



Abstract from Article

THE COVENANTAL BASIS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SWISS POLITICAL FEDERALISM: 1291-1848

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Abstract

This study argues that the modern political philosophy of federalism is directly linked to the Swiss Reformed idea of religious covenant, which was first formulated in the 1520s and 1530s by Heinrich Bullinger in Zurich. Bullinger's concept of religious covenant had roots both in the Old Testament and in the early federal ideal and reality that had come out of the Swiss Middle Ages; it therefore had important social and political implications as well as theological meaning. During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, this theological idea of federalism fed into and helped to create the modern political concept of federalism, especially in the thought of Phillippe Duplessis-Mornay and Johannes Althusius. Political federalism became a reality in the Constitution of the United States in the late eighteenth century. The Swiss federal Constitution of 1848 was instructed by the mature concept of political federalism, by the Constitution of the United States, and by the long tradition of Swiss federalism. All of these influences had some basis in the uniquely Swiss idea of religious covenant.

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