



Chapter from Book

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE AND THE EARLY REFORMED TRADITION: BULLINGER AND CALVIN

by

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Abstract

After breaking with Rome, reformers grappled with the problem of the relationship of the church and the civil government. In the Reformed communities two basic answers were put forth. From Zurich and Zwingli came the idea of a close relationship between civil government and the church, and this idea was carried forward after 1531 by Bullinger. The other viewpoint, that the church and civil society were separate entities, was introduced in 1530 by Johannes Oecolampadius in Basel. John Calvin's approach in Geneva was nearly identical to Oecolampadius's theories. These differing approaches were exemplified in Calvin's struggle with the magistrates in Geneva during the 1540's and his eventual victory in early 1550's over the Perrinists. Ironically, Bullinger's support of Calvin and his approach to church discipline during the Bethelier affair was instrumental in Calvin's victory in Geneva. Further, even though the Zurich and Genevan church traditions of discipline and relationship with the civil governments continued to compete through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in the end the Oecolampadius-Calvinist system dominated the Reformed tradition.

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