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Signs and Providence: A Study of Ulrich Zwingli's Sacramental Theology

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SIGNS AND PROVIDENCE
A STUDY OF ULRICH ZWINGLI'S SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation considers the role of the doctrine of divine providence in the sacramental theology of Ulrich Zwingli. This is done by treating Zwingli in the context of his personal history, his broader sacramental thought, including his treatment of the Word and preaching, and his historical development in his writings on the Lord's Supper. The attempt is made to understand the personal importance of this doctrine for Zwingli and the way it functions within his theology of the sacraments. Each subject area and document is considered in the light of three questions. What is the relationship between human action and divine action? What is the relationship between Christ's presence and the sacrament? What is the role and function of the sacrament? This study concludes that Zwingli's affirmation of absolute providence consistently functions as a determinative principle in his sacramental theology, defining his foundational understanding of the sacraments and establishing the parameters of his sacramental thought.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Acknowledgments | i |
| 1. Introduction | 1 |
| 2. Zwingli's Early Development | 14 |
| 3. Early Writings | 33 |
| 4. The Word..... | 54 |
| 5. Baptism | 77 |
| 6. Zwingli in Mid-Career | 102 |
| 7. Sacramental Controversy..... | 127 |
| 8. Marburg | 154 |
| 9. Marburg to Kappel..... | 180 |
| 10. Conclusion | 202 |
| Bibliography..... | 210 |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The thesis of this dissertation is that Zwingli's understanding of providence plays a determinative role in the development of Zwingli's sacramental theology. His emphatic affirmation of the absolute character of divine providence is the central issue at stake in the sacramental controversies with Luther, the Anabaptists and the Catholic teaching on the sacraments. Considered in the context of this ongoing debate *On Providence* is revealed as an essentially sacramental work presenting the theological and philosophical foundations which underlie Zwingli's sacramental understanding. Consideration of other influences (i.e. humanism) and issues (i.e. development or change in his thought) are not made irrelevant by this central affirmation, but they take place within the unchanging parameters established by it. Zwingli's foundational understanding of the role of divine providence sets the non-negotiable outline within which he works. Understanding this central ordering principle in Zwingli's sacramental thought will serve to clarify other issues in it and makes easily understandable the unreconcilable breach with Luther.

Despite a significant body of scholarship and renewed attention in recent years, Ulrich Zwingli remains an enigma. A consensus has not yet been reached regarding the essential character of Zwingli's theology or theological system. Significant debate is ongoing with respect to many areas of his life and thought.

The degree of his dependence upon Luther, Erasmus, humanism, medieval scholasticism, patristic and ancient secular sources remain areas of disagreement. Characterizations of the core, or determinative center, of his thought range widely and are not only significantly different, but even contradictory. "Zwingli is in turn reformer or rationalist, humanist or spiritualist, politician or preacher."¹ This is also true in consideration of Zwingli's sacramental, and specifically eucharistic, theology. Since this dissertation proposes to reconsider Zwingli's sacramental thought it will be helpful to review the range of scholarship regarding our subject. We want to briefly consider three aspects of scholarly opinion. First, we will consider the major interpretations of the essential, or determinative, elements of Zwingli's thought. Second, we want to review interpretations of the presence of Christ in the Supper in Zwingli's thought. This will include the issue of development or change in Zwingli's sacramental views. Thirdly, we propose to consider the treatment of the issue of providence in the context of Zwingli's sacramental thought and, specifically, how *On Providence* is treated.

Any treatment of this subject area would have to begin with Walther Köhler. His magisterial two volume *Zwingli und Luther* remains the standard work on the Sacramental Controversy.² For Köhler, Zwingli is a humanist reformer whose

¹W.P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldreich Zwingli*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 2.

²Walther Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther*, 2 vol. Vol. I. *Die religiöse und politische Entwicklung bis zum Marburger Religionsgespräch 1529*. (Leipzig, 1924), Vol.II. *Vom Beginn der Marburger Verhandlungen 1529 bis zum Abschluß der Württembergischen Konkordie von 1536*, (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1953). See also *Die Geisteswelt Ulrich Zwinglis: Christentum und Antike*, (Gothe: Verlag Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1920), and *Huldrych Zwingli* (Stuttgart: K.F.Koehler Verlag, 1952).

theology remains shaped by Zwingli's foundational understanding from the perspective of an Erasmian humanism. The key to understanding Zwingli and the core of the controversy with Luther is bound up in the humanist perspective, which includes the scholastic foundations from which it develops, and the more essentially biblical Lutheran view rooted in the late medieval nominalist foundations from which Luther works.³

While the influence of Erasmus and humanism continues to be acknowledged as an important element of Zwingli's development and thought, it is not generally regarded as the interpretive key to understanding Zwingli. However, notable proponents continue to advocate this view. Stefan Bosshard presents an important work, *Zwingli - Erasmus - Cajetan*, in which he argues for the enduring influence of Erasmus on Zwingli's understanding of the Eucharist.⁴ Christof Gestrich also argues for the determinative influence of humanism (following Fritz Blanke) understanding that influence in terms of a severe dualism of spirit and matter.⁵ This leads to the characterization of Zwingli in terms of a pronounced

³Alister McGrath provides a helpful study into the reformation traditions and their medieval roots in *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

⁴Stefan Niklaus Bosshard, *Zwingli - Erasmus - Cajetan: Die Eucharistie als Zeichen der Einheit*, (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978).

⁵Christof Gestrich, *Zwingli als Theologe - Glaube und Geist beim Zürcher Reformator*, (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1967). See also Fritz Blanke, "Zwingli's Sakramentsanschauung," *Theologische Blätter* 10(1931): 283-90 and "Zum Verständnis der Abendmahlslehre Zwinglis," *Pastoraltheologie* (1931): 314-320. Staedtke might also be included here. He understands the platonism which Zwingli inherited as part of his humanism to be determinative in Zwingli's denial of communication of grace through material means. Joachim Staedtke, "Abendmahl/

spiritualism. Jacques Pollet also concludes that the key to understanding Zwingli is his spiritualism, but understands it to be rooted in an Ockhamist voluntarism.⁶

Fritz Schmidt-Clausing proposes a reconsideration of Zwingli's spiritualism. He suggests a theologically determined affirmation of the freedom of the Spirit rather than a dualistic spiritualism. He offers the alternative "pneumatology" rather than spiritualism.⁷ Rudolf Pfister comes to a similar conclusion in his study of election in Zwingli's thought.⁸

Gottfried Locher argues that Zwingli's theology is shaped by his strong commitment to biblical fidelity. That biblical foundation results in a Christologically oriented theology.⁹ Jaques Courvoisier follows generally in Locher's perspective but concludes that the key to understanding Zwingli's sacramental theology is in the ecclesial focus of his thought.¹⁰ Courvoisier

Reformationzeit," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* I:106-122, Gerhard Krause and Gerhard Müller, ed., (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977).

⁶Jacques V. Pollet, *Huldrych Zwingli - Biographie et Théologie*, (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1988).

⁷Fritz Schmidt-Clausing, *Zwingli*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1965).

⁸Rudolf Pfister, *Die Seligkeit erwählter Heiden bei Zwingli*, (Zollikon-Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1952).

⁹Gottfried W. Locher, *Zwingli's Thought - New Perspectives*, (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1981), *Die Zwinglische Reformation*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), *Die Theologie Huldreich Zwinglis im Lichte seiner Christologie*, (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1952).

¹⁰Jaques Courvoisier, *Zwingli, A Reformed Theologian*, (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), "Réflexions à propos de la doctrine eucharistique de Zwingli et de Calvin," in *Festgabe Leon von Muralt*, Martin Haas and René Hauswirth, ed., (Zurich: Berichthaus, 1970), 58-65. Courvoisier relies heavily on the work of Julius

understands Zwingli's theology to be developed in service to his pastoral ecclesiastical concerns.¹¹

W.P.Stephens appreciates the influence of a variety of sources upon Zwingli's thought. He does not, however, attempt to characterize the relative impact of them or to identify a key interpretive element.¹² He exemplifies the uncertainty of contemporary scholarship in its attempts to characterize or define the essence of Zwingli's theology. As the range of interpretations indicates, Zwingli remains an enigmatic figure.

Our second overview concerns Zwingli's understanding of presence in the Supper. The issue is most often expressed by the question whether or not Zwingli affirmed "real presence" in the Supper. The difficulty in answering that question lies not only in discerning Zwingli's view but in understanding what is meant by the question. As Brian Gerrish asks, "For what, after all, *is* the reality of the real presence?"¹³ When scholars affirm or deny that Zwingli held a view of real presence it is not enough to merely collate their responses, assuming that they share

Schweizer, *Reformierte Abendmahlsgestaltung in der Schau Zwinglis*, (Basel, 1954).

¹¹Pipkin also concludes that Zwingli's sacramental theology is shaped in service to his pastoral concerns and practice. H. Wayne Pipkin, "The Positive Values of Zwingli's Eucharistic Writings," in Huldrych Zwingli, 1484-1531: A Legacy of Radical Reform, E.J.Furca, ed., (Montreal: McGill University, 1984), 107-143.

¹²W.P.Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

¹³Brian A. Gerrish, "Discerning the Body: Sign and Reality in Luther's Controversy with the Swiss," *Journal of Religion* 68(1988): 377-395.

the same understanding of what constitutes real presence. Therefore, we shall attempt to characterize the positions held, rather than using the criterion of positions vis-a-vis "real presence."

Scholarly opinion regarding Zwingli is roughly divided between those who hold that Zwingli's view of presence remained essentially unchanged throughout his writings and those who discern a significant shift in his thought. In modern scholarship, Karl Bauer led the debate in favor of a consistent sacramental position.¹⁴ He held that Zwingli affirmed a spiritual presence for those who had faith, understanding this as an affirmation of real presence. G. Locher, F. Schmidt-Clausing, J. Staedtke, and W. Niesel follow this view by affirming a real spiritual, symbolic or sacramental presence.¹⁵ Courvoisier allows for an increasing precision in Zwingli's thought but contends for a consistent focus on the church in Zwingli's thought. The transformation which takes place in the Supper is in the Body of the Church for which the elements are symbols only.¹⁶ Real presence is understood in terms of presence in the Body, not the sacrament itself. In a recent reconsideration

¹⁴ Bauer carried on a running debate with Walther Köhler on this issue. Karl Bauer, "Die Abendmahlslehre Zwinglis bis zum Beginn der Auseinandersetzung mit Luther," *Theologische Blätter* 5(1926): 217-226, "Symbolik und Realpräsenz in der Abendmahlsanschauung Zwinglis bis 1525," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 46(1927): 97-105. For Köhler's rebuttal see "Zu Zwinglis ältester Abendmahlsauffassung," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 45(1926): 399-408, "and "Zur Abendmahlskontroverse in der Reformationszeit, insbesondere zur Entwicklung der Abendmahlslehre Zwinglis," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 47(1928): 47-56.

¹⁵Locher, *Zwingli's Thought*; Schmidt-Clausing, *Zwingli*; Staedtke, "Abendmahl/ Reformationzeit"; W. Niesel, "Zwinglis 'spätere' Sakramentsanschauung," *Theologische Blätter* 11(1932): 12-17.

¹⁶Courvoisier, *Zwingli*.

Brian Gerrish concludes that Zwingli's view is a thoroughly symbolic view in which the sacrament is a celebration of *mere* symbols, disjoined from any reality.¹⁷ One additional treatment that considers Zwingli's thought apart from the issue of a shift is that of Vailiki Limberis. Limberis offers a provocative look at Zwingli's thought from a Eastern Orthodox perspective, particularly with reference to the coincidence of reality and symbols.¹⁸

At least as numerous are the scholars who detect a significant shift in Zwingli's thought throughout the course of his writings. Zwingli's sacramental thought is generally considered in three periods. The first is his early writings, primarily against the Catholic view of sacrifice, in the time up to his exposure to Hoen's letter proposing signification as an interpretive model for the words of institution (1524). The second period encompasses the controversy with Luther in which Zwingli is concerned to distinguish himself from Luther and other branches of the Reformation. This period extends through Marburg (1529). The third period covers the remainder of Zwingli's life (to 1531), especially focusing upon his last work, *Exposition of the Christian Faith*.

Köhler maintains that Zwingli held to a view of real presence in his early period. Beginning with an acceptance of transubstantiation, Zwingli shifts in 1523 to a mystical view that retains an affirmation of a real spiritual presence. Influenced by Hoen's letter and in the controversy with Luther, Zwingli shifts to a merely symbolic view which denies any objective, or real, presence. After Marburg,

¹⁷Brian A. Gerrish, "Discerning the Body: Sign and Reality in Luther's Controversy with the Swiss," *Journal of Religion* 68(1988): 377-395.

¹⁸Vailiki Limberis, "Symbol and Sanctification: An Orthodox Critique of Zwingli," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 26(1981): 97-112.

Köhler contends that Zwingli reconsidered his position. He continues to deny bodily presence but affirms a real spiritual presence in the Supper.¹⁹ Alexander Barclay traces a similar progression in the benefit of the Supper, moving from an early affirmation of objective benefit to a merely subjective view in the middle period and returning to a reaffirmation of the objective benefit of the Supper in the late period.²⁰

Bosshard proposes development within a basic continuity. He contends that Zwingli's theology is shaped by his humanist presuppositions throughout but reflects development and change within that consistent framework. He suggests that in Zwingli's early period he held an essentially humanist view which denied the benefit of the flesh but held to an objective spiritual benefit (to those who have faith). In his middle period, however, he moved to a merely symbolic view. This view reflected a spiritual focus, but without any objective benefit. The third period (which Bosshard dates beginning with *Amica Exegesis* in 1527) reflects a moderated symbolism in which objective benefit is reasserted through the contemplation of faith (*fidei contemplatione*).²¹

Stephens understands the progression in terms of Zwingli's understanding and application of the sacraments as signs. The early period reflects the understanding that God reassures us through the signs. The middle period is

¹⁹Walther Köhler, "Zur Abendmahlskontroverse in der Reformationszeit, insbesondere zur Entwicklung der Abendmahlslehre Zwinglis," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 47(1928): 47-56, *Zwingli und Luther I*.

²⁰Alexander Barclay, *The Protestant Doctrine of the Lord's Supper*, (Glasgow: Jackson, Wylie & Co., 1927).

²¹Bosshard, *Zwingli*.

concerned with our reassuring others (in the Church) through signs. The third period more positively incorporates both elements. The value of the sacrament is reflected in the revaluing of the signs. The transformation of the sacrament is in "transsignification."²²

Gäbler and Pollet also see a development in Zwingli but perceive it as progressive. Gäbler sees Zwingli developing his view of symbolic remembrance through his career and especially in the ongoing debate concerning the sacraments. He arrives at a positive view of remembrance which is more than mere recollection and through which an affirmation of presence can be assumed. Pollet also sees a progressive development throughout Zwingli's writings. However, he concludes that Zwingli moves from an affirmation of objective presence to a mere symbolism.²³

Providence is broadly recognized as an important element of Zwingli's thought. It is less clearly understood how the doctrine of divine providence

²²Stephens, *Theology*. Pipkin's view is very similar. See H. Wayne Pipkin, "The Positive Values of Zwingli's Eucharistic Writings," in *Huldrych Zwingli, 1484-1531: A Legacy of Radical Reform*, E.J.Furcha, ed., (Montreal: McGill University, 1984), 107-143. McGrath offers an interesting and creative treatment of Zwingli (relying heavily on Stephens) in a recent monograph. He develops the idea of transsignification in conjunction with the idea of foundational narrative for community. It is, however, more relevant for contemporary discussion than historical research. Alister McGrath, "The Eucharist: Reassessing Zwingli," *Theology* 93(1990), 13-19.

²³Ulrich Gäbler, *Huldrych Zwingli - Eine Einführung in sein Leben und sein Werk*, (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1983), 118-125; *Huldrych Zwingli - Reformation als prophetischer Auftrag*, (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1973), 65-68; Pollet, *Zwingli-Biographie*, 60.

functions within Zwingli's theological system.²⁴ This is certainly true with regard to Zwingli's sacramental thought. The role of providence as it functions in Zwingli's sacramental, or eucharistic, theology has not been thoroughly considered and is not clearly understood. This uncertainty is reflected in the understanding and treatment of Zwingli's transcribed sermon *On Providence*. Although it is the transcription of a sermon delivered at Marburg on the eve of the sacramental colloquy, it is not considered in that context. Stephens, for example, considers providence to be an important influence in Zwingli's thought in general and his sacramental thought, in particular. Yet, he cites *On Providence* as an example of writing at the opposite extreme from Zwingli's eucharistic writing.²⁵ This is true despite the fact that he later cites the importance of the issue of God's sovereignty in relation to the sacraments in Zwingli's *Account of the Faith*, which essentially repeats the arguments of *On Providence*.²⁶ Pollet alludes to the importance of providence in Zwingli's thought and refers to *On Providence* as a promising area for further study. But he does not pursue the study of providence within Zwingli's sacramental

²⁴"Das zu lösende Problem besteht darin, welche Bedeutung dieser Schrift für ein Gesamtverständnis der zwinglischen Glaubens- und Geisteshaltung zukommt." Siegfried Rother, *Die religiösen und geistigen Grundlagen der Politik Huldrych Zwinglis*, (Erlangen: Palm & Enke, 1956), 115.

²⁵"The lasting impression of scholasticism can be seen later in writings as diverse as *The Providence of God* and the eucharistic works." Stephens, *Theology*, 6. Gestrich contends that attention to *On Providence* diverts attention away from the sacramental controversy. Gestrich, *Zwingli*, 17.

²⁶"The fundamental role of the sovereignty of God in Zwingli's understanding of the sacraments is clear in *An Account of the Faith*." Stephens, *Theology*, 186.

theology, returning to his basic characterization of Zwingli's spiritualism.²⁷ Courvoisier discusses *On Providence*, but with reference to the Christological character of his theology and without any reference to his sacramental theology.²⁸ Rother treats *On Providence* at length, highlighting the importance of providence and election in Zwingli's thought.²⁹ He even critiques earlier scholarship for its failure to consider *On Providence* in its historic context at the Marburg Colloquy.³⁰ Yet he does not consider it in the context of the sacramental controversy at hand, ignoring the sacraments entirely.³¹ In summary, the doctrine of providence has been largely overlooked and the work *On Providence* has been ignored in the study of Zwingli's sacramental theology.

Turning to the question of methodology, this study will attempt to understand Zwingli on his own terms. Questions concerning the viability or quality of Zwingli's theology are not our concern. We will not attempt to determine the accuracy of Zwingli's understanding of his opponents. We will, however, attempt to understand what Zwingli perceived to be the issues being debated. We will not attempt to move Zwingli's thought out of the sixteenth century to consider its

²⁷Pollet, *Zwingli-Biographie*, 66,85-87, 90. Pollet, who finds the roots of Zwingli's spiritualism in Ockhamist voluntarism, discerns the roots of Zwingli's doctrine of providence in Italian humanism. Jacques V. Pollet, *Huldrych Zwingli et la Réforme en Suisse*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 45-46,51.

²⁸Courvoisier, *Zwingli*, 44-47.

²⁹Siegfried Rother, *Die religiösen und geistigen Grundlagen der Politik Huldrych Zwinglis*, (Erlangen: Palm & Enke, 1956).

³⁰Rother, *Grundlagen*, 117.

³¹He does make one passing reference to the sacraments. *Ibid.*, 124.

contemporary relevance or value. Whether Zwingli's theology is good, accurate or useful from a historical perspective is an evaluative judgement outside the scope of this work. To understand Zwingli accurately within his own personal, historical and theological context is the goal of this study.

In order to accomplish that goal effectively we will first consider Zwingli in his personal, historical context. We will attempt to understand why, in a personal sense, the doctrine of absolute providence should be so important to Zwingli that it should be a determinative theological principle. This will not be an attempt at "psychohistory," but to attempt to consider theological issues without some consideration of the human issues involved would seem to be irresponsible and unrealistic scholarship.

Secondly, we propose to consider Zwingli's eucharistic theology in the broader context of his sacramental theology. This will allow us to observe his theological system at work as it confronts different issues and problems. In particular, it allows us to complement the polemical treatments that characterize much of the sacramental controversy with Luther. This broader context will include Zwingli's understanding of the Word and preaching. For Zwingli, as for Luther, the Word and the proclamation of it gain a nearly sacramental character. The same issues will be observed at work here as in the specifically eucharistic writings.

Thirdly, we will consider Zwingli's sacramental thought in its historical context and development. Beginning with his earliest writings and proceeding to his last major work, we will consider Zwingli's treatment of the sacraments in its historical development through a varied selection of writings. We will find in them both continuity and change in his sacramental understanding.

To help provide focus in an extended consideration of often-difficult material, throughout the study we will pose three issues concerning the sacrament. First, what is the relationship of the communication of grace or benefit to the celebration of the sacrament? In other words, what is the relationship of human action (celebration of the sacrament) and divine action (communication of grace or benefit)? In what sense, or under what circumstances, can we say that God is bound to act or that spiritual effect is inherent in the sacrament? Second, what is the relationship of Christ's presence to the sacrament and the elements? Is Christ present? How do we understand him to be present? Third, what is the role and character of the sacrament? What is its function, benefit or purpose for the Christian and the Church? These are, of course, interrelated issues and it will not always be possible to consider them distinct from one another. However, they do provide three aspects of the understanding of the sacraments that may allow us to trace the progression of Zwingli's thought with more focus and clarity. By following closely Zwingli's development with these areas of interest in mind we shall more clearly understand his sacramental theology.

CHAPTER TWO

ZWINGLI'S EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Any attempt to understand Ulrich Zwingli as a mature reformer must address the development that produced and shaped him. The man who stood across the table from Martin Luther in the Fall of 1529 cannot effectively be considered apart from the personal history that brought him there. The theological positions for which he struggled were shaped in the crucible of his life experience. Consideration of theology abstracted from life is inadequate. Therefore, our investigation should begin with the formation of Zwingli's thought. This study does not propose new evidence or a new thesis concerning Zwingli's early development. Adequate research for our purposes has already been done by others. We propose to build on their earlier research. However, to understand adequately later developments and issues it will be necessary for us to have a clear understanding of what has already been established about Zwingli's earlier life¹. Of particular interest for this study are five specific influences in Zwingli's development. They are the shaping influence of, and resulting concern for, Zwingli's homeland; his theological and philosophical foundations; the impact and influence of humanism; the personal crisis of 1519-20 and the changes it produced

¹"Die 'vortheologische' Zeit im Leben Zwinglis hat ihm so viele Eindrücke und wegweisende Anregungen vermittelt, daß ohne ihre ausreichende Berücksichtigung sein reformatorisches Unternehmen nur teilweise verständlich wäre." Joachim Rogge. "Die Initia Zwinglis und Luthers: Eine Einführung in die Probleme," *LutherJahrbuch* 30(1963): 109.

in Zwingli's thought; and the question of Zwingli's early relationship to Luther. Any attempt to understand the later Zwingli without careful attention to the foundational character of these influences is doomed to, at best, partial success. On the other hand, considering Zwingli in light of these shaping influences may help to make clear what was previously understood as enigmatic.

Ulrich Zwingli was born on January 1, 1484 in the small mountain village of Wildhaus, located in modern Switzerland. His family seems to have been moderately prosperous and politically active.² Participation in the political process and personal concern for the welfare of the community were integral parts of the environment in which Zwingli spent his early childhood.³ His identification with the rural community followed him throughout his life. He would describe himself as a farmer long after he was intimately involved in urban life and international politics.⁴ His love for the natural beauty of his mountain home would be expressed in the highly descriptive language he would frequently employ. Illustrations and imagery in his later writing would indicate sharp personal recollections of the environment and experiences of those early years.⁵ The impulse to active involvement in the welfare and destiny of his homeland and his deep love and

²Oskar Farner, *Huldrych Zwingli*, 4 vols., (Zurich:Zwingli-Verlag, 1943f.), 1:68-70, 57-58, 87-92.

³Farner, *Zwingli*, 1:138-139; George R. Potter, *Zwingli*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 10; Köhler, *Zwingli*, 16-17.

⁴"Netze konnte Zwingli vom Heimatboden werfen, weit, sehr weit, aber Weltbürger wurde er nie. Auch der gelehrte Humanist lebte nicht wie Erasmus von Rotterdam, kosmopolitisch im Gelehrtenstaat, er blieb Huldrych Zwingli 'der Toggenburger', wie er gern unterschrieb." Köhler, *Zwingli*, 15; Farner, *Zwingli*, 8, 92; Potter, *Zwingli*, 9-10.

⁵Potter, *Zwingli*, 10; Köhler, *Zwingli*, 9-10; Farner, *Zwingli*, 132-137.

personal identification with it are foundational elements in Zwingli's self-understanding.⁶ In a letter to B. Stapfer in 1522, Zwingli would declare that from his childhood he had prepared and exerted himself on behalf of the welfare of the confederacy.⁷

Zwingli's earliest activism was on behalf of the confederacy. His first published work was *The Fable of the Ox*.⁸ In it Zwingli challenged the practice of mercenary service and prophesied the likely disastrous consequences for the Swiss people. The fable portrays the French, in particular, as dangerous but even the Pope, who is portrayed sympathetically, brings the Swiss into danger.⁹ In striking contrast to these external threats Zwingli regarded his homeland in idyllic terms. "Immensely proud of his people, he thought of central Switzerland as a near-paradise, where free men, united by memories of resistance to Habsburg aggression, lived in countrified simplicity."¹⁰ Zwingli's critique of military service was determined less by ethical theory than personal concern for his homeland. "Zwingli was convinced of the right to protect the peace of the homeland *and* the Church, with force if necessary."¹¹ Despite his reservations concerning military service Zwingli participated as chaplain of the Glarus contingent in the campaign

⁶Farner, *Zwingli*, 8, 141; Joachim Rogge, *Zwingli und Erasmus*, (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1962), 12,14,15; Z I, 166, 578.

⁷Z VII, 602-603.

⁸Z I, 10-22.

⁹Potter, *Zwingli*, 35-36; Rogge, *Zwingli*, 13-19.

¹⁰Potter, *Zwingli*, 34.

¹¹"Zwingli war...von dem Recht überzeugt, den Frieden der Heimat und der Kirche zu schützen, wenn nötig auch gewaltsam." Rogge, *Zwingli*, 21; also 15, 19.

leading to the Battle of Novaro in June, 1513. His reservations were, in this instance, overcome by his allegiance to the papal cause. After the disaster at Marignano in 1515, however, his general opposition to mercenary service stiffened. After urging his countrymen to battle on behalf of the Pope he witnessed the slaughter of some 10,000 of them in sacrifice to profit and foreign political struggles.¹² His increasingly adamant opposition to military service was grounded in his conviction that such mercenary service would destroy the Swiss.¹³

Zwingli's deep concern for the welfare of the Swiss and his growing sense that the future of his homeland was in dire jeopardy established, at least in part, the agenda his life's work should address.¹⁴ The question must be answered, "How can the impending judgement upon the Swiss nation be averted?". The search for the answer to that question stands behind the development of Ulrich Zwingli as a man and a reformer. In contrast to Luther, Zwingli's impulse to reformation is prompted, to a significant extent, by external crisis.¹⁵

Zwingli's formal education began at the age of six. He was sent to live with his uncle Bartholomäus who was a parish priest in Wesen am Walensee.

¹²Köhler, *Zwingli*, 36-38; Potter, *Zwingli*, 38.

¹³Köhler, *Zwingli*, 37-38. While it would be a mistake to attribute to Zwingli a twentieth century concept of nationalism it is clear that Zwingli identified himself as Swiss as distinct from other "national" groups, including South German. See Köhler, *Zwingli*, 88-89.

¹⁴Gottfried W. Locher, *Zwingli's Thought - New Perspectives*, (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1981), 3, 14, 33, 267; Rogge, "Initia," 121; Farner, *Zwingli*, 1:141.

¹⁵"Zwingli ist ungleich viel tiefer seiner Heimat verhaftet als Luther...Und wenn er zum Reformator wird, dann geschieht das zur Rettung seiner Heimat...Auf dem Weg gebracht wurde Zwingli durch die Not von außen, nicht von innen!" Rogge, "Initia," 113. Also Locher, *Zwingli's Thought*, 231; Ulrich Gäbler, "Luther und Zwingli," *Luther* 55(1984):106; Rogge, *Zwingli*, 12, 54.

Following the rudimentary beginnings of his education under his uncle Zwingli went (at the age of 10) to Basel to study under the direction of Schulmeister Gregorius Bünzli. When he pursued his education further (at the age of 13) he went to Bern to study under the humanist Heinrich Wölfflin. His education was essentially confined to Switzerland, with only an unsuccessful (and historically unclear) venture to Vienna.¹⁶ In 1502 he returned to Basel where he completed his formal education with a Baccalaureus in 1504 and his Magister in 1506.¹⁷

Zwingli's educational development took place in a context sympathetic to the "via antiqua". When Zwingli later takes exception as a reformer to the teaching of the scholastics it is Aquinas, Lombard and Scotus to which he primarily refers.¹⁸ Zwingli's interest in, and sympathy with, Aristotle earned him the appellation "Aristotelian."¹⁹ Zwingli's education did include exposure to the "via moderna."²⁰ His writing includes references to Ockham and Biel.²¹ During his tenure at Basel the faculty represented "via antiqua" and "via moderna" coexisting side by side.²² Despite this exposure and at least passing familiarity with late medieval nominalism

¹⁶Köhler, *Zwingli*, 18-20; Farner, *Zwingli*, 184-194.

¹⁷Köhler, *Zwingli*, 21.

¹⁸Farner, *Zwingli*, 210, 216; Walther Köhler, *Die Geistewelt Ulrich Zwinglis*, (Götte: Verlag F.A. Perthes, 1920), 15-16; Rogge, "Initia," 118.

¹⁹Farner, *Zwingli*, 1:210; Köhler, *Zwingli*, 23.

²⁰For a discussion of the "via moderna" see William Courtenay, "Nominalism and Late Medieval Religion," 26-59, in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, Charles Trinkaus and Heiko Oberman, ed., (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974). Also Alister McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 75-92.

²¹Farner, *Zwingli*, 1:217-219; Köhler, *Zwingli*, 22.

²²Köhler, *Zwingli*, 21-22.

it is the "via antiqua" that provides the formative foundation for Zwingli's understanding.²³

Walther Köhler suggests that this fact is of decisive importance in understanding Zwingli and his later reformed faith.²⁴ The "via antiqua" would provide the philosophical and theological underpinnings upon which Zwingli's later development was built.²⁵ Significantly, it meant that many of the questions that troubled Luther would not be important, or relevant, to Zwingli. There was, for Zwingli, no radical disjunction between what we know of God and what God is, or how we may expect him to act. There is a problem in the limitation of our knowledge of God, but not uncertainty about his character. In this sense Zwingli will remain a product of the "via antiqua" and this perspective will be the context of his later sacramental thought.²⁶

The more immediate consequence of his foundations in the "via antiqua" would be the preparation it provided for his development into humanism. As a humanist he would reject his earlier scholasticism, but its influence was still readily

²³"Zwingli war Scholastiker und arbeitet mit ihren Fragestellungen." Köhler, *Geistewelt*, 15. Also Köhler, *Zwingli*, 19; Potter, *Zwingli*, 15,16-19; Farner, *Zwingli* 1:216; Gestrich, *Zwingli*, 60; McGrath, *Origins*, 94, 107.

²⁴Köhler, *Zwingli*, 23-26, 27. Potter also affirms at least partial acceptance of Köhler's analysis. Potter, *Zwingli*, 16.

²⁵"Alles in der Gedankenwelt des Thomas von Aquino drängte zur Einheit und Harmonie. Dieser Grundcharakter seines Lebenswerkes ist entscheidend für den Schuler des 'alten Weges' Ulrich Zwingli." Köhler, *Geistewelt*, 17; Gestrich, *Zwingli*, 59.

²⁶Köhler, *Geistewelt*, 15.

to be seen. His humanism was built on the scholastic foundations of the "via antiqua."²⁷

Zwingli's exposure to humanism almost certainly began very early. His uncle Bartholomäus was a man sympathetic to the New Learning and was likely to have shared that sympathy with him.²⁸ Farner credits Heinrich Wölfflin with the first serious exposure to humanism, beginning a relationship that would continue throughout Zwingli's life.²⁹ Zwingli's ventures to Vienna in 1498 and 1500 are likely to have given him a broader exposure to humanism.³⁰ In Basel, although the University remained solidly traditional, the presence of the Basel printers drew the presence of a growing circle of humanists.³¹ Although Zwingli was absorbed in scholarly interests during this period he was also drawn into contact with a number of humanists of future prominence.³²

²⁷"Sein Humanismus ist durch die Scholastik des alten Weges vorbereitet worden." Köhler, *Zwingli*, 24.

²⁸The impact of this early exposure is unclear. Jackson claims that the influence of Zwingli's uncle was formative and perhaps even decisive. Samuel Macauley Jackson, *Huldreich Zwingli*, (New York: G.R.Putnam's Sons, 1901), 54. Köhler rejects the likelihood of significant influence in this period. Köhler, *Zwingli*, 17.

²⁹"Eine neues Denken und Verstehen ging deshalb jetzt den Toggenburger Knaben auf." Farner, *Zwingli*, 1:166, 166-168. Köhler, *Zwingli*, 18.

³⁰Köhler, *Zwingli*, 18-20; Farner, *Zwingli*, 1:181, 184-194; Rogge, *Zwingli*, 23; Potter, *Zwingli*, 11-14..

³¹Hans R.Guggisberg, *Basel in the Sixteenth Century*, (St.Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1982), 9-10.

³²Potter, *Zwingli*, 14-20. Potter identifies Beatus Rhenanus, Heinrich Loriti, Conrad Pellican, Conrad Zwick and Caspar Hedio as being among those likely to have come into contact with Zwingli in this period. 19.

In 1506 Zwingli received an unexpected call to Glarus as priest. This call prompted Zwingli to make a decision about entering the priesthood. His affirmative decision led him to accept the call to Glarus. Zwingli's correspondence during this period reflects his growing interest in humanism and identifies an active circle of reform-minded young Swiss humanists.³³

Zwingli's interest in humanism is transformed by 1516 into a more fervent personal commitment. Credit for that change is given to Erasmus, whose influence emerges with Zwingli's study of his poem *Klage Jesu* in 1514/15.³⁴ This influence was heightened by a personal meeting with Erasmus in 1515.³⁵ Zwingli's time in Glarus is brought to an end as a result of his increasingly open and adamant opposition to mercenary service. This activism made his position in Glarus difficult and led to his acceptance of the position as preacher for the monastery at Einsiedeln in 1516.³⁶

The next two years at Einsiedeln were important in Zwingli's development. The influence of Erasmus was profoundly felt.³⁷ These years are spent in productive study in the Greek New Testament as well as other less spiritual humanist

³³Köhler, *Zwingli*, 30-31.

³⁴Rogge, *Zwingli*, 23; Arthur Rich, *Die Anfänge der Theologie Huldrych Zwinglis*, (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1949), 22-24.

³⁵Rogge and Rich place the meeting in 1515, following the 1515 dating of letter #29 (dated 29 April 1515; Z VII, 35). Rogge, *Zwingli*, 23; Rich, *Anfänge*, 17-21. Köhler proposes a 1516 date for the letter and the meeting with Erasmus. Köhler, *Zwingli*, 33.

³⁶Köhler, *Zwingli*, 39.

³⁷Köhler, *Zwingli*, 40-43. He concludes, "Die zwei Einsiedler Jahre standen ganz unter der Wirkung des Erasmus von Rotterdam und seiner Friedensabsichten.", 40. Rogge, "Initia," 110, 125.

interests.³⁸ The impact of Zwingli's experience with the great pilgrimage festival at Einsiedeln is debated.³⁹ The importance of Zwingli's access to the excellent library and his enhanced opportunities for study is certain.⁴⁰ During these formative years Zwingli increasingly takes up the cause of humanist reform and emerges as an important figure in the Swiss circle of young humanists.

The young priest that accepted the call to Zurich in January, 1519, was clearly an Erasmian humanist.⁴¹ By 1520, however, a clear divergence had emerged between the young humanist and his mentor, Erasmus.⁴² By 1522, that divergence would become an open break. One result of that shift would be a reevaluation of humanist perspectives. The elements involved, and the course of that shift will be treated in the following section. But it remains to consider what the lasting contribution of Zwingli's humanism would be.

Despite the break that he makes with humanism Zwingli reflects the influence of humanism throughout his life.⁴³ Zwingli's thought, however, would reflect significant areas of discontinuity with humanism as well. The degree of his reliance upon humanism as a base for his theological development would vary

³⁸Potter, *Zwingli*, 42-44.

³⁹Köhler, *Zwingli*, 40-43.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 43.

⁴¹McGrath, *Origins*, 49; Rich, *Anfänge*, 70.

⁴²Rich, *Anfänge*, 96; Ulrich Gäbler, "Huldrych Zwinglis 'Reformatatorische Wende'," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 89(1978): 123-125.

⁴³Rogge, *Zwingli*, 7,47.

widely with the issue under consideration.⁴⁴ He also retains humanist content or terminology, but within a different system of thought or with a new (reformed) meaning.⁴⁵ A thorough study of the areas of continuity and discontinuity is beyond the scope of this study. What is relevant for our consideration, however, is the fact that humanist positions cannot merely be assumed to be the explanation or basis for Zwingli's thought. Further, a caution should be raised against too quickly assuming that use of humanist language or argument necessarily implies a simply humanist position. Finally, it is clear that there are other issues of concern to Zwingli that override his early humanist views. For the sake of those issues earlier positions are abandoned or modified, indicating their relative importance to Zwingli. Zwingli remains shaped by his humanism, but his views will require careful consideration on their own merits.

By 1515 Zwingli is turning increased attention to study of the Scriptures and calling increasingly for an agenda of reform. By 1516 Zwingli can claim to hold to the authority of scripture over traditions of the church. This movement intensifies in the Einsiedeln period leading to his call to Zurich. Whether or not one should date Zwingli's conversion to reformed faith in this period is a matter of debate.⁴⁶ One's

⁴⁴Rich, *Anfänge*, 15-16; Rudolf Pfister, *Die Seligkeit erwählter Heiden bei Zwingli*, (Zollikon-Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1952), 22-23, 30-31, 104; Locher, *Theologie*, 91; McGrath, *Origins*, 41, 49-50.

⁴⁵Rich, *Anfänge*, 144, 161, 166; Locher, *Theologie*, 92-93.

⁴⁶See Wilhelm Neuser, *Die Reformatorische Wende bei Zwingli*, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977), 12; Rich, *Anfänge*, 16; Köhler, *Zwingli*, 40-43; Gunter Zimmerman, "Der Durchbruch zur Reformation nach dem Zeugen Ulrich Zwinglis vom Jahre 1523," *Zwingliana* 17(1986): 111, 114, 120.

conclusion is largely determined by the definitions applied in the debate.⁴⁷

Resolution of that question is beyond the scope of our consideration here. What does seem clear is that by 1519 Zwingli has not yet arrived at a mature faith. There are significant developments yet to take place. It is to those developments that we turn next.

As a result of the crisis of 1519/20 Zwingli makes a fundamental shift in his theology. For the purpose of our study we want to identify and follow the impact of that shift, with particular attention to his sacramental thought. We will set to the side the question of whether this theological affirmation should be understood as the point of conversion to reformation faith. We shall be content to attempt to identify and characterize this shift in Zwingli's thought and its impact on Zwingli's subsequent development.

The issue in question is the nature of God and the means by which he deals redemptively with Man. This understanding is revealed and worked out in Zwingli's treatment of providence and the possibility of human activity functioning as a secondary cause within the realm of that providence. Zwingli inherits the terms of the debate and works within traditional categories. God is the primary cause of all things. Humans may not aspire to primary causality. We may, however, be understood to effect a secondary causality. That is, we may exercise a certain freedom of action and choice. It is traditionally affirmed that a person exercises such freedom with regard to things "below" them. That is, with regard to selection of specific actions such as eating and drinking, selecting clothes to wear, etc. a person may exercise a certain prerogative of choice. The question at issue for

⁴⁷Neuser, *Wende*, 7-13; Rogge, *Zwingli*, 10; Gottfried.W. Locher, "The Changes in the Understanding of Zwingli in Recent Research", *Church History* 34(1965), 8-9; Zimmerman, "Durchbruch," 108.

Zwingli is whether or not we may effect spiritual reality by the exercise of such freedom. Can the free action of Man be rightly understood as a cause (even secondary) of God's gracious activity in moral and spiritual renewal?

In his early thought it is clear that Zwingli affirmed just such a possibility. Zwingli's concern and activism on behalf of reform in the confederacy was accompanied by a confidence that man could, by his action, effect such a change.⁴⁸ His early view of God's predestination was one which Zwingli attributes to Thomas Aquinas, based upon God's foreknowledge.⁴⁹ Under the influence of Erasmus and his circle of humanist friends Zwingli placed his hope on the prospect of a Christian renaissance. By a return to the sources and meditation upon the "philosophia Christi" man could be led to renewal, leading in turn to societal renewal. Grace would certainly play a part but emphasis was placed upon strong confidence in the free will of man. Man was, himself, capable of moving toward the "Christianismus renascens."⁵⁰ In fact, not only was man capable of accomplishing that renaissance, but its success was believed to be imminent. Zwingli and his friends believed that a new day was about to dawn that would sweep Europe.⁵¹ As late as December 31, 1519 Zwingli expresses optimism about the success of the coming renaissance.⁵²

By July 24, 1520 Zwingli is speaking in language that puts increased emphasis upon our submission to, and dependence upon, God.⁵³ By 1521 his

⁴⁸Rich, *Anfänge*, 67-68.

⁴⁹OP, 184; Rother, *Grundlagen*, 120-121.

⁵⁰Rich, *Anfänge*, 70.

⁵¹Ibid., 67-68.

⁵²Ibid., 97.

⁵³Ibid., 96-97.

correspondence shows an explicit rejection of free will.⁵⁴ Affirmation of man's free will and participation in the optimistically awaited renaissance is replaced by the contradictory affirmation of God's absolute providence and a denial of secondary causality to human religious efforts.⁵⁵ Apart from the question of how this relates to his reformed conversion, it is certain that this movement reflects an important shift from his earlier thought. It is characteristic *only* of his reformed period. To what cause can we attribute this fundamental and relatively rapid shift in Zwingli's thought?

Rich identifies three events that occur from the fall of 1519 to the summer of 1520 which challenge Zwingli's formerly man-focused confidence. The first is the occurrence of the plague in Zurich. In September, 1519, Zwingli falls victim himself to the plague. Although he recovers after a close brush with death he is abruptly confronted with his own mortality.⁵⁶ The death of his brother, with whom he was very close, could not help but serve to underscore the fragile nature of human existence for Zwingli. In reflection upon his experience he wrote his *Pestlied* (Plague-song). It reveals Zwingli's concern, not primarily for his own life, but for the prospect of his death just in the critical hour of the battle for reform in Zurich. The resolution to this concern is found in the assurance that the battle rests in God's hands. He will see the battle through. Zwingli's confidence for his own

⁵⁴Ibid., 146-147.

⁵⁵CTFR, 114, 271, 91, 272; OP, 203. "The deeply pessimistic view of man which Zwingli now adopts contrasts sharply with his own earlier views, as well as those of Erasmus. Linked with this pessimistic theological anthropology is a strong doctrine of providence...by which man's fate is understood to be determined by divine predestination." McGrath, *Origins*, 51.

⁵⁶Rich, *Anfänge*, 104.

part of the Christian "renascens," and in its ultimate success, must be placed entirely in God's hands.⁵⁷

The second event that shook Zwingli's confidence in the "Christianismus renascens" was his disillusionment with the Roman church. Zwingli's confidence in the will of the Church for reform was shattered by the publication of the "Exsurge Domine" against Martin Luther on June 15, 1520.⁵⁸ It was primarily in his role as a leader in the Christian renaissance that Zwingli admired Luther. Called to reform by the prophetic figure of Luther, Zwingli and his friends optimistically expected the Church to respond by confession and reform.⁵⁹ The Bull against Luther dashed any such hopes and left no possibility for quick or certain reform.

The third development in this critical period was Zwingli's disillusionment with the humanists themselves. As the lines were drawn between the Roman church and Luther many humanists began to defect from his ranks of supporters. Particularly the older humanists rejected confrontation with the church in the hopes of internal (and peaceful) reform.⁶⁰ But to Zwingli, they seemed to abandon the champion of the Christian renaissance just in the critical hour. Zwingli's writings betray keen disappointment and disillusionment at this betrayal by those he had admired and trusted.⁶¹

⁵⁷Rich, *Anfänge*, 115, 113-114; Rogge, "Initia," 129-130.

⁵⁸Rich, *Anfänge*, 99-100.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 75-77; Rogge, *Zwingli*, 46; Köhler, *Zwingli*, 62-63.

⁶⁰Rich, *Anfänge*, 99-103. See Bernd Moeller's essay "The German Humanists and the Beginnings of the Reformation" in *Imperial Cities and the Reformation*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972; reprint, Durham: Labyrinth Press, 1982), 19-38.

⁶¹Rich, *Anfänge*, 101-102; McGrath, *Origins*, 49.

These events challenged Zwingli's hope for renewal in the church and reform in the confederacy. They result in the loss of Zwingli's optimism and confidence in the efforts of human institutions and movements. However, despite his lost optimism in the prospect of reform through human agency his concern remained focused on the urgent need for reform. Rich postulates the starting question of Zwingli's shift in this way. "How can the renaissance of Christianity triumph in a world that rises up in demonic opposition to it?"⁶² How can the renaissance succeed when it is dependent upon human individuals or institutions that are so uncertain? Zwingli's concern for an answer to this question moves him to the fundamental shift in his thought which we have identified.⁶³ "To begin with Zwingli was something of a humanistic idealistic and pacifist reformer, but then, in the fearful terror of judgment, he discovered that only the Gospel could still save his people and Christendom."⁶⁴ And that Gospel must be understood to place full confidence in the absolute sovereignty of God.⁶⁵ This key shift in Zwingli's thought will prove critical to the development of Zwingli's sacramental theology.

One final area of concern in determining Zwingli's formation is his relation to Martin Luther and the influence Luther exerted on Zwingli. Zwingli's early

⁶²Rich, *Anfänge*, 169. See discussion in Gäbler, "Wende," 123-125.

⁶³"The humanist vision of the reform of man and the church through a programme of education is now regarded by Zwingli as unrealistic; what is required is a divine reformation of both the individual and the church in which God, rather than man, is regarded as the chief agent." McGrath, *Origins*, 52.

⁶⁴Locher, *Zwingli's Thought*, 14.

⁶⁵CTFR, 272. Gäbler concurs with Rich's identification of a shift and the resulting consequences for Zwingli's theology but proposes understanding the shift in terms of a change in Zwingli's understanding of history. Gäbler, "Wende," 125-126.

development almost certainly took place without significant exposure to Luther. It is December of 1518 before Luther's name appears in Zwingli's correspondence.⁶⁶ For Zwingli and his fellow humanist reformers this was a period of growing activism and agitation for reform. It is in the context of this movement that Luther is received as a leader in reform. In what Moeller calls "a constructive misunderstanding" Luther is warmly regarded by the humanists as a whole.⁶⁷ Similarly, Zwingli hails Luther as a courageous humanist combatant against corrupted tradition, calling him an "Elijah."⁶⁸ It is the perceived betrayal of Luther in this role by the conservative humanists that helps to prompt his disillusionment discussed above.

The question of Luther's role as a substantive contributor to Zwingli's developing thought is another matter. By 1523 Zwingli is protesting against being labelled as a "Lutheran" and denying significant exposure to, or influence from, Luther's writings.⁶⁹ We have already seen that Zwingli - like most of his humanist circle - began from a different philosophical and theological foundation than Luther.⁷⁰ Through his early reformed development Zwingli worked largely

⁶⁶Significantly, it appears in a letter *to* Zwingli (from Beatus Rhenanus), rather than *from* him. Rich, *Anfänge*, 73; Rogge, *Zwingli*, 46; Köhler, *Zwingli*, 60-61.

⁶⁷Moeller, *Imperial Cities*, 29, 26-27. Moeller concludes, "we know of hardly a single humanist who did not at least once in those early years have a friendly word to say about Luther." 26.

⁶⁸Köhler, *Zwingli*, 62-63; Rich, *Anfänge*, 75-77.

⁶⁹Köhler, *Zwingli*, 65.

⁷⁰Moeller, *Imperial Cities*, 29; Rogge, *Zwingli*, 46. See Alister McGrath's careful and illuminating study in *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation*.

independent of significant Lutheran influence.⁷¹ Rich's conclusion seems merited, that Luther "did not have, in any sense, decisive influence upon (Zwingli's) theological development."⁷²

The importance of this issue is in our awareness of foundational differences in Luther and Zwingli's respective theological systems. These differences extend to their basic understanding of God. Luther struggles with the "hidden" God whose character and intent is not readily evident to human intellect. Zwingli's understanding of God is based upon God's simplicity and inability to deceive.⁷³ Luther understands God's revelation to challenge or even oppose the human understanding of highest good, while Zwingli understands God as the *realization* of the conception of highest good.⁷⁴ This may indicate that the later sacramental

⁷¹Rich, *Anfänge*, 79-89; Köhler, *Zwingli*, 74; Moeller, *Imperial Cities*, 35-36. Brecht's argument that Zwingli should be understood as a disciple and product of Luther's influence prior to 1522 does not seem compelling. See Martin Brecht, "Zwingli als Schüler Luthers - Zu Seiner theologischen Entwicklung 1518-1522," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 96(1985), 301-319. Brecht contends that Zwingli's understanding of justification by faith (contemporary with Luther) is unlikely to be the result of an independent discovery. Therefore, indications that Zwingli may have had more extensive familiarity with Luther suggest to Brecht the likelihood that Zwingli gained his initial understanding from Luther. He allows that Zwingli's humanism and creativity produce (from that beginning) an independent originality in Zwingli's thought. Brecht overlooks, however, fundamental differences in the understanding of faith and justification between Luther and Zwingli. Zwingli's understanding of the role and character of faith will be evident in the course of this study. See also Zimmerman, "Durchbruch," 99-101, 117-118.

⁷²Luther "hat keineswegs auf die theologische Entwicklung entscheidend eingewirkt." Rich, *Anfänge*, 95.

⁷³"Luther entdeckt das verborgene und darum mit weltlicher Vernunft und Empirik nicht zu fassende Handeln und Wesen Gottes. Zwingli findet den für Erwählte fasslichen, unparadoxen und eindeutig erfahrbaren Gott." Gestrich, *Zwingli*, 37.

⁷⁴Gestrich, *Zwingli*, 38.

controversy begins from fundamentally different perspectives. The differences that surfaced in the controversy would reflect not only conflicting sacramental views but conflicting systems of thought.⁷⁵

Although the issues that bring them to spiritual crisis are different, both reformers despair of human ability to accomplish moral and spiritual reform. Their resolution of that dilemma is shaped by their understanding of God and his character. Luther's God is an "uncertain" partner whom we encounter as both hidden and revealed. We seek some means of assurance before him. Zwingli does not seek or require any such reassurance regarding the character of God or his intentions toward man. His writings reveal an understanding of God overflowing with goodness and benevolence. God is good and kind, anxious to be the giver of good and perfect gifts. If Zwingli's confidence in man is shaken, his confidence in God remains untouched. His optimism remains, with the object of that confidence clearly found in the kind face of God. To this God we may ascribe unrestrained freedom in his dealings with us without fear or uncertainty. It is this understanding which allows Zwingli the opportunity to find assurance in the affirmation of God's absolute providence. It is to this assurance that he will tenaciously cling.

This brief overview may allow us to place Zwingli into his own context as we consider the development of his sacramental thought. He is a man with an enduring agenda - the reform and salvation of his (Swiss) society. With foundations of his thought rooted in traditional scholasticism he is profoundly shaped by the impulses of humanism. Sympathetic to Luther and supportive of his reform efforts,

⁷⁵"Es wäre verfehlt zu meinen, erst jetzt (in the sacramental controversy) entwickelten beide ihre gegensätzlichen Standpunkte. Sie waren in der vorpolemischen Zeit von Anfang an gegeben." Rogge, "Initia," 131, 114. Also Rogge, *Zwingli*, 12, 50. "Zwingli hatte eine andere Vorbildung, einen anderen Charakter und wohl auch ein anderes Weltbild als Luther." Gestrinch, *Zwingli*, 86.

Zwingli is more significantly influenced by Augustine, Aquinas, Erasmus, and the Greek New Testament. All of these sources are called into question by the crisis of 1519/20 and, to some extent, are redefined for Zwingli by it. It is only as we attempt to understand him as the product of this development that we can hope to understand Zwingli on his own terms.

CHAPTER THREE

EARLY WRITINGS

Zwingli's most thorough discussion of his position on the Supper in this early period is found in his *Auslegen und Gründe der Schlußreden*. Article 18 is our particular interest, addressing the understanding of the sacrament of the Supper.¹ This document outlines Zwingli's reformed understanding in contrast to the Roman church. While Luther appears, it is as a fellow reformer, not yet an opponent. As we review this work we will give particular attention to our three questions, or areas of investigation.

In Article 18 Zwingli affirms the adequacy of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice and his initiative in offering himself. This affirmation is understood to refute the idea of the mass as a sacrificial offering. Rather, it should be seen as a remembrance and surety of the salvation which Christ has already obtained for those having faith.² Zwingli identifies three foundational positions that undergird this article. The first is the office of Christ. This office identifies Christ as the initiative priest who, alone, has made the sacrificial offering of himself. Secondly, Scripture, specifically Hebrews, affirms the character of Christ's priesthood and sacrifice. Finally, the

¹*Auslegen und Gründe der Schlußreden*, Z II, 111-157.

²Article 18 - Das Christus sich selbs einest uffgeopferet, in die Ewigkeit ein wärend und bezalend Opfer ist für aller gleubigen Sünd; daruss ermessen würt, die Messe nit ein Opfer, sunder des Opffers ein Widergedächtnus sin und Sichrung der Erlösung, die Christus uns bewisen hat. Z II, 111.

perfection of Christ's sacrifice does not require or allow for addition or repetition. Taken together, Zwingli's arguments build on the defense of Christ's initiative and the adequacy of the sacrifice offered.³

Zwingli proceeds in his first section to address that affirmation at greater length. Drawing freely from New Testament Scripture, primarily Hebrews 9 & 10, Zwingli demonstrates the superiority and efficacy of Christ's sacrifice. In contrast to the partial and inadequate priestly offering of the Old Testament temple, Christ's sacrifice is complete.⁴ It is the sacrifice which is solely and eternally adequate for the salvation of humanity.⁵ Zwingli proposes to paraphrase the words of institution as a proclamation of that eternal, universal and adequate sacrifice. The presentation of the bread and cup are a proclamation of the gospel.⁶

The repetition and representation of Christ's sacrifice is a denial and denigration of it. Repetition reduces the sacrifice to the level of the Old Testament sacrifices.⁷ Such a denial of the unique character of Christ's sacrifice by repetition "would be a denigration and defamation of the perfection of that sacrifice."⁸ Further, the repetition of Christ's sacrifice in the Supper boldly asserts human

³Z II, 112.

⁴Z II, 113-114, 118.

⁵"So tūr und werd ist es vor gott, das es in die ewigheyt für alle menschen das pfand and wārd ist, durch das sy allein zâ got kummend." Z II, 114-115.

⁶Z II, 115-116, 118.

⁷Z II 113.

⁸"...wäre ie ein mindrung und schmach der volkommenheit des opfers." Z II, 114.

authority and tradition over God's authority in Scripture and human initiative over Christ's initiative at his sacrifice.⁹

Zwingli then proceeds to argue that affirmation of Christ's sacrifice - totally adequate, at Christ's initiative - precludes understanding the Mass as an offering. He argues emphatically that it is the papists, not he, who demean the sacrament and rob it of its meaning.¹⁰ This is because the concepts of (repeated) offering and sacrament are contradictory. A sacrament has covenantal character. It is a sign pointing to a covenantal promise given by God. Zwingli affirms the traditional definition of the sacrament as a sign of a sacred thing, understanding the thing signified to be God's covenantal promise. If Christ is a sacrificial offering in the repeated sacrament the sign and thing signified have become confused.¹¹ Confusing the simple, the papists have stripped the sacrament of its character as a sure sign. Only when the body and blood celebrated in the supper point to the eternal covenant of redemption based on Christ's sacrifice and God's promise can the certain character of the sign be established and the Supper rightly termed a sacrament.¹²

It is this character of the sacrament that concerns Zwingli and not any consideration of the elements themselves. "the simple should understand that we do not contend here over whether the body and blood of Christ is eaten and drunk (for no Christian questions this), but rather, whether this is an offering or a

⁹Z II, 116, 118.

¹⁰Z II, 119-120.

¹¹Z II, 120-121.

¹²Z II, 122, 125.

remembrance."¹³ Zwingli repeats his earlier argument that to repeat the offering is to assume human initiative in the sacrament, demeaning the offering and presuming upon God.¹⁴ A human offering in the Supper is appropriate, but as the grateful response of the disciple to the sacrifice of Christ. The simple are reassured by the certain remembrance of God's eternal covenant established by Christ's one-time sacrifice on the cross. The power of the sacrament is not in the celebration of it, but in the certain covenant to which it points.¹⁵ Zwingli concludes that the Supper is "not an offering, but a remembrance of the offering of Christ, who died once for all."¹⁶

Zwingli proceeds to a consideration of the concepts of offering and remembrance in light of the gospel and I Corinthian texts on the Last Supper. In the discussion we discover some now-familiar themes. Zwingli is emphatic in his protection of Christ's initiative in making the sacrificial offering.¹⁷ The assurance of the Supper is drawn from the adequacy of Christ's sacrifice and God's eternal covenant which the Supper proclaims but does not convey.¹⁸ This subtle disjunction

¹³"Hie söllend die einvaltigen lernen, das man hie nit strydet, ob der fronlychnam und blöit Christi geessen und truncken werde (dann daran zwyflet dheinem Christen), sunder ob es ein opfer sye oder nun ein widergedächtnus." Z II, 128.

¹⁴Z II, 128-129.

¹⁵Z II, 127, 130.

¹⁶"...nit ein opffer, sunder ein sichre widergedächtnus sin des einest getödtten opffers Christi." Z II, 130.

¹⁷Z II, 130.

¹⁸Z II, 131-132.

is amplified by Zwingli's description of the internal, spiritual reception of grace.¹⁹ Nonetheless, he understands the sacrament as having been given for our assurance and encouragement.²⁰

Zwingli digresses to a critique of the practice of the celebration of the Supper in one kind only. In that discussion he refers to the elements as "himelschen spyß".²¹ While this seems to elevate the elements Zwingli continues by asserting that the elements are not necessary to the reception of grace, "for when you have believed in Christ as your salvation you have, through faith, found salvation even if the elements in both kinds should be withheld from you."²²

Zwingli then returns to his consideration of the Mark and Luke texts. In that discussion he redefines the "cup" that is drunk as the covenant of grace which is received. The words of institution (from Luke) "have the meaning; this drink is the new testament or covenant which is established through my blood, which is poured out for you, or that in my blood, which is poured out for you, (this covenant) has foundation and power."²³ Zwingli paraphrases the words of Christ as proposing that

¹⁹Z II, 132.

²⁰Z II, 132.

²¹Z II, 133.

²²"...dann wenn sy Jesum Christum ggloubt hand ir heyl sin, so hand sy im glouben heyl funden, ob inen schon bed gestalten entzogen wärind." Z II, 134.

²³"...habend den sinn; Das tranck ist das nūw testament oder pund, das durch min blüt, das für üch vergossen wirt, uffgericht wirdt, oder das in minem t, das für üch vergossen wirdt, krafft und grund hat." Z II, 135-136.

eating and drinking should be understood as remembrance, "that you renew with remembrance the inheritance which I have given to you."²⁴

In Zwingli's discussion of I Corinthians 11:23-26 he displays again an ambiguity concerning the elements. He refers to the reception of the sacramental elements as "sin fleisch und blüt niessen".²⁵ However, his characterization of Paul's teaching focuses on spiritual remembrance of the covenant of grace which God has instituted on our behalf. Paul's understanding of remembrance is an inner response of thanksgiving for the sacrifice of Christ that has restored us in relation to God.²⁶ In his review of these texts Zwingli finds "widergedächtnus" affirmed over the inappropriate category of "opffer".

Zwingli moves to an illuminating discussion of his position vis-a-vis Luther. While he has for some years referred to the Supper as a "widergedächtnus" he sees no conflict with Luther's more recent characterization (in Zwingli's chronology) of the Supper as "Testament".²⁷ Rather, the terms complement one another. Testament refers to the substance of the sacrament, "the nature, character and essence of the body and blood of Christ." Remembrance refers to the human activity of the sacrament the customary form or practice by which we celebrate the sacrament.²⁸ In

²⁴"...das ir ernüwring mit widerdencken die gûthat, die ich ûch bewisen hab." Z II, 136.

²⁵Z II, 137.

²⁶"...nüt anderst, denn ein innige dancksagung der gûthat und widergedächtnus sines demuetigen lydens, damit er uns got vereinet hat, welchs on zweyfel den gleubigen menschen so frölich gemacht, das er uns die gûthat gottes nit gnôg ußrueffen noch ruemen." Z II, 137.

²⁷Z II, 137-138.

²⁸"...die natur, eigenschaft und wesen deß fronlychnams und blüts Christi." Z II, 138.

other words, Zwingli is proposing that Luther refers to the objective covenant of grace towards which the sacrament points while he is describing the subjective practice of receiving, or apprehending, that covenant, or testament.²⁹ He affirms the objective content of the Supper, but in terms of the eternal covenant, or testament, which it proclaims and which we "receive" by remembrance. "The eating and reception of the testament is, finally, nothing other than a remembrance."³⁰ This timely apprehension of God's eternal covenant (or testament) makes the Supper a source of assurance. "Dis spyß ein trost ist der seel."³¹

Zwingli next proposes to offer a characterization of the Supper and how it should be understood. In it he draws primarily from John 6, affirming John 6:63, "Der geist machet lebendig, das fleisch ist nüt nüt."³² It is, however, no abstract argument from a perspective of a spirit/flesh dualism. More correctly, it is a Spirit/flesh dualism that concerns Zwingli and informs his position. He does not denigrate the idea of the material, but affirms the transcendence of the divine as our source of assurance. "For what could so certainly restore wretched man as the word of his

²⁹Zwingli ist, wie er sorgfältig ausführ, nicht der Auffassung, daß die beiden Anschauungen übereinstimmen, sondern daß sie sich ergänzen, um zusammen das Abendmahlsgeschehen verständlich zu machen." Zimmerman, "Durchbruch," 105.

³⁰Z II, 138. "So wir inemend und niessend das gât diß testaments, thünd wir nüt anderst, weder das wir vestenklich gloubend, daß Jesus Christus, der unschuldig und gerecht, für uns armen sündler einest uffgeopfert und tödt, unser sünd vor got versuent and bezahlt hab in die ewigkeit, und zu sicherheit sin eigen fleisch und blüt zu einer spyß ggeben."

³¹Z II, 141.

³²Z II, 142.

creator?"³³ It is the apprehension of this word of God's covenant of grace that empowers the sacrament. For "what is the nourishment of the soul except the certainty that Jesus Christ is your salvation before God."³⁴ Just as the initiative in the sacrifice is reserved to Christ, alone, so the apprehension of the covenant is at the Spirit's initiation. Man may celebrate the Supper as a meal of covenantal remembrance, but the Spirit, alone, "causes the human heart to have faith, thus giving it life."³⁵

Zwingli offers his own paraphrases of the words of Christ that illuminate his understanding of the Supper. He understands the presentation and reception of the elements in terms of the proclamation of the gospel and its apprehension by faith.

The bread which I give to you is my body, This means that the only word that strengthens the soul and gives life is that you believe that I am your salvation and redemptive offering before God...Whoever eats my body and drinks my blood has eternal life. That means, if you don't place your trust in the body and blood of Jesus Christ - that is, in his death, which is your life - you will not have life...This is how the words of Christ should be understood, as the word of faith signified in the words of flesh and blood.³⁶

³³"Dann was möchte den trostlosen menschen so sicher widerbringen als das wort sines schöpfers?" Z II, 141.

³⁴"...was ist die spyß der seel anderst, weder daß sy sicher ist, das Jesus Christus ir heyl sye vor got." Z II, 141-142.

³⁵"...macht das hertz des menschen gleubig, und denn so sye der mensch lebendig." Z II, 143.

³⁶"Das brot das ich üch geben wird, das ist min lychnam. Hat dise meinung: Das, so die sel sterckt und lebendig macht, ist das einig wort, daß sy gloubet, das ich ir heyl und bezalend oppfer bin vor got...Welcher da isßt minem lychnam und trinckt min blüt, der hat ewigs leben. Hat ouch die meinung: Setzend üwren trost nit in den lychnam und blüt Christi, das ist: in sinen tod, der üwer leben ist, so ist dhein leben in üch...Das aber dise wort Christi also söllind

For Zwingli the Supper is a celebration that points entirely beyond itself to salvation through Christ by faith.³⁷

That perspective produces an ambivalence in Zwingli's regard for the elements in the Supper. He affirms them as given by Christ in order that the simple would find the covenantal testament of grace easier to apprehend. The visible elements serve to reassure faith (in the simple).³⁸ They do not, however, have any power apart from faith. Since the initiation of faith is reserved to the activity of the Holy Spirit the elements (and Supper) are effectively empty without the initiative of the Holy Spirit. This absence of binding and reliance upon God's initiative is not a source of concern for Zwingli. Rather it is a source of assurance. For God "by nature, wills to love humanity out of his greatness."³⁹ It is Zwingli's transcendent focus in the Supper, rather than any disdain for the material elements, that leads him to minimize their importance. His attention to the eternal covenant of grace which they proclaim results in a relative disinterest in the elements themselves or what happens to them in the Supper.⁴⁰

From here Zwingli makes an extended digression into his relationship to Luther in the development of his thought. While this is a rich passage for historical investigation it does not pertain, for the most part, to our subject. While affirming Luther's teaching and, especially, his role as a reformer, Zwingli goes to some

verstanden werden, das sy das wort des gloubens bedütend under den worten des fleischs und blüts." Z II, 142.

³⁷Z II, 143.

³⁸Z II, 143.

³⁹"...hat die natur, das sy sich wil mit irer grösse den menschen lieben." Z II, 144.

⁴⁰Z II, 144.

lengths to assert his independence of Luther in his discovery and development of reformed faith. While there are overtones of self-defense, there are also some themes familiar to us. His rejection of Luther as the leading source in the reformation returns to a defense of Christ's initiative in redemption.

Pious Christians, concerning this issue let us not transform the name of Christ into the name of Luther; for Luther did not die on our behalf, rather he teaches us to acknowledge him through whom, alone, we have salvation. ⁴¹

In fact, Zwingli sees in the similarities between Luther and himself as a confirmation that the Spirit is the initiator and common source of reformation teaching.⁴² At this stage in his career Zwingli is complimentary and affirmative of Luther. But he is unwilling to allow Luther's importance to overshadow or diminish the fundamental initiative of the Spirit of God.

Zwingli returns more directly to the topic of the Supper in his final section. He reiterates the complementary character of the concepts of "testament" and "remembrance". The Supper is a remembrance of the testament established by God for our benefit. The testament is not contained in the Supper, itself, nor are the benefits of the testament mediated necessarily through the sacrament. Rather the Supper points beyond itself to the certain eternal covenant of grace which God has established. "The body and blood of Christ are an eternal covenant, inheritance or

⁴¹Hierumb lassend uns, frommen Christen, den eerlichen namen Christi nit verwandelt werden in den namen Luters; denn Luter ist nit für uns gestorben, sunder lert er uns erkennen den, von dem wir allein alles heyl habend. Z II, 149.

⁴²Z II, 150.

testament, so that when one eats and drinks he does not make an offering, but rather remembers and renews that which Christ has done, once for all."⁴³

Zwingli marshalls his closing arguments against the category of "offering" in the Mass. He cites Chrysostom and Nicholas of Lyra as examples of important teachers who affirm the understanding of the Supper as a remembrance. However, at the same time he allows that others have - unscripturally - called the Mass an "offering".⁴⁴ Finally, the argument rests on the compromise of the role and initiative of Christ threatened by the teaching of "offering".⁴⁵ Zwingli demonstrates his urgent concern to avoid distraction from God's initiative in establishing an eternal covenant of grace. He does not want to bring the covenant "down" into the sacrament, but to point "up" through remembrance in the sacrament. It is the eternal, transcendent covenant that is the focus of the sacrament of the Supper.⁴⁶ It is that eternal covenant, remembered in the Supper, which gives Zwingli assurance of forgiveness and salvation.

Only a few weeks after the publication of Zwingli's *Auslegen* he addressed the issue of the Supper in a major work, *De canone missae epichiresis*.⁴⁷ This work

⁴³"Der fronlychnam und blüt Christi sind ein ewig gmächt, erb oder testament; so man den ißt und trinckt, opffert man nit, sunder man widergedenckt und ernüweret das, so Christus einest gethon hat." Z II, 150

⁴⁴Z II, 151-153.

⁴⁵Z II, 153.

⁴⁶...got verheißt, er werde einen ewigen pundt mit uns treffen, die gwüssen und getrüwen erbärmbden Davids. Disen pundt hat alle menschen davor wol verstanden gemacht unnd gevestet sin mit dem blüt Christi, dereinewigen gottist; so ist ouch das testament ewig. Z II, 156.

⁴⁷Z II, 552-608. "De canone missae epichiresis" was written August 19-22, 1523. For a modern German translation and notes, see Fritz Schmidt-Clausing, *Zwinglis Kanonversuch*, (Frankfurt a.M.:Verlag Otto Lembeck, 1969).

offers an illuminating consideration of Zwingli's sacramental theology from a different perspective, that of liturgical theology.⁴⁸ As a liturgical reformer Zwingli demonstrates the key issues at stake for him in the struggle to correct and create appropriate liturgy. As such, *De canone* is a window into Zwingli's theology "at work."⁴⁹

De canone is addressed to Theobald von Geroldseck, an early mentor to Zwingli from Einsiedeln.⁵⁰ In his opening remarks directed to Theobald Zwingli proclaims the present and certain future triumph of God's providence through Christ. This is true despite the strenuous exertions of the opponents of God's work. Zwingli remarks, "...you see how, by divine providence, the seed of Christ continues to grow...None of the obstacles of God's word - their weapons of war, deceptions, howling or artifice can prevent its growth."⁵¹ In the midst of the struggle, Zwingli is confident of the outcome.⁵²

Despite the further outcry which Zwingli expects, he concludes that it is time to undertake the reform of the canon of the mass. It is, he cautions, a preliminary effort. He is not completely satisfied with himself, but feels the necessity to make a

⁴⁸Schmidt-Clausing, *Kanonversuch*, 3.

⁴⁹"So kann man ohne Mühe in dem 'Kanonversuch' von 1523 ein dogmatisches Kompendium Zwinglischer Theologie sehen." Schmidt-Clausing, *Kanonversuch*, 4. Schmidt-Clausing contends that Zwingli deserves attention as the first reformed liturgist. 5.

⁵⁰"Ego vero ante omnes debitor sum, quod annis iam non adeo paucis ita faveris, colueris, tutatus sis, ut pareus not potuisset melius aut dexterius." Z II, 560.

⁵¹"...vides, inquam, ut divina providentia fiat, ut Christi seges tam foeliciter herbescat,...Hec omnia verbi dei, obstacula, arma, hypocrisis, ploratus, insidiae, incrementum eius sistere non possunt." Z II, 556.

⁵²"Sanguine suo peperit eccleaiam Christus, sanguine rursum lustrabit. Non est igitur, ut anxie nimus scandali rationem ultra habeamus." Z II, 557.

beginning.⁵³ The people can discover the spiritual possibilities available to those who seek to strengthen their souls with heavenly food and drink.⁵⁴ That can only happen when the canon undergoes radical reform. That reform must be ordered by the Word of God. "When this (the Word of God) can be kept forever whole and unchanged, then the heart of the whole issue is sure."⁵⁵ True faith issues in the kind of confidence which perseveres courageously in the face of opposition.⁵⁶

Zwingli opens his treatment of the canon by declaring that it is an effort to bring to light multiple errors that are misleading the people. He asserts his right to reconsider the canon on the basis of historical precedents. Gregory, Alexander, Leo and Sergius serve as examples of historical development and reconsideration of the canon. Such precedents argue for the propriety of Zwingli's undertaking.⁵⁷

He immediately considers the foundational understanding of the mass. The linguistic roots of "mass" in the Hebrew "missah" have allowed a misunderstanding. Reuchlin allows the meaning of the offering of personal achievement to God. This interpretation Zwingli adamantly rejects. Any suggestion of a correlation between the presentation of a tribute offering to God and the Eucharist is entirely inappropriate.⁵⁸ Zwingli is anxious to place the focus of the Eucharist on the work of God's grace already done which is celebrated in the present. Zwingli's preferred

⁵³In order to make a deadline for the Frankfurter Messe Zwingli completes "De canone" in only four days. Z II, 557.

⁵⁴Z II, 557.

⁵⁵"Que si integra semper ac immutata servantur, iam huius rei summa integra manet." Z II, 559.

⁵⁶Z II, 559.

⁵⁷Z II, 564-567.

⁵⁸Z II, 567-568.

designation, "Eucharist", suggests a proclamation of God's goodness and his gift of grace to us through the already-accomplished sacrifice of Christ.⁵⁹ As Zwingli moves to his textual consideration of the canon he quickly indicates the role and character of faith in the Eucharist. The congregation is constituted by those who trust in complete faith in Jesus Christ.⁶⁰ The benefit of the Eucharist must not rest on human works or priestly power, but solely on the sacrifice of Christ. Further, the benefit of Christ's sacrifice is conveyed only to those who come in faith.⁶¹ That faith is clearly not considered as a work or spiritual achievement, but an attitude of trust. "Consider only those as faithful and good sons of God who place all of their trust in God."⁶²

Such a faith perspective makes reference to the prayers of the saints inappropriate and unnecessary. "Whoever seeks to understand (God) from his word is so graciously received that he neither will, nor can, take refuge with any other."⁶³ True faith - as an attitude of absolute trust - excludes the necessity to exercise

⁵⁹"Nam eucharistia nomen aliud nihil quam hunc cibum et potum liberale bonumque dei donum et gratiam esse predicat, adeoque istud audet, quod deum iam videt ac sentit liberaliter hanc gratiam fecisse; unde ab eo, quod iam factum est, nomen natum est." Z II, 569.

⁶⁰Z II, 570-571.

⁶¹Z II, 571-572.

⁶²"Sed eos modo et fideles et bonos deique filios puta, qui omnem spem in deum iactant." Z II, 572.

⁶³"Quisquis eum ad hunc modum ex verbis suis cognoscere perrexerit, tam benigniter excipitur, ut post ad alium neminem vel cupiat vel possit confugere." Z II, 577. Also 575-577.

human means to prompt God's grace. "If my hope is in God, who I recognize as my father, why should I not hope for all things from him?"⁶⁴

This is not to say that our prayers are unnecessary or that our works are without any merit. God has a purpose in calling us to pray and scripture teaches the idea of reward for good works.⁶⁵ However, the credit for our works is the credit due an instrument, like the hammer in the hand of the silversmith. "For it is God who is at work in us, both to will and to bring to completion. We are his work and his instruments."⁶⁶ It is an error to ascribe to the instrument the work of the craftsman.

Zwingli immediately applies this principle to the Eucharist. It is an error to ascribe to the mass what is God's. "We are not able to come to God in any way through our merit, but through Christ alone."⁶⁷ The work of Christ has made all human merit unnecessary. To ascribe to human agency any power to effect the work of grace is to rob Christ.⁶⁸

It is the Word of God which is at the heart of the Eucharist. It is the nourishment by which the Spirit strengthens the human heart.⁶⁹ The Word of God is,

⁶⁴"Si enim spes mea deus est, si patrem esse cognosco, quid non omnia ab illo spero?" Z II, 577.

⁶⁵Z II, 577, 580. "Adparet ergo, quandoquidem deus operi nostro premia pollicetur et prestat etiam, meritum non nihil esse." Z II, 580.

⁶⁶"Deus enim est, qui operatur in nobis et velle et perficere; ipsius enim opus sumus, ipsius organa." Z II, 580.

⁶⁷"Nullis enim nostris meritis ad deum venire possumus, sed solo Christo." Z II, 581. Also, 580-581.

⁶⁸Z II, 581.

⁶⁹"Verbum igitur dei cibus est, qui ieiunam mentem fulcit hand secus atque corporeus panis cor hominis confirmat." Z II, 582.

however, not to be understood as merely synonymous with the Bible. Zwingli identifies the Word of God expressly with the redemptive sacrifice of Christ.

What is, then, this word, which is bread or food for the soul? It is the word that it is a reality that Christ gave his body and blood for us that we who were dead might be restored to life.⁷⁰

It is that redemptive reality which is the focus of our faith. Zwingli offers a paraphrase of Jesus' words in John 6:51, "I, who have been offered up for humanity, am the most certain hope of your salvation."⁷¹ It is our faith in this hope - by the work of God in us - that results in our benefit through the sacrament. "That is, if we believe that the once-for-all offering of Christ cleanses all the sins of humanity, then we are already fed and confident of our salvation."⁷²

The proper understanding of the Eucharist is as a "remembrance" of what God has done in Christ. To repeat the offering of Christ in the mass is to demean the sacrifice of Christ.⁷³ Zwingli understands such an attempt as an intrusion upon God's power and activity. At best, this is an unnecessary attempt to "add" to what God can do.⁷⁴ Worse, it can be seen as an unholty presumption. It is those who add their own words to the words of Christ who treat the Supper

⁷⁰Quod est autem hoc verbum, quod panis aut cibus est animae? Hoc est verbum, id est hec res est, quod Christus corpus et sanguinem suum tradidit, ut vite restituamur, qui mortui eramus. Z II, 583.

⁷¹"Ego pro hominibus oblatus certissima eorum spes ero salutis." Z II, 583.

⁷²Hoc est, dum hoc credimus, quod semel Christus oblatus omnium omnia scelera diluerit, ut iam simus et securi salutis." Z II, 583.

⁷³Z II, 583-585.

⁷⁴Quid igitur possunt humana verba, si cuncta divina potentia constant?" Z II, 590.

disrespectfully.⁷⁵ The focus of the Eucharist must not be the contemporary liturgical celebration which communicates grace by its exercise. It is, rather, a sacramental remembrance of Christ's atoning work which is the sure hope of our trust by faith. Zwingli emphatically affirms that the Supper is nothing else than a remembrance which commemorates the sacrifice of Christ.⁷⁶

Zwingli dismisses the concept of purgatory on the same grounds - that is, our salvation is a result of what God does, not what we do.⁷⁷ It is not hope in eventual redemption through the torment of purgatory that should encourage us. Rather, it is trust in God's Word which proclaims the redeeming sacrifice of Christ that is our hope.⁷⁸ Zwingli's alternative service is an attempt to encourage and facilitate such a trusting faith among God's people. He is willing to move carefully to accommodate the weak. But the end goal is clear and Zwingli's theological agenda is already taking shape.

A brief consideration of one final work of this period will complete our overview of early writings. Zwingli's letter to Thomas Wyttenbach was written in June, 1523 at the same time as the writing of his *Auslegung* which we have already considered. Not surprisingly, Köhler concludes that the treatments in both are

⁷⁵"Vides autem, uter iniquius consecrationis verba tractet, tunc qui tua divinis misces, an ego, qui id ferre nolo." Z II, 590.

⁷⁶"His apertissimis verbis ostenditur ipsam syntaxim aliud non esse quam commemorationem passionis dominice." Z II, 592.

⁷⁷Z II, 593-595. It is important to remember that when Zwingli speaks of faith in the believer it is always understood to be a gift, resulting from the unprompted action of God and not a result of human effort, or even cooperation.

⁷⁸"...nempe, quod quicumque verbo dei fidat, quod verbum Christum agnium totius mundi peccata expiantem nobis esse predicat, quod inquam, sic credens salvus fidat, et in ignis iudicium non veniat, sed transeat a morte in vitam." Z II, 596.

essentially identical.⁷⁹ Zwingli affirms his emphatic defense of God's initiative in the Supper which we recognize as the producing of faith in the believer. Any compromise of this position by attributing inherent power or causation to the elements or actual celebration of the sacrament is rejected.⁸⁰

This emphasis upon the decisive role of faith in the reception of grace in the supper leads to the de-emphasis on the importance of the objective elements. They are appropriate to the sacrament but not ultimately essential or decisive in the effectual character of the sacrament.⁸¹ It is not that there is no real presence in the sacramental celebration. The point is that the real presence is determined by God's action through faith rather than through human celebration of the sacrament itself. Zwingli is not proposing a mere symbolism.⁸² The function of the external sacrament and elements is to point to the promise of God, encouraging the weak to the strengthening of faith.⁸³ These are familiar themes, echoing positions we have observed in Zwingli's *Auslegung* and *De Canone*.

⁷⁹Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther* 1:37.

⁸⁰"Die ganze Polemik gegen den Sprachgebrauch, die Elemente Leib und Blut Christi zu nennen, richtet sich nur gegen die magisch-sakramentale Auffassung, dem Genuß als solchen die Bedeutung von Leib und Blut Christi, d.h. Erlösungskraft zuzuschreiben; die Erlösungskraft hängt eben am Glauben und nicht am operatus operatum; der Glaube eignet sich das in der Eucharistie Dargebotene an...Zwingli kämpft dagegen, den sinnlichen Elementen Brot und Wein etwas zuzuschreiben, was nur Leib und Blut Christi bzw. dem Glauben an sie zugeschrieben werden darf." Ibid., 1:24-27, 23-24. Bosshard misreads Zwingli here when he concludes "daß Christus seine Gegenwart mit dem liturgischen Essen verbunden wissen wolle." Bosshard, *Zwingli*, 17.

⁸¹Ibid., 1:24, 27; Bosshard, *Zwingli*, 12-13, 16-17.

⁸²Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther*, 1:28; Bosshard, *Zwingli*, 32.

⁸³Locher, *Zwinglische Reformation*, 289. "Das sinnliche Erfahren der Sakramentszeichen kann zwar niemals den seligmachen Glauben bewirken, aber

The three documents we have considered convey a consistent early view of Zwingli's understanding of the Supper and the issues that shape it. Taken together, they can help us to gain a better understanding of Zwingli's approach to the Supper at the beginnings of his reformed period. Specifically, they clarify his early view of our three basic questions.

The first question concerns the relationship of human action to divine action. Is Christ's presence (and, hence, grace) *bound* to the celebration of the sacrament in general, or to the words of institution in particular? Zwingli's early answer to this question is an emphatic no. His running argument against the category of sacrifice is rooted in the issue of human vs. divine action. Any proposal that suggests human initiative over against divine initiative is repeatedly and enthusiastically rebutted. The issue of the adequacy of Christ's sacrifice is a denial of the need for human agency added to the divine. The requisite necessity of faith for benefit from the sacrament is also a protection of God's initiative (who, alone, can produce faith). The deemphasis of the material vs. Spirit is concerned - not with spirit/body dualism, but - with human activity vs. divine initiative. His approach to Scripture is shaped by this emphasis on the initiative of the Spirit. He is concerned to exalt the role of God rather than denigrate the human role. Certainly the historical context of these works argues for Zwingli's concern for human activism. However, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the thrust of his arguments necessarily deemphasizes the human role.³⁴

immerhin diesen Glauben unterstützen, den Blick für das schärfen, worum es dem Glauben geht." Gestrinch, *Zwingli*, 30.

³⁴"Die Lehre von der Allwirksamkeit Gottes geht so schon leicht über in die Lehre von der Alleinwirksamkeit, die den Zweitursachen die Mitwirkung im sakramentalen Geschehen verwehrt." Bosshard, *Zwingli*, 32.

The second question concerns the relationship of Christ's presence to the sacrament and the elements. Is Christ present? And, if so, how is he understood to be present? Zwingli's own ambiguity makes this question more difficult to answer. It seems clear that Zwingli is not concerned to dispute language of "body" and "blood" in these early writings. As we have seen, at times Zwingli uses very "physical" language and is unconcerned with disputing affirmations of Christ's presence in the Supper.⁸⁵ However, Zwingli also makes it clear in his discussion that Christ's presence is not inherent in, or attached to, the elements. The presence of faith is the decisive element. Köhler concludes that Zwingli affirms a real presence in this period.⁸⁶ That may be affirmed, provided that one stipulates the necessary element of faith. Faith must be added to the sacrament for a real presence to be affirmed. The elements and the words of institution do not contain or convey a necessary real presence. They proclaim, by signification, the covenant of grace that is apprehended by faith (at God's initiative). Thus we have the characteristic Zwinglian ambiguity that produces such a variety of interpretations. Apart from the presence of faith the sacrament would be appropriately described as a mere, or empty, symbolism. Human recitation of the words of institution, or handling of material elements cannot convey or compel the presence or gracious activity of God. When, however, God adds faith to the celebration of the same sacrament we may understand Christ to be really present in that sacrament. And this addition Zwingli fully expects to be freely imparted because God is a gracious God, anxious to bless.

⁸⁵"Die später so umstrittene Frage der leibhaften Gegenwart Christi im Sakrament beschäftigt den Zürcher Reformator zu diesem Zeitpunkt allerdings noch nicht." Zimmerman, "Durchbruch," 104.

⁸⁶Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther* 1:34,35. Also Locher, *Zwinglische Reformation*, 287.

The third question concerns the role and character of the sacrament. What is the benefit, or result, of the sacrament. Here, again, Zwingli's pastoral impulses are at odds with the logical extension of his theological positions. He asserts a benefit in the sacrament, especially for the weak, or simple. The sacrament may serve to affirm and strengthen their faith. However, he also allows that the sacrament may be ultimately unnecessary for the believer of strong faith. Further, his clear affirmation of the divine initiative in faith contradicts any certain role of building or producing faith through the sacrament. The weak, as well as the strong, will have faith when God chooses to produce it - through the sacrament or without it. Perhaps again the soundest explanation is that his declaration of the benefit of the sacrament, especially for the simple, assumes the gracious activity of God in the sacrament producing faith. As we have seen, that activity is not bound to the sacrament but is assumed by Zwingli to be typically present.

Zwingli's understanding of the sacrament tends to diminish its unique character. It is primarily a proclamation of God's gracious covenant and provision through Christ. It is an instrument which God uses without obligation being implied. However, the gracious covenant which is signified serves to alleviate - for Zwingli - any anxiety or uncertainty which the lack of obligation might produce. The covenant which is proclaimed carries with it a greater promise than a sacramental "binding."

In this early period Zwingli exhibits clear theological foundations for his sacramental understanding. Further, these foundations are distinctly "Zwinglian" in their composition. How these impulses are to developed or changed remains to be seen. But even these early writings give some clear answers to the questions posed by our study.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WORD

For Zwingli, as for Luther, the proclamation of the Word has central importance in the accomplishment of the reformation. Indeed, for both men the ministry of the Word attains almost sacramental character. We find that the same theological principles which shape their specifically sacramental thought demonstrated in their consideration of the Word. Luther understood that the same principles applied here as in the Lord's Supper.¹ Study of Zwingli's treatment of the role and function of the proclamation of the Word may help us to understand those principles more clearly as they are treated apart from the acrimony of the sacramental controversy.

The importance of the ministry of the Word for Zwingli is a clear characteristic of the Zurich reform. Locher credits "the discovery of the Word of God, publicly preached...as providing both the power and the obligation for the renewal of life, and as constituting both the beginning and the very heart of the reformation itself."² This emphasis should not, however, mislead us to regard the proclamation of the Word as an effective means of grace. While certainly important, the external word of God does not and cannot guarantee the presence and activity of

¹David C. Steinmetz, *Luther in Context*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 82-83.

²Locher, *Zwingli's Thought*, 342.

God's Spirit.³ Zwingli understood the ministry of the Word as being of central importance and an especially appropriate instrument of the Spirit. However, the coincidence of Word and Spirit was understood to be the result of the exercise of the Spirit's freedom.⁴ "We are rendered faithful only by that Word which the Heavenly Father proclaims in our hearts."⁵ As we shall see, proclamation of the Word is given its importance as an instrument, not a (secondary) cause of grace. Zwingli's understanding serves to exalt the importance of the proclaimed Word while, at the same time, denying any necessary efficacy to it.

Zwingli treats his understanding of the Word in an address to the nuns of Oetenbach in 1522, published as *Von Klarheit und Gewissheit des Wortes Gottes*.⁶ Zwingli argues that as a result of the *imago Dei* in man there is a desire for and an affinity to God's Word. It is this affinity which most clearly demonstrates the *imago Dei* in man.⁷ Even evil men demonstrate an awareness of transcendence that reflects this affinity and desire for God's Word.⁸ God's Word is the spiritual air that we "breathe" and without which we cannot exist.⁹ The inner man longs for God's Word

³Ibid., 186.

⁴Ibid., 13, 180.

⁵CTFR, 376.

⁶Z I, 328-384.

⁷"...die begird nach got, die ein ieder mensch in im empfndt, uns anernborn ist, indem das wir nach der bildnuß gottes geschaffen und siner art unnd geschlechts sind." Z I, 345-6.

⁸Z I, 346-7.

⁹Z I, 348.

- which is understood to be synonymous with His law or eternal will - out of his inner likeness to God and desire for God.¹⁰

The power of God's Word is such that whatever it promises is surely fulfilled. Extensive citations of examples from both the Old and New Testaments are used to demonstrate the certainty of the power of God's Word.

The Word of God is so certain and powerful that, however he wills, all things occur as his word decrees. For it is so alive and mighty that even non-reasoning things are ordered by it.¹¹

This demonstration of certainty is understood to protect the character of God, himself. For, if God's Word - i.e. the expression of His will - could be thwarted or left undone then God's power and absolute lordship would be undermined.¹² Further, this affirmation of the absolute power of the providence of God is identified as the central affirmation of the evangelical faith.¹³

The clarity of God's Word is guaranteed by reliance upon God in addressing it to us. The proper approach to the Word is our attitude of humility and dependence on the inner speaking of the Spirit rather than on human learning or

¹⁰Z I, 352. "So wir nun der inneren menchen also, wie obstat, erfunden hand, der sinen lust hat mit dem gsatz gottes, uß dem grund, das er ein bildnus gottes darzu geschöpft ist, das er im zugefugt werde, muß ie volgen, das den inneren menschen dhein gsatz noch wort also erlustet als das wort gottes." Ibid.

¹¹Das wort gottes ist so gwus und starck, das, wie got wil, also geschehend alle ding von stund an, so er sin wort gspricht; dann es ist so lebendig, so krefftig, das alle joch unvernünftig ding sich von stund an im glichfoermig machen. Z I, 353. Also 353-6.

¹²Z I, 357. "Sin wort mag nit ungethon sin, es mag nit vernuetet werden noch gehindert; denn wo das wer, so wer doch nit almechtig, wenn er sine wort nit alle möcht volenden, oder ein andrer were stercker dann er, der im sin wort möchte hinderstellig machen, sunder es muß alweg geschehen." Ibid.

¹³Z I, 357-8. "Die gantz evangelisch ler ist nüt anders dann ein gwuß bewären, was got ie verheissen hab, werde gwuß geleystet." Ibid.

understanding.¹⁴ Once given inner illumination we realize a confidence and assurance based upon the Word.¹⁵ Again, Zwingli uses extensive citations of Old and New Testament examples to support this understanding.¹⁶ The result of the inner address of the Word is awakening and life-bringing. Zwingli clearly understands this encounter with the Word as an event of spiritual renewal producing faith in God.¹⁷ Although Zwingli does not make the distinction explicit he clearly distinguishes between the study of Scripture and the illumination of the Word. The former is an empty exercise of human vanity without the direction of the latter.¹⁸ It is evidence of this internal illumination by the Spirit that gives us certainty of correct interpretation by ourselves or by others.¹⁹

This foundational understanding shapes Zwingli's view of the study of scripture. While *Von Klarheit und Gewissheit* offers a variety of practical guides or recommendations for study, it ultimately dictates a "passive" role for man. We can, and should, utilize the resources at our command. But, finally, we should come to the scripture relying upon God to reveal its meaning to us. The exercise is empty

¹⁴Z I, 360. "Ein ieder, der zû dem wort gottes kumpt und bringt mit im nit sinen eygen verstand...sunder hat das gemut, das er vom wort gottes wil geleert werden, der hat etwas, das ist: nüt halten uff sich selb, sunder sich allein an got und sin insprechen lassen." Ibid.

¹⁵Z I, 361

¹⁶Z I, 365-372.

¹⁷Z I, 373-4. "Din wort erwicket, widerbringt, macht lebendig, daß die seel davon vertröst und verhefft wirt an dich, das sy keim andren wort me vertrauwen mag dann dienen." Z I, 373.

¹⁸Z I, 379-80.

¹⁹Z I, 382.

and faulty unless God chooses to illuminate the scripture. However, based on his character and his promises we can have confidence in his action.²⁰

In *Von Klarheit und Gewissheit* Zwingli demonstrates the basic principles of his understanding of the Word. The Word is understood to be the communication of the will of God. This will or intention is certain and may be understood in terms of the absolute providence of God. This providence *must* be absolute. The understanding of the Word is functionally conjoined in this text with the consideration of Scripture. However the true communication of the Word to the inner man is accomplished at the initiation and in total dependence upon the movement of the Spirit. The attributes of power and clarity should be understood primarily in terms of the Word as the communication of the Spirit. There is no sense in which the written word may be understood to share those attributes apart from the activity of the Spirit directed to the inner man.

Given the preeminence Zwingli accords the role of the Spirit it is not surprising to find that he shortly was forced to deal with the implications of that emphasis. Zwingli's affirmation of the priority of the Spirit over human learning and study found a ready reception among the emerging Anabaptists. The nature of Zwingli's relationship to the emerging Radical party has been and remains the issue of some debate.²¹ The precise nature of that relationship is beyond the scope of this

²⁰Z I, 360-1, 365, 379-380. This treatment will be reflected in Zwingli's development and understanding of Prophezei.

²¹This area of scholarship is shaped by confessional struggles. The concern of modern Anabaptist scholarship to recover their historical heritage has produced the view that the Anabaptist party only fulfilled the early principles of reform which Zwingli taught and personally embraced. In the face of political opposition Zwingli abandons the pure reformation precepts for pragmatic compromise. This thesis, advocated by George Bender and John Yoder, has been challenged by Robert Walton, among others.

study. Clearly, by 1525, Zwingli felt compelled to address the issues raised by the Anabaptists. He does so specifically with regard to preaching in *Von dem Predigamt*.²² This treatise is contemporary with, and refers to, Zwingli's treatment of baptism in *Von der Taufe*, considered in the next chapter. Because of the context of controversy out of which it comes *Von dem Predigamt* deals primarily with the aspect of office rather than a general treatment of the activity of preaching. It may be seen as an attempt to establish correctives to any unbridled freedom - even when it claims to be under the (free) movement of the Spirit.

Zwingli addresses this work directly to the Anabaptists. For a corrective treatment on baptism he refers to *Von der Taufe*. In this work he specifically proposes to refute the claims of lay-preachers to the right to preach.²³ Zwingli compares them to the Judaizers who emphasized externals against Paul dividing the church. It is particularly the emphasis on externals to divide the church (into true and false disciples) that receives Zwingli's strongest response.²⁴ Zwingli proposes to show by biblical argument the impropriety of the Anabaptist view.

The first criterion to emerge is the role of the church in affirming the message and ministry of the preachers. The affirmation of their claim to be sent from God is not self-authenticating but is "proved" by the response and acceptance of the local congregation. If the local congregation as a whole does not accept and receive the preachers then they should not be allowed to speak.²⁵

²²Z IV, 369-433. *Von dem Predigamt* is written in response to a letter from Markus Murer, dated June 8, 1525, seeking Zwingli's counsel in dealing with Anabaptist agitation.

²³Z IV, 382-3.

²⁴Z IV, 384-7.

²⁵Z IV, 389.

The practice of the church with regard to the office of preaching should be in accord with the apostolic practice as we discover it in Scripture. Zwingli takes Ephesians 4:11-14 as his textual basis for an apostolic model of preaching ministry. However, he essentially divides the listed offices into two groups - apostle and the rest (prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher).²⁶ The apostle's office is to preach the gospel with his ministry distinguished by his itineracy rather than his task. The prophet and evangelist also preach the gospel, but are resident.²⁷

It is primarily this resident class of ministers that concerns Zwingli. And it appears that he is less concerned to make clear distinctions between them than he is to describe the character of local ministry. The office of prophet (which includes the function of evangelist and offices of bishop and pastor) is concerned to proclaim God's will and root out everything that is against it.²⁸ This rigorous prophetic emphasis would have been pleasing to the Anabaptists had Zwingli not added some conditions to it. Proper understanding of the prophetic (i.e. Biblical) message requires a competence in the Biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek. Zwingli cites I Corinthians 14:26-33 as evidence of this requirement. Therefore, those who do not have such linguistic competence (i.e. the Anabaptists) should remain silent.²⁹ It is study of Scripture with appropriate knowledge of language and conducted in an orderly way that is the appropriate context for God's illumination of the Word.³⁰

²⁶Z IV, 390-394.

²⁷Z IV, 391, 399.

²⁸Z IV, 393-4.

²⁹Z IV, 395.

³⁰Z IV, 396.

Zwingli refers here to the establishment of "Prophezei" as a realization of that model.³¹

The evangelist has the same essential office as the prophet, bishop or pastor and is only distinguished from the apostle by his residence.³² Teachers are also difficult to distinguish, since their necessity springs from a need for their knowledge of Greek and Hebrew (which was also a necessity for the prophet, bishop or pastor).³³ It may be supposed that in their case the level of competency was to be higher, supplementing the competence of the parish pastor as was done in "Prophezei." Zwingli strongly reaffirms the importance of the understanding of the biblical languages to facilitate understanding and to prevent error.³⁴ Linguistic competence does not, in itself, convey correct understanding of Scripture but functions as an appropriate preparation and corrective to the illumination of Scripture by the Spirit.

The Anabaptists, in contrast, did not have the necessary understanding of how to interpret Scripture. More serious, however, was their willingness to create division in the church.³⁵ If they were truly sent of God they would be confirmed by the congregation.³⁶ One who is sent of God will evidence that fact in 1)compliance with payment of tithes, 2)obedience to authorities and 3)rejection of divisiveness (as

³¹Z IV, 398.

³²Z IV, 399.

³³Z IV, 418.

³⁴ibid.

³⁵Z IV, 420-1.

³⁶Z IV, 426. Zwingli does allow for the alternative affirmation of God-sent ministry through the demonstration of wonders. This is, however, a theoretical (if Biblical) possibility which is not at issue in this conflict with the Anabaptists.

I Cor. 14:33).³⁷ These criteria, applied to the Anabaptists, demonstrated clearly that they were troublemakers and not messengers sent by God.³⁸ Zwingli closes this treatise with a strong warning against division on the basis of externals.³⁹

This work would not be numbered among Zwingli's finest and the Anabaptists found it less than convincing. For our purposes, however, it does serve to "fill out" Zwingli's understanding of the proclamation of the Word. We should see this as supplementing his earlier writing rather than supplanting it. The freedom of the Spirit in addressing the true Word to the inner man is still assumed (as is clearly recognizable in the companion *Von der Taufe*). However, Zwingli now adds criteria of propriety in study of the Word in preparation for the illumination of the Spirit. We begin to see an approach to study and proclamation that incorporates both an affirmation of God's freedom and strong emphasis on man's preparation.

As Zwingli suggests in *Von dem Predigtamt*, the institution of "Prophezei" is the product of this understanding. We may understand Prophezei as the ideal context and method for the study and proclamation of the Word. Zwingli's particular understanding of the Word produces an emphasis on the study as well as the preaching of the Word. For this reason Prophezei offers us the best opportunity to observe Zwingli's understanding put into practice. It is to Prophezei that we now turn our attention.

On June 19, 1525, with a prayer of invocation, Ulrich Zwingli officially marked the beginning of the Prophezei in Zurich.⁴⁰ The name was given by

³⁷Z IV, 427-428.

³⁸Z IV, 432-433.

³⁹Z IV, 432-433.

Zwingli himself, drawn from I Corinthians 14. Instituted for the purpose of Biblical study, Prophezei was an integral part of the Zurich reformation and reflects the unique mixture of influences in that reformation. It is as a product of the Swiss, Humanist, and Reformation concerns and characteristics that Prophezei is formed. It may be said to be a reflection of Ulrich Zwingli and the Zurich reformation in microcosm.⁴¹ To attempt to adequately understand it we will consider how Prophezei worked, what was understood to take place as a result of this study of the Word, and what influences and theological presuppositions shaped Prophezei.

Prophezei was begun as a liturgical as well as educational reform. As replacement for the morning services, clergy, teachers, students, interested laymen and even Jews from the city were encouraged to attend. The hour (or more) of Bible study took place each morning except Friday (Market day) and Sunday at 7 o'clock (8 o'clock in the winter) at the Grossmünster of Zurich.⁴² The study was opened by a Latin prayer after which someone (usually a student) would read up to a chapter of the Old Testament out of the Latin Vulgate.⁴³ Then the Hebrew would be read with comments and clarification. This would be followed by a reading of the Greek Septuagint (usually by Zwingli himself), also with relevant comments and

⁴⁰Z IV, 365. I have chosen to retain the German "Prophezei" instead of the English "prophesying" to attempt to avoid misleading connotations.

⁴¹Locher, *Zwingli's Thought*, 28.

⁴²Fritz Schmidt-Clausing, "Das Prophezeigebet," *Zwingliana* 12 (1964): 13. For the liturgical order of the Prophezei, see Z IV, 701-703. For description of Prophezei to the Large and Small Councils of Zurich, see Z IV, 666.

⁴³The Prophezei in the Great Minster was designated exclusively for the study of the Old Testament. Once the entire Testament had been studied they were to start over again. The New Testament was handled by Oswald Myconius in the Fraumünster in the afternoons.

explanation. The text would then be considered (in Latin) as a whole. At this point the Prophezei would switch to Swiss German. Another participant (usually Leo Jud or Kaspar Megander) would offer a German version of the opening prayer, and the text under study would form the basis for a sermon to the people who had gathered in the church to take part in the latter part of the Prophezei. The service would then be concluded with a lengthy intercessory prayer.

Prophezei was instituted to counter the false (non-Biblical) religion of the Papists and the extremes of the radical party (Anabaptists) by producing a better educated clergy and laity.⁴⁴ It represents the first reformed theological faculty. Funded by monies freed from the Catholic private masses, it is ironic that the first faculty member (Ceporin) was paid from the endowment of Konrad Hoffman, Zwingli's long-time opponent, upon Hoffman's death. Ceporin (Jakob Wiesendanger) was to be the first of an impressive group of scholars. Ceporin himself had studied Hebrew under Reuchlin in Ingolstadt.⁴⁵ Upon his death, shortly before Christmas in 1525 (reportedly because of the excessive demands of Prophezei), he was replaced by Konrad Pellikan, an acknowledged master of Hebrew.⁴⁶ In addition to these, area clergy of ability such as Leo Jud, Heinrich Bullinger and, of course, Ulrich Zwingli himself were regular participants. Zwingli was a man of considerable linguistic talents. He was extremely competent in Greek and had studied Hebrew under Andreas Boeschenstein (who had taught Hebrew to

⁴⁴Fritz Schmidt-Clausing, *Zwingli als Liturgiker*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), 68.

⁴⁵Farner, *Zwingli*, 552-553. For the installation of Ceporin, see Z IV, 267-8.

⁴⁶Ludwig Diestel, *Geschichte des Alten Testaments in der christlichen Kirche* (Jena: Mauke's Verlag, 1869), 272.

Melanchthon) and had attained a commendable competence for his time.⁴⁷ The abilities of these and any other participants were to be shared in a format encouraging the questions and opinions of all participants. Rather than a lecture, it took the form of a seminar followed by a summary proclamation of the Word.

Prophezei was an attempt to facilitate a recovery of the true religion taught in scripture. For Zwingli, "the Spirit demands obedience towards Scripture, in contrast to all human authority."⁴⁸ In fidelity to the Word we are faithful to the true will of God as he has revealed it in history. Even the Law was no enemy, but rather a teaching tool which demonstrates for us "nothing else than the eternal will of God."⁴⁹ The infallible church was not one dependent upon tradition or Papal authority, but "that one alone which rests upon the Word of God only."⁵⁰ The false human additions to God's message must be stripped away until only the clear, simple message of God remains. In this endeavor the humanist call to return to the sources made common cause with the basic reformed concern to recover God's true Biblical message. The whole study method of Prophezei can be understood as an attempt by the most scientific methods available to determine that original message. Those who have fallen into errors of false religion "we can easily vanquish by leading them back to the source."⁵¹

⁴⁷Emil Egli, "Zwingli als Hebraer," *Zwingliana* 1(1900): 154-55. Regarding Zwingli's competence in Greek, Potter maintains that by 1518 Zwingli had "mastered the Greek language as well as any man north of the Alps - More, Vadian, even Erasmus." Potter, *Zwingli*, 43.

⁴⁸Locher, *Zwingli's Thought*, 188.

⁴⁹CTFR, 137; Z III, 707.

⁵⁰CTFR, 373.

⁵¹ZB, 87.

The basic text for Biblical study must be the original language. Zwingli was convinced that the Old Testament could not be understood without an exact knowledge of Hebrew. Failure to gain a correct understanding of Hebrew had often led earlier translators and exegetes into error.⁵² Zwingli's high regard for the importance of Hebrew is reflected in the impressive faculty of Hebrew scholars who were to come to Zurich. To understand Scripture required the ability and knowledge to understand the peculiarities of the Hebrew language and culture. Attention must be given to understanding the figures of speech, schematisms, and idioms of the language and the time, place, occasions, persons and other circumstances of the scriptural account.⁵³ Such was Zwingli's concern to recover the original Hebrew context of scripture that he was accused of coming to his understanding of the Old Testament under Jewish influence. In fact, while denying this charge, Zwingli acknowledges that on at least two occasions a Jew from Winterthur had attended the Prophezei as a resource person to observe their treatment of the Hebrew and indicate whether it was accurate.⁵⁴ It is interesting to note that Zwingli believed that it was not only necessary to understand Hebrew to understand the Old Testament, but that it was also necessary to understand the New Testament properly. This was because it was written by persons out of a Jewish context and their writing (even in Greek) would reflect that context.

The Greek Septuagint was used as a study aid to the Hebrew and Latin texts. Its antiquity and particularly the fact that it predated "pointing" made it a valuable

⁵²Edwin Künzli, "Zwingli's Jesaja Erklärungen," *Zwingliana* 10 (1957): 489.

⁵³Edwin Künzli, "Zwingli als Ausleger des Alten Testaments," In *Huldreich Zwingli's Sämtliche Werke* XIV, (Zurich: Berichthaus, 1959), 882.

⁵⁴Z III, 138-139.

resource. It is frequently used to correct or support the Vulgate translation. However, it is clearly used as a supplemental aid to study. Zwingli usually taught the Septuagint himself and the results of Prophezei have been shown to be largely a product of Zwingli's influence. Those facts would lead one to expect a preponderance of weight given to the Septuagint. However, the citations of the Septuagint number less than either the Hebrew (most cited) or the Latin.⁵⁵ The primary goal must always be the recovery of the original language and the Greek Septuagint could only assist in that attempt - never supplant it.

This overwhelming concern with philology is the identifying characteristic of the exegesis of Prophezei. "What is most apparent is the great attention paid to words; it was not only that the exact meaning must be discovered, but also derivations and the implications from derivations".⁵⁶ The fact that the philological study functioned as preliminary to application by the preached word results in an imbalance in the commentaries resulting from the Prophezei. What is reflected in the commentaries is the exegetical background for the sermons which are only preserved separately, if at all. Therefore, the bulk of the theological development and treatment is not included. The commentaries on the Prophets, for example, are regarded as being only philological-exegetical justification for the accompanying translation.⁵⁷ At least, the Zurich scholars were deeply concerned with recovering the original text in its true meaning. It was only in recovering the original context

⁵⁵Edwin Künzli, Quellenproblem und mystischer Schriftsinn in Zwingli's Genesis- und Exoduskommentar I," *Zwingliana* 9 (1951): 186.

⁵⁶Potter, *Zwingli*, 222.

⁵⁷Gerhard Krause, "Zwingli's Auslegung der Propheten," *Zwingliana* 11 (1960): 260. Also Künzli, "Jesaja," 488. Locher goes so far as to contend that "the method followed by Zwingli, Jud, and Bibliander was exactly that of Kittel's Theologisches Wörterbuch." Locher, *Zwingli's Thought*, 28.

that they could recover the message of true religion bare of the misleading accretions of human teachings.

Oh you rascals - you are not instructed or versed in the Gospels, and you pick verses from it without regard to their context, and wrest them according to your own desire.⁵⁸

That is not to say that secular sources were to be ignored or rejected. The fact that Zwingli sought Jewish counsel indicates his willingness to seek help in any quarter. Although to be used with reservation, the ancient secular writers were a valuable resource for information regarding linguistic practices, history, technical information or knowledge of the natural sciences. For historical information Herodotus and Livy were favored sources. For natural science Pliny the Elder was frequently cited and Cicero was a favorite general source of information. These were all used, however, only as resources to determine and illuminate the source text of the Bible.⁵⁹

Sources in the Christian tradition were also used. Jerome was an important model in his comparative study and philological interest. Augustine is an important theological source for Zwingli but his lack of philological interest in preference for philosophical and theological concerns limited his contribution to the exegetical work of the Prophezei. Besides what may have been learned directly from local Jews, knowledge of Hebrew exegesis and lexicography is drawn from Nicholas of Lyra and Reuchlin. To a lesser extent, Oecoiampadius was used (particularly in Isaiah) as a source.

Any source or tool which could help unmask the true religion of scripture was welcome. The church could only be renewed when the message of Scripture

⁵⁸ZB, 87.

⁵⁹Künzli, "Ausleger," 887.

was confronted in its pure simplicity. The scientific exegesis of the Prophezei was directed toward that goal. The recovery of the simple, "literal" sense of Scripture becomes a spiritual exercise using scientific tools. The recovery of that simple sense was at least as important as the subsequent theological development of it. If interpretation was based upon a false understanding (i.e. one that reflects human learning rather than God's simple revelation) it was doomed to destructive failure.⁶⁰ Every tool and effort was employed in an effort to recover that true sense of Scripture.

Having applied all of our human ability in an attempt to recover the "simple" message of scripture, the process remains incomplete. For the ultimate goal of Prophezei was that this encounter of man with Word would effect a transformation.⁶¹ Zwingli's concern was for reformation and renewal. Men and women must be transformed by the power and in the presence of the Word. It is the interaction with the Word which accomplishes the transformation. "The receivers of the Word should be changed into that which they have rightly understood in the Prophezei. And that is the Word, which is identical with the Holy Spirit."⁶² The transformation of man takes place in this context of encounter with the Word. The desire of man for God is met and nourished by it, the image of God is restored by it. "The image is terribly weakened by sin, but persists, awaiting the one thing that can re-establish that broken relationship - the Word of God."⁶³ This work is

⁶⁰Gestrich, *Zwingli*, 81; Köhler, *Geistewelt*, 67.

⁶¹Schmidt-Clausing, "Das Prophezeiebet," 21.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 29.

⁶³J. Samuel Preuss, "Zwingli, Calvin and the Origin of Religion." *Church History* 46 (1977): 196

accomplished for man who has no ability to accomplish it himself. But it is not that man is forced to respond against his wishes. It is rather to our joy, for "there is no law or word which will give greater delight to the inward man than the Word of God."⁶⁴

The extent of Zwingli's confidence in this transforming power of interaction with the Word is indicated by his interest in the Jews. Künzli argues that Zwingli's running dialogue with the Jewish interpretation of Scripture is offered in the belief that the commentary would find its way to Jewish readers and in the hope that by it they would be led to a Christian understanding.⁶⁵ This example only serves to illustrate Zwingli's confidence in the Word. His answer to accomplishing the reformation in Zurich was to teach and preach the true Word and the reformation would essentially take place on its own (though we must expend every effort on our part as well) as a consequence.

For this reason it should be seen that the summary sermon in the vernacular should not be understood as an alien addition but as a natural part of Prophezei. The Prophezei would be incomplete until it facilitated transformation of the people - and through them the city and beyond. The complete Prophezei, then, does not properly end with the intercessory prayer, but is realized in the streets of Zurich and the villages of the Canton. In the accomplishment of "Christianismus renacens...the Prophezei was the powerhouse."⁶⁶ Julius Schweizer has developed the interesting analysis that in Zwingli's revised liturgy of the Eucharist the transformation of the elements is not entirely removed from the service. Rather, the

⁶⁴ZB, 67.

⁶⁵Künzli, "Jesaja," 491.

⁶⁶Potter, *Zwingli*, 224.

transformation is pronounced upon the congregation. *They* become the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Schmidt-Clausing argues that the same dynamic is basic to the Prophezei.⁶⁷ Prophezei is the proclamation of the Word, understood in a broader sense than the sermon alone, intending the transformation of the people in the encounter with the Word of God. "Outwardly the reforming work at Zurich was severely practical, but at bottom the practical measures were simply the outworking of the inward revolution accomplished by the preaching of the divine Word."⁶⁸

This understanding of the character of Prophezei would, at first glance, seem to be a synthesis of Erasmus' emphasis upon the moral transformation that comes as a result of encounter with Scripture⁶⁹ and the Lutheran emphasis upon the power and priority of the preached word. If that were the case there would be no necessary conflict with either view. In Zwingli's development of the understanding of Prophezei and the Word there is, however, a significant shift that marks his own peculiar synthesis of these two views. That shift is the denial of any necessary causal link between the Prophezei and the transformation by the Word.

This denial may seem to be in sharp contradiction to Zwingli's strong affirmation of the efficacy and power of the Word. However, while recognizing the centrality of Scripture for Zwingli it is necessary to note that he ultimately makes a distinction between the Word and Scripture. The true Word is not one "which consists of letters or sentences but...that which shines in the heart."⁷⁰ The reason

⁶⁷Schmidt-Clausing, "Das Prophezeiebet," 21, 29.

⁶⁸ZB, 29.

⁶⁹Charles Bene, "L'exégèse des Psaumes chez Erasme," In *Histoire de l'exégèse au XVIe siècle*, (Geneva, 1978), 119, 123-24, 126.

⁷⁰CTFR, 373.

for this distinction comes, for Zwingli, out of his understanding of God. Bromiley suggests that "the unifying factor in Zwingli's theology was the overwhelming emphasis upon the divine sovereignty."⁷¹ Divine providence must be absolute or it is no longer perfect (and therefore no longer truly divine). To bind the Holy Spirit (i.e. God, himself) to material things or human activity is to restrict (and therefore to exercise control over) divine providence. If God's presence and activity are necessarily bound to Scripture (including the study and proclamation of it), then His absolute sovereignty and therefore His divinity are compromised. Such a position contradicts Jesus' teaching that the Spirit blows where it wills. It is the (free) action of the Holy Spirit that changes the Scripture to the Word of God by revealing it to our hearts. Scripture without the Spirit is only words, and study or proclamation of Scripture does not guarantee the presence of the Holy Spirit speaking the true Word.

Fritz Schmidt-Clausing identifies the significance of the following prayer used in Prophezei.

Almighty, eternal and merciful God, whose Word is a lamp unto our path, open and illuminate our minds, that we may purely and perfectly understand Thy Word and that our lives may be conformed (or transformed) according to what we have rightly understood, that in nothing we may be displeasing unto Thy Majesty, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This prayer is an adaptation of an ancient collect for Pentecost Sunday and is offered both at the beginning of the Prophezei - in Latin - and before the message - in German. It is an address to the Trinity invoking the action of the Holy Spirit in the study of Scripture in the Prophezei.⁷² As Bromiley correctly notes, "The Word is mediated through written documents, but has its character and effectiveness as Word

⁷¹ZB, 37.

⁷²Schmidt-Clausing, "Das Prophezeigebet," 21.

only in so far as it is directed and applied by the Holy Spirit."⁷³ Having done all in our human ability in Prophezei we still will not encounter the Word apart from the action of the Holy Spirit. This is because "man cannot receive God, cannot listen to the law, unless God Himself draw the heart to Himself."⁷⁴ The Holy Spirit is not obligated to come in the Prophezei and preached word, but we may confidently assume that he will. Faithful believers seeking the true Word of God transform the Choir of the Great Minster into a magnetfield for the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵ The practice of Prophezei does not act as a (secondary) cause, but becomes an especially appropriate instrument of the immediate work of the Holy Spirit. Although God is not bound to the written word we may be confident of our encounter with Him. For "he who desires the divine message, and has something of the Word of God, to him it shall be given."⁷⁶

It is in this context - searching the scriptures and seeking the Word - that we may come to true understanding. "When the Word of God shines on the human understanding, it enlightens it in such a way that it understands and confesses the Word and knows the certainty of it."⁷⁷ Zwingli draws from his own experience. "Then I began to ask God for light and the Scriptures became far clearer to me - even though I read nothing else - than if I had studied many commentators and expositors."⁷⁸ It is clear from the great effort expended in Prophezei that Zwingli

⁷³ZB, 55.

⁷⁴CTFR, 339; Z III, 908.

⁷⁵Schmidt-Clausing, "Das Prophezeige bet," 21.

⁷⁶ZB, 74.

⁷⁷ZB, 75.

⁷⁸ZB, 91.

does not mean to abolish or ignore study of the Scripture with the aid of other tools and resources. He does, however, mean to establish the priority of the role of Divine initiative.⁷⁹ In contrast to the false, true religion is drawn "not from the stagnant pools of human wisdom, but from the living water of the divine Spirit, which is the Word of God."⁸⁰ The Holy Spirit ultimately is the guarantor of true religion, despite the great effort expended on careful exegesis. "We do not need human interpreters, but his anointing, which is the Spirit, teaches us of all things - all things, notice, and therefore it is truth and no lie."⁸¹ It may be this marked emphasis that leads Pollet to conclude that, despite strong humanist influence in the Prophezei, Zwingli is closer here to the "Schwärmer" than the humanists.⁸²

For Zwingli, then, man waits helpless and weakened by his broken relationship to God. By the action of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts (primarily through the Scripture as it is studied and proclaimed) we are drawn to God and transformed. Although theoretically the Holy Spirit can speak independent of Scripture, that is an option to be regarded as reserved to the heathen. The idea of waiting for direct inspiration from the Holy Spirit while disregarding Scripture would have terrified Zwingli. Though the Spirit is not necessarily bound to Scripture, it is nonetheless the means by which, and through which, the Spirit speaks the true Word to us.

⁷⁹Preuss, "Zwingli," 191.

⁸⁰CTFR, 56; Z III, 639.

⁸¹ZB, 78.

⁸²J.V.M. Pollet, "Recherches sur Zwingli," *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 28 (1954): 173.

The illumination of the Word is the necessary counterpart to the scientific study of the Scripture. Only the Word can properly and unfailingly reveal the will of God. Only the Word can accomplish the human moral transformation. The written word is ultimately not to be measured by the understanding of men, but "only through the Word of God written in the minds of the faithful."⁸³ The fact that this Word is not *necessarily* present where the Scripture is studied or proclaimed is not to be seen as an indication of uncertainty. "The Holy Spirit unfailingly reveals the meaning of the Bible to those who truly seek to know God's message as opposed to those who merely expect their opinions to be confirmed by the Bible text."⁸⁴ Though God *must* not be present, we believe He will be. For Zwingli our prayer invoking His presence "is nothing else than a sure confidence in the mercy of God."⁸⁵

What, then, does Zwingli's treatment of the Word tell us about our three areas of inquiry? To the first, the question of binding God's action to the Word, the answer is quite clear. Despite Zwingli's undoubted emphasis on the study and proclamation of the Word, God is never "bound" to act through it.⁸⁶ Rather, consideration of the Word provides a particularly appropriate context or instrument that God uses - at his free initiative. Whenever Zwingli strongly affirms the transforming power of the Word he assumes God's expected action. But he makes

⁸³CTFR, 381.

⁸⁴Potter, *Zwingli*, 87.

⁸⁵CTFR, 282; Z III, 853.

⁸⁶"Das Wort Gottes (zwischen schriftlichem und gepredigtem Wort Gottes macht Zwingli, anders als Luther, keinen Unterschied) hat nicht die Kraft, Glauben zu wecken und es beglaubigt sich nicht selbst, man muss vielmehr bereits gläubig und gewiss an es herantreten." Gestrich, *Zwingli*, 70.

quite clear that study or proclamation are, in themselves, empty exercises. God, alone, makes them transforming.

The question of God's presence is also clear. Although he is not bound, Zwingli confidently expects God to choose to be present. God's covenant of grace is a certainty. Any uncertainty in the process for Zwingli concerns the human role. Zwingli confidently expects God's (freely chosen) presence.

The third question concerns the benefit or result of the sacrament. Zwingli affirms a transformative character to the Word. It is, if anything, more powerful and initiative of change than the Supper alone. The celebration of the Supper in the context of the preaching service suggests the Supper as a form of proclamation of the Word. At the least, Zwingli understands the role of the Word - as an instrument of God's action - to be powerfully transformative.

CHAPTER FIVE

BAPTISM

Ulrich Zwingli's sacramental thought is also revealed in his understanding of baptism. In contrast to his development of Prophezei and preaching, which are developed against the background of Roman Catholic practices and the controversy on the Lord's Supper, which is considered in debate with Lutheran thought, as well as Catholic, baptism is treated in controversy with the radical arm of the reformation. In and around Zurich the "Anabaptists" emerged as a counter-force to be reckoned with. In the ensuing debate regarding the understanding of baptism the early leader Balthasar Hubmaier was Zwingli's opponent.

Ulrich Zwingli and Balthasar Hubmaier are two of the most significant figures of the early Reformation. Yet, each in his own way has been left outside the primary focus of their traditions. Zwingli's contributions are largely hidden in the shadow of John Calvin. Hubmaier is regarded with some suspicion or, at least, misgivings by a modern Anabaptist scholarship anxious to find a pure tradition.¹ Nonetheless, in the early controversy regarding baptism (and all the implications of that controversy) we find these two men reflecting and shaping the Anabaptist and Reformed theological traditions. Although Zwingli's *Von der Taufe* was shaped in controversy, "the main interest of the book is as a positive statement of the Reformed tradition." As such, Bromiley concludes that "the best Reformed work on

¹John Howard Yoder, "Balthasar Hübmaier and the Beginnings of Swiss Anabaptism," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 33(1959): 17.

the subject (of baptism) derived in large part from this source."² Hubmaier's reply, *Von der christlichen Taufe*, is "historically and theologically Hubmaier's most significant work."³ As such it is significant, not only in relation to Hubmaier's own work, but as a major work of early Anabaptist theology.⁴

In this chapter we will consider the positions of these two men, primarily as revealed in the above named works. After a brief consideration of the context which prompts Zwingli's *Von der Taufe* we will consider that work and attempt to accurately summarize the main arguments and identify the critical issues. Hubmaier's *Von der christlichen Taufe* will be considered in like fashion. By considering Zwingli's presuppositions in his sacramental thought in this controversy we hope to more clearly identify the consistent issues upon which he focuses. Specifically, we will attempt to discern those issues that reflect on the questions we have posed concerning Zwingli's sacramental thought.

The course of events involving Zwingli and the Zurich Radicals from 1522-1525 remains a disputed area of scholarship. The question of whether the break in 1525 comes as a result of a shift in Zwingli or the increasing radicalism of the dissidents is one which is unresolved. Scholarship tends to discern the answer in sympathy with the scholar's own tradition. Since this is an area of research most often pursued by those with personal interests at stake it is hard to discern a clearly objective and accurate analysis.

²G.W. Bromiley, ed. and trans., *Zwingli and Bullinger*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 122, 128. (cited hereafter as ZB)

³HS, 117.

⁴ "Diese Schrift ist einer der hervorragendsten literarischen und theologischen Werke, das vom Täuferum im 16 Jahrhundert ausgegangen ist." HS, 118.

What does seem to be clear is that "from 1522 on, the activities of an organized radical party...were one of Zwingli's central problems."⁵ Apart from the question of who is responsible for the break, Zwingli increasingly faces radical dissent leading to open defiance from the Radicals emerging out of his own reform while still struggling to overcome resistance from the traditional and Catholic interests. The dissent from the left took increasingly disruptive actions as they became discontented with the progress of reform. It is at least questionable, and perhaps self-serving, to distinguish from our historical perspective between the "true" Anabaptists and mere troublemakers. The parties were, at the least, intermingled. Grebel and Manz once approached Zwingli with propositions of assuming political power to accomplish reform.⁶ It is not surprising that Zwingli and his followers regarded the radical elements as part of one whole. This dissident element was probably never more than an irritation to Zwingli within Zurich. They lacked the following and support necessary to unseat Zwingli's leadership. This was, however, not the case outside of Zurich. Despite disputations, arrests and warnings the Anabaptists continued to be active in the countryside around Zurich and in neighboring lands. On Easter, 1525, Hubmaier underwent adult baptism and attempted to make Waldshut an Anabaptist city. In St. Gallen the question hung in the balance and provides the motive and context for Zwingli's writing in May, 1525, of *Von der Taufe*.⁷

⁵Robert C. Walton, *Zwingli's Theocracy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 69.

⁶Fritz Blanke, *Brothers in Christ*, (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1961), 12.

⁷"Der Grund ist unschwer ersichtlich: in St. Gallen war da Täuferturn eine schwer drohende Gefahr geworden, und die Entscheidung war noch nicht abzusehen, im Gegenteil, stand sie gleichsam auf das Messers Schneide." Z IV, 189 .

Although Zwingli wrote *Von der Taufe* specifically with regard to baptism, the issues at stake are far reaching. A careful reading of the work will affirm Martin Haas' analysis that in the conflict with the Anabaptists "the difference lay above all in ecclesiology." That is, these conflicts represent competing understandings of the relationship of the activity of man and God in the constitution of the Church. The other issues - including baptism - stem from this basic difference.⁸ From the beginning of *Von der Taufe* Zwingli makes his foundational position clear. Zwingli's doctrine of Providence makes God the principal actor in Salvation History. God cannot be bound to material things or human activity. Thus, "in the last analysis it is because the divine willingness has precedence over the human that we may rightly administer the sacrament to children within the covenant."⁹ The precedence of the divine initiative over the human makes the age of the recipient a matter of indifference. If it is, then, an "indifferent" thing, why do we divide the church and threaten the success of reform in "essential" matters? Zwingli will approach the issue in four sections: 1) on baptism, 2) the institution of baptism, 3) rebaptism and 4) infant baptism. Although argued logically and exegetically, the primary argument will persistently be the one stated above.

In the opening section of *Von der Taufe* Zwingli quickly identifies the issues that concern him. "We do not learn the truth by contention."¹⁰ Rather, contention brings "unnecessary strife and unrest...And all for the sake of external things on which the honor of God does not depend and by which purity and

⁸"...der Unterschied lag vor allem in der Ekklesiologie." Martin Haas, "Täuferum und Volkskirche - Faktoren der Trennung," *Zwingliana* 13(1970): 264.

⁹ZB, 127.

¹⁰ZB, 129; Z IV, 215.

quietness of conscience are not advanced."¹¹ Ironically, having rebuked the dissenters, Zwingli must acknowledge that he can only conclude that "all the doctors have been in error from the time of the apostles" because they "ascribed to the water a power it does not have and the holy apostles did not teach."¹² Baptism cannot be a source of objective power or cleansing for that is a work of God alone. It is, instead, a sign given as a concession to man. "The man who receives the mark of baptism is the one who is resolved to hear what God says to him, to learn the divine precepts and to live his life in accordance with them."¹³

Zwingli identifies four uses of baptism in Scripture which are essentially a mixture of three meanings of baptism: internal baptism by the Spirit, external teaching, and external water baptism. Of these, man can only administer external water baptism and teaching, "for God alone baptizes with the Spirit, and he himself chooses how and when and to whom that baptism will be administered."¹⁴ It is the faith produced by the baptism of the Spirit which is determinative of our salvation. "For neither as water nor as external teaching does baptism save us, but faith."¹⁵ We may note that Zwingli now applies the same presuppositions to his understanding of baptism as those applied to the Supper and the teaching (or

¹¹ZB, 130. "Er hat ein unnützen zang und unrñw under dem christenen volck gemacht, die liebe zerüttet umb etwas usserlicher dingen willen, an denen gottes schmach nit hanget, mit denen unschuld und rñw der conscientzen nit gepflantz ward." Z IV, 216.

¹²ZB, 130; Z IV, 216.

¹³ZB, 131. "Welicher nun sich mit dem touff verzeychnet, der wil hören, was im got sag, sin ordinantz erlernen und nach dero leben." Z IV, 218.

¹⁴ZB, 133. "der einig got toufft mit sinem geyst, wie, wen, und wenn er wil." Z IV, 221.

¹⁵ZB, 134; Z IV, 222.

preaching) of the Word. Scripture shows us that these three uses of baptism do not necessarily occur in a certain order but may, and have been, demonstrated in various sequences. However, while these three are all important facets of the life of the church, "we must speak first and chiefly of the baptism of the Holy Spirit."¹⁶

Zwingli notes that "some have taught that signs are given for the confirmation of an existing faith in that in which we have already learned and to which we are pledged."¹⁷ This is to misunderstand the nature and focus of baptism. It is a covenantal sign which - like circumcision - is a testimony to the faithfulness of the God of the Covenant rather than an affirmation of individual faith.¹⁸ That is, the focus of the sacrament is God's covenant rather than man's response. Interestingly, Zwingli acknowledges that "for some time I myself was deceived by the error and I thought it better not to baptize children until they came to years of discretion."¹⁹ However, although he entertained the idea of the Anabaptists he did not share the divisive spirit of "those who are violent and rebellious."²⁰ Such an improper spirit has even brought the Anabaptists to claim that they live, after baptism, without sin, a claim that is clearly presumptuous and erroneous.²¹

This is not to say that baptism bears no relation to the life and faith of the individual. Baptism is "a covenant sign which indicates that all those who receive it

¹⁶ZB, 136. "Hie muessen wir ouch vor allen dingen von dem touff des heiligen geystes sagen." Z IV, 225.

¹⁷ZB, 138. "Es habend etlich gelert, die zeychen sygind ggeben zû vestung des gloubens deß, das man uns geiert oder zûsagt hab." Z IV, 226.

¹⁸ZB, 138; Z IV, 226-227.

¹⁹ZB, 139, Z IV, 228-229.

²⁰ZB, 139; Z IV, 229.

²¹ZB, 139-140; Z IV, 229-231.

are willing to amend their lives and to follow Christ. In short, it is an initiation to a new life."²² In this understanding, Zwingli and the Anabaptists are in agreement. However, to move from that affirmation to focus on the faith of the individual is to produce "a sect and not faith."²³ God is the actor for Zwingli, not man, and "for my part, I allow God to work how and when he wills."²⁴ To do otherwise, focusing on man's faith, is to be led to division, producing a sect rather than the church of the covenant people.²⁵

After all, what can baptism truly accomplish? No material thing can cleanse the spirit. No act of man, not even the preaching of the Word, can produce faith, for "a spoken or material word has no greater power than that of water. For none can remit sin but God alone."²⁶

It is clear that the external baptism of water cannot affect spiritual cleansing. Hence, water baptism is nothing but an external ceremony, that is, an outward sign that we are incorporated and engrafted into the Lord Jesus Christ and pledged to live to him and follow him.²⁷

²²ZB, 141. "Für das erst ist der touff ein pflichtig zeichen, das den, der inn nimpt, anzeigt, das er sin leben beßren und Christo nachvolgen welle. Kurtz, es ist ein anhab eines nūwen lebens." Z IV, 231.

²³ZB, 148; Z IV, 241.

²⁴ZB, 149. "Ich wil got lassen wūrken, wie und wenn er wil." Z IV, 242.

²⁵ZB, 150-152; Z IV, 243-246.

²⁶ZB, 154. "So ist doch gheins muntlichen oder lyplichen wortes krafft grösser wede die krafft des lyplichen wassers; denn es mag nieman die sünd hynnemen wede gott." Z IV, 248-249.

²⁷ZB, 156. "Also erfindt sich, das der usser wassertouff nūts vermag zū reinigung der seel. So muß er nūts anders sin wede ein usserliche cerimonien, das ist: ein usserlich zeichen, das der mensch in den herren Christum Jhesum ingefürt, gepflantz und pflichtet, im leben und nachvolgen welle." Z IV, 252.

As an external sign, baptism cannot accomplish internal cleansing. This is not primarily because of the material nature of the sacrament but because, as human activity, it cannot preempt the divine initiative. To focus on baptism as a testimony to the prior experience of internal baptism is to focus on man and divide the church. Zwingli notes that "the root of the trouble (from Zwingli's perspective) is that the Anabaptists will not recognize any Christians except themselves or any church except their own."²⁸ This is to determine the church based upon man's response rather than God's eternal covenant. Surely we ought to follow the demands of Scripture, but under the authority of the (reformed) church and not cause dissension over things which are "indifferent".²⁹

In his second section Zwingli discusses the origin and institution of baptism. It is here that Zwingli claims "God instituted baptism in and through John."³⁰ He acknowledges that he breaks here with the traditional understanding of the church "for all the theologians that I have ever read or can call to mind" agree that the baptism of John and that of Christ are different.³¹ "But if John preached the Kingdom of Christ, then he administered the baptism of Christ."³² Calling men to repentance and pointing them toward Christ is all that man can do. The internal baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs only at the instance of the Holy Spirit in both the baptism of John and that of Christ. We may administer outward water baptism and

²⁸ZB, 158; Z IV, 254.

²⁹ZB, 159. "...in den usserlichen dingen, die fry sind." Z IV, 255

³⁰ZB, 161; Z IV, 258.

³¹ZB, 161; Z IV, 258.

³²ZB, 162. "So hat er ouch den touff Christi gfuert, wie er die ler sins ryches gefuert hat." Z IV, 259.

teaching, as both John and Christ's disciples did, but "God moves inwardly according to his own sovereign choice."³³ The importance of the external sign is not as a mark of distinction, but of unity. "Christ, the very son of God, underwent baptism in order that he might give us an example of unity, that we may all enter under the one sign."³⁴

Zwingli concludes this section with an attempt to explain Acts 19. The apparent rebaptism into Christ after receiving the baptism of John is explained by understanding the baptism of John here as the teaching of John. Paul "saw the inadequacy of their knowledge and he asked them whether they had received the Holy Ghost, that is, whether they were in a right relationship with God and believed in their hearts."³⁵

The third section addresses the issue of rebaptism. The argument of the Anabaptists (as presented by Zwingli) is that, either they were baptized in the Pope's baptism (and, hence, not truly baptized) or they cannot be sure that they were baptized at all (since they could not recall the event). In either case, they propose, they should be baptized so that they can be sure.³⁶ Zwingli dismisses the first case on the basis of ancient authorities. The Anabaptists themselves know better, claiming that infant baptism began under Pope Nicholas II (1058-61) and then citing Augustine's discussion regarding the problem of infant baptism. The problem is,

³³ZB, 163. "Got zücht innwendig, wenn er wil, so wir glych ußwendig leren und touffend." Z IV, 261.

³⁴ZB, 167; Z IV, 265-266.

³⁵ZB, 173; Z IV, 274.

³⁶Z IV, 278.

again, one of a divisive spirit.³⁷ The second claim Zwingli regards as disingenuous, referring the Anabaptists to the witness of their own parents and godparents.³⁸

The true source of their desire for rebaptism is in a misunderstanding of the true nature of baptism. He who wants to repeat baptism, "certainly wants to seek something that he did not have before. In so doing he would from that point follow after that which had before led us into total blindness, that is, that we should seek assurance for the soul in external things."³⁹ The assurance in baptism is not to be found in the power of the elements or validated by our personal faith. It is only in the provident power of the God of the Covenant. If we cannot accomplish anything new in rebaptism then why make such an issue of the matter? For Zwingli the answer is clear. The insistence upon rebaptism comes out of a heart filled with pride and foolishness. These are men who are willing and anxious (from Zwingli's point of view) to rend the church out of stubbornness and insolence for the sake of an issue that is of no ultimate importance.⁴⁰ The fruit of the Christian life comes by the work of God - not through rebaptism.⁴¹

Zwingli's last section deals with infant baptism. He reaffirms the nature of sacraments as signs (Pflichtzeichen). Baptism - like circumcision - is a sign of

³⁷Z IV, 278-281.

³⁸Z IV, 281.

³⁹"...der wil on zwyfel etwas darinn sÿchen, das er vor nit gehebt hat; und denn so wurd von stund an das hernach volgen, das uns vor in alle blintheit gefurt hat, das wir in usserlichen dingen trost der seel wurdind sÿchen." Z IV, 284.

⁴⁰Z IV, 289, 287. Zwingli describes the founders of Anabaptism as "saturnische" which W. Köhler defines as "einen eigensennigen, rechthaberischen, redegewandten, streitsuchtigen Menschen." Köhler, *Zwingli*, 287.

⁴¹Z IV, 291.

covenantal fidelity to God.⁴² In the case of infant baptism the commitment is made on the part of the family and community to raise the child within the covenant community.⁴³ Neither infant or adult baptism can do more because the inner baptism is accomplished by God alone. To the accusation that Jesus did not baptize children (and that, therefore, we should not either), Zwingli retorts that the same argument from silence would exclude women from the Eucharist because we read of no women at the Last Supper.⁴⁴ The Anabaptists have failed to distinguish between essential and indifferent things. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is essential, but the sex of the communicant is "indifferent." So also the sacrament of baptism is essential, but the age of the participants is indifferent, "and I would no more tolerate separating the old from the young as I would separating the men from the women."⁴⁵

Since baptism is a covenantal sign, to exclude children is to exclude them from the covenant. It is just such an exclusion that prompts Christ's rebuke in Mark 10:13-16. And if this is merely an "external" coming to Christ it is still no different from adult baptism because "no one comes to faith in Christ, even as an adult, except those whom the Father has drawn to himself."⁴⁶ If Christ himself has invited

⁴²Z IV, 292-3.

⁴³"Also was dem menschen möglich, sin kind und nechsten by dem pundt des einigen gottes zu behalten, das er imm von gheinen andren gott liess verkünden von der kindheit uff." Z IV, 294.

⁴⁴Z IV, 296.

⁴⁵"...denn ich wil als wenig lyden, das ir mir den menschen in kind und alt teilend, als in wyb und man." Z IV, 297.

⁴⁶"...zu Christo des glaubens halb nieman kumpt, der glych erwachsen ist, dann welchen der vatter zß imm gezogen hatt." Z IV, 299.

the children to him, then "why should someone deny them the sign of the people of God?"⁴⁷

Zwingli argues that baptism of children began in the time of Christ. While explicit Biblical evidence is lacking, the traditional practice of circumcision and paternal representation suggest the comfortable assimilation of such a practice. The identification of baptism as a covenant sign certainly implies that it was understood in similar fashion as circumcision.⁴⁸ "Now we see from the practice of the children of Israel and from the proclamation of Paul that infant baptism must have begun in apostolic times."⁴⁹

The issue of infant baptism was tied to the problem of original sin. Zwingli addresses original sin in a significant passage detailing his understanding of it. Original sin or inherited sin is actually only the inheritance of human weakness from Adam. It should not properly be called sin. Sin must be willful and willful sin can only occur when the law is understood and willfully disobeyed.⁵⁰ The naming of "prästen" as sin is an error of the theologians.⁵¹

⁴⁷Z IV, 299.

⁴⁸Z IV, 303-307.

⁴⁹"Ietz sehend wir am bruch der kinden Israels und an der kundschaft Pauli wol, das der kindertouff müß by der apostelzyten angehabt haben." Z IV, 307.

⁵⁰ "Also volgt, das die erbsünd ein präst ist, der von imm selbs nit süntlich ist demm, der inn hat. Er mag inn ouch nit verdammen, got geb, was die theologi sagend, biss das er uß dem prästen wider das gsatzt gottes thut. Denn thüt er aber erst wider das gsatzt, wenn er das gsatzt erkennt." Z IV, 307-308.

⁵¹"Der präst kan ye nit sünd sin." Z IV, 309.

The fundamental argument for infant baptism is that they are already the children of God.⁵² Just as the children of Israel were included in the covenant by circumcision so we should include the children in the church and not exclude them by denying the baptismal seal.⁵³ "Circumcision became a sign of the faith and was given to children. Now baptism (is practiced) in the place of circumcision."⁵⁴ The external sign is given in corporate identification, to encourage Christian training and to perpetuate the teaching of the faith.⁵⁵

In his final summary Zwingli reviews his arguments. Regarding baptism in general it has been shown (to Zwingli's satisfaction, at least) that no external thing can purify the soul. That is the prerogative of the free activity of God. Therefore, baptism cannot wash away sin. It is instituted, rather, as a "Pflichtzeichen" of God's people and no more than that. Children are identified in the Old as well as the New Testament as being God's. Therefore, just as they were marked as such by circumcision in the Old Testament, they should be given the sign of faith in baptism. As for rebaptism there is no clear example or proof in all of Scripture to support it.⁵⁶

Zwingli's *Von der Taufe* appeared in May, 1525. By then, Balthasar Hubmaier had already cast his lot with the Anabaptists. There were, however, still ties remaining to Zwingli and his supporters and still differences between Hubmaier

⁵²Z IV, 325.

⁵³Z IV, 325-6.

⁵⁴"Die bschnydung ist ein zeichen des gloubens gewesen, und ist den kinden ggeben. Nun ist der touff an stat der bschnydung." Z IV, 327.

⁵⁵Z IV, 331-2.

⁵⁶Z IV, 334.

and the Zurich Radicals. It was apparently Hubmaier's hope to yet win Zwingli (or at least Zwingli's supporters) to a view of believer baptism. On July 10, 1525, Hubmaier wrote to the Zurich council to advise them that he was preparing a booklet demonstrating the case for believer baptism. *Von der christlichen Taufe* is dated 11 July, 1525.⁵⁷

Yoder contends that although he was acquainted with Zwingli's booklet, "Hubmaier was not interested in direct polemics...occasional rebuttal of Zwinglian arguments occurs only on the margin of this entire exposition."⁵⁸ However, a comparison of texts seems to rather affirm Windhorst when he suggests that Zwingli's work shapes the form and content of Hubmaier's reply.⁵⁹ Although Zwingli is not mentioned by name, *Von der christlichen Taufe* is directed toward him. A careful consideration of Hubmaier's arguments may help to illuminate key issues of difference with Zwingli.

Hubmaier prefaces his work with preliminary denial of several of Zwingli's charges against the Anabaptists. Zwingli has charged them with creating sects, denying a Christian magistracy and claiming sinlessness after baptism. Hubmaier rejects all three as being inaccurate.⁶⁰ Windhorst suggests that these

⁵⁷HS, 116; Christof Windhorst, *Täuferisches Taufverständnis*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 38-39.

⁵⁸Yoder, "Balthasar Hübmaier", 9-10.

⁵⁹"...sowohl formal als auch sachlich Zwingli's Buch der Gedankenführung Hubmaiers als folie gedient hat." Windhorst, *Täuferisches Taufverständnis*, 47; also Armour, *Anabaptist Baptism*, 27.

⁶⁰HS, 120.

accusations are directed at a Zurich situation from which Hubmaier intends to distance himself.⁶¹ At least, they do not accurately reflect Hubmaier's own views.

Proceeding to the text of the work, Hubmaier states his definition of water baptism. It is, he declares, nothing other than a public sign and testimony of inner faith by which one openly identifies oneself as a disciple of Christ.⁶² Although this definition shows certain similarities to Zwingli's, Hubmaier draws quite different conclusions regarding it. He concludes that this shows that instruction should precede baptism in water, producing recognition of sins and the forgiveness of Christ.⁶³ Although he adopts Zwingli's distinction between inward and outward baptism he applies it in a different way.

In the second section Hubmaier considers the office of John the Baptist. He identifies the witness of John in 1) preaching repentance, 2) baptism and 3) directing to Christ.⁶⁴ John's message was limited to condemnation under the law and could offer no hope other than in anticipation of Christ.⁶⁵ Hubmaier follows with a section relating scriptural texts regarding John's baptism. Hubmaier identifies a pattern which is repeated in the Biblical accounts consisting of 1) Word, 2) hearing,

⁶¹Windhorst, *Täuferisches Taufverständnis*, 44.

⁶²"(Es) ist nicht anders dann ein öffentliche bekantnüss und zeugnüss des inwendigen glaubens und pflichten, mit der sich der mensch auch außwendig bezeügt und vor menglich (jedermann) sich anzeygt, das er sey ein sünder...(und) habe sich auch verpflichtet unnd im fürgesetzt, füran nach dem wort und beulich Christi zuleben." HS, 122.

⁶³HS, 122-123.

⁶⁴HS, 123-127.

⁶⁵"In summa: Gott fñrt durch Johannes hinab in die hell, unnd durch christum wider aufher." HS, 127.

3)recognition of sins/ change of life and 4)baptism and works.⁶⁶ Since children are not mentioned, Hubmaier takes that to mean that they were not baptized. Indeed, they could not be if the pattern required required repentance before baptism. "John was in the wilderness and certainly baptized only those to whom he had previously preached and led into an acknowledgement of their sins."⁶⁷

Hubmaier moves to the office of the Apostles, discovering again a scriptural pattern of 1)preaching, 2)faith, and 3)external baptism.⁶⁸ The preaching moves men to recognition of their sin and through the Word, to faith.⁶⁹ After the Christian has heard the word and believed "he gives God his heart and commits himself in his heart to follow a new life after the rule of Christ."⁷⁰ It is as a sign of this existing faith that he then submits to baptism. While the process of conversion and baptism may not always follow this order, Hubmaier contends that this is the way it should happen. It should be clear "that no one should be baptized with water who does not beforehand confess faith and know how he stands with God."⁷¹ Baptism, then, should be understood as a public sign of the prior inward work of the Spirit.

⁶⁶HS, 128.

⁶⁷"Johannes was in der wüsten unnd hat getäufft mit wasser, on zweyffel nyemants dann die, denen er voran gepredigt und inn erkanntnûß irer sünden yngefürt." HS, 130.

⁶⁸HS, 134.

⁶⁹ "So kumpt der glaub auß der predig, das predigen aber durch das wort gottes." HS, 135.

⁷⁰ "...ergibt er sich Gott sein hertz unnd verpflichtet sich inwendig im hertzen in ein new leben nach der regel Christi zufüren." HS, 136.

⁷¹ "...das man nyemandt mit dem wasser täuffen solle, er bekenne dann vorhyh den glauben und wisse, wie er mit Gott daran sey." HS, 136.

To baptize children is to ignore the teaching of Scripture. Hubmaier rejects Zwingli's description of baptism as an initiatory sign. Initiation into what, he asks? Experience demonstrates that children do not grow up into model Christians merely because of their baptism.⁷² Mark 16:15ff. makes it absolutely clear (for Hubmaier) "that the young children are baptized without any scriptural support because they should be taught and instructed in the faith beforehand."⁷³ Hubmaier identifies as necessary knowledge prior to baptism - a recognition of sin, belief in forgiveness of sins in Christ, commitment to a new life after the will of God and in his power, and belief that Jesus is the Christ.⁷⁴ Therefore, adult baptism is not rebaptism, because infant baptism is not a true baptism.⁷⁵

In fact, not only is adult baptism permissible, it is necessary. As a sacrament, baptism is more necessary than the Lord's Supper.⁷⁶ The reason for this necessity is that baptism identifies the church.⁷⁷ Baptism, then, is the mark of the believer with inward faith by which he identifies himself with the visible church. Hubmaier concludes this section with an enumeration of ten reasons to baptize

⁷²HS, 137-138.

⁷³"...das man die jungen Kinder täuffet on allen grundt der schrifftten, denn man soll ye vor im glauben geleert sein und underrichtet." HS, 139.

⁷⁴HS, 139-140.

⁷⁵"...der kindli tauff ist keyn tauff uß eßer eygen bekantnuß unnd inn der warheit." HS, 140.

⁷⁶HS, 140-143.

⁷⁷"Wo der Wassertauff nit ist, da selbs ist keyn Kirch, keyn diener, weder bruder noch schwester, keyn bruderlich straff, außschliessung oder wiederauffnehmung, und rede hye von der außwendigen Kirchen...So muß ye auch ein außwendig bekantnuß oder zeügüß seyn, dar durch außwendig bruder und schwester einander kennen, dann der glaub ist alleyn im hertzen." HS, 145.

(rebaptize). Armour comments that "ten variations on the theme are given, but each reduces to the principle that Christ requires it."⁷⁸ Hubmaier wishes to demonstrate as strongly as possible from scriptural teaching that "all those who believe are responsible to allow themselves to be baptized according to the institution of Christ."⁷⁹

The following section considers the scriptural teaching of the Baptism of Christ. Hubmaier finds once again a discernable pattern in the process of conversion and baptism. The pattern, varying slightly from the prior examples, is 1)Word, 2)hearing, 3)faith, 4)baptism and 5)works.⁸⁰ This pattern of experience again demonstrates the necessity for faith prior to baptism. It should be clear that infant baptism is inappropriate and that believers baptism is the only correct and Christian baptism. Any other teaching is the product of falsehood and deception.⁸¹

In the next-to-last section Hubmaier answers four questions. 1)Is infant baptism forbidden in the Word of God? Yes, because believer's baptism is commanded and the baptism of non-believers (or pre-believers) is forbidden.⁸² 2)Have children been baptized from the time of the Apostles? Even if it has been, it was done improperly and against Scripture.⁸³ 3)Are unbaptized children damned or blessed? We cannot know, although God may bless them out of his grace. The

⁷⁸Armour, *Anabaptist Baptism*, 29.

⁷⁹"...alle die, da so glauben, schuldig seyen, sich zu tauffen lassen nach der pflanzung Christi." HS, 146.

⁸⁰HS, 146.

⁸¹HS, 151.

⁸²HS, 151.

⁸³HS, 153.

scriptural evidence is unclear.⁸⁴ 4)Is it helpful to baptize children in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? No, Baptism is nothing unless it involves repentance and commitment to new life.⁸⁵

Hubmaier concludes his treatise with a summation of the process of conversion and baptism as he believes it to be found in Scripture. 1)In hearing the Word of the law we are brought to recognition of our depravity. 2)To the man struck down unto death by this recognition comes Jesus, who brings healing and calls us to faith in him.⁸⁶ 3)Having commended himself to Christ by inward commitment, the believer now gives open, public witness before the community of his new inner life by the external sign of water baptism. In so doing he witnesses "that he believes that he has a gracious, good and merciful God and Father in heaven through Jesus Christ." Further, by this testimony he submits himself to the discipline of the community, thus marking his entry into the church.⁸⁷ 4)The change in life from sin comes not from the ceremony or the ability of man, but from the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit triumphs in man, bringing about the good fruit and witness of life in Christ.⁸⁸ 5)Now, by faith brought to a recognition of the incomprehensible gift of God, we should be thankful - making remembrance through the Lord's Supper. The bread and wine are to bring us to reflection and

⁸⁴"Es ist keyn schrift vorhanden, so gilt es nit auß dem finger saugen." HS, 154-156.

⁸⁵HS, 156.

⁸⁶HS, 158.

⁸⁷"...das er glaub, wie er ein gnädigen, guttingen und barmhertigen Gott und vatter habe im hymmel durch Jhesum Christum." HS, 160.

⁸⁸HS, 160-161.

remembrance and convey no objective power in themselves.⁸⁹ In that reflection we find ourselves directed to God's grace, upon which all our hopes depend. "Where He does not give grace we are already lost."⁹⁰

Hubmaier reflects agreement with Zwingli at several points. But even in the points of agreement he finds himself led to quite different conclusions. We are saved by grace through the action of the Holy Spirit, but this is precisely the saving grace to which we testify at baptism. We affirm the faithfulness of God, not abstractly, but as we find evidence of that faithfulness at work in our hearts and lives. The examples of Christ and his disciples and, to a lesser extent, John the Baptist demonstrate a clear pattern calling for confession and testimony of faith prior to baptism. For Hubmaier, the scriptural evidence is clear. Baptism without faith or prior to faith compromises the true nature of the church and disregards the call of Christ in the New Testament. The New Testament church is a believers' church. Looking constantly at Scripture, Hubmaier finds these conclusions inescapable and thoroughly convincing.

Even in the midst of this increasingly acrimonious debate there are areas of agreement between Hubmaier and Zwingli. Regarding the sacrament of baptism itself, both Hubmaier and Zwingli are in agreement as to the necessity of baptism for the individual and the church. Their understanding of necessity also includes rejection of any objective power resident in the elements or celebration themselves. It seems clear that Hubmaier had adopted, or at least shared, Zwingli's distinction

⁸⁹HS, 161-162.

⁹⁰"Dann wo er nit gnad gibt, so ist es umb uns schon verloren." HS, 162-163.

between the inner Baptism of the Holy Spirit and external baptism with water.⁹¹ The external baptism is only a witness to the inner baptism. While Hubmaier understands that witness as regarding a prior experience and Zwingli as (generally) in anticipation of a future experience, both separate the inner baptism from the external baptism in water.

Although there are points of agreement, Hubmaier and Zwingli's disagreements are fundamental. Though they both see baptism as an external witness in the context of the church they see it in entirely different focus. For Hubmaier the focus is on the individual while for Zwingli the focus is on the church.⁹² This focus also suggests a different emphasis upon agency in baptism. For Zwingli, baptism is primarily a witness to the covenant of God, while for Hubmaier it is a witness to the activity of God as encountered and evidenced in a particular individual. As Steinmetz concludes, "the principal actor in Zwingli's covenant is the triune God... The principal actor in Hubmaier's covenant is the believing individual."⁹³ This different perspective changes the issues and consequences at stake.

⁹¹Windhorst, *Täuferisches Taufverständnis*, 47; Armour, *Anabaptist Baptism*, 26.

⁹²"Zwingli denkt das Sakrament der Taufe von Ganzen der Kirche her in Richtung auf den einzelnen, der ihre durch die Taufe eingegliedert wird. Hubmaier dagegen ist zuerst am Glauben und neuen Leben des einzelnen Menschens interessiert." Windhorst, *Täuferisches Taufverständnis*, 104; also Armour, *Anabaptist Baptism*, 31; and Torsten Bergsten, *Balthasar Hubmaier*, trans. W.R. Estep (Valley Forge: Judson, 1978), 293.

⁹³David C. Steinmetz, "Scholasticism and Radical Reform: Nominalist Motifs in the Theology of Balthasar Hübmaier," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 45(1971): 129, 130.

Because Zwingli lays stress on the sovereign activity of the Divine Spirit rather than on the human response of faith and on the decree of election rather than on the experience of regeneration, he is willing to administer the sacrament to infants.⁹⁴ On the other hand, it is Hubmaier's stress upon the individual that leads him to be concerned with the state of faith in the recipient and the life that expresses that faith.⁹⁵ "If Zwingli defines baptism as the covenant sign of the people of God, Hubmaier defines it as the covenant sign of the new life."⁹⁶ It is this difference in perspective that results in their disagreement over the essential or indifferent nature of the administration of baptism. Since, for Zwingli, the agent and focus were outside the baptizand, the age and understanding of the recipient in baptism could be "indifferent" matters. Indeed, they could be nothing more.⁹⁷ For Hubmaier, however, the confession and disposition of the individual were at the heart of the sacrament. To regard them as indifferent would be to deprive the sacrament of its meaning.

A revealing issue in dispute is the nature of the baptism of John. It reflects fundamental differences between Hubmaier and Zwingli that go beyond a minor exegetical problem. For Hubmaier, John's baptism is a testimony to repentance

⁹⁴Ibid., 129.

⁹⁵Windhorst, *Täuferisches Taufverständnis*, 101.

⁹⁶"Definiert Zwingli die Taufe als ein Pflichtzeichen des Volkes Gottes, so Hubmaier als Pflichtzeichen des neuen Lebens." Ibid., 104.

⁹⁷Cottrell seems justified in rejecting Bromiley's criticism that Zwingli failed to establish the necessity of infant baptism. In the context of the controversy it was only necessary to establish the permissibility of infant baptism. Cottrell is correct when he adds that within Zwingli's understanding of providence he could do no more than that. See Jack Warren Cottrell, "Covenant and Baptism in the Theology of Huldreich Zwingli" (Ph.D. Diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1971), 158.

without power to forgive. Forgiveness is tied to Christ.⁹⁸ But, as Steinmetz concludes, for Zwingli "it is not enough to say that John's baptism was merely a baptism of repentance, because so, according to the New Testament, was the baptism of Jesus."⁹⁹ In part, this reflects the different focus on the agent in baptism. But it also reflects a basic difference in their understanding of the transition - personified in John - from the Old Testament to the New. Locher notes that for Zwingli biblical history "is fundamental for faith and life; it is indispensable..." and of "decisive importance...(to) the biblical concept of the covenant."¹⁰⁰ Hubmaier, on the other hand, wants to consider the New Testament in terms of a fundamental break with the old. His failure to deal with the issue of covenant leads Armour to conclude that "Hubmaier felt himself unable to come to grips with the covenant theology that was the key to Zwingli's argument."¹⁰¹ This difference is reflected in their respective approaches to biblical interpretation. Hubmaier seems more at ease with the immediate context while Zwingli is more concerned with the salvation-historical context. The implications, then, of the dispute over John are far-reaching.

Zwingli is motivated by a vision of one people of God in history...John is a symbol for Zwingli of the continuity between the two testaments and

⁹⁸"Am Datum der Auferstehung entscheidet sich für Hubmaier, ob die Taufe zur Vergebung gesendet wird oder nicht...Die Johannaufstehe steht im Zeichen des vernichtenden Gesetzes, die Christustaufe im Zeichen des erlösenden Evangeliums." Windhorst, *Täuferisches Taufverständnis*, 57-58.

⁹⁹David C. Steinmetz, "The Baptism of John and the Baptism of Jesus in Huldrych Zwingli, Balthasar Hübmaier and Late Medieval Theology," in *Continuity and Discontinuity*, ed F.F. Church & T. George (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), 176.

¹⁰⁰Locher, *Zwingli's Thought*, 113.

¹⁰¹Armour, *Anabaptist Baptism*, 37.

the unity of the people of God in time. The argument over John is passionate because the issue at stake is the validity of that vision.¹⁰²

Let us consider the questions posed in our study and see what light this debate sheds on them. Although the issues are treated somewhat differently in baptism, basic themes should still be clear. Concerning the relation of human action to divine the answer is emphatically clear. In familiar terms Zwingli decries any attempt to bind God to human action. He states that baptism - like the Supper and the Word - can effect no action on God's part. God acts freely. He explicitly affirms what we have already seen in our consideration of Supper and Word. Baptism is a sacrament which celebrates the covenant that God has already established and fulfills.

The focus of the sacrament is on that covenant. That is, the focus is not on the individual believer or the contemporary celebration. Quite the reverse is true. The individual participates in the celebration of the community that looks beyond itself to God's redemptive activity throughout human history. God's presence is understood in that sense. God has made himself present in the redemptive history which has called the church into being. As the church celebrates that reality it celebrates his historic - which is not to exclude immediate - presence.

The benefit of the sacrament is the celebration of that hopeful covenant and the commitment of our lives to it. It marks our visible entry into the church of the covenant and signifies our (expected, if not already fulfilled) personal participation in the internal renewal of faith. It should be noted that Zwingli's optimism regarding God's redemption assumes inclusion of virtually the entire visible church. He assumes that God acts graciously and is untroubled by concerns for sifting the wheat

¹⁰²Steinmetz, "Baptism," 181.

from the chaff. The church can joyfully celebrate baptism - even of infants - in the confidence that they will (almost) certainly realize the renewal promised in it.

CHAPTER SIX

ZWINGLI IN MID-CAREER

We want next to consider Zwingli's sacramental thought in mid-career. By 1524 Zwingli's theology is well developed. He writes to distinguish his views from the Catholic tradition, the Radical, or Anabaptist, party and now, increasingly, within the ranks of the reformers as a whole. In this period he will give increased attention to dialogue with the Lutheran position on the Supper. Luther, however, is not personally identified or attacked and the writings are not sharply polemical. The period gives us an opportunity to observe a mature Zwingli prior to the more heated writings of the sacramental controversy,

Zwingli's letter to Matthew Alber of 16 November, 1524 marks his first serious attempt to distinguish himself within the ranks of the reformers on the Supper.¹ Karlstadt's sacramental writings produced a furor of discussion and a heated rejection by Luther and his adherents. Zwingli's apparent similarities to Karlstadt's views raised questions and caused some to categorize Karlstadt and Zwingli together.² Forced to address the issue, Zwingli goes "semi-public". He addresses his letter to Matthew Alber, a Lutheran of his acquaintance, who is in

¹Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther* I:72.

²"Dem Kernpunkte bei Karlstadt stimmten sie zu, trotz allem, sie hatten ähnliches bei Zwingli selbst gehört auf der Kanzel...Da war Aufklärung durch Zwingli Pflicht." Z III, 324.

conflict with a Zwinglian, Konrad Hermann.³ In it Zwingli attempts to distinguish himself from Karlstadt and Luther. He tries to maintain a balance between clarifying and affirming his differences and, at the same time, trying to avoid a break with Luther by handling the topic carefully.⁴

Although the letter was not published until March 1525 it was hand-copied and widely distributed. It is clear that Matthew Alber was merely a convenient addressee for a general letter. As many as 500 copies were sent to potential supporters who would, hopefully, be won over to a Zwinglian view of the Supper.⁵ With this work, Zwingli can be seen to make a careful opening in his controversy with Luther over the reformation understanding of the Supper.

Zwingli identifies the reason for writing as his reading of Karlstadt's *Von dem widerchristlichen mißbrauch des hern und kelch*. While Zwingli is in agreement with some of what Karlstadt has written he disagrees with other aspects of Karlstadt's interpretation.⁶ Immediately Zwingli begins with John 6 which embodies not only his starting point, but the heart of his understanding. John 6 clearly teaches that to "eat" is to believe, which is to become, through faith, sons of God.⁷ The

³Z III, 328.

⁴Z III, 326-327; ZR, 296.

⁵The claim of 500 letters may actually be an allusion to I Cor. 15:6, according to Walther Köhler, rather than a true estimate. Wilhelm Walther sees this distribution as a tactical action which is part of a clearly developed plan by Zwingli to win the reformation over to his view of the Supper. See Z III, 325, 331. Köhler concludes, however, that "...unbefangen betrachtet ist Zwinglis Sendschreiben an Alber ein erstes Heraustreten aus einer Reserve in der Abendmahlsfrage Luther gegenüber, veranlaßt durch Karlstadt's Auftreten, in vorsichtiger Form." Z III, 328.

⁶Z III, 335-336.

⁷Z III, 336.

bread of life is spiritual bread, that is, the sacrifice of Christ for us.⁸ It is that sacrifice which is the focus of the Supper and the basis of our hope. "Caro igitur mea, quatenus est morte adflicta, cibus, hoc est: spes est animae."⁹

This bodily sacrifice is not to be understood in merely fleshly terms. It is the sacrifice of Christ as the Son of God (i.e. in his divinity) that is the focus of the Supper.¹⁰ The source of life is faith in the salvation offered to us through this sacrifice. "Christ's words have this meaning: No one shall have life except those who believe that I have been given over to death for their salvation."¹¹ To believe in this redeeming sacrifice is the "eating" we are called to in the Supper. To "eat" in the Supper is to believe.¹² To eat the flesh is to believe that Christ died for me. To drink the blood is to believe that it was shed for me. It is by *believing* that Christ is

⁸"Sic ergo panis, id est: cibus animae, quem pollicitus sum, caro mea est, non quemadmodum vos putati, sic vobiscum vivens et conversans, sed pro mundi vita tradita, hoc est: pro mortuis atrociter caesa, ut vivicerentur." Z III, 338.

⁹Z III, 338.

¹⁰"Sed caro Christi pro nobis mortua, eum, qui eius morte nititur, spiritualem facit, nempe dei filium." Z III, 338. "Quatenus autem Christus mundum vivivat, hinc est, quod deus deique filius est, non quatenus caro est." Z III, 340

¹¹"Christi verborum sententia haec erat: Nemo vivet, nisi qui credet me pro salute sue esse morti traditum." Z III, 338.

¹²"...pro 'me edit' sentirent Christum 'in me credit'." Z III, 339.

in us, not by bodily eating.¹³ "Therefore, it is faith - not eating - of which Christ is speaking here [i.e. John 6]."¹⁴

Zwingli repeatedly and emphatically cites John 6:63, "Spiritus est, qui vivificat; caro non prodest quicquam." "He holds up the words like a shield; the flesh is able to do nothing."¹⁵ Indeed, he regards it as the decisive refutation of any bodily eating.¹⁶ In a veiled reference to Luther, Zwingli declares that it is foolish to deny transubstantiation and yet refuse to acknowledge the symbolic and spiritual character of the Supper.¹⁷ "If eating the body could make us holy, then there would be two ways to blessedness - faith and fleshly eating of the body of Christ."¹⁸ It is to protect the centrality of faith and the focus of the Supper on Christ's redemptive sacrifice that Zwingli repeatedly invokes "caro non prodest quicquam." The discussion does not center on materiality, but the essential role of faith. "Faith is the certitude that Christ has been crucified for our redemption and salvation."¹⁹

¹³"Sic carnem eius edamus, id est: pro nobis mortuam credamus; et sanguinem eius bibamus, id est: quod sanguis eius pro nobis effusus sit, firmiter credamus: iam Christus sit in nobis et nos in ipso. Sed estne Christus in quoquam corporaliter? Minime!" Z III, 339.

¹⁴"Fides ergo est, non manducatio, de qua Christus hic [i.e. John 6] loquitur." Z III, 339. "Fides ergo opus est, quod beat, non corpus corporaliter edere." Z III, 340.

¹⁵"Wie einem Schild will er das Wort entgegenhalten: caro non potest quicquam." Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther* I:76.

¹⁶Z III, 340-341.

¹⁷Z III, 341.

¹⁸"Wenn das Essen des Leibes selig machte, so gäbe es zwei Wege der Seligkeit, Glaube und leibliches Essen des Leibes Christi." Z III, 330.

¹⁹"Fides ergo, quae certa est Christum crucifixum nostram esse redemptionem et salutem." Z III, 341. "Quam carnem quemque sanguinem? Non

In light of this perspective Zwingli considers Karlstadt's views, concluding with a mild rejection.²⁰ It seems clear that, while the work is ostensibly written to distinguish Zwingli's views from Karlstadt's, Zwingli is not seriously concerned about Karlstadt. Luther is not named, but is clearly the primary party addressed.²¹

Zwingli introduces the argument that "est" should be understood to mean "signifies." "This 'signifies' my body which is given for you."²² Zwingli argues that this is the clearest and most appropriate understanding of Christ's words of institution.²³ Here Zwingli presents for the first time the language "symbol" and "signifies" in this form, addressing the words of institution.²⁴ The Supper is clearly presented as a symbolic remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ for us.²⁵

eam, qui humorem habet, neque eam, quae pondus; sed eam quam in mente cognoscimus nobis esse salutis pignus, hac causa, quod pro nobis sit in cruce, morte adfecta." Z III, 341.

²⁰ "Hanc Carolstadii sententiam, qui probaverit, nos minime offendet." Z III, 344.

²¹"Die ganze Auseinandersetzung mit Karlstadt ist Zwingli, das merkt man deutlich, nicht allzu wichtig, hier ist das Maß der Zustimmung viel größer als der Unterschied. Anders Luther gegenüber." Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther* I:73. Also Z III, 330.

²²"Hoc 'significat' corpus mean, quod pro vobis traditur." Z III, 345.
"...videlicet in hoc verbo 'est', cuius significantia non perpetuo pro 'esse' acipitur, sed etiam pro 'significare.'" Z III, 330.

²³"Fitque horum verborum Christi sensus ad hunc modum apertissimus: Hoc convivium significat aut symbolum est. quo refreabitis meum ipsius corpus dei filii, domini vestu et magistri, pro vobis esse esse traditum." Z III, 345-346.

²⁴Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther* I:74-75. "Erstmalig wird jetzt die Deutung des 'est' der Einsetzungsworte als 'significat' geboten - wir wissen, hier wirkt der Brief des Honius." *Ibid.*, 74

²⁵Z III, 329.

The corporate character of this remembrance is also emphasized. "The 'communion' is not a meal, but the fellowship of the church."²⁶ It is the collective celebration of those who trust in faith in the redemptive work of Christ forming the Body of Christ, that is, the church.²⁷ It is as a corporate remembrance by faith in the redeeming work of Christ for us that the Supper is to be properly understood. Zwingli concludes,

From all of this it is clear that the eating of the eucharist is not for the removal of sin, but as a symbol for those who firmly believe in the remission of sins through the death of Christ and return thanksgiving.²⁸

Zwingli's developed thought is expressed most systematically in his treatise, *Commentary on True and False Religion*. Produced in 1524-5 it demonstrates the theological system in which Zwingli worked. In it we may see the theological development of the themes we have already identified in Zwingli's thought and life.²⁹ Zwingli's ambitious purpose in his *Commentary* is contrast the true religion of the Bible and the false religion of tradition and reason.³⁰ The presentation of the

²⁶"Die 'Kommunion' ist also nicht ein Essen, sondern die communicatio ecclesiae." Z III, 329. "Panem dedit nobis Christus, ut eum simul edentes in unum ipsius corpus coalescamus; modo prius coelestem panem - ut Io.6 docuit - ederimus; hoc autem corpus ecclesia Christi est." Z III, 349.

²⁷"Factum ergo est inter discipulos Christi, ut quinquē fratres esse se confiterentur, sic iuxta Christi institutum cum reliquis fratribus ederent ac biberent; et hac ratione in communionem fratrum, qui credebant se Christi corpore et sanguine redemptos, accipiebantur." Z III, 351.

²⁸"Unde obiter et hoc patet, eucharistiae esum non tollere peccata, sed symbolum eorum esse, qui firmiter Christi morte exhaustum et deletum esse peccatum credunt et gratias agunt." Z III, 351.

²⁹*De vera et falsa religione commentarius*, Z III, 590-912. English translation in *Commentary on True and False Religion*, Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., (Durham: Labyrinth Press, 1981), 1-343 (Cited as CTFR).

³⁰CTFR, 56-58; Z III, 639-640.

matter at hand indicates the seriousness with which Zwingli regards this matter and the clear yes/no character of the problem. As Zwingli poses it, this is a struggle for the essentials of true faith.

In his first major section Zwingli treats our knowledge of God. His radical emphasis on scripture, or revelation, leads to a sharp limitation of the power of reason. More pessimistic than Luther, Zwingli contends that even knowledge of God's existence (*that* he is) is by revelation.³¹ God's essential character (*what* he is) is certainly known only by revelation from the Spirit of God.³² Zwingli understands God's sovereignty to be an essential characteristic of God, for "all things live and move in him and through him."³³ This rather scriptural description of God's providence is further conditioned by Zwingli's insistence that the perfection of divinity demands *absolute* providence. If it is not absolute it is not perfect and, therefore, not appropriate to God.³⁴ By this qualification Zwingli is not making a merely theoretical or philosophical point. He moves directly to the more immediately theological implications of this principle. He asserts that "the whole business of predestination, free will, and merit rests upon this matter of providence."³⁵ This ascription of absolute providence may be a source of comfort

³¹CTFR, 59; Z II, 641.

³²CTFR, 62-63; Z III, 643-644.

³³CTFR, 66. "Redeo: Istis ergo patet, in deo et perdeum, ut omnia esse et consistere, sic omnia in ipso et per ipsum vivere, moveri." Z III, 646.

³⁴CTFR, 67; Z III, 647.

³⁵CTFR, 70. "Nam ex providentiae loco predestinationis, liberi arbitrii meritque universum negotium pendet." Z III, 650.

for us because (this absolutely provident) God is "kind and bountiful" and acts in gracious and generous ways towards his creation.³⁶

By contrast, man suffers from total depravity. Zwingli's earlier optimism regarding man's moral capacity for good is strikingly absent in the *Commentary*. He concludes that "man is altogether bad and that all his thoughts and actions are controlled by self-love."³⁷ Man cannot even know his own inner self without God's action to reveal it to him.³⁸ Bound by sin "the entire imagination of man is not only inclined to evil, but firmly fixed and set upon it, and that not at intervals..., but all the time."³⁹ Intent upon, and bound to, sin man is incapable of free choice or moral initiative.⁴⁰

Given God's absolute providence and man's total incapacity for self-initiative to the good, it is no surprise that Zwingli attributes the total initiative in religion to God.⁴¹ God, in his gracious providence, calls to man who is in utter despair and "he whom He calls is forced to respond whether he will or not."⁴² The evidence of God's saving grace is this involuntary response which results in a confidence and trust in God's goodness. He concludes that

³⁶CTFR, 70-74; Z III, 650-653..

³⁷CTFR, 87. "...confiteantur hominem esse undequaque pessimun, omnia sui amore consulae ac facere." Z III, 665.

³⁸CTFR, 82; Z III, 660-661.

³⁹CTFR, 79; Z III, 658.

⁴⁰CTFR, 83; Z III, 661-662.

⁴¹CTFR, 89-90; Z III, 667.

⁴²CTFR, 91. "Quem enim ille vocat, velit nolit respondere cogitur." Z III, 668.

this clinging to God, therefore, with an unshakeable trust in Him as the only good, as the only one who has the knowledge and the power to relieve our troubles and to turn away all evils or to turn them to his own glory and the benefit of his people, and with filial dependence upon him as a father - this is piety, is religion.⁴³

This response is also revealed in "an eagerness to live according to the will of God."⁴⁴ By definition, then, the true Christian possesses a confidence and trust in God and God's good will toward him. The subjective state of confidence and trust is the *product* of God's action and the *basis* for man's assent and belief. Perhaps no moment as clearly divides Luther and Zwingli as this one. Luther clings to the promises of God, finding in this exercise of faith a source of hope and assurance. Zwingli sees God-focused assurance and confidence produced in man by God, on the basis of which man clings to (this gracious) God. For Zwingli, "the Christian religion is nothing else than a firm hope in God through Christ Jesus and a blameless life wrought after the pattern of Christ as far as He giveth us."⁴⁵

The practitioners of false religion are those who seek another source of confidence and trust than that which is produced in the heart by the Spirit of God.⁴⁶ When Zwingli declares that "those are truly pious who hang upon the utterances of God alone", it is this issue to which he refers.⁴⁷ The "utterance" or "word" of God

⁴³CTFR, 91. "Ea igitur adhesio - qua deo, utpote solo bono, quod solum erumnas nostras sarcire, mala omnia avertere, aut in gloriam suam suorumque usum convertere scit et potest, inconcusse fident, eoque parentis loco utitur -, pietas est, religio est." Z III, 668.

⁴⁴CTFR, 91; Z II, 668-669.

⁴⁵CTFR, 135. "...vidilicet, quod Christiana religio nihil aliud est, quam firma spes in deum per Christum Iesum, et innocens vita, ad exemplum Christi, quoad ipse donat, expressa." Z III, 705.

⁴⁶CTFR, 92; Z III, 669.

⁴⁷CTFR, 93; Z III, 670.

is used synonymously with the subjective confidence and trust which the Spirit produces (at his own initiative) in us. "Nothing right and good is, then, to be hoped for from any other source than God alone...It is false religion or piety when trust is put in any other than God."⁴⁸

Christ appears in Zwingli's discussion of soteriology in the context of God's grace (and providence). "Christ, then, is the certainty and pledge of the grace of God."⁴⁹ Zwingli presents a satisfaction view of the atonement, affirming the importance of Christ for our redemption.⁵⁰ However, Christ is treated as a necessary extension of God's providence, almost utilitarian or instrumental in accomplishing the desired ends of providence. "Thus Divine Providence ordained that as Adam by sinning had made himself naked and exposed himself to need, so Christ, that Divine Justice might be appeased, should experience want, cold, and all the ills that had been brought upon man for his sin."⁵¹

Zwingli's discussion of the sacraments attempts to refute three positions he identifies as erroneous. The first is the (Roman Catholic) view that sacraments are intrinsically efficient. i.e. "something great and holy which by its own power can free the conscience from sin."⁵² Zwingli adamantly denies such power, holding it to

⁴⁸CTFR, 97. "Nihil ergo recti bonique alicunde, quam a deo sperandum est...Falsa religio sive pietas est, ubi alio fidentum quam deo." Z III, 674. This is precisely how Zwingli understands Luther's covenantal view of the Eucharist as a guarantee, or source of assurance.

⁴⁹CTFR, 100; Z III, 676.

⁵⁰CTFR, 103-111; Z III, 678-685.

⁵¹CTFR, 114; Z III, 688.

⁵²CTFR, 179. "...aliquid magnum sanctumque intelligunt, quod vi sua conscientiam a peccato liberet." Z III, 757.

be the exclusive prerogative of God.⁵³ "They are wrong, therefore, by the whole width of heaven who think that sacraments have any cleansing power."⁵⁴

The second view (Lutheran) appropriately denies the intrinsic efficacy of the sacrament but wrongly binds the sign and the thing signified. This view "supposes the sacraments are signs of such a kind that, when they are applied to a man, the thing signified by the sacraments at once takes place within him."⁵⁵ Zwingli rejects this necessary concurrence of sign and grace on two grounds. First, he rejects the attempt to give assurance to the recipients by this conjoining. As we have seen, the man of faith is, by definition, moved by the Spirit to trust and confidence in God. Therefore, either the assurance is unnecessary (when offered to the man of faith) or misguided (when offered to man without faith). For "they that have not faith gape with wonder at anything applied to them that is said to have power, and fancy they have found, nay actually felt, salvation, when they have not felt anything at all within, as is shown by their subsequent lives."⁵⁶ Therefore, attempting to give assurance by conjoining grace to the sacraments, man either duplicates what God has already done or falsely offers what God has not given. Thus, the goal of giving assurance through such a view of the sacraments is misguided.

Secondly, to say that the internal work of the Spirit necessarily accompanies the external sign is to wrongly bind the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God

⁵³CTFR, 181; Z III, 759.

⁵⁴CTFR, 182. "Toto igitur coelo errant, qui sacramenta vim habere mundandi putant. Z III, 760.

⁵⁵CTFR, 183. "...quae putat sacramenta talia esse signa, ut, cum exercentur in homine, simul intus fiat, quod sacramentis significetur." Z III, 761.

⁵⁶CTFR, 182; Z III, 760.

is then required to act in accordance with human activity through signs.⁵⁷ This view Zwingli finds totally unacceptable.

For in this way the liberty of the divine Spirit which distributes itself to individuals as it will, that is, to whom it will, when it will, where it will, would be bound. For if it were compelled to act within where we employ the signs externally, it would be absolutely bound by the signs, whereas we see that really the opposite takes place...⁵⁸

To bind God in this way is clearly, for Zwingli, inappropriate and dangerous.

The third view (Anabaptist), recognizing that

the sacraments cannot purify, nor the operation of the divine spirit be such a slave to the sacraments that, when they are performed, it is compelled at the same time to act within, taught that the sacraments are signs which make a man sure of the thing which has (already) been accomplished within him.⁵⁹

Again, the use of the sacraments to reassure faith is rejected, and for the same reasons as above. Faith bears witness to itself - when it is present - and does not require external reassurance. On the other hand, reassurance offered to those who do not have such self-evident faith are misled by such assurances. So, when the sacraments function to assure the celebrant they function unnecessarily (to the man of faith) or in a deceiving manner (to the man without faith). Either way, the emphasis has shifted to confidence in man and human ceremonies and away from direct reliance upon God.⁶⁰

⁵⁷CTFR, 182-183; Z III, 760-761.

⁵⁸CTFR, 183. "Nam hac ratione libertas divini spiritus alligata esset, qui dividit singulis, ut vult, id est: quibus, quando, ubi vult. Nam si tunc cogeret in operari, quoniam nos extra signum notamus, signum prorsus alligatum esset, cuius tamen contrarium factum esse videmus." Z III, 761.

⁵⁹CTFR, 183; Z III, 761.

⁶⁰CTFR, 183-184; Z III, 761.

Zwingli denies any necessary efficacy to the sacraments. They function as a pledge to the church of our intention to be a soldier of Christ or a testimony to the church of personal commitment to the Christian life. The orientation of the sacraments is toward the community. They function as initiatory signs identifying the celebrant as a member of the covenantal community.⁶¹

This understanding is made clear in Zwingli's discussion of baptism. It is, Zwingli says, "an initiation by which those marked themselves out who were going to amend their lives."⁶² This initiatory function did not promise, nor even imply, the immediate baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is, indeed, "a sign and ceremony signifying the real thing," but that "real thing" (i.e. true baptism) cannot be conjoined of necessity to human activity.⁶³ It is the baptism of the Holy Spirit that "is so very necessary that no one can be saved without it; for no one is saved except by faith, and faith is not born save at the instance of the Holy Spirit."⁶⁴ The sacrament of baptism is important to the church but it is not conjoined to the true inner baptism of the Holy Spirit. God remains free.

Zwingli's discussion of the Supper is considered in the context of his earlier treatment of the character of the sacraments. In that context he treats the Supper specifically, in greater detail. He makes it clear that he regards the issue of the Supper as a critical one. He remarks that "if there is anywhere pernicious error in the adoration and worship of the true God, it is in the abuse of the Eucharist."⁶⁵

⁶¹CTFR, 184; Z III, 761.

⁶²CTFR, 185-186; Z III, 763.

⁶³CTFR, 197; Z III, 773.

⁶⁴CTFR, 187; Z III, 764.

⁶⁵CTFR, 198-199; Z III, 774.

This abuse, which compromises the center of our faith, involves the desire to handle holy things and to attempt to make things holy which are not holy."⁶⁶ This impulse militates against the true experience of faith which issues in trust in God and desire to live a holy life. This experience of faith determines the character of the Supper (Eucharist) as "a thanksgiving".⁶⁷

In his extended discussion of the Supper Zwingli uses biblical language and references extensively, centering around an exposition of John 6. Material, or earthly, food does not profit a man spiritually, nor does it satisfy him. The food that does not perish is faith, produced inwardly by the action of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁸ "Faith in Christ is, therefore, the only thing that can give such food and drink to the heart that it shall want nothing further."⁶⁹

This protracted discussion includes familiar denials of spiritual efficacy attributed to sensible, material things. The issues at stake, however, do not merely concern a material/spiritual dichotomy. Zwingli summarizes the essence of the errors of the false teachers into two misdirected assumptions or affirmations. They err "first, in thinking that faith has its origin in man's decision and election."⁷⁰ In other words, Zwingli regards the issue at stake in this material/spiritual debate as concerning the question of agency in election and faith. Zwingli understands the

⁶⁶CTFR, 199; Z III, 774.

⁶⁷CTFR, 200; Z III, 775.

⁶⁸CTFR, 200-201; Z III, 775-776.

⁶⁹CTFR, 202; Z III, 777. As we have seen, Zwingli wants nothing more than faith produced in the heart by the action of the Holy Spirit and that precludes any need for further (external) assurances.

⁷⁰CTFR, 213. "Primo, quod fidem putant ab hominis iudicio et electione proficisci." Z III, 786.

core of the error of attributing spiritual benefit to sensible things as denying God's absolute initiative in election and faith. "They err in the second place, then, in applying faith to things of sense, and in saying that through these it brings us certainty."⁷¹ Again the issue at stake is in attributing to sensible things what belongs solely to the initiative of God. To seek assurance through human or material means is to seek unnecessarily or falsely. Zwingli has repeatedly addressed this issue in his *Commentary*. He understands the attribution of spiritual efficacy to sensible things or human activity as a challenge to, or denial of, God's primary and absolute initiative in election and faith. The essential issue at stake is not the essential limitation of the material or human, but the protection of the divine character and the absolute nature of divine providence. Significantly, it is in the discussion of the words of consecration that Zwingli concludes, "Some men today attribute to works what belongs solely to the grace of God."⁷²

The discussion of providence re-emerges in Zwingli's treatment of merit. He explains that "these four things are related: Providence, Predestination, Free Will, and Merit. Not that the last two are really related to the first two, but that the man who rightly understands the first cannot help understanding the last."⁷³ And between providence and predestination, providence is determinative, for "Providence is the mother of Predestination."⁷⁴ Zwingli's affirmation of

⁷¹CTFR, 213. "Secundo ergo sic errant, quod fidem ad res sensibiles trahunt, et per istas certitudinem adferre perhibent." Z III, 786.

⁷³CTFR, 218. "Dum quidam hodie tribuunt operibus, quod solius gratiae dei est." Z III, 790.

⁷³CTFR, 271; Z III, 842.

⁷⁴CTFR, 271. "Est autem providentia praedestinationis veluti parens." Z III, 846.

absolute providence precludes any exercise of free will or attainment of human merit. "By the providence of God, therefore, are taken away together free will and merit."⁷⁵

Similarly, Zwingli raises the issue again when he addresses the question of "offence." The subject matter of the *Commentary* and the struggle over the Reformation force him to address this issue. But the resolution is, according to Zwingli, in teaching the people the true character of religion and faith. When this has been taught the Christian man "will disregard those fallacious hopes which certain persons have told us to place in sacraments, ceremonies, and created things, and will see that all his hopes are placed in God."⁷⁶ For Zwingli, the teaching and affirmation of God's Providence and trust in God, alone, can resolve the division and deception of the church.

Zwingli's conclusion in the *Commentary* recounts the outline of faith he has presented throughout. Totally sinful, man is helpless without God's initiative and intervention. By that intervention God has shown himself a "most loving Father". Graciously, he draws men to himself, and by the Holy Spirit produces faith in the heart of man. That Spirit-produced faith results in trust and confidence in God and His benevolence and an earnest desire to please Him.⁷⁷

A Christian, therefore, is a man, who trusts in the one and only true God; who relies upon his mercy through his Son Christ, God of God; who models himself upon His example; who dies daily; who renounces

⁷⁵CTFR, 273; Z III, 843.

⁷⁶CTFR, 320. "...negliget fallaces istas spes, quas nobis quidam in sacramentis, in ceremoniis et creaturis ostenderant, ac omnia sua videbit in deo sibi esse posita." Z III, 890.

⁷⁷CTFR, 337-341; Z III, 907-910.

self; who is intent upon this one thing, not to do anything that can offend his God.⁷⁸

Zwingli's reformed faith is emphatic in its affirmation of the absolute sovereignty of God and his unconditioned initiative in election to faith. Man is the recipient of faith, helpless apart from the activity of the Spirit. Any resort to human agency or material instrumentality to produce or reassure faith is denied as misguided and erroneous. It is important to note that this denial of the sacraments as source of assurance is not understood to leave us in doubt. Zwingli understands our assurance to come immediately, as a result of the action of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. By definition, the man of faith possesses a trust and confidence in God and His good intentions toward him. Zwingli is not worried about God. He is worried about man and any attempt to divert initiative or confidence away from God to man.

Zwingli's mature view stands in sharp contrast to his Erasmian humanist beginnings. While he remains heavily influenced by humanism he departs from it at critical points. Zwingli reflects a unique synthesis of humanist, reformation, and personal influences. To fail to appreciate the unique character of the Zwinglian synthesis is to ensure failure to understand the complex dynamics at play in Zwingli's interaction with his contemporaries. Specifically, his controversy with Luther may become more explicable as we recognize the issues and forces at stake in it for Zwingli.

On April 11 and 12, 1525 the Zurich Rat considered the teaching of the Lord's Supper. Joachim am Grüt was Zwingli's opponent and strongly advocated the Catholic position. Zwingli and his party argued against a literal sense for "Hoc est corpus meum" and advocating a view of the language as a trope. The Rat declared

⁷⁸CTFR, 341; Z III, 910.

for a reform of the mass, opening the way for the institution of a reformed Supper.⁷⁹ Early in the morning of April 13, Zwingli had a dream pointing to Exodus 12:11. In response to the debate and his dream he produced *Subsidium sive coronis de eucharistia*.⁸⁰

Subsidium is primarily directed against the Catholics in rebuttal to the local conflict with am Grüt. In contrast to earlier treatments against the Catholics, in this work it is Zwingli who is defending himself against criticism of his views.⁸¹

Subsidium is written "as support and expansion of his *Commentary*. Some things that he wanted to say were left out and new ideas have emerged in the meantime."⁸²

Zwingli opens the work in response to accusations that he was influenced by Karlstadt and that he had propagated his recent sacramental views at an inopportune time. Zwingli replies that these supposedly new views were, in fact, positions he had held for some time.⁸³ He has, however, been careful in making them public while seeking confirmation from learned men, which he has received. In the meantime,

⁷⁹Z IV, 440-442.

⁸⁰Z IV, 442-443. *Subsidium* was published 17 August, 1525. Z IV, 440-502.

⁸¹Z IV, 443. "Ihr Character bestimmt sich damit als ausgesprochen antikatholisches Werk; die Front der Darlegungen über die Abendmahlslehre kehrt sich nicht etwa gegen die Lutheraner. Die Schrift ist zugleich eine innerschweizerische und nicht auf die allgemeine Öffentlichkeit berechnet."

⁸²"...als Unterstützung und Ergänzung seines Commentarius; einiges, was er dort sagen wollte, hat er ausgelassen, und neue Gedanken sind inzwischen hinzugetreten." Z IV, 444. "In hoc subsidium mittatur, ut quod superioribus propter operis celerum ac tumultuarium promulgationem deest, hic ex parte sarciaatur; partem enim alii praestabunt." Z IV, 463.

⁸³"Fuimus ante annos plures, quam nunc conveniat dicere, huius opinionis de eucharistia, quam et per epistolam et in "Commentario" promulgavimus." Z IV, 463.

Karlstadt has promulgated views which are too extreme for Zwingli.⁸⁴ It is true that Karlstadt spent time in Basel and visited Zurich during that time, but Zwingli did not have any contact with him.⁸⁵ In contrast to Karlstadt, Zwingli argues that the words of institution should be understood as a trope or figure.⁸⁶ Other authorities have confirmed his opinion in this view.⁸⁷

Following these introductory remarks Zwingli proposes to address the topic at hand. Faith is the heart of the issue in the Supper. In fact, "for those who believe in Christ, the eating according to the flesh is not necessary. Indeed, we know that even if it is eaten the flesh is not capable of anything."⁸⁸ The focus of our faith is not in the fleshly eating of the Supper, but in Christ. And we know that Christ is, bodily, at the right hand of the Father in heaven.⁸⁹ Our faith is not directed to the eating of the sacrament but to the saving sacrifice of Christ for us. It is on that sacrifice which we should focus and to which we should direct our faith.⁹⁰ The

⁸⁴"Carolstadii expositione supra modum abhorrebant." Z IV, 465,463.

⁸⁵Z IV, 464.

⁸⁶"Coepimus ergo protinus adperire tropum, qui in verbis dominicis est." Z IV, 465.

⁸⁷This reference to "aliis autoribus" is almost certainly a reference to Cornelius Hoen. Z IV, 466.

⁸⁸"Qui enim Christo fidunt, Christum ultra secundum carnem non requirunt; sciunt enim carnem prorsus nihil prodesse, sie edas." Z IV, 466. "Sciunt ergo, qui Christo fidunt, hac sola ratione salutem constare, dum fidunt; nec edentibus uspiam promissam esse salutem." Z IV, 467.

⁸⁹"Sciunt eam carnem a dextra patris sedere, nec inde moveri, donec redeat cum universo mundo rationem positurus." Z IV, 467.

⁹⁰"Fides constat salus, non corporali manducatione, neque ea fide, qua te fingas credere, quicquid finxeris, sed qua fides filio dei pro te in cruce impenso." Z IV, 467.

proper "eating" of the Supper is not of the elements, but the Word of Christ presented to us.⁹¹

The disciples understood Christ's words in a symbolic sense. The passover meal as a symbolic celebration provided a context that suggested symbolic meaning.⁹² Such a figurative sense is the only understanding that makes sense. When Christ offers the cup as his blood which is poured out, his own blood had not yet been poured out. "For in this [we understand that] we do not drink the blood of the covenant itself, but a symbol of the blood of the covenant."⁹³ To suggest that Christ miraculously gave the disciples his "poured out" blood *before* the event is unacceptable.⁹⁴ Only an understanding of the words of institution as a trope, or figure, reconciles the account adequately.⁹⁵ Zwingli proposes a paraphrase that expresses the meaning of the words of institution. " 'This cup' is a figure or symbol of my blood, which is the blood of the new covenant, poured out for many for the remission of sins."⁹⁶ There are numerous examples in the scripture of the use of

⁹¹"Corporam hic carnem non edi, sed verbis Christi tropum inesse." Z IV, 467.

⁹²Z IV, 468. "Liquit ergo ex ipsa disipulorum tranquillitate, quod sermonem Christi recte intellexerunt, sed symbolicos." Z IV, 468.

⁹³"Unde nec hodie ipsum testamenti sanguinem bibimus, sed sanguinis testamenti symbolum." Z IV, 470.

⁹⁴Z IV, 471.

⁹⁵"Porro si tropum receperimus, iam in portu navigamus, iam tuta et plana sunt omnia, non reclamant fides, non communis sesus, non ipsum scripturae ingenium, quae tropis est undique referta." Z IV, 471.

⁹⁶ " 'Hoc poculum' figura aut symbolum est mei sanguinis, qui sanguis est novi testamenti, eo quod pro peccatorum multitudinis remissione effunditur." Z IV, 472.

figures in speech. Zwingli specifically cites parables as a common example.⁹⁷ All these affirm the understanding that the elements are symbols of Christ's sacrifice (already) given for us.⁹⁸

Zwingli recounts his vision of early April 13. In it he hears the words of Exodus 12:11, "Est enim phase." Clearly, the passover prefigures Christ. As such it celebrates the salvation found in Christ - symbolically.⁹⁹ The language and character of the passover is symbolic. When God declares that "it is indeed passover" (Ex. 12:11) and the Hebrews eat the passover meal, the event has not yet occurred. The passover meal is celebrated in symbolic anticipation of the event itself.¹⁰⁰ As in the passover, the Supper (at its initiation) celebrates an event (Christ's death) which has not yet happened. Therefore, it must be understood as a symbol of that (future) sacrifice.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷Z IV, 472-475, 480-482.

⁹⁸"Sic est isto loco: 'Hoc est corpus meum' ista vox 'est' tropice pro 'significat' posita est, ut sit sensus: Hoc significat aut figurat corpus meum pro vobis traditum; aut: Hoc est symbolum, quod corpus meum pro vobis est traditum." Z IV, 482.

⁹⁹"...nulli apostolorum, nulli doctorum aliter sentiant, quam pascha clarissimam esse mortis Christi praefigurationem, Christumque ipsum verum esse pascha, quo in sempiternum sanctificati consummantur, id est: quo credentes a servitute peccati liberati coelo inferuntur." Z IV, 484.

¹⁰⁰Z IV, 485-486.

¹⁰¹"Sic et hic instituitur symbolum Christi pro nobis occisi antequam occideretur, quod tamen sequenti tempore occisi futuram erat." Z IV, 486. Köhler concludes "Grundvoraussetzung seiner Exegese ist: die Danksagung, die einst gefeiert wurde zur Erinnerung an die leibliche Befreiung aus Ägypten, ist übergegangen auf unsere Eucharistie, d.h. die Danksagung, in der wir uns freuen, daß die Welt mit Gott durch seinen Sohn versöhnt sei." Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther* I:11.

Zwingli proceeds to directly rebut arguments posed by his opponent (am Grüt). He rejects the argument that we should believe in the miracle of the Supper by faith. Credulity is not the same as faith, which is to be directed toward matters of salvation. He proposes that a biblical understanding is an inner certainty based upon our sure hope in Christ.¹⁰² Even demons believe, but that does not produce salvation.¹⁰³ It is true that other miracles are expressed in scripture that requires belief. But these are not against human sense. Furthermore, they are clearly stated and concern salvation, which transubstantiation does not.¹⁰⁴

Zwingli rejects the argument that flesh (as in John 6:63) should be understood to mean fleshly sense or mind. He contends that Christ clearly intended that bodily flesh should be understood.¹⁰⁵ To the proposal that "edere" in the Supper should be understood in the sense of "credere", Zwingli is in agreement. However, he adamantly rejects the idea that what is to be believed is the miracle that the bread has been transformed.¹⁰⁶ Faith is to be directed to Christ. "One who 'eats' Christ is one who believes in Christ, which is to have faith in being given eternal life, not one who believes that the bread is his body."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰²"Est ergo fides ea mentis certitudo et summa, quam homo habet ac sentit etiam habere in eas res, ad quas tendimus, in quas spes omnes dirigimus." Z IV, 491. See discussion 489-492.

¹⁰³Z IV, 492.

¹⁰⁴Z IV, 442-443. "Salutaris est virgineus partus, sed nihil salutis sperare licet huic, si corpoream carnem edas." Z IV, 493.

¹⁰⁵Z IV, 494-495.

¹⁰⁶Z IV, 495.

¹⁰⁷"Qui Christum edunt, id est: qui Christo credunt, hoc est: fidunt, vitam aeternum vivent; non qui credunt panem carnem eius esse." Z IV, 496.

Zwingli agrees that God is able to make bread and flesh to exist simultaneously. But that doesn't mean that he has done it.¹⁰⁸ God could make an elephant that is also a gourd, but he hasn't done that, either. Zwingli considers this argument to be impudent. The clarity of the words of scripture testify to God's providential care and express his intent. The fact that the disciples understood Christ without confusion affirms Zwingli's contention that they are clear.¹⁰⁹

Opponents argue that in I Cor. 10:16 Paul is speaking of fellowship in the body and blood of Jesus Christ rather than symbolically. Zwingli argues that the true fellowship is of those who share in the saving grace of Christ. Through that shared hope in faith they become a "special assembly and community."¹¹⁰

In the final rebuttal Zwingli deals with the concept of testament. The contention that the new testament is Christ's blood, itself, and not a symbol is based on a misunderstanding of covenant. A testament "is nothing other than something promised by God."¹¹¹ The circumcision of Abraham is a testamental sign, or symbol. Baptism is a symbol of the new testament. The testament or covenant is the forgiveness of sins through Christ.¹¹² "What is the new testament? The free remission of sins through the Son of God."¹¹³

¹⁰⁸"Deus potest hoc facere: ergo factum est?" Z IV, 496.

¹⁰⁹Z IV, 497.

¹¹⁰"...peculiaris concio sodalitumque." Z IV, 498.

¹¹¹"...nihil aliud est quam conditio a deo promissa." Z IV, 499.

¹¹²Z IV, 500.

¹¹³"Quid ergo est novum testamentum? Gratuita remissio peccatorum per filium dei." Z IV, 500-501.

Before we draw conclusions from the writings of this period the impact of the letter from Honius should be briefly considered. In mid-May 1524 Zwingli was exposed to a letter by Cornelius Hoen regarding the interpretation of the words of institution.¹¹⁴ It proposed that the words of institution be understood in the sense of signification. That is, "est" (in "Hoc est corpus meum") should be understood to mean "significat." Köhler credits this exposure with significant development or movement in Zwingli's sacramental thought.¹¹⁵

It is true that Zwingli readily adopts the application of signification to the words of institution. However, as we have seen, his understanding of the Supper as functioning in terms of signification is clear from his earlier writings. Hoens' letter offers a convenient interpretive framework that Zwingli adopts to more clearly or effectively argue his understanding of the Supper. However it is not clear that Zwingli's adoption of Honius' interpretive language actually produced substantive change in Zwingli's understanding of the Supper. Certainly this is true in the areas of our specific concern.

This period reflects fundamental continuity with earlier materials considered. While the substantial positions remain unchanged, there are some shifts in emphasis. A brief overview may serve to illustrate both. The issue of the binding of Christ's presence, or God's action, to the celebration of the Supper is emphatically clear. The proposal of any necessary link between human actions and God's action is categorically denied. This denial is, in fact, a central and non-negotiable feature of

¹¹⁴Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther* I:61-66.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 66. He also grants that Hoen's letter does not introduce anything absolutely new for Zwingli. It offers, rather, a convenient solution to an existing problem that was consistent with Zwingli's established position. Köhler, "Abendmahlsauffassung," 407; Bosshard, *Zwingli*, 63.

Zwingli's theology. The Supper functions as a remembrance, pointing us toward the eternal covenant of God's grace realized through Christ. In itself - as a human activity - it may appropriately be understood as "mere" symbolism.

That characterization, however, fails to reflect the fuller understanding of the Supper for Zwingli. God's goodness - reflected in this gracious covenant - is certain to act. Perhaps more accurately, the Supper is a remembrance that God has already acted. Revealed by the producing of faith in the individual, God's grace is evident and present. This is always Zwingli's assumption. It must be noted, however, that in Zwingli's emphasis on denial of any necessary activity of God's grace or presence this more positive affirmation is less clear. The arguments and positions Zwingli is responding to cause him to give increased emphasis to some aspects of his thought and decreased emphasis to others. The de-emphasis of the elements of the Supper reflects this shift. However, the denial of the necessity of the elements is clear from his earliest writings and is not new.

This is also true in Zwingli's treatment of the benefit of the Supper. Zwingli's understanding of the Supper has made it difficult from the beginning to ascribe significant benefit to it. The defense of God's initiative and the central importance of faith as the true "eating" in the Supper limits the positive benefit properly attributed to Supper, itself. In earlier writings Zwingli has affirmed the encouraging benefit for the "simple." In these writings, Zwingli's defense of the freedom of God's action independent of the sacrament has pressed him to further deemphasize even this positive benefit. The Supper serves to identify the community and proclaim God's gracious covenants. It cannot do much more than that.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SACRAMENTAL CONTROVERSY

The months following the publication of Zwingli's *Subsidium* saw an intensification of the controversy between Zwingli, Luther and others concerning the Supper. John Brenz (and the other Swabian pastors who joined in the *Syngramma Suevicum*), Martin Bucer, John Oecolampadius, John Bugenhagen and Luther entered open debate concerning the Supper. In the years 1526-29, leading to Marburg, the controversy would intensify and the polemical writings multiplied. The intensity and increasingly personal polemic present a challenge to the attempt to distill key issues in this period. Three works have been selected that provide helpful insight as they address the controversy from different points. Sifting through their arguments will, hopefully, reveal to us the progress of Zwingli's treatment of our three areas of interest.

The sacramental controversy between Zwingli and Luther and their respective supporters begins in earnest (from Zwingli's side) with the publication of "Eine klare Unterrichtung vom Nachtmahl Christi" on 23 February, 1526.¹ With this work Zwingli moves the debate into the public forum by distributing it in German. Directed in part to the ongoing local controversy with the Catholics, "Eine

¹*Ein klare underrichtung vom nachtmal Christi durch Huldrychen Zuingli tütisch (als vormal nie) umb der einvaltigen willen, damit sy mit niemans spytzfündigkeit hindergangen mögind werden, beschriben. Z IV, 773-861.*

klare Unterrichtung" is primarily directed at Luther and the struggle for the reformed understanding of the Supper.

Zwingli opens by noting that in earlier writings concerning the Supper he has written only in Latin. But now his writings have been banned in some places (by Lutherans) and he is forced to enter the public forum (i.e.- in German). He portrays the struggle over the understanding of the Supper as a struggle against the darkness.² Zwingli proposes as the basis of his argument the affirmations of the Apostles' Creed concerning Christ, specifically "He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from which He shall come to judge the living and the dead."³ The basic error of his opponents is that they attempt to confirm or protect their faith through flesh and blood. Any such attempt to support faith in this way serves, rather, to undercut faith.⁴ He accuses his opponents of lacking true faith.⁵

In the first of four articles Zwingli addresses the correct understanding of the words of institution in the Supper. He begins his treatment by posing and answering the question of what we should understand a sacrament to be.

A sacrament is understood as a sign of a sacred thing. So, when I say 'the sacrament of the body' I mean nothing else

²"Denn was ist finsternus, wenn diser won, das hierinn brot fleysch sye unnd win blät, und wessenlich genoßen werdind, nit ein finsternus ist?" Z IV, 790.

³Z IV, 791.

⁴Z IV, 791. Some "beschirmind christenlichen glouben mit schirm des fleischs und bläts; dann wer damit vermeinte dem glouben schutz ze thün, sturmt inn, als sich erfinden wirt."

⁵Z IV, 792.

than that the bread is a sign of the body of Christ, who has died for us.⁶

From this basic understanding Zwingli treats three other views - Catholic, Lutheran and Erasmian - in succession, demonstrating their shortcomings in comparison with this view.

The first view (Catholic) proposes that the substance of the bread is transformed by a miracle of God's creative power.⁷ This is in error on two accounts. First, it contends that the priest (i.e. a man) can cause the body of Christ to be present by their speaking the words, "This is my body."⁸ Second, this view reflects a failure to correctly understand the meaning of the words in context. That is, by not recognizing the character of the Supper as a sign, the Catholics are forced to defend a sensible eating of Christ's body. In Zwingli's view, if Christ's body is substantially present it must be sensibly present. But even the Catholics acknowledge that the Body is not eaten sensibly. Therefore, it cannot be the natural, or substantial, body of Christ.⁹

In Zwingli's opinion, the second view (Lutheran) does not differ significantly from the first. It fails to acknowledge the figurative character of the words of Christ. "They will absolutely not allow that the words of Christ 'this is my body' are a

⁶"Sacrament ist als vil als ein zeichen eines heiligen dings. Wenn ich nun sprich: 'das sacrament des fronlychnams,' wil ich nütz anders verston weder das brot, das ein bedütung ist des lychnams Christi, der für uns gestorben ist." Z IV, 793-794.

⁷Z IV, 794.

⁸Z IV, 796.

⁹Z IV, 797.

figure or manner of speaking, but rather that the word 'is' must be understood naturally."¹⁰ Such a position misunderstands the use of figurative language in the Bible, as a whole. If we insist on the literal sense "then Christ is a vine, a foolish sheep or a door, and Peter is the foundation stone of the Church."¹¹ The third view (Erasmian) he defers to later discussion in the text.

In rebuttal, Zwingli proposes to clearly show that Christ's words cannot properly be understood to affirm a reception of bodily flesh and blood.¹² In an interesting turn of the argument, Zwingli attempts to use Catholic writings to disprove the Catholic position. He cites the corrective confession of Berengar of Tours in "de consecratione" which contains the affirmation

the wine and bread that is placed on the altar after the blessing is only a sacrament, that is, a sign, and cannot be the true body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that (that is, the body) cannot be sensible, but rather only a sign.¹³

He follows with arguments from Gratian and a strong attack on the papacy.

¹⁰"Sy wil gheins wegs zûlassen, daß dise wort Christi: 'Das ist min lychnam' ein figurliche oder verwendte red sye, sunder das wort 'ist' werde wesentlich genomen." Z IV, 798. This makes the two views virtually the same. "So stechend sy bed einandren ab." 799.

¹¹"...so ist Christus rebholz, ein unvernünfftig schaaff, ein tür, und Petrus die grundfeste der kilchen etc." Z IV, 799.

¹²Z IV, 800.

¹³"...das wyn und brot, die man uff den altar thût, nach der wyhung allein ein sacrament, das ist: zeichen und warer lychnam und blât des herren Jesu Christi nit sye, und daß der (verstand: lychnam) nit möge empfindlich, sunder allein des zeichens." Z IV, 801.

Zwingli pauses for a passing shot at Bugenhagen.¹⁴ Then he proceeds to consider Augustine whom he cites to affirm that trust in Christ is the eating of the Supper.¹⁵ The Catholics have twisted Augustine's dictum "whoever trusts in him eats of him," calling on those who believe to eat his body. But the sense of Augustine's teaching is that trusting faith is the true eating of the Supper.¹⁶

Briefly, the full sense of the words of Augustine is this - when you come to this thanksgiving...you do nothing other than to openly demonstrate that you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. So 'trust in Christ' should be our primary focus when we eat the signs of wine and bread.¹⁷

To "eat" the Supper is to trust in Christ. The conclusion is clear, for Zwingli, that a figurative, symbolic understanding is the only proper interpretation of the words of Christ in the Supper.¹⁸

¹⁴Zwingli considers Bugenhagen's denial (referred to, but not identified by name) that the body is eaten with the mouth and teeth as tantamount to an acknowledgment of Zwingli's position as correct. "Glych als wol zeigend sy mit offnen worten an, daß sy diß wörtlin 'ist' gantz nit nit wesentlich nennend, als sy aber stryend." Z IV, 806.

¹⁵Z IV, 808.

¹⁶Z IV, 807-808. "So ist aber 'Christum lyplich essen' nütz anders weder: vertruwen uff den sun gottes, des lychnam für uns in 'n todt geben ist." Z IV, 808.

¹⁷"Und ist kurzlich aller sinn diser worten Augustini der: Wenn du zû diser dancksagung kumst...tîstu nütz anders, denn das du dich offentlich dartîst, du vertruwist uff den herren Jesum Christum. So muß ye 'in Christum vertruwen' das fürnem sin, daruf wir sehen söllend, so wir die bedütlichen win unnd brot eßend." Z IV, 808-809.

¹⁸Z IV, 809.

Zwingli moves to Article two which contains his argument concerning the understanding of the words of Christ. He proposes to show that it is not possible to (reasonably) attribute a literal, or natural, sense to the words of institution. He cites his earlier writings in his *Commentary* and *Subsidium* as explaining the (proper) traditional understanding. The words calling us to eat Christ's body and drink his blood

should not be understood otherwise than that one trusts in him who gave his flesh and blood for our salvation and cleansing from sin, and that he is not speaking here of the sacrament itself, but rather the proclamation of the gospel through the symbolic eating and drinking of his flesh and blood.¹⁹

In using such figurative language Christ is only continuing his standing practice of using earthly things to illustrate heavenly things.²⁰ Zwingli follows by citing numerous biblical examples (with special attention to John 6) which confirm a symbolic understanding. For Zwingli, this affirms the centrality of trusting faith in the Supper. "Christ teaches us with his own words that all reference here to eating of the flesh or bread should be understood as 'trust'."²¹

¹⁹"...nutz anders verstanden werden, weder daß man in inn vertuwe, der sin fleisch und blût zñ unser erlösung und abwäschung unser sünden hingeben hat; und das er am selben ort gar nit von disem sacrament redt, sunder das evangelium uskündt under der bedütlichen red essens und trinckens sines fleischs und blüts." Z IV, 810.

²⁰Z IV, 810-811.

²¹"Christus lert uns mit sinen eignen worten, das alles, so hie von fleisch- oder brotessen geseyt wirt, allein für 'vertruwen' sol verstanden werden." Z IV, 819.

He then turns to canon law to draw support for a symbolic, or figurative, understanding. Citing a paraphrase of Christ's words given in the canon he claims the support of the canon for his interpretation.²² To this ancient witness Zwingli adds a citation of John 6, I Cor, 10, and the earlier cited articles of faith (Apostles' Creed).²³

Zwingli discusses the two natures of Christ, beginning his consideration with the argument that Christ is at the right hand of the Father.²⁴ He deals directly with the two interpretations that Zwingli finds inadequate. The first proposes that God - all powerful - can enable Christ to be both in heaven and on earth simultaneously.²⁵ Such a position makes Christ a liar since Jesus said that he was leaving the earth. This declaration is clearer than the debated 'This is my body.' Further, numerous scriptures affirm that Christ *must* be at the right hand of the Father (citing Ps.110:1; I Cor.15:25; Matt 26:64; Matt 25:31). Thirdly, Christ cannot come (back) to earth except visibly (ref. Acts 1:9-11ff.).²⁶

²²Zwingli cites the canon as paraphrasing Christ as saying "Ir muessend die ding ich üch gseit hab, geistlich verston. Ir werdend nit den lychnam essen, den ir sehend, und nit das blît trincken, das do vergiessen werdend die mich werden crützgen. Ich hab üch ein sacrament (das ist: ein bedüttnus) empfohlen, welche, geislich verstanden, üch läbendig macht; aber das fleisch ist gar nüt nüt." Z IV, 821.

²³Z IV, 823-826. Zwingli regards John 6 alone as adequate to settle the issue. "Diß ort: 'Das fleisch ist gar nüt nüt'(John 6:63)...ist allein starck gnüg ze bewären, daß die wort Christi: 'Das ist min lychnam' schlechtlich nit mögend verstanden werden vom wäsentlichen lyplichen fleisch." 823.

²⁴Z IV, 827-830.

²⁵Z IV, 830.

²⁶Z IV, 831-834.

The second interpretation is that of Erasmus (earlier referred to) which Zwingli now addresses. Erasmus contends that the resurrected body of Christ may be wherever Christ chooses for it to be and, therefore, may be in heaven and in the sacrament simultaneously.²⁷ Zwingli returns again to the argument that Christ is - and must be - at the right hand of the Father.²⁸ For Zwingli, this is the same error as that of Marcion.²⁹ To insist upon a bodily understanding of "This is my body" is to also include the modifier that follows - i.e., "which is broken for you." This means the sensible body which suffered death. Therefore, a spiritual (non-sensible) body cannot be what is meant by Christ's words.³⁰ Turning to scriptural argument Zwingli cites numerous scriptures to prove that Christ's body must be in one location even after resurrection.³¹ Once again, Zwingli turns to Catholic authority to support his case, citing canon law.³²

²⁷"Die ard und natur des uferstandnen lychnams ist, das er ist, wo er wil, unnd deßhalb ist ouch der lychnam Christi imm himel und in disem sacrament miteinander und an allen orten." Z IV, 831.

²⁸Z IV, 835. "...shynt uns ietz in d'ougen, das wir sehend, das es uff uns reicht, das er doben sitzen wirt und wir inn nit sehen biß an'n jüngsten tag."

²⁹Z IV, 835-837.

³⁰"So er nun nit unsichtbar, sunder sichtbar, nit unempfindlich, sunder empfindlich den tod erlidten hat, und er hette inn ze essen geben, wie er inn in's lyden hat ggeben, so müste er sichtbarlich, embfindlich und wesentlich mit den zenen geessen werden?" Z IV, 837.

³¹Zwingli cites numerous texts from Matthew 18, 24, 28; Luke 17; and John 12, 14, 17 which reflect location. Z IV, 838-840.

³²"Dann der lychnam, der uferstanden ist, der müß an eim ort sin; aber sin trüw oder gnad ist allenthalb außgegossen [Corpus iuris canonici c.44, Dist II de consecratione]." Z IV, 840.

Proceeding to his third article Zwingli summarizes what has gone before to have have conclusively shown that the words of institution cannot properly be understood bodily. Now he proposes to demonstrate how the words "this is my body" should be understood.³³

First, it is clear that scripture speaks in "figures" (figürlicher). Numerous examples are cited from both Testaments, such as "I am the vine", demonstrating the broad usage of figurative language in scripture.³⁴ Christ's words at the Supper are understood most naturally in this sense. Further, the setting in which the Supper took place (i.e. the Passover meal) suggests a figurative understanding. Despite their propensity to misunderstanding the disciples understood Christ's meaning. As Jews they understood the meaning in the context of Passover, "and saw from that that the Lord, with similar words, was instituting another celebration, another thanksgiving."³⁵ Zwingli declares that no apostles taught the transformation of bread and wine into body and blood.³⁶

Considering Luke 22:19-20 in detail, Zwingli argues that Christ's words "this is my body, which is given for you," must be treated as one statement. "From this it follows that Christ was speaking with reference to the body that was given to

³³Z IV, 841. "Nun ist es an dem, das wir anzeigind, welchs doch der sinn diser worten: 'das ist min mychnam' sye, der mit und by andren gschrift, ouch mit artickeln des gloubens ston mög."

³⁴Z IV, 842-847.

³⁵"...und sahend demnach, das der herr ein ander fest, ein andre dancksagung, ynsatz und aber nit unglyche wort brucht." Z IV, 847-848.

³⁶Z IV, 848.

die for us."³⁷ The instruction to celebrate the Supper "in remembrance of me" tells us the purpose of the Supper.³⁸ The cup of the New Testament in Christ's blood should be understood as a sign of Christ's sacrifice. "The new testament is not the blood, but rather the forgiveness, the gracious remission of our sins."³⁹ Further discussion can be found in *Subsidium*. But it should be evident that the Supper is an instance of a sign being called by the name of the thing signified.⁴⁰

The ancient authorities confirm this view. Zwingli considers Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine specifically. He then refers further investigation to Oecolampadius' book (*De genuina verborum domini*).⁴¹ Summarizing the ancient authorities, Zwingli concludes "that they called the bread and wine the body and blood of Christ although they understood them as a sign and remembrance of the body and blood of Christ."⁴²

Concluding this article (and the heart of the work) Zwingli offers a characterization of the Supper. Christ instituted a meal of remembrance signifying

³⁷"Daruf volgt nun, das Christus von dem lychnam redt, der für uns ist in todt ggeben." Z IV, 849.

³⁸"Hie habend wir, worzû diß bedütlich brot yngesetzt ist namlich:zû gedechtnus Christi, daß er für uns in'n tod ggeben ist." Z IV, 849.

³⁹"Das nūw testament ist nit das blüt, sunder die vergeben, gnädig nachlassung unser sünden." Z IV, 850.

⁴⁰Z IV, 851. "...die bedütenden ding mit dem namen der bedüteten genempt werdend."

⁴¹Z IV, 852-856.

⁴²"...das sy diß brot und wyn den lychnam und blüt Christi genennet habend, wiewol sy die nun für ein bedütung und vermanung des lychnams und blüts Christi verstanden habend." Z IV, 856.

his death and sacrifice as the passover meal signified ("figur und bedütus") the act of God in the first passover. This is given so that we will not forget that Christ has died for us and that, through a public thanksgiving we will bear witness and encourage one another as we celebrate the redemption obtained for us.⁴³ We should celebrate this "dancksagung" together, demonstrating that we are those who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.⁴⁴

Article four is given to rebutting various arguments. Zwingli responds to the accusation that he and Oecolampadius differ on the meaning of the words of institution. He replies that "das bedüet minen lychnam"(Zwingli) and "das ist ein bedütnus mines lychnams"(Oecolampadius) are interchangeable, without difference in meaning.⁴⁵ In reference to the meaning of I Corinthians 10 (v.16ff), Zwingli understands it to affirm the Church as the Body of Christ - one bread/one body.⁴⁶

Zwingli concludes this work by returning to the affirmation "that since Christ sits bodily at the right hand of God he cannot be here bodily."⁴⁷ Finally, in the

⁴³"...daß wir nimmer me vergessind, daß er sinen lychnam in die schmach des tods ggeben hatt umb unsertwillen, sunder deß nit allein in unseren hertzen nit vergessind, sunder ouch alle mit einander offenlich mit loben und dancksagung bezügind und zâ trâffenliche und merung der sach mit einandren das sacrament, das ist: zeichen des heiligen lydens, mit einander essind und trinckind, welchs ein bedütnus ist, das Christus sinen lychnam in'n tod für uns ggeben und sin blît für uns vergossen hat." Z IV, 857-858.

⁴⁴Z IV, 858.

⁴⁵I.e., "hoc significat corpus" vs. "hoc est figura corporis." Z IV, 858-859.

⁴⁶Z IV, 859-861.

⁴⁷"...daß Christus zur grechten gottes lyplich sitzt, daß er hie nit lyplich sin mag." Z IV, 861.

closing section he addresses Luther by name, calling him to accept the arguments given.⁴⁸ With that admonition the sacramental controversy enters a new phase.

A few weeks after the publication of "Klare Unterrichtung" Martin Bucer brought the activity of Jakob Strauß to Zwingli's attention. In July Bucer reported that Strauß had managed to prompt an edict against their books. He preached against Bucer and Zwingli, particularly with regard to the Supper. Twice Oecolampadius declined Strauß' invitation to participate in a disputation. After reading Zwingli's "Die erst kurz antwurt über Eggen siben schlußreden."⁴⁹ Strauß was moved to attack Zwingli in print. In July 1526 he published "Wider den unmitten Irethumb Maister Ulrichs Zwinglins."⁵⁰

In this work Strauß argues that to deny the real presence of Christ's body and blood is to dishonor Christ and the Word of God. Strauß reflects and represents the critique of the Schwäbisch theologians who produced the "Syngramma Suevicum." This view proposed a spiritual eating, combined with a real presence through the power of the word, given to strengthen faith.⁵¹ The fundamental basis of the Supper is the power of the word in the sacrament. The word carries the power to effect the

⁴⁸Z IV, 861.

⁴⁹Z V, 171-195.

⁵⁰Z V, 453-454.

⁵¹"Einmal ein ganz geistliches und innerliches im Glauben ohne alles Fleischliche oder Leibliche, sodann ein zwar unsichtbares und allen Sinnen und aller Vernunft des Menschen unbegreifliches, aber doch wahrhaftiges Essen des aus Kraft und allmächtiger Wirkung seines ewigen Wortes realpräsenten Leibes und Blutes Christi...Glaubensstärkung ist des Sakramentes Wirkung." Z V, 454.

real presence of Christ (spiritually understood).⁵² Zwingli's response gives us an opportunity to consider his treatment of the sacrament in opposition to a non-material, but necessary presence of Christ in the Supper,

In early January 1527 Zwingli's *Antwort über Straußens Büchlein, das Nachmahl Christi betreffend* appears in print.⁵³ He begins by cautioning Strauß not to speak of the Supper until his confidence is properly founded - "until all our confidence comes from him who is our rock and foundation." Characterizing Strauß' view as "lyplich-geystlich" he proceeds to specifically treat 22 points in rebuttal.⁵⁴ These 22 points reflect a wide range of issues and relative importance but highlight some important aspects of Zwingli's thought.

Zwingli offers a characterization of the Supper as a "eucharistia" or "dancksagung." As such it serves as a proclamation of Christian unity by the use of material signs which is celebrated by the church in thanksgiving for its redemption

⁵²"Für Strauß handelt es sich um einen göttlichen Altmachtskraft des Wortes...Mit dieser Betonung des Wortes griff Strauß auf das Syngramma der Schwäbischen Theologen von 1525 zurück." Z V, 454.

⁵³Z V, 453-547. *Antwort Huldrychen Zwinglins über doctor Strussen buechlin, wider inn geschriben, das nachmal Christi betreffende.*

⁵⁴"...biß das uns allen versicherung kumpt von dem der unser feiß unnd grundveste ist." Z V, 465.

through Christ.⁵⁵ It is also a proclamation of God's love toward us, for which we give thanks, and a public commitment on our part to love our neighbor.⁵⁶

Returning to a position considered earlier in reference to the Word, Zwingli reaffirms the importance of language in biblical study. Despite the central role of the Holy Spirit "the recognition of the manner of speaking is a sign which directs us toward a correct understanding."⁵⁷ An understanding of Hebrew is necessary to properly understand not only the Old Testament, but also the New Testament, because it is written in Greek by writers who were Hebrews. For instance - in an important application - the use of figurative language which is characteristic of Hebrew is reflected in Jesus' use of figurative language.⁵⁸ Zwingli reviews a long list of examples, culminating in "this is my body."⁵⁹ An appreciation of the language of the Old Testament, such as Exodus 12, will illuminate the proper meaning of NT texts.⁶⁰ The Passover is an interpretive model for the Supper, indicating its

⁵⁵Z V, 470-471. "Und zû eim urkund christlicher einigung hat Christus ein offen früntlich zeychen, das er synem lychnam und blît nach genennet, verordnet mit einander brüderlich ze niessen...imm dancksagtind syner erlösung."

⁵⁶ir leerend die thüren gnad und liebe gottes gegen uns, und darüber dancksagend wir imm und wie er uns ein sichtbar pflichtzeichen ggeben hat zû ofner kundschaft bruederliche liebe unnd erzeygung der glideren und lybs Christi. Z V, 471-472.

⁵⁷...die erkantnus der spraachen ardt zeygen ist, durch den man in disem handel uff den rechten weg gewisen wirdt." Z V, 475.

⁵⁸Z V, 475-476.

⁵⁹Z V, 476-478.

⁶⁰"Exodi 12. werdend wir für alle kundschaften dise ard und eygenschaft der hebraischen spraach eigenlich erlernen; dann daselbst glyche form der worten ist." Z V, 479.

symbolic meaning. Understanding this it becomes clear the Supper is "a remembrance and thanksgiving that he gave his body unto death for us."⁶¹

In a surprising reference among the list of examples of biblical use of figures, Zwingli refers to the scriptural declaration that Jesus is at the right hand of God, the Father. " 'He sits at the right hand of the Father Almighty' is a figure of speech by which one understands that Christ Jesus is equal with the Father."⁶² Considering the way he uses this affirmation elsewhere this is a curious interpretation by Zwingli.

Zwingli attacks the claim that a reading of the simple or literal sense of the words of Christ teaches the real presence of his spiritual (not sensible) body.

Does 'body' properly and simply mean 'an invisible body' or 'given' mean 'will be visibly given'?...for Christ did not say 'This is my invisible body which is visibly given for you.'⁶³

In fact, Strauß is interpreting the words of institution.⁶⁴ If a literal interpretation affirms Christ to be bodily in the bread, then it must be visible and sensible, because it was visibly and sensibly that Christ was given for us.⁶⁵

⁶¹"...ein gedächtnuß unnd dancksagung deß, das er sinen lychnam für uns hat in tod ggeben." Z V, 480.

⁶²Item: 'Er sitzt zur grechten gotts vatters allmechtigen' ist ein figurliches red, durch die man verstadt, das Christum Jesus glych gwaltig mit dem vatter ist." Z V, 481.

⁶³Heißt 'corpus' eigentlich und unverwendt: einen unsichtbaren lychnam, oder 'traditum': wirdt sichtbarlich hinggeben?...dann Christus hat ye not geredt: 'Das ist min unsichtbaren lychnam, der sichtbarlich für üch hinggeben wirt.'" Z V, 491.

To teach a bodily presence and a spiritual eating is a confused understanding⁶⁶ Strauß denies a fleshly eating like the Jews, yet a spiritual eating is to trust in Christ (as Zwingli teaches).⁶⁷ Strauß's confusion stems from his failure to distinguish "between a form, or practice, and an essential thing."⁶⁸ This failure causes him to propose a theological innovation (spiritual/bodily eating in the sacrament). Correctly understood, the fleshly eating (of the elements) in the sacrament is the form or ceremony while the spiritual eating (trusting by faith in Christ) is the essential character of the sacrament.⁶⁹ This is, however, not to imply that faith is produced or necessarily increased through the sacrament, but only celebrated in a sacrament of thanksgiving.⁷⁰

⁶⁴"Ist es nit yetz ein synecdoche, so ir sprechend 'In dem brot ist min lychnam' für 'das ist min lychnam?'" Z V, 491.

⁶⁵Z V, 493.

⁶⁶"...dann ich frag dich, Strauß, ob in disem sacrament der lychnam esse oder die seel." Z V, 496.

⁶⁷Z V, 497. "Harwiderumb ist geistlich essen Christi nüts anders weder in Christum Jesum, den waren sun gottes, vertrauen." Z V, 498.

⁶⁸"...ob ein sacrament ein bruch und uebung sye oder ein wäsenlich ding." Z V, 497.

⁶⁹Z V, 497-498.

⁷⁰"Dann das nachtmahl ist nit zû ußbreiten des glaubens oder meren yngesetzt (ouch so bringt das sacramentlich essen gheinen nutz; oder aber ir wurdind nit allein das bapstüm, sunder ouch die alten ceremonien widerumb ufrichten, söltind ussere ding in inneren menschen etwas meren oder fruchtbringen), sunder es ist ein dancksagung des todes Christi." Z V, 500.

Zwingli proceeds to respond to Strauß's claim that we do not eat the body of Christ in a fleshly way but by means of the power of God's word.⁷¹ Zwingli responds with the assertion that there is no need for controversy between them. Spiritual eating (trusting faith) is for both the heart of the Supper.⁷² However, the role of the word is misunderstood. The miracle of the Supper is produced in us by the Spirit.⁷³ Strauß misunderstands faith when he directs it toward the presence of Christ through the power of the word. Faith is properly directed toward Christ, evidenced by trust in Him.⁷⁴ Returning to the argument for a spiritual bodily presence, Zwingli again accuses his opponents of the same figurative interpretation that he is denounced for.⁷⁵ Even such a spiritual body (figuratively understood) cannot be present in the Supper because it is localized at the right hand of the Father and cannot be in multiple places.⁷⁶ More serious, Strauß is directing the focus of faith to the eating of the Supper and the power of the preached word, rather than to

⁷¹Strauß - "Darumb isset der mensch nit hie das fleisch Christi fleyschlicher wyß, aber nach inhalt der allmechtigen, gewaltigen worten." Z V, 500.

⁷²Z V, 501.

⁷³Z V, 501-503.

⁷⁴Z V, 504-505.

⁷⁵"Demnach, so bald ir sprechend, der unsichtbar lychnam sye daa, so nemmend doch ir yetz von stund an das wort 'corpus' tropice, das ist: andersverstendig, den lychnam für den unsichtbaren lychnam." Z V, 510, 518-519.

⁷⁶Z V, 510-516.

trust in Christ.⁷⁷ Such an understanding undercuts and misdirects the proper role of faith and the function of the sacrament.

Zwingli considers the understanding of word, proposing a distinction between the external, or outer, word and the inner word, or meaning. It is the concurrence of the external word with the meaning that God intends which gives the word truth.⁷⁸ The spoken word may only be regarded as the true word when it expresses God's intent. It is this meaning that God reveals to our hearts and is the basis of our faith.⁷⁹ "Now you see clearly, pious Christian, what the apostles referred to as the external word. Not the voice, but rather the meaning itself - which you have in your heart - is what they spoke of."⁸⁰ Zwingli is anxious to affirm that the spoken word is important. It is important, however, not as spoken word, but as it expresses the proper sense and meaning of God's message to us.⁸¹ The proper

⁷⁷"Wir zeygend inn aber nyenen, dann da er sich selbs zeygt; ir aber zeigend inn in brot, inn nachtmal, ouch wie man das heil oder trost in gheinem usserlichen ding zeygen sol, zeigend ir in sinem essen vestung des gloubens, ouch gegenwürtigkeit des gepredigeten evangelii, ja alles, das üch in sinn kumpt." Z V, 516.

⁷⁸"Das usser wort, das von unserem münden kumpt, ist ouch eben das wort gottes, das by got ist und in unseren gläubigen hertzen, so ver wir 'wort' für den sinn und die warheit nennend." Z V, 520.

⁷⁹"Das usser wort, das Paulus prediget hat (yetz nenn ich 'wort' denn sinn und verstand), ist der sinn und meinung, die got hat, und das inner wort Pauli ist ouch einer meinung und sinn mit dem ussere gewesen, Und ist darnach das selbig wort, so es gott in der menschen hertzen gepflantz hat." Z V, 520.

⁸⁰"So sichstu ietz wol, frommer Christ, was den aposteln das usserlich wort heißt: nit die stimm...sunder die selbs meinung, die sy in iren hertzen habend, harus geredt." Z V, 521.

⁸¹Z V, 525-526.

sense and meaning of the Supper is as a thanksgiving for what God has done for us in Christ.⁸²

In a summary statement Zwingli concludes that just as one signifies in baptism his association with the Church, so one signifies through the Supper his trust in Christ as saviour. Similarly, just as we cannot say that the power of the proclaimed word causes power to effect change through the water, so we know that the Supper does not effect change by a bodily eating. Rather, it is given

so that those, who together give thanks for the death that has given them life, also eat together this material meal in order that each one can give public witness that he trusts in Christ and will live the Christian life among the people.⁸³

Christ is, himself, "das heyl der seel" and it is not necessary to add external words or eating or presence to that.⁸⁴

The Supper was instituted as a meal of remembrance. The power of the words of the sacrament are in effecting that remembrance.⁸⁵ Strauß is in error when he attributes to the proclamation of the word power to invoke the presence of the Word. Proclamation of the word rather points to the Word without power to do

⁸²Z V, 527.

⁸³"...das die, so miteinander dancksagend umb den tod, der uns läbendig hat gemacht, ouch diß früntlich mal oder mass miteinander essind, damit ein ieder ouch offne kundschafft von im selbs ggeben hab, daß er uff Christum truwe unnd ouch dannethin christenlich gegen den andren glideren läbe." Z V, 528-529.

⁸⁴Z V, 532.

⁸⁵Z V, 532-533.

more than convey God's meaning.⁸⁶ In so doing it does not accomplish anything in itself, but provides an appropriate instrument for the proper work of the Spirit, which produces faith in the heart of man.⁸⁷

Prompted by his reading of Luther's *Sermon von dem Sacrament des Leibes und bluts Christi widder die Schwarngeister* (WA 19, pp.482-523), Zwingli publishes *Freundlich Verglimpfung* in late March 1527.⁸⁸ While Zwingli finds much in this sermon he agrees with, there are things in it that will raise questions for the weak that need to be addressed.⁸⁹ He declares that he esteems Luther highly but that he does not yet properly understand the Supper.⁹⁰ The true eating in the Supper has been misunderstood, for

⁸⁶Z V, 533-534.

⁸⁷Z V, 534. "...nit daß das reden ützig mache oder bringe, sunder die red ist ein offnung."

⁸⁸Z V, 763-794. "Früntlich verglimpfung und ableynung über die predig des treffenlichen Martini Luthers widder die schwermer, zß Wittenberg gethon unnd bescriben zß schirm des waesenlichen lychnams und blüts Christi im sacrament. Zß güter bewarung von Huldrychen Zuingli ylends und kurtz begriffen." Zwingli declares later in the work that Luther has attacked him before the "simple" (i.e. in open German writings) while Zwingli has been more careful, writing more freely only in latin. 780.

⁸⁹Z V, 771.

⁹⁰"...So wil ich gar klar one allen schalck und zorn anzeigen, das der allmechtig gott Martino Luther in diser leer des sacraments die heimlichkeit seines verstands nit geoffnet hat." Z V, 772. "Mart. Luther ist als hoch in minem schlechten urteyl als ein einiger, noch ist gott hoher."

belief that flesh and blood are eaten here does not make us holy, for God has not promised that...[The true eating is rather] trust in the Son of God, who gave his life in death for us, as all who believe know full well.⁹¹

The relation of scripture and faith are like a beast and a plow - one an instrument and the other the source of empowerment.⁹²

The words of Christ at the Last Supper must be properly understood in a figurative sense. If they are taken literally then Christ's body must be visibly and sensibly present.⁹³ Zwingli cites numerous scriptural examples of figures, or tropes, in scripture, including Exodus 12:11. In his now familiar argument he draws an interpretive parallel between the passover (as symbolic meal) and the Supper. The Supper is most appropriately understood as a

thanksgiving to the Lord, that his only Son suffered death for us and, as is revealed in the thanksgiving, declaration that one trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ and that through his death is reconciled to God.⁹⁴

⁹¹"...glauben, das hie fleisch und blüt geessen werde macht nit saelig; dann gott hats nit verheissen...[The true eating is, rather] vertruwen uff den sun gottes, der sin leben für unseren tod ggeben hat, als alle gloeübige wol wüssend." Z V, 773.

⁹² "Also, hie ist das tier der lebendig gloub; strick und silen ist die gschrift...Sichstu, also müs man den glauben unnd die gschrift byeinander haben." Z V, 774.

⁹³Z V, 775.

⁹⁴"...dancksagung dem herren, daß sin einiger sun den tod für uns erlitten hat, und welcher in der dancksagung erscheint, gibt sich für einen uns, der uff den herren Iesum Christum vertruwe, daß er durch sinen tod gott versuonet sye." Z V, 776-777.

Turning to a more detailed rebuttal of Luther, Zwingli accuses him of a non-scriptural understanding of the Body *with* the bread in the Supper. When Luther teaches that bread remains bread, but that in - or with - the bread man eats of the Body of Christ he is adding his own meaning to the scripture.⁹⁵ Luther is using a figure to interpret the text - just as he accuses Zwingli - because Jesus didn't say "this is my body with the bread."⁹⁶

Luther teaches mis-focused faith. Faith should be directed toward God's word (that is, his covenant of redemption through Christ), not toward the body and blood in the Supper. It is not enough to have God's word unless we correctly understand it.⁹⁷ When Luther declares that it is through faith that we are made holy, Zwingli is in hearty agreement. However, Luther errs when he suggests that faith comes from human action.⁹⁸ God's redemption, revealed in faith, is not in our power to effect or change, either through our initiative or by sacramental ceremony.

for God has established his covenant with all creation. Now, the covenant cannot be changed (We are not speaking here of external ceremonies, but only the inner basis for faith which the ceremonies require).⁹⁹

⁹⁵Z V, 778-779.

⁹⁶Z V, 779.

⁹⁷Z V, 780-781. "...es nit gnuog ist schreyen: 'Ich hab gottes wort,' sunder man muß gottes wort recht verstoen und demnach sich uff den rechten verstand gottes worts lassen." 781.

⁹⁸"...daß der gloub, eigentlich nun von uns entsprungen, das vermoeg, sonder welcher gloubt, den hat gott vor und ee erwellet und zogen...So staat ye der gloub allein uss der wal gottes." Z V, 781.

⁹⁹"...denn also hat gott den pundt mit allen userwelten gemacht...Nun mag aber der pundt nit geendret werden (wir redend hie nit von den usserlichen

Luther is focusing his faith on the sign, rather than the covenant of grace which it signifies.

Zwingli considers the understanding of words of promise in a revealing corrective to Luther. There is a great difference between words that contain a promise and those that do not. "Those which promise are held unquestioningly by the faithful because whatever they promise surely transpires. Those, however, which do not promise, but explain or teach, sometimes occur and sometimes not."¹⁰⁰ There is also a difference between trusting God's word and believing God's word.¹⁰¹ Trust is to be directed toward the word that promises. Belief is to be attributed to those parts of God's word that teach or admonish but do not promise.¹⁰² In the Supper it is not the words of institution which contain the promise but the proclamation that Christ's sacrifice brings forgiveness of our sins. Luther is focusing his trust (faith) on the wrong aspect of the Supper.¹⁰³ The word does not produce faith, rather faith reveals the word to us.¹⁰⁴ The Supper is not about the body of Christ given to us

cerimonien, sunder allein von dem inneren grund deß gloubens; dann die cerimonien habend dennen müssen)." Z V, 781-782.

¹⁰⁰"Dann die da verheißend, sind by dem gloeubigen ungezweyfet, was sy verheissend, werde beschehen; welche aber nit verheissend, sunder erzellend oder lerend, die beschehen etwan und etwan nit." Z V, 783.

¹⁰¹Z V, 783.

¹⁰²Z V, 784.

¹⁰³Z V, 784-785.

¹⁰⁴Z V, 785-786. "Sichstu erstlich, das er's umbkert? Man lernt den glouben nit uß den worten, sunder got lert uns inn, und denn ersehen wir den glouben ouch in den worten." 786.

that through eating we might come to forgiveness of sins. It is about the sacrifice of Christ that brings us - through his death - forgiveness of sins.¹⁰⁵

Zwingli entreats Luther to abandon his error, claiming that they really believe the same truth.¹⁰⁶ The focus on the flesh and reliance upon the sacrament is unnecessary to those who have trusting faith in Christ. "If eternal life comes because we trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, then the fleshly eating is unnecessary."¹⁰⁷ Faith that is produced by external things rather than the Spirit is false and useless faith.¹⁰⁸ True faith, produced by the inner working of the Spirit reveals itself in trust in Christ. "In brief, firm, righteous, pure faith trusts in the divinity of Christ Jesus and acknowledges his death as our life."¹⁰⁹ To teach otherwise, as Luther has done, binding God to the ceremony of the sacrament is to return to the errors of the papists.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵Z V, 786.

¹⁰⁶"So sind wir eins; dann wir gloubend dasselb ouch vestenklich;...du darffst in disem wort nit wyter glouben." Z V, 786.

¹⁰⁷"Kumpt nun das ewig leben darumb, das wir in Iesum Christum, den sun gottes, vertrauend, so gadt das fleischessen loß." Z V, 787.

¹⁰⁸"Kurtz , der gloub oder die salbung empfindt in ir selbs, das uns gott mit sinen geyst innwendig sicheret und das alle die usserlichen ding, die von ussen in uns kummend, uns nüts moegend anthun zu der rechtwerdung." Z V, 787.

¹⁰⁹"Kurtz, der vest, grecht, luter gloub vertrauwt uff Christi Iesu gottheit und erkennt sinen tod unser leben sin." Z V, 788. "Es muß geist, nit fleisch sin, das die seel laebendig macht; so ist ye das fleisch nüt nüt, verstand alweg; ze essen." 789.

¹¹⁰Z V, 791-793.

These three documents show continuity and development in Zwingli's view of the Supper. Continuity is clear regarding Zwingli's fundamental presuppositions about the Supper. The development is most obvious in Zwingli's characterization of the Supper and his presentation of how best to understand his basic view of it.

The relation of human action and divine action continues to reflect the view Zwingli has maintained from the beginnings of his treatment of the Supper. God is not, and cannot be, bound to human action, even the celebration of the sacraments. The eating of material elements, the preached word, or the words of institution are not able to convey grace or cause God's presence or action. The necessary presence of faith is understood as a protection of God's initiative. It is something that God produces when and how he chooses. The power of the sacrament is not in the sacrament, itself, but in the truth it proclaims, or points to. The debate over the power of the word makes clear that the central issue is not materiality, but causality. Man does not cause. God alone causes his action and presence.

The relation of Christ's presence to the sacrament and the elements cannot be a necessary one. Neither, however, is it totally disconnected. Zwingli understands the sacrament and the elements to function as a sign pointing to Christ's redemptive sacrifice and, hence, his redemptive presence in the affairs of man. The eating of the Supper is the appropriation of that eternal truth of redemption. The fact that the presence pointed to in the Supper is Christ's work in history does not seem to make it, therefore, remote to Zwingli. Christ's eternal work of redemption is realized in *this* time and celebration of eternal covenants include a celebration of a present reality. For Zwingli it is adequate to identify the contemporary celebration of the Supper as part of a historical continuum of redemptive grace. To tie Christ's

presence any more closely to the sacrament or elements in it is unnecessary and detrimental.

Zwingli's arguments increasingly turn to the nature and focus of faith in the Supper. Faith that is directed toward the elements or the contemporary celebration of the sacrament is misdirected faith. It is faith that looks to the sign for establishment or strengthening rather than the covenant of grace which is signified. The promise conveyed in the Supper is not that God has bound himself to act when we appropriately celebrate the Supper. Such a view reflects uncertainty about God's intent which is resolved by binding God to human action. But rather than conveying certainty this distracts our attention from the true source of assurance which is God's eternal covenant and character. Zwingli simply does not understand the concern of his opponents to gain assurance from the binding of God to act. Within his understanding of faith we are moved to an attitude of trust. A desire to bind (an apparently uncertain) God is, for Zwingli, a contradiction of such a trusting faith. This is reflected in his repeated accusations of inadequate and mis-directed faith in his opponents. True faith is revealed in a confident trust in God's benevolent covenant of redemption in (our) history.

The character of the Supper becomes increasingly developed in this period. The aspect of community is increasingly emphasized. The Supper is a communal celebration and remembrance of Christ's sacrifice and provision of redemption by which we express thanks and testify to our trusting faith in that provision. The Supper is a communal sign which proclaims our salvation as the Passover proclaims the historic salvation of the Jews. The communal and proclamation functions have replaced the function of increasing or strengthening faith. This early role (which was always somewhat at odds with Zwingli's basic understanding of the dynamics of the

Supper) is effectively absent, except in the arguments of opponents. This change does not, however, reflect a fundamental change in Zwingli's understanding but a development of the role and character of the Supper more consistent with his basic understanding of the relationship of human and divine roles in the Supper and salvation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MARBURG

In October 1529 the controversy between Luther and Zwingli culminated in the Colloquy at Marburg. At the invitation (and prompting) of Phillip of Hesse the two parties gathered to attempt a conciliation of reformation forces. The resulting partial agreement has been the focus of extended discussion and disagreement. A resolution to the broader analysis is beyond the scope of this work. Instead, we will undertake to discover how Zwingli understood the issues and results of the Colloquy. Whether he understood them accurately is not our focus. By considering Zwingli's participation and comments we hope to see the dispute as he saw it.

At the beginning of the conference Zwingli presented a sermon on providence. The text of the sermon is only recorded by recollection nearly a year later at the request of Phillip of Hesse.¹ Perhaps for this reason the sermon is not generally treated in the context of the colloquy.² A review of the text in light of

¹ Dated August 20, 1530. In *On Providence*, William J. Hinke, ed. Labyrinth Press: Durham, 1983. 128-234 (hereafter cited as OP). *Ad illustrissimum Catorum principem Philippum sermonis de providentia dei anamnema*, Z VIiii, 1-230.

²Walther Köhler comments regarding the sermon that Zwingli "hat ohne jede Anspielung auf die kommende Dinge mehr eine philosophische Abhandlung als eine Predigt gehalten." *Zwingli und Luther* 11:75. Rother highlights the importance of this work as a fundamental statement of Zwingli's theological center. He also

Zwingli's treatment of the sacrament suggests that Zwingli was self-consciously addressing the issue at hand. While the work is done from memory Zwingli asserts that he has been able to reproduce "if not the sermon itself, at least the same material and line of argument."³ Assuming this to be true, we discover that *On Providence* is not only relevant to the issue of the Supper, but is a presentation of Zwingli's comprehensive understanding of the issues at stake in it.

Zwingli highlights his understanding of the critical nature of the issue in his introductory remarks to Phillip of Hesse. He lauds Phillip for understanding the importance of holding fast to "the chief point of religion," allowing disagreement on other, less important, issues.⁴ That declaration leads to his presentation of Zwingli's "short, but I think substantial, summary regarding Providence."⁵

Zwingli's first chapter asserts "Providence must exist, because the supreme good necessarily cares for and regulates all things."⁶ He proceeds to argue for deity as the necessary combination of supreme power, supreme good and supreme truth. Moreover, this divine nature must be "pure, genuine, clear, complete, simple and

places his study in the historical context but, suprisingly, fails to consider the sacramental issue at hand. Rother, *Grundlagen*, 118, 139.

³OP, 130. "...si non sermonum ipsum, attamen argumentum idem ac materiam te accepisse fateberis." Z VIiii, 69.

⁴OP, 129. "religionis summam" Z VIiii, 67.

⁵OP, 130; Z VIiii, 69.

⁶OP, 130. "Providential necessario esse ex eo, quod summum bonum necessario universa curat ac disponit." Z VIiii, 70.

unchangeable."⁷ There is here no hint of the "hiddenness" of God or his character. The consequence of this foundational understanding of the nature of divinity is the conclusion "that providence must exist and that it cares for and regulates all things."⁸ The logical inverse is also true and makes clear that to deny the ordering and regulation of providence is to deny God as God.⁹ And while the argumentation is done in classical terms (primarily logically and philosophically rather than biblically) Zwingli understands the argument to be about the Christian God. "I can easily show that the things which we attribute to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who are yet one God and Divinity, derive their origin from this source."¹⁰

The second chapter considers "what Providence is and how it differs from Wisdom."¹¹ Providence is a wisdom that not only foresees, but regulates all things. It is "the enduring and unchangeable rule over and direction of all things in the universe."¹² This encompassing declaration that we are at the mercy of the absolute rule of providence provokes no anxiety or concern on Zwingli's part. This is because the foundation of providence in God's essential goodness determines the

⁷OP, 131-132. "purum, syncerum, dilucidum, integrum, simplex et immutabile" Z Vliii, 72-73.

⁸OP, 132. "Et videbimus cum providentiam necessario esse, tum eandem omnia curare atque disponere." Z Vliii, 75.

⁹OP, 133; Z Vliii, 75-76.

¹⁰OP, 134; Z Vliii, 77. Throughout *On Providence* use of philosophical and classical resources serves Biblical/ theological purposes. Gestrich, *Zwingli*, 55.

¹¹OP, 134; Z Vliii, 78.

¹²OP, 136. "Providentia est perpetuum et immutabile rerum universarum regnum et administration." Z Vliii, 81.

benevolent character of its rule. Zwingli expresses the powerful impact of this understanding when he declares that God

freely supplies all with all things, asking nothing in return except that we shall take with gladness and gratefulness the gifts of His Bounty...He rejoices in giving, that He cannot help giving. For the more and oftener He gives, the better known His kindness becomes.¹³

Zwingli's emphatic defense of Providence is tied to his understanding of it as an expression of the gracious character of God. This gracious providence is eternal and unchanging.¹⁴ Echoing the argument of the first chapter, Zwingli declares that to allow any other power of creative agency is to deny God his deity.¹⁵

The third chapter proposes "Secondary causes are not properly called causes. This is of fundamental importance for the understanding of Providence."¹⁶ Zwingli undertakes an extended discussion of the natural order in which he discerns clear demonstration of the ordering of providence.¹⁷ Even occurrences which seem to disturb the natural order are demonstrations of providence. "[E]ven the things which we call fortuitous or accidental are not fortuitous or random happenings, but are all

¹³OP, 136. "Ille vero ultro suppeditat omnibus omnia, nihil repeteris, quam ut liberaliter a se donata hilares ac grati capiamus." Z VIiii, 81.

¹⁴OP, 137; ZIiii, 82.

¹⁵OP, 137; Z VIiii, 82-83.

¹⁶OP, 138. "Causas secundas iniuria causas vocari; quod methodus est ad providentiae cognitionem." Z VIiii, 83.

¹⁷OP, 148. "Per dei virtutem universa existunt, vivunt et operantur; imo in ipso, qui praesens ubique est, et iuxta ipsum, qui omnium esse, existere ac vivere est, omnia sunt." Z VIiii, 102. Also 83-112.

effected by the order and regulation of the deity."¹⁸ To the evidence of the natural order Zwingli adds classical authority from Plato and Seneca.¹⁹ Zwingli concludes the denial of causality to instruments. The farmer is the true cause of the work of the ox and the smith the cause of the work of the hammer. They are instruments rather than causes.²⁰ "Whatever means and instruments, therefore, are called causes, are not properly so called, but by metonymy, that is, derivatively from that one first cause of all that is."²¹

Properly understood, created things are "instruments by which the power of the Godhead shows its active presence."²² Lest the implications of this argument be missed Zwingli draws specific application to the word. "Do we not see here that the apostle and the word which he uses for the setting forth of the truth are instruments, not causes, and that the one cause, by which even the apostle exists and preaches, is the Deity?"²³ All created things are more properly called instruments than causes. This is not because they are material but because they are "lifeless by nature, and yet

¹⁸OP, 150. "In his igitur non minus quam in homine divinae virtutis praesentiam, qua existunt, vivunt et moventur, deprehendimus." Z VIiii, 105.

¹⁹OP, 151-154; Z VIiii, 106-110.

²⁰OP, 154-155; Z VIiii, 110-111.

²¹OP, 155. "Quaecunque igitur media aut instrumenta sunt, cum causa adpellantur, non iure sic vocantur, sed 'metonumikos,' hoc est: denominative, ab illa scilicet unica primaque universorum, quae fiunt, causa." Z VIiii, 111.

²²OP, 156. "Instrumenta igitur sunt, per quae praesens numinis virtus operatur." Z VIiii, 112.

²³OP, 156. "An non et hic videmus apostolem et verbum, quo utitur ad veritatis expositionem, instrumenta esse, non causas, causam vero unicam, qua et apostolus consistet et praedicat, numen esse?" Z VIiii, 112.

through them and from them" the creator works.²⁴ Again we observe that the affirmation of God's initiative alone produces for Zwingli positive images.²⁵ On the other hand, any denial of the absolute ordering of providence undermines the affirmation of deity and any assurance of benevolent order in creation.²⁶

Chapter four considers the question "Regarding man and why the law was given to him when all things are directed by Divine Providence."²⁷ Zwingli proposes that man was created "to enjoy God through fellowship and friendship here, through possession and most intimate contact in the hereafter."²⁸ Divine will, which may be inscrutable to us, purposed to create humans as body and soul - two parts in ongoing struggle.²⁹ In this struggle the spirit "sighs for God and expects all things from his bounty, not from its own desserts." The flesh, on the other hand, awaits what is due to itself.³⁰ At the heart of Zwingli's description of spirit/flesh dualism is the issue of causality. The spirit acknowledges God's initiative and awaits

²⁴OP, 156-157; Z Vliii, 113..

²⁵OP, 157. "Ut cum aliam tellurem triticum, arborem poma sue, solem lucem et calorem fundere videmus, iam praebentem dei manum non aliter contemplerur, quam cum benignus parens culci filiolo botrum in palmite praebet. Numinis benigna virtus est, quae universa donat; tellus, arbor, sol, caetera palmes sunt et racemus, in quo munis nobis et praebetur et accipitur." Z Vliii, 113.

²⁶OP, 158; Z Vliii, 114-115.

²⁷OP, 159; Z Vliii, 115.

²⁸OP, 159-160; Z Vliii, 116-117.

²⁹OP, 162-165; Z Vliii, 122-127.

³⁰OP, 163; Z Vliii, 124.

God's blessing. The flesh (foolishly) demands that it be the determinative cause of its fate.

In the context of this struggle Zwingli considers the function and purpose of the law. "The law is the divine order, expressing His nature and will...The law is the constant will of God."³¹ In other words, the law has a revelatory function, revealing God (His will and character) to us.³² Zwingli alludes to "some persons of importance"(read: Luther) who have failed to understand the benevolent character of the law.³³ In the struggle between the spirit and the flesh the law is a light revealing "the mind, intelligence, and will of God."³⁴ It teaches us "not only that it is God whom we ought to love above all things, but also that he is by His nature not only man but all His creatures."³⁵ The law, then, is a positive, even gracious, instrument of God. By it, "He assures us of two things, one, that we are born to attain to a knowledge of God, the other, that we are destined to enjoy Him."³⁶

Zwingli returns to the ongoing struggle between the flesh and spirit in humankind. It is impossible to avoid the tension between God's drawing of the

³¹OP, 166. "Lex est numinis iussus illius ingenium ac voluntatem exprimens...lex est perpetua voluntas dei." Z Vliii, 128.

³²OP, 166. Postremo videmus, quid per essentiam sit lex, nempe numinis voluntas et ingenium, ut, cum legem audimus, discimus, quid velit deus et quod ipse eius ingenii est, quod nos docet." Z Vliii, 129.

³³OP, 166; Z Vliii, 129.

³⁴OP, 168; Z Vliii, 132.

³⁵OP, 168; Z Vliii, 133.

³⁶OP, 170. "Cum ergo deus per legem voluntatem suam homini communicat, iam ista traditione sua duorum nos certos facit: unius, quod ad deum cognoscendum nati, alterius, quod ad illo fruendum destinati sumus." Z Vliii, 135.

spirit and the body drawn by the flesh. As an example of the struggle Zwingli alludes to the contemporary dispute concerning the Supper.³⁷ By placing the dispute in this context Zwingli defines the terms of the debate. That is, in terms of spirit, acknowledging and awaiting God's providential (and gracious) activity, or in terms of flesh, insisting that the determination of God's blessing be linked to a fleshly cause. To a person in the midst of the struggle between spirit and flesh "the law is a gift of Divine Providence...to indicate Its will to man and to guide and educate him."³⁸

Zwingli's fifth chapter defends the goodness of providence, despite the Fall. "Divine Wisdom was not making a mistake either in creating man or in teaching him by the law when it knew he would fall."³⁹ At issue are the goodness and wisdom of providence and, therefore, the character of providence itself. Zwingli argues for God's goodness in creation "since God's natural and inmost cause for creating is goodness."⁴⁰ Even the Fall is interpreted benevolently as enabling the full revelation of righteousness. "For the good, therefore, of angels and men both were fashioned that they could fall...For by the fall the splendor of the divine righteousness was made apparent."⁴¹ Subsequently God's goodness was further

³⁷OP, 172-173; Z VIiii, 137-139. "Hodie in eucharistia dissentitur, num corpus Christi per essentiam re ipsa sive naturaliter ac vere edatur." 139.

³⁸OP, 174; Z VIiii, 140.

³⁹OP, 174; Z VIiii, 140.

⁴⁰OP, 175. "Creando: cum enim naturalis et intima deo causa creandi sit bonitas." Z VIiii, 141.

⁴¹OP, 177; Z VIiii, 145-146.

revealed in man's restoration.⁴² Even the Fall cannot shake Zwingli's firm confidence in the goodness of the ordering of providence or of its absolute character.

In chapter six Zwingli comes to the application of providence to man's spiritual destiny. "On election, which the theologians call predestination; that it is sure and unchangeable, and that its source is goodness and wisdom."⁴³ Zwingli argues that history in the created order is a product of goodness. Even justice should be considered a "species of goodness." He is able to confidently affirm that "all of God's doings in regard to man savor of goodness no less than of justice."⁴⁴

Election is the demonstration of the goodness of God freely exercised toward man. "Election, then, is the free disposition of the divine will in regard to those that are to be blessed...[It is] not dependent upon nor following our arranging and disposing."⁴⁵ Zwingli notes that he earlier held the view which he credits to Thomas Aquinas of predestination based upon foreknowledge. But he has rejected it because by conditioning predestination (and therefore providence) upon foreknowledge (of man's determinative action) we "inadvertently bring God's goodness and omnipotence into danger."⁴⁶ Election is properly ascribed to God's will, alone.⁴⁷

⁴²OP, 178; Z Vliii, 147.

⁴³OP, 180; Z Vliii, 150.

⁴⁴OP, 181; Z Vliii, 152.

⁴⁵OP, 184. "Est igitur electio libera divinae voluntatis de beandis constituo...non a nostra dispositione aut constitutione pendere nequa nostram constitutionem sequi." Z Vliii, 156.

⁴⁶OP, 184-185; Z Vliii, 156-158.

⁴⁷OP, 186; Z Vliii, 159-160.

He cites additional scriptural evidence, making clear "that the disposition of God is free, not depending upon any secondary consideration or cause."⁴⁸

Zwingli suggests that the strife over free will and merit vs. election and providence could be resolved by "contemplation of the Deity" as the supreme good. Such contemplation is, he says, "the safest bulwark of religion."⁴⁹ It reveals to us a God who, without our prompting, "shares his bounty, wishes well to all, cares for all, is the light of all knowledge, nay is the only source of understanding."⁵⁰ Apprehension of this supreme good removes any necessity for further assurance of God's good intent.

Having systematically built his theological system, Zwingli addresses the issue of the sacraments from that perspective. The error he wants to correct is the desire to remove the power from God in an attempt to attribute it to human or material agency.

So to external things, namely, sacraments and symbols, is attributed what nothing but the Divine Power can give...Although the gift and bounty of the divine goodness are extolled therein, they are not brought to us by the power of the symbols, except in so far as the symbols and the words of the preacher proclaim them.⁵¹

⁴⁸OP, 188. "Quibus primo intelligimus liberam esse constitutionem." Z VIiii, 163.

⁴⁹OP, 189; Z VIiii, 164.

⁵⁰OP, 189; Z VIiii, 164.

⁵¹OP, 189-190. "Sic rebus externis, puta sacramentis et symbolis, tribuitur, quod dare nisi divina virtus nihil potest...In qua tametsi divinae bonitatis munera et largitiones collandantur, non tamen virtute symbolorum adferuntur, nisi quantum et symbola et praedicationis verbum ista nunciant." Z VIiii, 165.

The decisive element in the sacrament is the gift of faith by the (free) action of the Holy Spirit. The elements only proclaim and represent the grace that God communicates - according to his will.⁵²

The "body" celebrated in the Supper is called "the food of the soul, because He who alone is the sure pledge of our hope is praised in it."⁵³ The material bread is not to be taken as a material body of Christ but as a sign of that body. This sign is a gift and demonstration of divine benevolence.

...the Divine Goodness is so pleasant and friendly to us that it deigns to present even to our senses certain shadowy forms of internal and spiritual things, which are called by the same name as the things themselves for the reason that they are the sacraments and representation of the real things.⁵⁴

The sacraments are constituted of a visible sign and the (invisible) thing signified. Handling the sign does not ascribe power to us over the thing it signifies. Thus, "it is wrong for us to be so dull as to attribute to a material thing what belongs to God alone, and to turn the Creator into the creature and the creature into Creator."⁵⁵ We attempt to assume to ourselves what is, in fact, the gift of divine goodness.

⁵²OP, 190-191; Z VIiii, 166-167.

⁵³OP, 191. "Adpellant animae cibum, quod is, qui solus est spei nostrae indubitatum pignus, in ea canitur." Z VIiii, 167.

⁵⁴OP, 191. "Sed quod divina bonitas nobis tum suavis et familiaris est, ut sensui quoque nostro rerum internarum ac spiritualium umbras quasdam ac species exhibeat, quas idcirco eisdem nominibus, quibus res ipsae adpellantur, dignatur, quod rerum verarum sacramenta sunt et significationes." Z VIiii, 167.

⁵⁵OP, 192. "Sed nefas est nos tam stupido esse, ut, quod solius dei est, rei sensibili tribuamus et vertamus tum creatorem in creaturam, tum creaturam in creatorem." Z VIiii, 168.

Here Zwingli proposes an aside to consider the proper understanding of faith in the belief that it will make the subjects of election and providence plainer.⁵⁶ He proposes his own definition of faith and paraphrase of Hebrews 11:1. "It is the firm and real confidence of the soul by which it trusts wholly in the things to be hoped for, that is, in the things for which solely and only it hopes without fear of disappointment."⁵⁷ The application of this criterion is immediately and critically applied to the "sacramentarians (i.e. Luther), who attribute to the sacraments what they do not contain." As a result they "lead men away from simple trust in the one God to belief in the power of symbols." He defines them (the sacramentarians) as "that class of men who attribute to symbols what belongs only to Divine Power and to the Holy Spirit, personally working in our souls, which symbols and the external word only proclaim and represent."⁵⁸

It is this misdirected focus in the Supper that is a danger to faith and the result of inadequate faith. For Zwingli, true faith does not need or seek assurances. "Faith is that real and unwavering thing given man by the Deity in whom alone he has the right to hope, by which he firmly and surely trusts in the invisible God."⁵⁹ There is little room for uncertainty in true faith. For faith - produced by God in the heart - is able to comprehend the goodness of God as the assurance of "things not seen." It recognizes God as

⁵⁶OP, 192; Z Vliii, 169.

⁵⁷OP, 193; Z Vliii, 169-170.

⁵⁸OP, 194.; Z Vliii, 172-173.

⁵⁹OP, 196. "Fides est res vera et constans a numine, in quod solum recte speratur, homini data, qua certe et firmiter fidit invisibilii deo." Z Vliii, 176.

its salvation and horn of plenty, and that this God is so rich that he has all things and can do all things, and is so bountiful and kind that he gives willingly and delights to give."⁶⁰

Zwingli applies this in a pastoral way, recounting how faith produces comfort and overcoming confidence in the life of the believer.⁶¹

Zwingli's affirmation of election as the expression of God's goodness toward humanity results in a generous view of individual election. It produces no anxiety or uncertainty for Zwingli. He will grant that one who has heard the doctrine of faith expounded yet chooses to remain in unbelief until death "we can perhaps count among the wretched."⁶²

Returning again to the heart of his argument Zwingli attempts to affirm God's initiative as strongly as possible. Faith should be understood as the result of election and not its cause. "Faith is the sign of election by which we obtain real blessedness. If election as a blossom had not preceded, faith would never have followed."⁶³ That is, God's initiative in election is evidenced by faith. Similarly, it is God's initiative rather than preaching which produces faith.

When Paul writes to the Romans [Romans10:17] that faith comes from hearing [the word] he attributes in the same way to the nearer cause that

⁶⁰OP, 197; Z VIiii, 177.

⁶¹OP, 197-199; Z VIiii, 177-180.

⁶²OP, 200; Z VIiii, 181-182. Zwingli's generous view extends to infants and children. He declares "ut sit de nullorum electione simus certiores quam de illorum infantium, qui intra puericiam tolluntur, dum adhuc sunt sine lege." Z VIiii, 191.

⁶³OP, 201. "Signum est electionis, qua vere beamur, fides. Electioni tanquam flos praecessisset, fides nunquam esset secuta." Z VIiii, 184.

is better known to us what belongs only to the Spirit, not to external preaching, as the sacramentarians are apt to contend.⁶⁴

The "sum total of the whole matter" is that God is the only real cause of all things that have to do with man "either as to his body or as to his soul."⁶⁵ We err when we attribute to the "nearer instrument or cause" what comes from God as the only true cause.⁶⁶

Zwingli's seventh chapter is a "confirmation of all that precedes by examples."⁶⁷ He offers an extended discussion and biblical, practical and contemporary illustrations and examples affirming providence.⁶⁸ "Thus all things happen, because all things are done by his dispensation and command."⁶⁹

In his epilogue Zwingli recapitulates the logical progression of his argument. The summary begins with the proposition "If the Deity exists, Providence must also exist."⁷⁰ The affirmation of Providence must be absolute.

But in admitting that Providence is at the head of all things, we ought not to understand this in so confused a manner as certain of the theologians do, who, while recognizing Providence with their lips, yet speaking of

⁶⁴OP, 203; Z VIiii, 186.

⁶⁵OP, 203-204; Z VIiii, 187.

⁶⁶OP, 204; Z VIiii, 187.

⁶⁷OP, 207; Z VIiii, 192.

⁶⁸OP, 207-224; Z VIiii, 192-217.

⁶⁹OP, 224. "Et universa ad hunc modum fiunt, quia eius ordinatione et iussu cuncta geruntur. Z VIiii, 217.

⁷⁰OP, 224-225; Z VIiii, 218-219.

man allow him some freedom, albeit very little, which little they insist upon having to some extent defined.⁷¹

It is difficult to understand this allusion as other than a reference to the theologians (i.e. Lutherans) at hand. Zwingli adamantly rejects any allowance of limitations or demands on providence as compromising the nature and character of God.⁷²

Zwingli's affirmation of providence is, admittedly, more than a merely theoretical issue. It is, at heart, an issue touching our assurance in an uncertain world. "In a word, the proper recognition of God's providence is to the pious and God-fearing the greatest and most helpful antidote against the evils of both prosperity and adversity."⁷³ God's providence endures despite the actions of humankind.⁷⁴ When we search out the supreme good we find providence. Divinity and providence are inextricably linked.⁷⁵ In this truth we find hope. Zwingli concludes with the admonition to "turn often to the contemplation of Providence. There you will find rest and deliverance from all storms and blasts."⁷⁶

⁷¹OP, 225-226; Z VlIii, 219.

⁷²OP, 225; Z VlIii, 219.

⁷³OP, 229. "Ut, breviter, providentiam recte agnovisse piis ac deum reverentibus maximum sit adversus prospera et adversa praesentissimumque antidotum. Z VlIii, 223-224.

⁷⁴OP, 231; Z VlIii, 226-227. "Veruntamen quicquid obstrepamus aut meditemur, dei consilium firmum manet." 226.

⁷⁵OP, 232-233; Z VlIii, 228-229.

⁷⁶OP, 233; Z VlIii, 229. "In einer großartigen Schau hat Zwingli im Marburg Schloß ein faszinierendes Bild dieser Einheit der Schöpfungsordnung und des von Gottgewirkten Weltgeschehens entworfen und das Schicksal des Menschen in dieses einbezogen. Gott ist die einzige Ursache, der Beweger und Urheber aller Dinge." Rother, *Grundlagen*, 121.

Zwingli's sermon on providence incorporates long-standing arguments regarding the Supper into a systematic and comprehensive theological argument. The system defines his position on the Supper. In fact, it is so tightly structured that it cannot allow any other position. It cannot allow God to be bound to act in any way without denying God as God. However, God's goodness and abounding benevolence remove the uncertainty such a position might suggest. The character of faith as the apprehension of God's goodness and absolute trust in Him precludes the necessity - and even the propriety - of any additional assurances. The promises contained in God's character are the promises Zwingli relies upon. Rather than a merely theoretical work without any particular concern for the debate at hand, *On Providence* should perhaps be considered Zwingli's most comprehensive work on his theology of the sacraments in the context of his theological system.

Accounts of the Colloquy of Marburg directly attributable to Ulrich Zwingli are limited to two brief summaries. The first is Zwingli's account of his discussion with Phillip Melanchthon on October 1, 1529 (the first day of the Colloquy).⁷⁷ In an attempt to begin positively Phillip of Hesse pairs Luther with Oecolampadius and Zwingli with Melanchthon in separate sessions. In addition to the Supper the discussion touches original sin, the word, the trinity and justification. The latter two topics (trinity and justification) are not, however, mentioned in Zwingli's protocol. Apparently, the agreement on these basic issues was clear enough that it did not merit comment.⁷⁸

⁷⁷"Aufzeichnung Zwinglis über eine Vorunterredung zwischen ihm und Melanhton in Marburg." Z Vlii, 491-509.

⁷⁸Z Vlii, 493.

Zwingli opens his summary with the declaration "Philippus concedit: Verba nihil aliud posse quam significare."⁷⁹ Zwingli claims Melanchthons agreement to the signficatory function of the word rather than causal power. He later refers (twice) to this concession in his discussion with Luther and Melanchthon does not refute him.⁸⁰ Not surprisingly, this first issue proceeds from the arguments of the sermon on providence and Zwingli proclaims Melanchthon's concession with a note of triumph.⁸¹

Zwingli next declares agreement between Melanchthon and himself regarding the word and the Holy Spirit. "Spiritus Sanctum operari in nobis iustificationem mediante verbo."⁸² Although the word is here acknowledged as a medium of the work of the Holy Spirit this should not be understood to contradict the prior declaration concerning the word. The word is not to be understood "materialiter," or externally, but as the internal word, or expression of God's will.⁸³ It does not have any inherent attribution of power, but is an instrument of God's will.⁸⁴

⁷⁹Z Vlii, 507.

⁸⁰Z Vlii, 494.

⁸¹Z Vlii, 495. "Für Melanchthon ist Christus bei der Abendmahlsfeier wirklich gegenwärtig. Aber diese Gegenwart wird nicht durch das Aussprechen der Einsetzungsworte herbeigeführt."

⁸²Z Vlii, 507.

⁸³Z Vlii, 496. "Das gepredigte Wort ist kein toter Laut, sondern es birgt einen Sinn und umschließt einen Kern. Dieser Sinn ist der Wille Gottes, der in der Hülle der menschlichen Worte steckt."

⁸⁴"Also die Wortwirkung ist keine automatische, sondern der Gotteswille macht unseren Willen lebendig, so daß wir verstehen und gehorchen." Z Vlii, 497.

Regarding the Supper Zwingli understands Melanchthon to be in agreement concerning the spiritual eating of faith in the sacrament. Faith is the "eating" of the Supper. The two reformers are agreed on the Augustinian formula (manducare=credere) which is, by now, a commonplace for Zwingli.⁸⁵

Their agreement does not extend, however, to the issue of the location of the body of Christ. Melanchthon is unwilling to agree that Christ's body must be in one place. Zwingli falls back to John 6:63, "the flesh profits nothing." Since that text has nothing to do with location it seems that Zwingli is disputing either the importance of the presence of the body or its power to effect anything in the sacrament. Both arguments would be typical. Zwingli and Melanchthon exchange arguments regarding location and Christ's body. Both cite scripture and claim patristic support.⁸⁶

In his final notes Zwingli returns again to the subject of the word. Here Zwingli and Melanchthon find themselves in agreement. The word is an expression of the mind and will of God, not effective inherently.⁸⁷ Regarding the meaning of the word and the relationship of word and spirit the two reformers are able to

⁸⁵"De spirituali manducatione non dissentimus, nempe quod manducare sit credere." Z VIIi, 507. Zwingli claims to have come to agreement with Melanchthon over against Luther's advocacy of "manducatio oralis." 501.

⁸⁶Z VIIi, 508-509.

⁸⁷"Verbum capitur pro ipsa sententia et mente Dei, que mens est et v(oluntas) dei, amicta tamen humanis verbis. Quam sententiam d(ivinae) voluntatis tunc capit humanum pectus, qum trahitur a p(atre)." Z VIIi, 509.

agree.⁸⁸ Zwingli regarded the first day's dialogue a triumph on the key issues of the Supper.

Zwingli's records a brief summary of his two days of discussions with Luther.⁸⁹ He recounts four issues. The first concerns bodily eating in the Supper. Luther affirms a bodily eating ("Müntlich wirt der lib geessen.") while Zwingli denies any spiritual benefit to bodily eating.⁹⁰

The subsequent discussion concerns the location of Christ's body. Luther seeks to affirm an "endsam" (Zwingli's translation of "definitive") presence as well as an overall (ubiquitous) presence. Zwingli contends that Christ cannot be present in the "definitive" sense.⁹¹ In a brief reference to the third issue, Zwingli reports Luther's indifference to (approval of?) calling the elements a sign of the body of Christ. Zwingli notes that this was granted by Luther without much discussion.⁹²

The final issue concerns the understanding of the word in the Supper. Luther concludes with a definite affirmation of the power of the word and the consecration formula. "When the word is spoken over the bread the body is there. God gives it no matter how evil the one who speaks [the word]."⁹³ Zwingli responds predictably

⁸⁸Z Viii, 504.

⁸⁹"Eine Aufzeichnung Zwinglis zum Marburger Religionsgespräch." (Uttingerbericht) Z Vlii, 524-531. Another, briefer version is given in Zwingli's letter to Vadian on October 20, 1529. (Nr.925).

⁹⁰Z Vlii, 529.

⁹¹Z Vlii, 530.

⁹²Z Vlii, 530.

⁹³Z Vlii, 531.

and consistently with a denial of any inherent power in the word and the accusation that this affirmation constitutes a return to the error of the papacy.⁹⁴

The Colloquy ends in a spirit (or, at least, appearance) of solidarity. Agreement is reached on fourteen articles of faith with partial agreement on the article concerning the Supper. This apparently small breach later widens quickly and the failure to bridge the gap is broadly discussed and often lamented. However, the near agreement may be more accurately understood as appearance more than reality. Zwingli provides marginal notes to the text of the agreement that indicate - at least in the areas we are concerned with - that he understood the Marburg articles in a clearly Zwinglian sense.

The fifth article affirms salvation by faith in Christ and excludes faith through works or orders.⁹⁵ Zwingli's marginal note denies grace (or, at least, justification) to sacramental eating. In so doing he makes a pointed denial of forgiveness by means of a (Lutheran) sacramental eating.⁹⁶

The sixth article affirms faith as a free gift of God, not conditioned by our works, "rather, the Holy Spirit gives and creates, where he wills."⁹⁷ To this Zwingli notes that in this sixth article the "tota summa pendet." The whole issue rests upon the free unconditioned freedom of the Spirit to produce faith as a gift of

⁹⁴"Damit richtend ir das bapsthüm uff, dann als wenig der predigende, so er prediget, die gloeubig macht, die inn hoerind, als wenig macht der sprechende ütziid." Z Vlii, 531.

⁹⁵Z Vlii, 521.

⁹⁶Z Vlii, 536. "Sola ergo fides, quae nihil aliud est quam spiritualis manducatio, iustificat, non manducatio sacramentalis." 550.

⁹⁷Z Vlii, 536.

God.⁹⁸ Were faith and Spirit acknowledged as the only [true] means of grace the sacramental controversy could be resolved."⁹⁹

The eighth article appears to affirm the binding of the Spirit to producing faith through the proclamation of the word.¹⁰⁰ That affirmation is, however, conditioned by the qualifier (attributed to Zwingli) "ordenlich zû reden," which Zwingli understands in the sense "normally speaking."¹⁰¹ Zwingli adds marginal notes citing biblical texts (Mark 16:15; Romans 10:17) affirming the connection between hearing the word and faith. However, as we have seen in Zwingli's treatment of the word he understands the Spirit to normally, or typically, use the word as an instrument to produce faith. The affirmation of the eighth article, conditioned by "ordenlich zû reden," allows Zwingli to understand that "this leaves open the possibility of a free, unmediated working of the Spirit, it was merely not the normal way."¹⁰²

The closing statement of article eight states that the Holy Spirit "works...where and in whom it wills." To the word "works" Zwingli notes that it is

⁹⁸Z VIIi, 550.

⁹⁹Z VIIi, 536. "Insofern ist die tota summa (der Auseinandersetzung mit Luther) vom sechsten Artikel (und seinem rechten Verständnis) abhängig."

¹⁰⁰"Zum achten, das der heylig geyst, ordenlich zû reden, niemants soelichen gloubenn oder syne gabe one vorgend predigt oder müntlich wort oder evangelion Christi, sonder durch unnd mit soelichem müntlichem wort würckt er und schafft er den glouben, wo und in welchen er wil." Z VIIi, 522.

¹⁰¹Z VIIi, 536.

¹⁰²Z VIIi, 536.

the Holy Spirit which gives faith and not the external word.¹⁰³ The emphasis is upon the initiative of the Holy Spirit, not the power of the word. The word proclaimed is merely an instrument which the Spirit typically uses as an instrument to produce faith.¹⁰⁴

To the fifteenth article, on the Supper, Zwingli adds his most extensive comments. The article identifies the Supper as "a sacrament of the true body and blood of Jesus Christ."¹⁰⁵ Zwingli paraphrases this as an affirmation of the supper as a *sign* of the body and blood of Christ.¹⁰⁶ Any real bodily presence is denied and with it any real agreement with Luther on this statement.¹⁰⁷ The subsequent statement affirming the priority of the spiritual eating is affirmed roundly. "In this we agree. The chief point of religion is saved."¹⁰⁸ Bodily presence is excluded. Spiritual reception is affirmed. The initiative of the Spirit is protected. The chief point of religion is saved.

¹⁰³"Ipse fidem dat, non externum verbum." Z Vlii, 522, 550.

¹⁰⁴"Wenn das äußere Wort den Glauben wirkt, so handelt es nicht selbstmächtig, sondern ist vom heiligen Geiste abhängig. Das Wort ist bloß ein Mittel; den entscheidenden Anstoß aber gibt er, er, der Geist." Z Vlii, 537.

¹⁰⁵"ein sacrament deß waren lybs und blüts Jesu Christi." Z Vlii, 523.

¹⁰⁶"Sacramentum signum est veri corporis, etc. Non est igitur verum corpus." Z Vlii, 551.

¹⁰⁷"Hier stellt Zwingli seine eigene Auffassung (signum corporis) derjenigen Luthers (est corpus) deutlich gegenüber (ohne freilich Luther namentlich zu erwähnen), und die Hörschaft im Großmünster wußte, daß er mit seiner Unterschrift der körperlichen Gegenwart des Leibes Christi im Abendmahl nicht beiepflichtet hatte." Z Vlii, 542.

¹⁰⁸"Principalis est manducation spiritualis. In hac consentimus. Caput ergo religionis est salvum. Z Vlii, 551.

The final point of agreement cited in the fifteenth article affirms the function of the Supper, i.e., "to move those of weak conscience to faith through the Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁹ To this affirmation Zwingli directs his lengthiest comments. The article seems to imply that the weak are moved (or, at least, prompted) to faith through the celebration of the Supper. This appearance is one that Zwingli is concerned to deny. The word proclaimed in the Supper is not the promise of (or in) the Supper, itself, but the sacrificial sacrifice of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit alone which enlivens and illuminates that proclamation.¹¹⁰ The Supper was instituted as a memorial of Christ's death and a thanksgiving for it. It is an instrument which God uses. The effect of the Supper "is not through our word, though it may be an instrument, but is accomplished by the divine work in the souls of men."¹¹¹ The external proclamation of the word and celebration of the Supper have been ordered by God but they are not effective means of grace (over which human action may exercise some control by their use or practice). God, alone, is (freely) at work.

The closing concession of article 15 that agreement concerning the bodily presence had not been reached only reflects the thorough disagreement that underlies the other articles. It is not necessary to ascribe blame for this failure to conciliate.

¹⁰⁹"...damit die schwachen gewüssen zû glouben zû bewegen durch den heyligen geyst." Z Vlii, 523.

¹¹⁰"...verbo scilicet domini passionis. Illud enim in hoc predicatur, ut sciamus, deum nobis esse propitium, quandoquidem filium suum pro nobis in mortem tradidit. Sed solus spiritus sanctus est, qui corda illuminat et per fidem iustificat. Idcirco in huiusmodi semper curavimus addi expositionem, qua intelligatur, fidem a solo deo esse." Z Vlii, 551.

¹¹¹"Sed haec omnia non nostro verbo, etiamsi instrumentum sit, sed divina operatione in mentibus hominum perficiuntur." Z Vlii, 551. "Das Nachtmahl ist also nicht Gnadenmittel, sondern Erinnerungs-, Dank-, und Lobfeier." Z Vlii, 544.

We may assume both parties genuinely attempted to come to agreement. For Luther's part, Osiander reports an offer of concession to the Zwinglians on the evening of October 4, the last night of the Colloquy. The offer (almost certainly coming from Luther himself) is that if the Zwinglians will affirm that the body of Christ is certainly in the Supper and not merely in human memory then the Lutherans will not press any other issue, such as the form or manner of that presence. If Zwingli will only affirm that Christ is certainly there when the sacrament is celebrated then the controversy can be resolved.¹¹² Certainly, Luther could hardly be more generous. However, given the theological framework out of which he addresses the question, Zwingli cannot agree. To bind God to a necessary acting, or presence, is to compromise his freedom. The arguments of *On Providence* logically work from such a premise to the denial of God as God and the elimination of the comfort and hope of our trust in gracious (absolute) providence. In the end, no agreement was possible without the surrender of the whole theological system. The "caput religionis" was at stake.

As we pose the three questions we have traced through Zwingli's writings we find that the themes of Zwingli's response are strikingly consistent. The fact that the arguments of *On Providence* so clearly reflect them argues strongly for its consideration as a document within the sacramental writings of Zwingli. Particularly with respect to the question or the relation of human and divine action in the Supper the arguments of *On Providence* are a classic presentation of Zwingli's long-standing

¹¹²Locher, *Zwinglische Reformation*, 326. "...wenn sie bekennen wollen, dass der Leib Christi im Abendmahl waere, nicht allein in der Menschen Gedächtnis, so wollten wir sie aller andern Fragen erlassen und nichts dringen, ob er leiblich oder geistlich, natürlich oder übernatürlich, in stat oder ohne stat (in loco aut sine loco) da wäre, und also für Brüder wieder annehmen."

position. They also make quite clear how important this issue is - both for Zwingli's sacramental theology and for his theology as a whole. The "chief point of religion" is the affirmation of a God who is essential good and benevolent and who is absolutely provident. Such an affirmation demands the denial of secondary causes. To grant effectual causality to secondary causes is to undermine the assurance of God's providence and to contradict his divinity. Zwingli makes quite explicit what kind of secondary causes he has principally in mind. They are the Word and the sacraments. The greatest threat to the heart of the faith as he understands it comes from those who want to bind God, attributing causal power to preaching and the sacraments. That is, the battlefield for the central theological issue of Zwingli's theology is the issue of the sacraments and, especially, the Supper. Zwingli is even explicit about the people he has in mind. They are the sacramentarians, i.e. Luther and his followers. These are those who, by misunderstanding, ignorance or mischief, have attacked and undermined the core of Zwingli's theological faith. This argument is not new in Zwingli's sacramental writing, as we have seen. Its appearance here, especially in *On Providence*, can hardly be understood as coincidental.

Zwingli's preeminent interest in the material that we have considered from this period is the prior issue of the relation of providence to the sacraments. However he also addresses the issue of the relation of presence to the sacraments. Much of the reported discussion at Marburg concerned the nature of Christ's presence in the Supper. That issue, however, is often debated in the struggle over the binding of God to act. Luther's eleventh hour offer and the argument of his parting sermon affirm the priority of that issue for him. How God is present is not so important as the certainty that he is present. Zwingli's response also underscores

the critical issue at stake. To admit a spiritualized presence is not adequate if that presence is bound to the celebration of the Supper.

For Zwingli, the struggle over what happens in the Supper is misdirected. The sacraments and elements in them are signs pointing beyond themselves to the eternal plan of redemption realized in Christ. Why do we want to direct our attention and our faith toward the temporal human celebration rather than the eternal divine reality proclaimed in it? The argument that binding God (or God's self-binding) to the sacrament as a means of reassurance is incomprehensible to Zwingli. By definition faith is an attitude of confident trust in God. Such a trusting faith does not need reassurances. The assurance that God will act is found, for Zwingli, in God's character and not in any covenantal binding to human signs. For this reason Zwingli is not deeply concerned about the nature of Christ's presence. Christ is, in some way, present to faith. The believer recalls the redemptive sacrifice of Christ and celebrates the gracious redemption of God by means of the symbols or signs which proclaim or represent it. To eat the nourishment offered in the Supper is to believe.

The documents considered in this period do not reflect extensive attention to the third area of concern, that is, the role and character of the sacrament. It is a conveyer of comfort, insofar as it directs our confidence and trust to God's absolute providence. It is not, in any way, an intrinsically effective means of grace or means to faith. It is the symbolic proclamation of divine goodness. The signs, or shadowy forms, are instruments of proclamation and celebration. They express and celebrate, rather than produce, faith. We may celebrate in joy and remembrance because our salvation is completely in God's (good and gracious) hands. Zwingli desires nothing more from the Supper.

CHAPTER NINE

MARBURG TO KAPPEL

The fragile concord achieved at Marburg could not long survive the fundamental differences it attempted to cover over. By the summer of 1530 the breach was wide between the two parties. At Augsburg Emperor Charles V held a Diet at which the antipathies of both the Catholics and the Lutherans were directed at the Zwinglians. Melanchthon composed a Lutheran confession (I.e. the Augsburg Confession) which was signed by the protestant princes and submitted to Charles. At the urging of Jakob Sturm, Zwingli is moved to compose his own formulation of a confessional statement and submit it to the Emperor. On July 3, 1530 his *Account of the Faith* was published.¹

Zwingli offers a twelve point summary of the Faith. Under the press of time he is forced to author it alone on behalf of those who support him. Although it reflects his views Zwingli maintains that he is willing to submit his confession to the judgment of "the whole Church of God, as far as it speaks by the command and inspiration of the Word and the Spirit of God."² The tone is conciliatory, but the submission to authority is heavily conditioned.

¹*An Account of the Faith*, in *On Providence*, (Durham: Labyrinth Press, 1983), 33-61 (Hereafter cited as OP). *Fidei Ratio*, Z Vlii, 753-817.

²OP, 35-36; Z Vlii, 792.

The first article affirms the nature of God as one "by nature good, true, powerful, just, wise, the Creator and Preserver of all things visible and invisible."³ The second article is a round affirmation of providence and denial of any true secondary causes. "I know that this supreme Deity, which is my God, freely determines all things, so that His counsel does not depend upon the contingency of any creature."⁴ This second affirmation leads him to defend the first one (the goodness of God) in conjunction with it. The goodness of God contains justice and mercy, and providence reveals God's goodness in the Fall as well as the restoration in Christ.⁵ Echoing his arguments in *On Providence* Zwingli declares that the goodness of God removes any cause for uncertainty or anxiety before God. Yes, the Gospel is powerless without God's self-willed empowerment which, alone, can give assurance of grace.

But now God has liberally, abundantly and wisely lavished it upon us that nothing further remains which could be desired; unless someone [like Lutherans?] would dare to seek something that is beyond the highest and beyond overflowing abundance.⁶

³OP, 36. "...natura bonum, rerum, potentam, iustam, sapientem, creatorem et curatorum rerum omnium visibilium atque invisibilium." Z Viii, 792.

⁴OP, 38. "Secundo scio numen istud summum, quod deus mens est, libere constituere de rebus universis, ita ut non prodeat consilium eius ab ullius creature occasione." Z Viii, 794.

⁵OP, 38-39; Z Viii, 795-796.

⁶OP, 39. "Ille autem tam liberaliter, tam abunde tamque prudenter totam in nos effudit, ut iam residuum nihil reliquerit, quod desyderare possimus, nisi supra summum et supra redundatam habundantiam quis quid requirere audeat." Z Viii, 796.

The third article reflects the affirmation of providence with regard to redemption. Salvation is by Christ alone, by the election of God.⁷

The fourth article deals with original sin. In response to critiques of his doctrine of original sin Zwingli works to state a positive case for his understanding of it.

An act is called sin when it is committed against the law...Hence, willing or unwilling, we are forced to admit that original sin...is not properly called sin...It is, therefore, properly a disease and condition....However, I have no objection to this disease and condition being called, after the habit of Paul, a sin.⁸

This condition or contagion is present in all those of human birth.⁹

The fifth article addresses the destiny of children who die before reaching adulthood. Zwingli's positive understanding of God's gracious benevolence allows him to regard this issue generously. He declares that "in condemning children born of Christian parents, nay even the children of heathen, we act rashly."¹⁰ Children of Christian parents are counted among the elect. I.e. Zwingli regards the visible church, in general, as being elect.¹¹

In the sixth article Zwingli treats the Church. His characterization of the elect reflects his understanding of faith as a subjective trusting in God. By evidence of this faith we know that we are elect.

⁷OP, 39; Z Vlii, 796.

⁸OP, 40; Z Vlii, 797.

⁹OP, 42; Z Vlii, 798-799.

¹⁰OP, 42; Z Vlii, 799.

¹¹OP, 43; Z Vlii, 800.

He is already certain that he is elect of God...For the Spirit cannot deceive. If He tells us that God is our Father, and we confidently and fearlessly call Him Father, untroubled because we shall enter upon the eternal inheritance, then it is certain that God's Spirit has been shed abroad in our hearts.¹²

Zwingli's understanding of faith and his abounding confidence in God's gracious character preclude any anxious uncertainty regarding election.

In the seventh article Zwingli comes directly to the issue of the sacraments. He opens with an emphatic denial of any understanding of the sacraments as inherently effective means of grace. "I believe, indeed I know, that all the sacraments are so far from conferring grace that they do not even convey or dispense it."¹³ Grace is given by the Spirit alone. The Spirit is not bound to, or reliant upon, external means.

Moreover, a channel or vehicle is not necessary to the Spirit, for He himself is the virtue and energy whereby all things are borne, and has no need of being borne; neither do we read in the Holy Scriptures that visible things, as are the sacraments, carry certainly with them the Spirit.¹⁴

Zwingli is clearly concerned by the idea that God's gracious activity should be in any way bound by, or limited to, the human exercise of external sacraments. Rather

¹²OP, 43-44. "Hic ergo iam certus est se dei electum esse...Spiritus enim ille fallere non potest. Qui si dictat nobis deum esse patrem nostrum et nos illum certi et intrepidi patrem adpellamus, securi quod sempiternam haereditatem simus adituri, iam certum est spiritum filii dei esse in corda nostra fusum." Z VIii, 800.

¹³OP, 46. "Septimo credo, imo scio omnia sacramenta tam abesse, ut gratiam conferant, ut ne adferant quidem aut dispensent." Z VIii, 803.

¹⁴OP, 46. "Dux autem vel vehiculum spiritui non est necessarium; ipse enim est virtus et latio, qua cuncta feruntur, non qui ferri opus habeat; neque id unquam legimus in scripturis sacris, quod sensibilia, qualia sacramenta sunt, certo secum ferrent spiritum; sed si sensibilia unquam lata sunt cum spiritu, iam spiritus fuit, qui tulit, non sensibilia." Z VIii, 803.

than a source of reassurance, such a binding produces in him a sense of uncertainty.
Were the Spirit to be conveyed by visible signs

it would be known how, where, whence and whither the Spirit is borne.
If the presence and efficacy of grace are bound to the sacraments, they
work whithersoever they are carried; and where they are not used,
everything becomes feeble.¹⁵

Rather than as a necessary means of grace "the sacraments are given as a public testimony of that grace which is previously present to every individual."¹⁶ That is, the sacrament serves as a sign which points beyond itself as a temporal, human event to the eternal, divine covenant of grace which it celebrates. This does not, for Zwingli, demean the sacraments. Indeed, sacraments should be "highly valued and treated with honor. For though they are unable to bestow grace...with their administration the words of the divine promise are declared and pronounced."¹⁷ To understand them otherwise is nothing less than a return to Judaism. And even in Judaism at its best, then prophets "always most steadfastly urged in their teaching that the promises and benefits of God are given by God's free goodness, and not with respect to merits or external ceremonies."¹⁸

¹⁵OP, 46-47. "Nam si sacramentis alligata est gratiae et efficacia, iam, quo adferuntur, operantur; quo non adhibentur, flaccescunt omnia." Z VIIi, 803-804.

¹⁶OP, 47; Z VIIi, 804.

¹⁷OP, 48. "...in precio habenda et honorifice tractanda sunt. Ut enim gratiam facere non possunt...cum simul cum promissionis divinae verbis in ipsorum actione pronunciatum ac promulgatum summa religione suspiciendum est." Z VIIi, 805.

¹⁸OP, 48; Z VIIi, 805.

Specific consideration of the Supper (Eucharist) is the focus of the eighth article. In it he offers a characterization of the presence of Christ and meaning of the Supper.

...the true body of Christ is present by the contemplation of faith. This means that they who thank the Lord for the benefits bestowed on us in His Son acknowledge that he assumed true flesh, in it truly suffered, truly washed away our sins by His blood; and thus everything done by Christ becomes as it were present to them by the contemplation of faith.¹⁹

Such an understanding of the Supper makes any essential, or bodily, presence unnecessary and Zwingli makes an effort to refute such a presence. He cites scriptural evidence that affirms the departure or absence of Christ's body and the heavenly location of the resurrected body.²⁰ This evidence serves to substantiate Zwingli's argument for a figurative understanding of Jesus' words "this is my body."²¹ The argument for figurative understanding and denial of spiritual benefit from bodily eating is bolstered by patristic support cited from Irenaeus, Ambrose and Augustine.²² All of this evidence is understood to affirm the focus in the Supper on faith.

For from these facts it becomes very evident that the ancients always spoke figuratively when they attributed so much to the eating of the body

¹⁹OP, 49. "Octavo credo, quod in sacra eucharistiae (hoc est: gratiarum actionis) coena verum Christi corpus adsit fidei contemplatione, hoc est: quod ii, qui gratias agunt domino pro beneficio nobis in filio sua collato, agnoscunt illum veram carnem adsumpsisse, vere in ille passum esse, vere nostra peccata sanguine suo abluisse et sic omnem rem per Christum gestam illis fidei contemplatione velut praesentem fieri." Z Vlii, 806.

²⁰OP, 49-51; Z Vlii, 806-809.

²¹OP, 52; Z Vlii, 809-810.

²²OP, 53-56; Z Vlii, 810-812.

of the Christ in the Supper; meaning, not that sacramental eating could cleanse the soul but faith in God through Jesus Christ, which is spiritual eating, whereof this external eating is but symbol and shadow.²³

Article nine is a brief consideration of ceremonies. Zwingli is willing to be tolerant of them if they are not contrary to faith or God's word. It is in their distracting the focus of worship from faith in God to themselves that they draw his condemnation. If they do not attract our worship they can not only be tolerated, but Zwingli will even acknowledge paintings and statuary as gifts of God.²⁴

The tenth article considers prophesying, or preaching, which Zwingli considers "most sacred, so that it is a work most necessary, above all others."²⁵ Consonant with his notes on the Marburg article on preaching and faith Zwingli grants that "among all nations the outward preaching...preceded faith." However, he immediately adds "which (meaning faith) we attribute to the Spirit alone."²⁶ The usual pattern is preaching which results in faith. This is, however, not because of the inherent power of preaching but because of the free activity of the Holy Spirit in

²³OP, 55. "ex his enim fit manifestissimum, quod veteres semper sunt symbolice locuti, cum corporis Christi in coena esui tantum tribuerunt. Puta, non quod sacramentalis manducation mundare animum posset, sed fides in deum per Jesum Christum, quae spiritualis est manducatio, alius externa ista symbolum est et adumbratio. Z Vlii, 812.

²⁴OP, 56; Z Vlii, 812-813.

²⁵OP, 56; Z Vlii, 813.

²⁶OP, 56. "Canonice enim sive regulariter loquendo videmus apud amnes populos externam praedicationem apostularum et euangelistarum sive episcoporum praecessisse fidem, quam tamen soli spiritui ferimus acceptam." Z Vlii, 813.

conjunction with it. "We see very many who hear indeed the outward preaching of the Gospel, but believe not, because there is a lack of the Spirit."²⁷

Zwingli affirms the role of the magistracy in the eleventh article.²⁸ The final article is a rejection of purgatory as "an affront to the redemption of Christ freely granted to us."²⁹ These twelve articles, the heart of which reflect the arguments of *On Providence* and concern the understanding of faith and sacraments, Zwingli declares that "I firmly believe, teach and maintain."³⁰ He concludes with a lengthy appeal to Emperor Charles.³¹

It is doubtful that Charles ever read it.³² It evoked no response from him and little response from anyone else, with the exception of John Eck. Eck was provoked to a sharp reply, methodically disputing every point asserted by Zwingli. Zwingli replied, in turn, in his *Letter to the Princes of Germany* in August 1530.³³ Significantly, he replied directly to only two of Eck's arguments - that the sacraments necessarily convey grace and that the body of Christ is present in the elements. Zwingli distinguishes the sign and the thing signified in the sacrament. As we would expect he denies the tie between the two in the celebration of the

²⁷OP, 56; Z Vlii, 813.

²⁸OP, 57; Z Vlii, 814.

²⁹OP, 58; Z Vlii, 814-815.

³⁰OP, 58; Z Vlii, 815.

³¹OP, 58-61; Z Vlii, 815.

³²OP, 34.

³³OP, 105-127. *De convitiis Eckii*, Z Vliii, 231-291.

sacrament. Signs are meaningful by analogy, or as a testament, bearing witness to a greater reality which is, however, not bound to the signs.³⁴ Even so, with regard to Christ's presence, Zwingli asserts "I have never denied that Christ's body is present in the Supper sacramentally and mysteriously."³⁵ What he *has* denied is the binding of Christ's body to the sacrament, because that would restrict and order the activity of God.

It follows also that grace is not bound up with the sacraments... For if it were bound up with the sacraments, they would profit and renew wherever they were celebrated.³⁶

Zwingli responds to Eck's treatment of Christ's sacramental presence and maintains that they do not reflect significant difference in their understanding of the nature of Christ's presence. But he concludes that this (apparent agreement) cannot resolve their differences because

...the bulk of the controversy remains. For they (the papists) attribute to the sacraments the power of working wherever they are administered, as if divine efficacy were bound up with them.³⁷

It is significant that Zwingli offers this response in his discussion of the nature of Christ's presence. His refutation regarding the nature of Christ's presence

³⁴OP, 107-108; Z VlIii, 253-256.

³⁵OP, 112. "Et nos nu quam negavimus corpus Christi sacramentaliter ac in mysterio esse in coena." Z VlIii, 264-265. Bosshard asserts that although Zwingli affirms Christ's presence he does not really mean it. Bosshard, *Zwingli*, 85.

³⁶OP, 113. "Quibus constat sacramenta non iustificare aut gratiam facere posse...nam si esset sacramentis alligata, iam, quoquaque admoveruntur, prodessent et repararent." Z VlIii, 265.

³⁷OP, 118. "...plurimum dissidii superesse. Ille enim tribuunt sacramentis, quasi alligata sit eis divina virtus, ut, ubicunque adhibeantur, operantur." Z VlIii, 272.

is based on the issue of the necessity, or binding, of Christ's presence. He conveys the impression that he equates the issues. His denial of the bodily presence is a denial "that the words are able to effect the thing they say."³⁸

In July 1531, three months before his death at Kappel Zwingli wrote *Exposition of the Christian Faith*. It was written to King Francis I of France in the hope of encouraging an alliance to protect and further the Reformation. He addresses the faith in eleven chapters and an appendix on the Eucharist. It was not actually published until 1536 by Bullinger. Offered as a response to "empty and lying insinuations of certain faithless persons," we may regard it as a final statement of Zwingli's views over against those of his opponents.³⁹ The arguments of his opponents that most concern him and the issues that prompt his attention offer a revealing picture of Zwingli's concerns at the end of his life.

Zwingli begins the treatise by considering "God and His worship." He offers a serene confidence in God, writing "we confess and declare that we have an infallible faith, since it is one resting securely upon one only creator."⁴⁰ That Zwingli understands this affirmation as intimately tied to the issues of the sacraments is demonstrated in the immediate movement to the consideration of the sacraments. What is at stake is God's role and our confidence. "Heathen" and "unbelievers" place their trust in created things that may deceive. Those that trust in God cannot

³⁸OP, 118-119; Z Vliii, 273-275..

³⁹OP, 237; Z Vlv, 52.

⁴⁰OP, 238. "...fatemur et adseveramus nos infallibilem habere fidem, ut que in uno ac solo creatore firma consistat." Z Vli, 54-55.

be misled.⁴¹ That certainty is compromised when trust is placed in anything other than God, himself.

Hence, all that confidence falls to the ground by certain people who lean thoughtlessly upon even the most sacred of created things or the most holy of sacraments. For that in which one should trust with absolute assurance must be God.⁴²

To trust in created things, including sacraments, is to put them into God's place.

That is not to say that the sacraments are not important, but to put them in their proper place. Zwingli declares that "we venerate and cherish the sacraments as signs and symbols of sacred things, not as if they were themselves the things of which they are signs."⁴³ Zwingli attempts to articulate a positive statement of the function of the sacraments. The grace and redemption proclaimed in the sacraments are real. But they are not temporally and materially conjoined to the celebration of the sacraments. Rather, the sacraments point - as signs - beyond themselves to timeless redemption in Christ.

...the signs signify real things, which really and naturally happened at one time...call them to mind and...set them before our eyes...By this commemoration all the benefits are present which God has vouchsafed unto us through His Son. Furthermore, by the symbols themselves...Christ himself is, as it were, presented to our eyes, so that

⁴¹OP, 238. "Qui autem creatore ac rerum omnium principio, quod nunquam coepit, sed alia produxit, fidunt, hi convinci erroris nequerunt." Z VIv, 55.

⁴²OP, 238-239. "Concidit hic omnis fiducia, qua vel creaturis sanctissimis vel sacramentis religiosissimus imprudenter nituntur quidam. Deum enim esse oportet, quo infallibiliter fidendum est." Z VIv, 55-56.

⁴³OP, 240. "Sacramenta vero sic veneramur et colimus ut signa et symbola rerum sacrarum, non quasi res ipse sunt, quarum signa sunt." Z VIv, 58.

not only the ears but the eyes and the mouth see and perceive the Christ whom the soul has present within and rejoices in.⁴⁴

To localize or to bind God to the sacraments is to reduce their meaning for Zwingli and to compromise the assurance of the promise that they proclaim (but do not convey). To do so is also to take for ourselves what belongs exclusively to God.⁴⁵ The Supper should be a human expression of thanksgiving for what God has done through Christ, not an attempt to control it.

It is in the context of this discussion of God's character and the understanding of the sacraments that Zwingli gives a summary statement that ties both issues together clearly at the heart of his theology.

This is the fountainhead of my religion, to recognize God as the uncreated Creator of all things, who solely and alone has all things in His power and freely giveth us all things. They, therefore, overthrow the first foundation of faith, who attribute to the creature what is the Creator's alone...It cannot, therefore, be the creature in whom we should put our trust."⁴⁶

⁴⁴OP, 240. "Sed quod sacramenta sit rerum verarum significationis, que res vere per essentiam et naturaliter aliquando geste sunt? Eas, inquam, res referunt, commemorant ac velut ante oculos ponunt...Qua commemoratione universa commemorantur dei beneficia, qua nobis per filium suum prestitit. Deinde symbolis ipsis...Christo ipse velut oculis presentatur, ut sic non iam auditus tantum, sed et visus et gustus Christum videant ac sentiant, quem animus in sinus presentem habet illoque gaudet." Z VIv, 58.

⁴⁵OP, 241. "Cum ergo numen ipsum hanc potestam creaturis nunquam tribuerit, quam nos eis tribuimus, iam constat frivolum esse, quod vel divos vel sacramenta docemus peccata dimittere bonaque largiri." Z VIv, 59.

⁴⁶OP, 241. "Summa: Hic est religionis nostre fons, ut deum agnoscamus esse, qui increatus creator rerum omnium est, quod ille unus ac solus omnia habet, gratis donat, quodque primum hoc fidei fundamentum evertunt, quicumque creature tribuunt, quod solius creatoris est...non ergo creatura esse potest, quo fidendum est." Z VIv, 61.

This emphatic and unqualified trust in God's absolute providence is a source of assurance because of Zwingli's understanding of God's goodness. God is by nature good and gracious - anxious to give good gifts. "Who could worthily extol the greatness of this divine goodness and generosity?"⁴⁷ For Zwingli, contemplation of God's unbounded and unconditioned freedom produces assurance, hope and an almost euphoric confidence.⁴⁸

It is worth noting that this entire discussion takes place in Zwingli's first chapter considering God and his worship. He makes explicitly clear that these issues - God's goodness, freedom, character and power - are central to his understanding of the sacraments. The argument of *On Providence* is reaffirmed by defining the heart of Zwingli's understanding of God to be at stake in this issue.

Zwingli's second chapter is a discussion and affirmation of the statements concerning Christ in the Apostles' Creed.⁴⁹ Purgatory is considered in chapter three as a compromise of Christ's sacrifice and justification.⁵⁰

The fourth chapter and the attached appendix treat the issue of the presence of Christ's body in the Supper. Zwingli's view is restated, "that the natural, material body of Christ...is not eaten literally and in its essence, but only spiritually, in the

⁴⁷OP, 243; Z VIv, 66.

⁴⁸OP, 241-243; Z VIv, 61-66.

⁴⁹OP, 243-246; Z VIv, 66-72.

⁵⁰OP, 247; Z VIv, 73-74.

Lord's Supper."⁵¹ He repeats his argument against a universal presence of Christ's humanity and for a localized presence of that humanity at the right hand of the Father.⁵² In contrast to a physical eating that is without benefit, Zwingli defines spiritual eating.

To eat the body of Christ spiritually is nothing else than to trust in spirit and heart upon the mercy and goodness of God through Christ, that is, to be sure with unshaken faith that God is going to give us pardon for our sins and the joy of everlasting blessedness on account of his Son.⁵³

This spiritual eating is not necessarily conjoined to the sacrament. When you comfort your heart, in the face of doubt or trial, with the assurance and confidence of God's provision and care for you through Christ, "you eat his body spiritually, that is, you stand unterrified in God against all the attacks of despair."⁵⁴

Sacramental eating "is to eat the body of Christ in heart and spirit with the accompaniment of the sacrament."⁵⁵ The true eating of the sacrament is internal,

⁵¹OP, 248. "...quod in coena domini naturale ac substantiale istud corpus Christi...non naturaliter atque per essentiam editur, sed spiritualiter tantum." Z VIv, 140.

⁵²OP, 249-250; Z VIv, 142-143.

⁵³OP, 252. "Spiritualiter edere corpus Christi nihil est quam spiritu ac mente nisi misericordia et bonitate dei per Christum, hoc est inconcussa fide certum esse, quod deus nobis peccatorum veniam et eterne beatudinis gaudium donaturus sit propter filium suum." Z VIv, 147.

⁵⁴OP, 253. "...iam spiritualiter corpus eius edio...imperterritus in deo sta contra omnia desperationis tela." Z VIv, 149.

⁵⁵OP, 252. "...est adiuncto sacramento mente ac spiritu corpus Christi edere." Z VIv, 147.

accompanied by the external, symbolic, representation of that internal reality.⁵⁶
Improper eating of the sacrament is external without internal eating (i.e. faith).⁵⁷

In this chapter Zwingli addresses the sacramental controversy explicitly, offering a characterization of the issues debated.

...there has been for some time a sharp controversy among us as to what the sacraments or symbols do or can do in the Supper; our opponents contending that the sacraments give faith, and bring to us the natural body of Christ, causing it to be eaten in real presence.⁵⁸

At issue is the question of the ability of the sacraments to effect or communicate faith. To which Zwingli's response is emphatic. The sacrament cannot give faith, because "none but the Holy Spirit giveth faith, which is confidence in God, and no external thing giveth it."⁵⁹ Rather, the sacraments - correctly understood - point to the historic basis of faith. "In this way, then, the Lord's Supper worketh faith, that is, signifies as certain that Christ was born and suffered."⁶⁰ Zwingli rejects any bodily presence as absurd and impious. Spiritual participation is the desire of true faith.⁶¹

⁵⁶OP, 253-254; Z VIv, 149-150.

⁵⁷OP, 254; Z VIv, 150-151.

⁵⁸OP, 254. "Porro quid sacramenta sive symbola in coena faciant aut possint, acriter certatum est aliquandiu inter nos, istis contententibus, quod sacramenta fidem dare, corpus Christi naturale adferre et, ut presens edatur, efficere soleant." Z VIv, 151.

⁵⁹OP, 254. "...fidem, que in deum fiducia est, nemo nisi spiritus sanctus dat, nulla res externa." Z VIv, 151.

⁶⁰OP, 254-255; Z VIv, 152.

⁶¹OP, 255-256; Z VIv, 153-155.

To the text of his *Exposition* Zwingli appends a "fuller exposition" of the Eucharist and Mass.⁶² In it he returns to his earlier arguments against the Mass as sacrifice. Most of the appendix is a repetition or expansion of those arguments against the Catholic teaching of sacrifice. However, in the appendix he offers a statement of his opinion regarding how the body of Christ is in the Supper. In it he affirms the presence of Christ in the Supper. "I believe that Christ is truly in the Supper, nay, I do not believe it is the Lord's Supper unless Christ is there."⁶³ His citation of scriptural proof is not a sacramental promise drawn from the institution of the Supper, but Matthew 18:20. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there will I be in the midst of them."⁶⁴ The assurance of the presence comes, then, from Christ's promise, in general, to be with his disciples when they are together. This promise suffices, however, for Zwingli to affirm the expectation of Christ's presence.

I maintain, therefore, that the body of Christ is not eaten in the Supper in the carnal and crude fashion they say, but I believe that the real body of Christ is eaten in the Supper sacramentally and spiritually by the religious, faithful and pure mind.⁶⁵

Chapter five considers the virtue of the sacraments. Zwingli cautions that "we ought not, under the guise of piety, to assign to the Eucharist or to Baptism

⁶²OP, 276-293; Z VIv, 75-108.

⁶³OP, 285. "Christum credimus vere esse in coena; immo credimus esse domini coenam, nisi Christi adsit." Z VIv, 90.

⁶⁴OP, 285; Z VIv, 90.

⁶⁵OP, 286. "Adserimus igitur non sic carnaliter et crasse manducari corpus Christi in coena, ut isti perhibent, sed verum Christi corpus credimus in coena sacramentaliter et spiritualiter edi a religiosa, fideli et sancta mente." Z VIv, 92-93.

qualities that bring faith and truth into danger."⁶⁶ The appropriate virtues of the sacraments are as sacred rites that bear witness to an accomplished fact (of God's action) in which the elements take the place of the things they signify.⁶⁷ Their character as signs does not imply unimportance. The value of a sign is tied to the value of the thing signified. Thus, the bread becomes sacred and, by signification, the sacramental body of Christ.⁶⁸ They also signify the body of Christ in the body of the Church. The grain and grapes blended into one bread and one cup present an analogy of the Church.⁶⁹

Zwingli also allows that "the sacraments bring increase and support to faith, and this the Eucharist does above all others."⁷⁰ It accomplishes this by drawing the attention of the sense away from the distractions of the world to focus on the grace of God. "In the Eucharist the four most powerful senses, nay, all the senses, are as it were, reclaimed and redeemed from fleshly desires, and drawn into obedience to

⁶⁶OP, 256. "...plane docent neque eucharistie neque baptismo specie pietatis attribui debere, quibus religio et veritas periclitantur." Z IV, 155.

⁶⁷OP, 256-260; Z IV, p156.

⁶⁸OP, 257; Z IV, 156-157. "Que non estimamus pro materie precio, sed iusta significate rei magnitudinem, ut iam non sit vulgaris panis, sed sacer, non panis tantum nomen habeat, sed corporis Christi quoque, immo sit corpus Christi, sed adpellatione et significatione, quod recentiores vocant 'sacramentaliter'." 157.

⁶⁹OP, 257-258; Z IV, 157-158.

⁷⁰OP, 258. "Auxilium opemque adferunt fidei. Et hoc pre omnibus facit eucharistia." Z IV, 158.

faith."⁷¹ Their attention focused, the senses receive the proclamation of God's love and sensibly respond, acting out the response of faith.

The sacraments, then, aid the contemplation of faith, and harmonize it with the longings of the heart, as without the use of the sacraments could not be done at all so completely.⁷²

The sacrament does not produce faith, but serves as an instrumental aid to it.⁷³

Finally, sacraments serve as an oath of allegiance, by which the individual identifies with Christ and his people.

These positive characterizations of the virtues of the sacraments should not be understood as a change in Zwingli's understanding of the Supper. All of these virtues are understood to be elements of a symbolic understanding of the Sacrament. He concludes with an explicit denial that Christ's body is literally present in the Supper, "But symbolically, sacramentally, metaphorically, or, as a metonymy."⁷⁴

The remainder of the work briefly treats the Church, magistracy, remission of sins, faith and works, eternal life and the Anabaptists. He reaffirms that faith conveys a certainty of forgiveness.⁷⁵ That certainty prompts him an affirmation of

⁷¹OP, 258. "In eucharistia quatator potentissimi, immo universi sensus a carnis cupiditibus velut vindicantur ac redimuntur et in obsequium fidei trahuntur." Z Vlv, 159.

⁷²OP, 258-259. "Aduvant ergo fidei contemplationem sacramenta, concordant cum mentis studiis, quod alias citra sacramentorum usum non tantopere tantoque fit consensu." Z Vlv, 159-160.

⁷³OP, 259; Z Vlv, 160. "Sunt ergo sacramenta velut frena, quibus sensus ad cupita sua excursuri revocantur ac retrahuntur, ut menti fideique obsecudent."

⁷⁴OP, 260. "...sed symbolice, sacramentaliter, denominative aut 'metonumikos'." Z Vlv, 161.

⁷⁵OP, 263-264; Z Vlv, 116-118.

everlasting life that is a new addition, especially appropriate considering the short time remaining to Zwingli.

Finally I believe that after this life, which is rather captivity and death than life, a glad and happy life will come to the saints or believers and that both will be unending.⁷⁶

As we review these late documents we find a combination of consistency and change in Zwingli's discussion. It is this period which is sometimes identified as marking a significant shift in Zwingli's thought regarding the Supper. As we consider our three specific areas of concern we may more clearly discern the character of the changes - as well as consistent themes - in Zwingli's view.

In the first area of inquiry - the relation of human action to divine action - the answer is a clear continuity with what Zwingli has held throughout his writings on the sacraments. God cannot be bound to any human activity, including the celebration of the sacraments. Echoing the arguments of *On Providence*, Zwingli makes the affirmation of God an affirmation of absolute providence. This affirmation is identified as the heart of his faith. To compromise this absolute ordering of creation by presuming to order it ourselves is to assume divine prerogatives and to undermine our confidence. The controversy over the Supper is specifically identified with this issue and is, in fact, the central issue debated in conjunction with it. The implications of the sacramental debate are far-reaching and fundamental as far as Zwingli is concerned. Any allowance of effective causality in the human exercise of the sacraments undermines his entire theological system.

It is this issue that prompts his selective reply to Eck. The Catholic view proposes the same error as the Lutheran - the binding of God to the exercise of the

⁷⁶OP, 269; Z VIV, 126.

sacraments. Significantly, Zwingli debates the nature of Christ's presence on the basis of God's binding expressed in it. This equation of bodily presence with the binding of God has been implicit in Zwingli's earlier discussion and is clearly highlighted here.

The *Exposition* reflects these positions. The more positive development of the role and character of the sacraments reflected in it should not cause us to overlook this clear continuity. Faith rests in a sure creator, one who certainly orders all things. Any challenge to that basis of faith (identified as the fountainhead of Zwingli's theology) is a challenge to the foundation of our confidence and God's character. The challenge that Zwingli is concerned about is the controversy over the nature of the sacraments. The attribution of effective causality to the sacraments is explicitly identified with this issue. Sacraments cannot effectively convey grace apart from the free activity of God. The debate is not about the materiality of the sacraments but the fact that they must not presume upon the initiative or freedom of God by binding Him in any way.

Zwingli offers some significant discussion of the issue of Christ's presence in relation to the elements or sacrament. There are several positive affirmations of Christ's presence in the Supper. Indeed, Zwingli says, he does not consider it to truly be a celebration of the Supper if Christ is not present. He will even affirm the presence of the true body of Christ in the Supper. It would be easy to have the impression that Zwingli has acceded to a doctrine of real presence, as Luther sought at Marburg. However, close examination reveals an effort by Zwingli to offer a more positively restated, but unchanged view.

The sacrament offers signs that point beyond themselves to a real and greater reality. They are not empty because they truly signify a real thing. However the real

thing is the accomplished fact of our redemption in Christ, not something immediately present. The presence of that reality is through symbols which accomplish a sacramental and mysterious presence. It is in this way that Christ may be said to be present. The true body is present to the contemplation of faith. Spiritual eating is trusting in the gracious provision of God through Christ for us. That eating nourishes and encourages us, giving us hope. Spiritual eating, however, is not necessarily conjoined with the sacrament. Zwingli defines sacramental eating as a particular instance of spiritual eating - that is, when spiritual eating occurs contemporaneously with the sacrament.⁷⁷

It is important to remember that for Zwingli this rather tenuous link is not a source of uncertainty. His powerfully positive understanding of God underlies his understanding of the sacrament. Zwingli fully expects that God will freely act for our benefit. God's character of benevolent goodness, expressed in redemption through Christ, is the only guarantee that Zwingli requires. In fact, it is the only guarantee that he allows.

It is in the third area of interest - the role and character of the sacrament - that Zwingli's thought seems to reflect real development. Particularly in his *Exposition* Zwingli seems to go to some effort to offer a more positive characterization of the function of the sacraments. They are sacred rites which we venerate and cherish, because they are signs and symbols of sacred things. It is the value of the things which they signify which lends them their importance.

⁷⁷"Zwingli spricht ja in seinen Spätschriften wieder von einer realen Gegenwart Christi und von einer Mitwirkung der Sinne bei deren Erfahrung. Aber weiter kann er nicht gehen, weil sein Glaubensbegriff insbesondere durch ein dualistisches Apriori überschattet ist." Bosshard, Zwingli, 96.

More substantially, Zwingli offers an attempt to characterize the positive contribution of the sacraments as an aid to faith. They increase and support the work of faith. In them the senses are harnessed and directed to the appropriate contemplation of faith. The direction of the senses serves to facilitate an appropriate environment for faith. The sacraments serve, however, as an instrumental aid to faith and not as a means to produce faith. In much the same way as the practice of Prophezei, the human activity is directed toward producing a conducive environment for the work of the Spirit. The human activity, itself, is not productive. It can however provide an appropriate context for the Spirit to do its work.

The continuity with earlier writings should be clear. The changes reflect Zwingli's effort to articulate more positive, constructive positions on the sacraments. Those positive changes, however, are worked out within the parameters and presuppositions of the points of continuity. The fundamental outline of Zwingli's thought has not changed. But within that fundamental outline he is working to understand and present his sacramental views as positively as possible.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

Zwingli's understanding of absolute divine providence is an ordering principle that is consistently determinative in his sacramental thought. He repeatedly identifies it as the chief point of religion. It is a non-negotiable tenet of his faith which he specifically identifies with the character and nature of divinity itself. If God is not absolutely provident he cannot be God. Whether or not we find the logic of his argument persuasive for us, it certainly was for him. To compromise the absolute character of God's providence constituted the denial of the heart and foundation of Zwingli's faith.

Consideration of Zwingli within his personal, historical context illuminates the emergence of his radical adherence to absolute providence. It makes understandable the personal dimension of the importance of this theological affirmation for Zwingli. His repeated allusions throughout his life to the ultimately comforting character of this doctrine underscores its personal significance for him. It helps to explain why this affirmation was so important to Zwingli that he was willing to pay any price - including the division of the Reformation - rather than compromise or surrender it. It also helps to explain how Zwingli could be so comforted and assured by such an absolute view of providence. Zwingli understood God as simple in nature and, by nature, good, kind and generous. There was nothing to fear from this God. He is more anxious to give blessings than we are to

receive them. There is no hiddenness or uncertainty in his character or intention toward us. The only uncertainty is that which humanity introduces. Zwingli is comforted by the assurance that absolute providence precludes the uncertain human element from making God's benevolence uncertain.

By considering Zwingli's broader sacramental writings, including his understanding of preaching and the Word, we discover that the same parameters - determined by the affirmation of absolute providence - are evident. Although the elements and issues vary with the sacrament considered or the opponent being debated, the heart of the matter remains the same. No sacramental understanding may be allowed which, in any way, undermines or compromises the initiative and ordering of divine providence. We may order our use and celebration of the sacraments in such a way that they are more appropriate instruments for the work of the Spirit. We may, and should, exert ourselves to provide a conducive context for that work. We should design and use the sacraments for the most positive benefit in the life of the community. But nothing we do can produce or convey God's certain presence or grace. That benefit occurs at the initiative of God alone.¹

Considering Zwingli's sacramental views in the context of their historical development we have focused on three aspects of the understanding of the sacrament. The first concerns the question of the relationship of human activity to divine activity. In what sense, or under what circumstances, may we say that God is bound to act or that spiritual benefit is inherent in the sacrament? The answer to this question is consistent and emphatic. There is no sense, and there are no

¹"Für Zwingli ist alles kirchliche Handeln eine einzige Epiklese, die Herabrufung des Heiligen Geistes." Schmidt-Clausing, *Zwingli*, 105-106.

circumstances, in which God is bound to act or spiritual benefit can be understood to be inherent in the sacrament. This response is clear in Zwingli's earliest writings. The teaching of sacrifice is a presumption upon God's initiative. To ascribe inherent power or effect to the celebration of the Supper is assume to ourselves what belongs to God.

This position is not only consistent in the broader sacramental writings but throughout Zwingli's career. It does not vary and is never debatable. Even his most positive discussions of the sacraments late in his career are explicitly conditioned by this presupposition. It is a non-negotiable doctrinal affirmation. The fact that this position does not change when the debate concerns the proclaimed Word or a spiritual presence underscores the fact that the denial of inherent efficacy in the sacrament is not based on the issue of materiality (arising from a stark dualism) but on the issue of providence (the assertion and protection of God's unconditioned initiative). A spirit/ matter dualism does not necessarily preclude any and all forms of sacramental causality. A Zwinglian sacramental theology is not the inevitable and necessary consequence of a humanist world view applied to sacramental understanding. What makes Zwingli's sacramental thought distinctive is the determinative presupposition of absolute divine providence. That distinctive is clearly present throughout Zwingli's sacramental writings.

The second area concerned the relationship of Christ's presence to the sacrament to the sacrament and the elements. Is Christ present? How do we understand him to be present? The answer to this question is less clear. It is here that Zwingli's dualism and Christology are most clearly evident. Certainly, Zwingli is anxious to avoid diminishing the spiritual emphasis of the sacrament by any crass materialism. His Christology poses some interesting questions. Both issues merit

further study. But the implications of both of these aspects of his thought are worked out within the parameters already set by Zwingli's understanding of providence and his protection of God's initiative. Because of this, Zwingli's position and emphasis can, and does, shift with regard to these two issues. This study does not mean to suggest that these two aspects of Zwingli's thought are not important and influential in his formulation of sacramental theology. It does, however, argue that they are not ultimately determinative, but work out their influence within the theological order established by Zwingli's commitment to an affirmation of absolute providence.

The question of Zwingli's understanding of the reality and certainty of Christ's presence is made more difficult by his own ambiguity. The variety of scholarly opinion is made understandable as we see that within the same document Zwingli can make statements that seem to both affirm and deny Christ's presence. Considering Zwingli within the context of his own presuppositions can help to unravel this puzzle. Because of his affirmation of absolute providence and unconditioned divine initiative Zwingli will deny any claim of necessary presence in the sacrament. However, at the same time, because of his understanding of God's overwhelming benevolence and grace he can affirm that Christ is surely present among his people when the sacraments are celebrated. We cannot declare that Christ is necessarily present, but we can affirm that, normally speaking, we can expect him to be present as a consequence of his free choice. Zwingli's conditioning of Christ's presence by the presence of faith in the celebrant is another protection of God's initiative. For Zwingli, coming to the sacrament in faith is not an action. Having faith is not something we do. It reflects no willful choice to trust God despite what we see and feel. Coming to the sacrament in faith is a description of the state of

God's activity in us. Faith is an attitude of subjective trust produced in us by the Spirit, whose initiative is unconditioned by our attitude or action.

When we consider Zwingli's statements in this context they become consistent and predictable. There is no period in Zwingli's career - early or late - when he will affirm a necessary presence in the sacrament, spiritual or otherwise. He will, however, throughout his writings (though with decreased emphasis in the period of controversy with Luther) affirm that he expects Christ to be present in the sacrament. To the question "is Christ present in the sacrament?" Zwingli gives a resounding "yes, and no." Presence is not inherent in the sacrament, but may be assumed.

Assuming, then, that Christ is present (not necessarily but by his unconditioned initiative), how do we understand him to be present? Clearly he is not present in any crass material sense. He is present "sacramentally" which is, for Zwingli, "anamnetic" presence. Christ is present by remembrance. This sacramental remembrance is more than mere recollection but it is less than a contemporary objective reality within the celebration of the sacrament itself.² Zwingli wants the focus of the sacramental celebration to be on what God has done and will do. The attempt to produce something in the sacrament or contemporaneous with it is misguided. Zwingli is less concerned to bring God "down" into the sacrament than he is to lift us "up" to remembrance and recognition of what God is doing. The sacrament serves to point beyond itself to the greater reality of God's redemptive

²"Die Aspekt des Erinnerns ist mehr als ein bloßes Zurückschauen, da in Zwinglis Verständnis von memoria der platonisch gefaßte enge Zusammenhang von erinnerndem Subjekt und erinnertem Gegenstand mitschwingt. Hierdurch wird eine Präsenz eigener Art bewirkt." Gäbler, "Einführung," 120.

covenant in Christ. For this reason the question whether Zwingli understands the elements as "mere" symbols or whether they are truly connected to reality allows two conclusions, both of which are correct, depending upon the point of reference. If the question refers to a tie to reality within, or concurrent with, the sacramental celebration, then the answer is that they are "mere" symbols. Nothing "happens" in the sacrament itself. If, however, the connection to reality is allowed to be beyond the temporal, local sacramental celebration, then the answer may be given in the affirmative. The heightened value of the symbols of the sacrament is the result of the ultimate importance of the reality which they signify. For Zwingli, to tie the meaning of the elements to a reality within the sacramental celebration would be a diminishing of their meaning not an enhancement. Transsignification is a helpful characterization of the essential objective transformation in the Supper. By virtue of signification Christ and his sacrifice become present in the Supper conveying the benefit that comes from contemplation of God's redemptive covenant. In this way the Supper becomes a celebration of providence and God's certain work of salvation. Zwingli also understood Christ to be spiritually present in the sense that he is present among his people. The gathering of "two or three" draws Christ's presence in this sense as surely as a sacramental celebration. Zwingli understood this to constitute the real presence of Christ in the Supper.

The third area of interest concerned the role and character of the sacrament. What is its function benefit or purpose for the Christian and the Church? It is in this area that Zwingli shows the greatest change and most creative development. Given his theological presuppositions he has the challenge of developing a positive and meaningful understanding of sacraments that are sacred but not inherently effective. In his early writings he ascribed positive benefit (the encouragement of weak faith)

that implied more than his theological position could justify. When pressed to the logical extension of his position - as he was by Luther - he was forced to accommodate his pastoral affirmations. In this sense Luther exposed the weakness of Zwingli's view. Zwingli, however, worked to develop a more positive statement of the role and character of the sacrament. It is here that Zwingli develops the application of the sacrament to the community. The sacraments become instruments of instruction and proclamation. The senses are directed by material elements and the visible sacramental ceremonies toward the contemplation of the covenant of redemption. Through them our vision of the world, our lives and the Church is changed. Our vision is lifted to the comforting and encouraging affirmation of God's certain work of redemption. We recognize ourselves as part of God's covenant people, among whom and through whom God is at work. We do not effect the reformation of ourselves and our community through the sacraments, but we celebrate the reality of that reformation. Schweizer's analysis would seem to be correct that the Supper proclaims the transformation of the people into the Body of Christ. But the Supper only celebrates that transformation; it does not effect it. The sacraments and the proclamation of the Word are not about "us," or what is happening within or concurrent with them. They are about understanding ourselves within the covenantal work of redemption which God is accomplishing through Christ and whose success is assured by the absolute character of divine providence. To this end Zwingli develops an increasingly positive characterization of the role and function of the sacraments. Recent scholarship has reconsidered the positive attributes of Zwingli's characterization of the sacraments, particularly the Supper. Further work is merited, but is beyond the scope of this study. However, it is important to note that no matter how positive Zwingli's characterization of the

sacraments becomes it is never allowed to compromise or contradict his fundamental affirmation of absolute providence and defense of unconditioned divine initiative.

Zwingli's understanding of providence plays a determinative role in the development his sacramental theology. In particular, his emphatic affirmation of the absolute character of divine providence distinctively shapes the outlines of that theology. There are other important influences and theological issues at work in his sacramental understanding, but his affirmation of providence establishes the non-negotiable theological foundation from which he works. Considering Zwingli within the context of this theological system makes understandable much that may have been regarded as enigmatic in his sacramental thought. It remains for others to judge the adequacy or relevance of Zwingli's sacramental theology. Considered on his own terms, Zwingli's sacramental theology reflects an internal coherence and consistency that may have been overlooked and which may help us to more clearly understand this important reformer.

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