europe gained.

The accession of Basle to the Confederation brought the additional advantage of a Swiss university.¹ Pius II had issued the bull of foundation at Mantua on 12 November 1459,

¹ E. Bonjour, *Die Universität Basel* (Basle, 1960), with facsimile of the bull of foundation; *Die Schweiz und Europa* (Basle, 1958), pp. 397-417. The brief note in H. Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden (Oxford, 1936), ii. 275 and W. Vischer, *Geschichte der Universität Basel* (Basle, 1860) need amendment. H. G. Wackernagel, *Die Matrikel der Universität Basel*, i. 1460-1529 (Basle, 1951) has valuable notes on personalities, some of which are amplified in Marc Sieber, *Die Universität Basel und die Eidgenossenschaft, 1460-1529. Eidgenössische Studenten in Basel (Studien zur Geschichte der Wissenschaften in Basel, Heft x, Basle, 1960).*

impressed, apparently, by the suitability of the city in which he had lived during the Council to be a centre of learning, willing to increase its prosperity by the advent of students, and the potentialities of the neighbourhood by the presence of learned men. The Bologna constitutional pattern was to be followed, allowing for wide academic freedom, as was also the case in Luther's remarkably parallel university of Erfurt. Thus there was available in 1501 a flourishing *studium generale*, supported by the corporation and citizens rather than by the bishop, whose rights were, of course, respected. The auxiliary advantages of paper mills and printing presses were not overlooked. It was very much a civic university, in spite of the endowment of some of the doctors with ecclesiastical prebends, chiefly in St. Peter's, and the exemption of students from the direct jurisdiction of the city magistrates. The early professors were men of some distinction, especially the lawyers such as Peter von Andlau and Johann Ulrich Sargant; the theologians included the renowned Strassburg preacher, Geiler von Kaisersberg¹ and the faculty of arts was adorned by Johann Heylin von Stein,² Sebastian Brant³ and Conrad Wölflin.⁴

The numbers of students from the Swiss states were not, at first, large, since few dwellers in the mountain valleys had either the money or the Latin that was necessary, but the influence of the University, with its close connections with Alsace and south Germany, was considerable. Both "ways", *via antiqua* and *via moderna*,⁵ realists and nominalists, were represented on the

¹ L. Dacheux, *Jean Geiler de Kaisersberg* (Paris, 1876). His anticipation of the Reformation ("Es musz brechen", *ibid.* p. 498) has often been cited, e.g. by G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, iv (Cambridge, 1950), 725.

² Max Hossfeld, "Johannes Heynlin aus Stein" (*Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, Bd. 6, 7, Basle, 1907-8).

³ H. G. Wackernagel, *Die Matrikel der Universität Basel* (Basle, 1951), i. 138. A considerable literature has grown up round his *Narrenschiff*, "one of the most popular books that was ever printed" (A. Tilley, *The dawn of the French Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1918), p. 295).

⁴ H. G. Wackernagel, *Matrikel*, i, 21.

⁵ Attention to the significance of this division was directed by Gerhard Ritter in "Studien zur Spätscholastik—*via antiqua* und *via moderna* auf den deutschen Universitäten", *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Phil.-hist. Kl. (Heidelberg, 1922).

academic staff, and the disputes between them maintained a lively atmosphere of discussion and had its repercussions in the debates on the City Council. Parity of esteem ("super paritate regiminis ambarum viarum") was an outcome¹ which in some measure reflects a characteristically Basle spirit of toleration and compromise.

In such an atmosphere Bible study and "poetry", including Greek literature, also developed. Basle attracted such scholars as Reuchlin,² Jacob Zimmerman,³ Johannes Wesel⁴ and Andronikos Kontoblakas,⁵ who taught Greek on a private-venture basis. Brant, William Textor,⁶ Thuring Fricker,⁷ the historian and town clerk of Berne, Conrad Turst,⁸ the geographer who printed the first map of Switzerland, Naclerus⁹ and Peter Luder¹⁰ were among the early students.

The jurists were well represented, divided, perhaps, into those with Italian and those with French proclivities, but both emphasizing the central and authoritarian tendencies of the Roman Law. This was the age of the Reception, and the influence of the Law Faculty might have made for greater resort to Imperial tribunals but for the political events of 1499 and 1501. There was no Common Law for the Swiss republics and it was perhaps well that both the arts and the law faculties at the new university allowed unusual freedom of expression of opinion in their disputations.¹¹

To the university doctors the changed status of the city after 1501 may have seemed insignificant, yet in fact it helped powerfully to guarantee the continuance of their ideals and aims. The

¹ Bonjour, *Die Universität Basel*, 84.

² matric. 1474 (H. G. Wackernagel, p. 127).

³ matric. 1485 (ibid. p. 186; R. Wackernagel, iii. 194, 213).

⁴ matric. 1461 (H. G. Wackernagel, p. 24).

⁵ Bonjour, *Die Universität Basel*, p. 96.

⁶ matric. 1462. Later renowned as a theologian at Aachen (H. G. Wackernagel, p. 30). ⁷ matric. 1461 (ibid. p. 21).

⁸ matric. 1470 (ibid. p. 81).

⁹ matric. 1464 (ibid. p. 45).

¹⁰ matric. 1464 (ibid. p. 45). Like many of the early humanists he studied and practised medicine.

¹¹ Guido Kisch, *Humanismus und Jurisprudenz; der Kampf zwischen mos italicus und mos gallicus an der Universität Basel*, Basle, 1955 (*Basler Studien zur Rechtswissenschaft*, 42); F. W. Maitland, *English Law and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1901).

university in its earlier years was able to grow with singularly little interference. The bishop was Chancellor, somewhat to the misliking of the City Council, but academics were always ready and able to appeal to Rome if necessary and such friction as there was made for theological breadth of view and for fearless freedom of discussion.

Basle was likewise eminently suitable for printing and publishing. Paper was being manufactured on a considerable scale in 1440, and there were also skilled copyists and bookbinders, so that it is not surprising that from 1460 onwards the pioneer work of Isenhut, Bergman, Flach and Niklaus Keseler led to the renowned presses and large production of Amerbach, Petri and Froben.

Free printing in Germany was liable to meet with difficulties and obstruction, as at Mainz, and therefore, in this matter also, the independence of Basle came just at the right moment. The insistent demand was for theological literature of every kind, and if satire at the expense of the church was added, this was because the generation was theologically minded. Since the printers were not required to enter any established gild, they were singularly free from civic interference, especially if they worked, as some did, in Klein Basle across the river. Their renown soon grew.¹ Some of Erasmus's earlier works were printed in "pirated" editions in Basle to his annoyance, but he soon found reason to take his custom there.²

It was Adam Petri who printed Luther's translation of the New Testament, adding explanatory notes about words not in current use in Basle, and who, with Thomas Wolff, was responsible for the multiplication of many other Lutheran books and pamphlets whose dissemination was to cause growing dissatisfaction at Lucerne.³ Although the decision to break with Rome

¹ C.W. Heckethorn, *The printers of Basle in the XV and XVI centuries* (London, 1907); E. Armstrong, *Robert Estienne* (Cambridge, 1954) p. 239. "Basle might, in the early part of the sixteenth century, have claimed to be the typographical metropolis of Europe."

² P.S. Allen, *The age of Erasmus* (Oxford, 1914), p. 152; *Erasmus* (Oxford, 1934), p. 128. "So long as Froben lived he could command practically everything that he wished of Erasmus' output, especially the big volumes."

³ P. Roth, "Die Reformation in Basel, I. Teil. Die Vorbereitungsjahre, 1525-28", *Basler Neujahrsblatt*, 1936; *Durchbruch und Festsetzung der Reformation in Basel* (Basle, 1942), p. 11.

in 1529 was a civic one, and partly political, the work of the Basle printers helped to prepare the way for it, both there and further afield.

The decision of 1501 necessarily meant closer relations with Zürich. Ulrich Zwingli was a student at the University of Basle from 1502, and his later thought, and therefore his preaching also, was profoundly influenced by his Basle training in the arts, particularly in logic. In Basle, as elsewhere, there was growing dissatisfaction with the wealth and habits of the clergy. This was accentuated by civic rivalry with the bishop, dislike of the church courts and of the machinery for the enforcement of canon law, including the prohibition of usury, increasingly inconvenient in a commercial centre. Further, Lutheran and Zwinglian influence, and serious reflection upon the bible text and the practices of the primitive church as expounded by Oecolampadius, brought about the decisive change of religious allegiance. This might have been much more difficult if Basle had remained an imperial city, for Freiburg-im-Breisgau, rather similarly situated, was to have a very different history. The bishop retired to Pruntrut and was treated by the Diet as a foreign, independent, sovereign prince and by the emperor as a member of the Holy Roman Empire.

The last resident bishop (Christopher von Uttenheim, the patron of Erasmus),¹ complained that the city had broken its oath (conjuratio) to him, changed the constitution, stolen his Schloss Pfeffingen, imprisoned his clerics and refused to pay the ground rent due to him. In fact, he had alienated almost everything available for ready money before 1510 and only the external manifestations of his office and authority were left.² Even the monasteries had already come within the civic orbit and provided no problem after 1501: the resources of St. Albans and St. Leonhards were appreciated and made use of, but were not a primary cause of their elimination.

It was in Basle as a constituent of the Swiss Confederation that Erasmus chose to live for his most productive years; it was

¹ Roth, *Durchbruch*, 42; Bonjour and Brückner, op. cit. p. 18.

² P. S. Allen and H. M. Allen, *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, iii (Oxford, 1913), 7 ff.

probably the nearest thing he recognized to "home". Primarily, no doubt, he lived there because of the excellent terms offered by the scholar-printers, the comfort of his lodgings and the advantages for sending his writings over Europe. It was a civilized city where he could associate with learned men, speak Latin and enjoy the delicate luxuries appreciated by an epicure.

It was also a place from where an Erasmian Renaissance of Christianity could be freely expounded. There the more obvious external weaknesses of the Christian church were eliminated by the control exercised by the City Council; Erasmus's serious morality was not offended by Basle practice and he had there a sympathetic and comprehending public. It was in Basle that he first made his Swiss friends,¹ Zwingli, Leo Zud, Zasius, Amerbach, Oecolampadius, Beatus Rhenanus, and Heinrich Loriti, and the Zwinglian reformation owed much more to Erasmus than to Luther. The events of 1501 were political in their framework, but they decidedly facilitated, even if they neither created nor were the essential accompaniments of, the outburst of activity associated with the names of Hans and Ambrosius Holbein and Urs Graf, with the rebuilding of the Rathaus and gild halls, with the anonymous illustrators, book-binders, glass-workers, goldsmiths and ivory carvers. When south German and Alsatian traditions were fused with those of Zürich and Berne, something characteristically Swiss was the outcome.

In 1501 the Swiss Confederation was at the height of its power militarily and politically. There was no sign then that the might of the Papacy was on the decline or that its reliance upon Swiss support would be imperilled in the future: the Franco-Swiss *rapprochement* still held and would have been strengthened but for Basle's suspicions of the purposes for which it would be used. It was the struggle of Habsburg and Valois which saved Europe from a dictatorship and this, in turn, owed something to the denial of the upper Rhine to the emperor by Basle and Schaffhausen. The terms of the Basler Bund were carefully observed and demonstrated what good faith could accomplish as between the discordant states. Civil war was averted or minimized

¹ P. Wernle, *Die Renaissance des Christentums im 16. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 1904), p. 27.

and the Swiss were held back from adventures too great for their strength by the knowledge that Basle could not be carried with them. Even Berne came to recognize that expansion must stop. At a critical moment the accession of Basle to the Confederation gave it the weight, stability and confidence necessary to hold it together when rival faiths and ideologies had rent its members apart. Neutrality, successful commerce, wisdom and culture form a mixed, but useful, contribution to a new order in central European society and the Swiss Confederation after 1501 was just that.