

The Sacraments in the Confessions of 1536, 1549, and 1566 – Bullinger’s Understanding in the Light of Zwingli’s

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The names of Zwingli and Bullinger are joined in such a way that it is natural to think of Bullinger not only as the successor of Zwingli but also as a continuation of Zwingli. There is indeed continuity in their ministry and their theology, but Bullinger is also distinctive both as a reformer and as a theologian. This is true for his view of the sacraments. As we look at Bullinger’s understanding of the sacraments in the confessions of 1536, 1549, and 1566, it is instructive to see similarities and differences between him and Zwingli, as well as the developments in his thought.

1 Zwingli’s Understanding of the Sacraments

The writings of Zwingli¹ most obviously comparable with these confessions are the Sixty-Seven Articles (1523) and the Marburg Articles (1529).² However, these do not reflect Zwingli’s theology in his final years and it is this to which Bullinger naturally refers. Three of his works from 1530–31, to which Bullinger does refer, are: *Account of the Faith* presented to the Emperor at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, *Letter to the Princes of Germany* again for the Diet in August 1530, in reply to Eck’s attack on *Account of the*

¹ Most of Zwingli’s works are published in Emil Egli et al. (eds.), *Huldreich Zwinglis Sämtliche Werke* (Berlin, Leipzig, Zurich, 1905–). Some which are not yet published in this modern critical edition are available in M. Schuler and J. Schultbess (eds.), *Huldreich Zwingli’s Werke* (Zurich, 1824–42). These editions are abbreviated as Z and S. The most substantial study of Zwingli’s sacramental theology and its relation to other views remains Walther Köbler, *Zwingli und Luther. Ihr Streit über das Abendmahl nach seinen politischen und religiösen Beziehungen*, vol. 1 Leipzig 1924, vol. 2 Gütersloh 1953.

² The eighteenth article in 1523 affirms «that the mass is not a sacrifice, but a memorial of the sacrifice and a seal of the redemption which Christ has shown to us». (Z I 460.8–10) The Marburg articles on baptism and the eucharist are capable of a Zwinglian as well as a Lutheran interpretation. The ninth article on baptism speaks of it as being not an empty sign, but «a sign and work of God in which our faith is required, through which (faith) we are born again to life». The fifteenth on the eucharist has five points of agreement, including the statements that it is «a sacrament of the true body and blood of Jesus Christ», that «the spiritual eating of the same body and blood is above all necessary», and that the sacrament has been «given and ordained by almighty God so that weak consciences may be brought to faith through the Holy Spirit». The only point of disagreement is «whether the true body and blood of Christ are bodily in the bread and wine». (Z VI/II 522. 22–24, 523. 12–27)

Faith, and *Exposition of the Faith* for the King of France in 1531, published by Bullinger in 1536.

There were changes and developments as well as considerable continuity in Zwingli's understanding of the sacraments.³ From the beginning his theology was compatible with a symbolic interpretation of the sacraments, whether or not he had a symbolic view then or moved to that view from the end of 1524. The subjective emphasis, which is a continuing element in his theology, is also evident in his preference for memorial to testament. (However the stress on faith in all his works is not simply subjective, as faith is the work of the Spirit.) Moreover, the emphasis on the community rather than just the individual is present from an early stage, as is the conviction that the sacraments are a public witness to a person's membership of the church. At one point, he spoke of the sacraments as our pledge or covenant with others and with God, but later he spoke of God's pledge or covenant with us. Originally he had related sacrament (meaning an oath) to God's instituting something as surely as with an oath, but at the end of 1524 to our uniting with each other in one body as with an oath. (Z II 120.23–30, III 348.17–22) Although Zwingli challenged the radicals on the sacraments, especially baptism, it is primarily in controversy with Lutheran and Roman views that he developed his sacramental theology. That is also the context for understanding his final works.

These works offer in many ways the most positive presentation of Zwingli's view of the sacraments, but there is still a strong emphasis on what he does not hold. Thus the article on the sacraments in *Account of the Faith* begins, «I believe, indeed I know, that all the sacraments are so far from conferring grace that they do not even convey or dispense it.» (Z VI/II 803.5–6) The reasons he offers are that grace is given by the Spirit alone, that the Spirit does not need a channel or vehicle, and that scripture does not show that visible things carry with them the Spirit, rather the reverse. (803.7–15) Zwingli insists on the sovereignty of the Spirit, who blows where he wills. This means that he cannot be bound to the sacraments. Rather people need the Spirit in order to receive the sacrament. (803.22–804.16)

In several of his works Zwingli has to state what the sacraments are for, as he has rejected the view that they bestow grace. Here he offers a threefold definition of a sacrament as a sign of a sacred thing, a visible form of invisible grace, and a public testimony. (805.6–10)

³ I have discussed Zwingli's understanding of the sacraments in *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, Oxford 1986, 180–93. See also W. P. Stephens, *The Soteriological Motive in the Eucharistic Controversy*, in: Willem van't Spijker (ed.), *Calvin: Erbe und Auftrag*, Kampen 1991, 203–213. A notable change is that in his early works he held that the sacraments confirm faith, something which he later rejected.

There is first the traditional definition of a sacrament as a sign of a sacred thing, but Zwingli refers to grace which has been given and not to grace which is being given. Although the sacraments cannot bestow grace, they associate visibly with the church those who before have been received into it invisibly. Thus by baptism people testify that they belong to the church. (805.6–7, 14–22) Zwingli rejects as a return to Judaism the view that the outward use of the sacraments cleanses people inwardly, for according to Isaiah and Jeremiah «the promises and benefits of God are given by God’s free goodness and not because of merits or outward ceremonies». (805.23–29)

His discussion of the eucharist begins positively with the affirmation that the true body of Christ is present by the contemplation of faith. This, however, is interpreted in terms of Christ’s saving death for us. It means that «everything done by Christ becomes as it were present to them by the contemplation of faith». In an extended discussion Zwingli rejects both the bodily presence of Christ’s body and the bodily eating of his body. (806.6–17) (In his controversy with Luther Zwingli has contrasted two ways of salvation: faith in Christ or bodily eating.) He supports his position from the Bible and the fathers, arguing that «as the body cannot be fed by a spiritual substance, neither can the soul be fed by a bodily substance». (810.9) He holds with Augustine that Christ is present everywhere according to his divinity, but not according to his humanity. He insists in the light of the ascension that Christ’s body is in heaven, but by analogy with the sun his body can be in one place, while his power pervades all things. Then, in the light of John 6:63 («the flesh is of no avail»), he insists that bodily eating is of no avail, unlike spiritual eating, which gives life.⁴ For Zwingli this and similar texts show that «This is my body» is to be interpreted figuratively. Moreover, if bodily eating gave forgiveness of sins, then Christ would have died in vain. Faith in God through Jesus Christ or spiritual eating cleanses the soul, not the eating of the sacrament. (807.1–19, 809.12–16, 28–30, 810.13–15, 812.3–6)

Eck attacks Zwingli and his *Account of the Faith* in detail. Zwingli replies swiftly, but his letter is addressed to the princes of Germany and not to the emperor.⁵ It focuses on two key points and – with Bucer’s encouragement – does so positively.⁶ They are «that the sacraments do not confer

⁴ The first part of the text «It is the Spirit who gives life» seems to be less emphasized in the later Zwingli.

⁵ Blanke argues that Zwingli wrote to the princes because he feared the emperor’s military intervention (Z VI/III 245).

⁶ Bucer interpreted Zwingli’s understanding of the sacraments positively in 1536, when his views were regarded as essentially Lutheran. «Christ alone effects the whole of salvation in us, and he does it not by some other power, but by his Spirit alone. However, for this he uses with us the word, both the visible word in the sacraments and the audible word in the gospel. By them he brings and offers remission of sins Zwingli recognized that; hence, when he

or dispense grace» and «that in the holy supper of the Lord Christ's natural body is not eaten». (Z VI/III 252.16–253.1) Zwingli develops his position, while affirming what he has already said. He defines a sacrament in terms of the sign and the thing signified. In baptism what is signified is belonging to the Church, though Zwingli refers also to washing and regeneration, and in the eucharist to giving thanks for Christ and his death for us. (253.8–10, 254.4–8, 258.9–10)

Zwingli now makes use of the senses to present a more positive view of the sacraments.⁷ The sacraments do not confer grace. However, when we contemplate the things which they signify, the sacraments in a way present them to our eyes and senses and enable them to penetrate to the mind, for Zwingli says that the mind works most freely when not distracted by the senses. He adds emphatically, however, that it is the Spirit who leads the way. (260.7–261.3, 262.2–4) For Zwingli only the Spirit, not something outward such as a sacrament, can reach the mind or heart or soul.

Zwingli speaks positively of the sacraments in supporting and restoring our faith, as in them we have a living and speaking invitation to contemplate God, and then of the necessity to have the Holy Spirit beforehand. This leads him to ask whether the sacraments are in vain? He affirms: «For they [the sacraments] proclaim salvation given by God, turn the senses to it, and exercise faith which they promise also to the neighbour, and draw to brotherly love. And one and the same Spirit effects all these things, who draws sometimes without, sometimes with, the instrument...» (270.6–15, 271.7–12) He later refers to contemplation and participation by faith as the one thing which is necessary in the sacraments. In the eucharist «the body of Christ is the more present to the mind by the contemplation of faith the greater is the faith and the love of Christ». (281.16–20, 24–25)

The sacraments are related somewhat ambiguously both to faith and to the Holy Spirit. Zwingli does not state that what is signified is offered to us regardless of our faith nor that the Holy Spirit uses the sacraments and makes them effective for us.

In *Exposition of the Faith* Zwingli refers to the sacraments initially in the opening chapter on «God and His Worship», with its stress on putting our trust in the creator and not the creature. God has not given to created things power to forgive sins.⁸ He also stresses that sacraments signify things which

denied that the sacraments dispense grace, he meant that the sacraments, that is the outward action, are not of themselves effective, but that everything belonging to our salvation depends on the inward action of Christ, of whom the sacraments are, in their way, instruments.» (*In sacra quatuor evangelia, Enarrationes perpetuae*, [Basel, 1536] p. 485 B)

⁷ Zwingli had spoken of the sacraments and senses earlier, but not in this way. See Stephens, *Theology* 182–83.

⁸ This is an important emphasis in Zwingli from the beginning. (Z II 217.14)

have been done and which we ought to do. Thus baptism signified both that Christ has washed us by his blood and that we ought to put him on. (Z VI/V 59.15–19, 60.1–6) Zwingli insists on the presence of Christ in the supper, asserting that it is not the Lord’s Supper, if Christ is not present. This is confirmed by Christ’s word «Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them», to which Zwingli adds, «How much more is he present where the whole church is gathered?» (90.14–17)

Interestingly Zwingli recognizes that his attacks on views which ascribe too much to the sacraments raise the question whether the sacraments have any virtue. The chapter entitled «The Seven Virtues of the Sacraments» is his response to this. The sacraments, he says, are instituted and used by Christ; bear witness to an accomplished fact; take the place of the things they signify, whence they also get their names; signify sublime things; have an analogy with what they signify; bring increase and support to faith through their appeal to the senses; and fill the office of an oath of allegiance. (155.11–161.18) The exposition of the sixth virtue (158.12–160.27) is as long as all the rest. It is through the senses that Satan attacks, but in the sacraments the senses are enlisted in the service of faith, and so they aid faith.

Earlier Zwingli used sacramental eating of merely outward eating without faith in the heart. (Z VI/II 812.3–6) In *Exposition of the Faith*, however, he uses it for an eating of the sacrament with faith, when people do inwardly what they represent outwardly. (Z VI/V 149.15–150.7 and 92.17–93.1) He insists that only the Holy Spirit gives faith. What the sacraments give is historical faith, which they give to believer and unbeliever alike. (151.10–152.1) For Zwingli Christ is present according to his divine nature, his body being in heaven. However, he has already interpreted this positively with the analogy of the sun. Its body is in one place, but its power pervades all things. (Z VI/II 807.17–19)

Zwingli’s understanding of the sacraments is related to his theology as a whole, in particular his understanding of God. God is central to his theology and he challenged teaching and practice which obscured this. From this arose his opposition to placing one’s trust in created things, such as the sacraments, rather than in God, the creator. For him medieval teaching and practice led people to put their faith in the sacraments and not in God. Moreover, that teaching and practice were in conflict with Zwingli’s emphasis on the sovereignty of God in salvation, redemption in Christ alone, and the freedom of the Spirit to act where and how he wills. The underlying neo-platonism in Zwingli’s theology also influenced his attitude to the sacraments with his conviction that what is outward (the sacrament) cannot affect the inward (the soul). His controversy with Roman and Lutheran views led to a negative presentation of what the sacrament does not do and therefore on the need for faith in our receiving rather than on the grace of God in giving. Moreover, the

emphasis on memorial and thanksgiving placed the accent on what God has done in Christ, not on what he is now doing through him.

From his late works we may note some of the central elements in Zwingli's sacramental theology.

The sacrament is defined in terms of the sign and the thing signified, but with a sharp distinction between the two. This leads often to a contrast between the inward and the outward, rather than a relating of them. What is signified refers sometimes to the church, sometimes to Christ and to what he has done, and its being called to mind.

The sacrament does not confer grace, but it is a sign of or testimony to grace *already* given.

Only the Spirit, and not the sacrament, gives faith. It can give only historical faith. It is necessary therefore to have faith before receiving the sacrament. Spiritual eating depends on such faith.

Faith is so fundamental to his theology that it often appears that the reality of what is signified by the sacraments and not simply its reception is dependent on faith.

The sacrament in itself does not give or increase faith. However, the senses to which the sacrament appeals can at least indirectly aid faith. Moreover, we have sacraments because of our senses.

The Spirit is sometimes, though not unequivocally, related to the sacraments. The freedom of the Spirit means that the Spirit does not need the sacraments and is not bound by them. It is the same Spirit who effects all things and who draws sometimes without, sometimes with, the instrument. (Z VI/III 271.10–12)⁹

The presence of Christ in the eucharist is affirmed, as is the presence of the true body and blood. However, Zwingli denies both bodily presence, as Christ's body is in heaven, and bodily eating, as the flesh is of no avail.

Christ's feeding the soul in the sacrament is expressed by analogy with the feeding of the body by the bread.

Christ's presence in the eucharist is on occasion, though not generally, related to the Spirit, but this is not developed by Zwingli as it is by others.¹⁰

In both sacraments there is a continuing emphasis on the church and on the sacrament as a testimony to membership of the church.

Zwingli accommodates himself at least in the words he uses, in the hope of agreement, as, for example, in his reply to Eck, yet he also shows impatience with the search for formulas which unite him with Luther, but only out-

⁹ The marginal note in the German text was «Alle würckung der usserlichen zeychen kumpt vom geist».

¹⁰ He states, «sed Christus adest in coena spiritu suo, gratia et virtute sua, intus vegetans et pascens fideles ...» (S VI/I 758.33–35).

wardly. He is also critical of the Tetrapolitan Confession, with its reference to Christ’s truly giving his true body as food for the soul. (Z XI 340.24–341.8)

There are elements in Zwingli’s theology, which could possibly have been developed by him, but which were developed later by others. Zwingli frequently refers to God’s use of means without compromising God’s sovereignty, and this could have been affirmed more positively without denying God’s freedom to act. (S VI/I 609.5–11, 729.24–28 and Z VI/III 120.20–24) He could have used the doctrine of election to affirm what God does in the sacraments, again without compromising God’s sovereignty. The analogy of fire in the flint, when it is struck, might have led to a more positive statement of Christ’s presence than in its use in the letter to Thomas Wyttenbach. It is followed by a reference to Christ’s being under the form of bread only when he is sought in faith. (Z VIII 88.6–10) Zwingli refers to the Holy Spirit’s drawing sometimes without and sometimes with the sacrament, but does not develop the second of these. It could have led to a stronger sense of what God gives in the sacraments. Moreover, he speaks of the Spirit’s drawing our hearts up to heaven. This is not said about the eucharist, but it coheres with what Calvin and Bullinger were to say. (SVI/II 74.28–33)

2 *The First Helvetic Confession*

Bullinger succeeded Zwingli in 1531 and in the following years strongly defended Zwingli’s life and teaching.¹¹ Although his theology was similar to Zwingli’s, he became a reformer independently of Zwingli. (Indeed the influences on him included the works of Luther and Melancthon.) He also came to his understanding of the sacraments independently of Zwingli. Even though he and Zwingli both had a broadly symbolic view of the sacraments, their thinking on them was shaped in part by different people and different texts.¹²

Zwingli’s death left many unresolved problems for the church in Zurich, including relations with Luther. Division from him became an increasing challenge, both theological and political, in the 1530s. It was focussed in the differences over the sacraments. Neither the Swiss nor the Germans seemed

¹¹ Opponents of the reformation in Switzerland used Zwingli’s and Oecolampadius’ teaching on the sacraments to account for their death and the defeat at Kappel. Concern to defend that teaching is evident in the sub-title and text of his reply to John Faber in 1532. See pages A 3v-5v and C 2v-4r. For the full title, see HBBib1 1 No. 35.

¹² See, for example, Hans-Georg *von Berg*, *Spätmittelalterliche Einflüsse auf Bullingers Theologie*, and Joachim *Staedtke*, *Bullingers Theologie – eine Fortsetzung der Zwinglischen?* in: Ulrich *Gäbler* and Endre *Zsindely* (eds.), *Bullinger-Tagung 1975, Zürich 1977*.

able to grasp the fundamental concerns of the other or to find a way forward. Martin Bucer came close to success in mediating between them.¹³ In the 1530s he was in contact with both groups, and there were occasions, such as the First Helvetic Confession, when there seemed to be a breakthrough. Ultimately, however, his efforts failed.

Bullinger's correspondence reveals some of the concerns which lie behind the Confession. While Bucer presses the need to satisfy Luther, Bullinger insists that his statements must be acceptable in Zurich and not Saxony (HBBW 6.593–94). He affirms the continuity of his teaching with that of Zwingli and Oecolampadius (2.158.193–99; 4. 370.3–371.9). (Bucer also argues that what he proposes was accepted by Zwingli and Oecolampadius.¹⁴) Bullinger's publishing of Zwingli's *Exposition of the Faith* in the weeks following the Confession may reflect his concern to show his fidelity to Zwingli to those thinking that too many concessions had been made. Often in the 1530s Bullinger states that he has difficulty with words such as instrument and exhibit. To him the word instrument seems to make the sacraments effective regardless of the faith of the recipient and the word exhibit seems to ascribe power to the minister or the sacrament rather than to God. (4.378.15–379.24, 423.37–42; 5.101.14–102.2) It is significant that in the First Helvetic Confession it is not the sacraments which exhibit but God, while the word instrument is not used.

Bullinger's relations with Bucer changed over the years. Thus he was critical of the idea of a concord in a letter of 12 July 1532. (2.153–160) Yet in 1534 he responded positively to him and was prepared to accept obscure and ambiguous expressions such as «exhibere, offerre, uniri, naturaliter, corporaliter et alia nonnulla». Underlying this acceptance was his conviction that Bucer was on their side. Moreover, the words were capable of a mild interpretation. (4.379.32–38) In March 1535, however, Bullinger asserts that even with a hundred meetings they could not go beyond their Zurich Confession (1534) unless persuaded by very clear scriptures. (5.170.32–34) After Bucer's part in the First Helvetic Confession, however, Bullinger thanked him for his exceptional care for the church in Zurich. (6.131. 2–3)

Behind the First Helvetic Confession there are other confessional statements of some of the Swiss Churches, such as the Bern articles (1532)¹⁵, the

¹³ See, for example, Ernst Bizer, *Studien zur Geschichte des Abendmahlsstreits im 16. Jahrhundert*, Gütersloh 1940; K. J. Rüetschi, Bucer und Bullinger in ihren persönlichen Beziehungen, in: Christian Krieger and Marc Lienhard (eds.), *Martin Bucer and Sixteenth Century Europe*, Leiden 1993, 429–39; and O. E. Strasser, *Die letzten Anstrengungen der Strassburger Theologen Martin Bucer und Wolfgang Capito, eine Union zwischen den deutschen Lutheranern und den schweizerischen Reformierten herbeizuführen*, in: *Zwingli*, 6 (1934) 5–15.

¹⁴ See Bizer, *Studien* 207.

¹⁵ See E. F. K. Müller, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirche*, Leipzig 1903, 43–47

Zurich Confession (1534), and the First Basel Confession (1534)¹⁶. Each of them to some degree points forward to the agreement in 1536. The Zurich Confession makes several positive points. «The true body of Christ ... is truly present, given, and distributed to believers.» The sacraments which were instituted by the Lord are «signs and testimonies of divine grace». «They not only signify the divine promises but also in their way bring and represent them to the senses.» (4.422.8–15, 425.98–99) They are not empty signs of an absent rather than of a present Christ – something those in Zurich have never taught. Christ makes himself present to his own. (423.31–32, 40–41)

In the Confession phrases such as eating the body or flesh of Christ are given a Zwinglian interpretation. It is said that they are to be understood as meaning to be persuaded through the Spirit and faith and firmly to believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was crucified for us. (424.68–70) This eating and drinking are not limited to the sacrament. We eat his true body truly when we believe with true faith his true body to be given for our salvation. There is no other presence or eating of the body and blood of Christ than the true and spiritual one and no other eating of the body than that which happens truly and through faith. God did not institute the sacraments in vain. However, for unbelievers, without faith, the sacraments are useless. (424.83–90, 425.95–96) Besides the characteristic Zwinglian emphasis on faith, spiritual eating, and the sacrament as a memorial (426.137–41), there is the insistence on God’s not being bound by the sacraments, and on the sacraments’ not being instruments and channels through which grace is poured into unbelievers, on the Spirit’s effecting everything, and on the Spirit’s drawing sometimes without the instrument, sometimes with. Created things can do nothing. (426.152–427.179) These Zwinglian statements inevitably qualify the positive earlier statements and the later affirmation of the sacraments as a tremendous and joyful mystery in which Christ is present. (428.203–207)

The First Helvetic Confession is introduced as «a common confession of the holy, true, and ancient Christian faith» as well as a confession of the Swiss churches. It involved the civic leaders as well as the reformers who were driven by political as well as theological concerns. It arose both from the Swiss endeavour to establish understanding and communion with Lu-

(abbreviated Müller). The Bern Synod has expressions which reflect the concern to find accommodation with Lutherans, however they are interpreted (e.g. Müller 45.25–32). See G. W. Locher, *Die Sakramentslehre des Berner Synodus*, in: G. W. Locher (ed.), *Der Berner Synodus von 1532*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1988, Vol 2, 219–34.

¹⁶ The Basel Confession relates Christ’s presence to faith but also speaks of the true body and blood as being offered with the bread and wine. It refers to Christ’s body as having ascended and to our adoring Christ in heaven rather than in the sacrament of his body and blood. (Müller 97.22–25, 32–43)

therans and from their need to have a statement of faith for the expected council.

It is natural for a confession with an ecumenical concern to have a positive character: to emphasise what one believes rather than what one rejects, to use words and ideas which accommodate the criticisms of others, but also to include safeguards and qualifications to disarm those who are most opposed to the others. The First Helvetic Confession has this ecumenical character and consequently manifests continuity as well as discontinuity with Zwingli. It was not the sole work of Bullinger, but he was one of the group who drafted it. Besides the fundamental work of the Swiss in producing the text, there was the role of Bucer and Capito. They arrived when it was complete and proposed amendments to it, undoubtedly strengthening its ecumenical character.

The confession has 27 articles, of which only three explicitly concern the sacraments.¹⁷ What is most striking about them is their essentially positive language about the sacraments and their affirmation of what God does in them. God is the subject of the sacraments. They are signs of divine grace. The articles speak differently from Zwingli of what the Lord does in the sacraments. Thus, «baptism is a bath of regeneration which the Lord offers and presents to his elect with a visible sign».¹⁸ In the Lord's Supper «the Lord truly offers his body and blood, that is himself, to his own and enables them to enjoy such fruit that he lives ever more and more in them and they in him». (Schaff 225, Müller 107.12–15)¹⁹ These articles are in keeping with the article on Ministers. It states that ministers are co-workers through whom «God imparts and offers to those who believe in him the knowledge of himself and the forgiveness of sins»²⁰. But it adds, and this is later applied to the sacraments, «in all things we ascribe all efficacy and power to God the Lord alone» and not to something created; and he «dispenses it to those he chooses according to his free will». (Schaff 219–20, Müller 105.7–12)

¹⁷ Articles 20–22, also numbered 21–23. For the editions, see HBBibl I Nos. 659–84. For the Latin text, see H. B. *Smith* and Philip *Schaff* (eds.), *The Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches*, London 1877, 211–31. For the German text, see Müller, *Bekenntnisschriften* 101–109.

¹⁸ The Latin text has «exhibeat», but the German text «anbietet und darstellt» (Schaff 224, Müller 107.5).

¹⁹ After stating that the sacraments are not bare signs, the German text describes them as consisting of signs and essential (substantial) things, whereas the Latin text says that they consist «at the same time (my italics) of the signs and the things (signified)» (Schaff 223, Müller 106.26–28). Then three times the word *res* is given in German as *wesenlich* and *geistlich*, again showing the more Zwinglian character of the German text.

²⁰ The Latin text has «administret» (Schaff 219), but the German text has «zuodienet und für-treyt» (Müller 105.5–6).

These statements about what God does in the sacraments are qualified by reference to God, election, and faith. The power is not in the sacraments or the ministers but in God alone, and the sacraments are not fruitful automatically, but only in the elect or in believers. Thus what is given in baptism is given to the elect and what is given in the eucharist is given to «his own» or believers.²¹ Moreover, certain views of the bread and wine are explicitly excluded. Thus Christ’s body and blood are not naturally united with the bread and wine nor spatially included in them. They are food not for the stomach, but for eternal life. (Schaff 223–25, Müller 106.33–34, 41–43, 107.3–5, 12–14, 20–25, 108.1–2) It is important to note that the confession speaks about what God does and not what the sacraments do. Thus on baptism it speaks not of God’s using the sign but of his offering the bath of regeneration with a sign. On the Lord’s Supper it refers to the bread and wine as signs through which the communion of the body and blood of Christ are offered by the Lord through the ministry of the church. Nevertheless, this section concludes by ascribing the power to God alone and not to the sacraments. (Schaff 224–27, Müller 107.2–5, 12–14, 19–22, 108.1–2)

The prolonged contact and correspondence with Bucer in the 1530s in the endeavour to establish communion with Luther and the German churches led to a more positive statement of the sacraments and to an accommodation to their understanding of the sacraments or at least to a language which would be acceptable to them. Some particular expressions probably reflect Bucer’s influence, such as the use of true in article 22, where the Lord truly offers his body and his blood and where the true communion of his body and blood is administered by holy and true signs, and also the reference to Christ’s offering his body and blood as Christ’s offering himself.²² The reference to the elect in the first part of the article on baptism probably comes from Bucer. (Schaff 224–25, Müller 107.3, 12–22)²³ There are, of course, elements familiar to us from Zwingli: the ascription of all power to God (Schaff 220, 226–27, Müller 105.7–12, 108.1–2), the references to faith (Schaff 225, Müller 106.34, 107.21,25), the basing of the baptism of Christians’

²¹ There is no reference to believers in the Latin version. Where it has «exhibeatur», the German text has «den gläubigen fürgetragen und dargeboten werde». (Schaff 225, Müller 107.21)

²² The reference to the signs as true is not in the Latin version.

²³ The reference to election here and in the Zurich Agreement is characteristic of Bucer’s understanding of the sacraments, as is the role of the Holy Spirit in the Zurich Agreement. He relates election to baptism as early as 1524. The role of the Spirit in the recipient is in part related to election, as the Holy Spirit works only in the elect. The Spirit makes both the recipient (elect children and believers) receptive and the sacrament effective, as the Lord «accomplishes inwardly by the Spirit what is signified by the signs». Bucer speaks as well of the Holy Spirit as the seal of divine grace, but also later of the sacraments as seals. See the discussion in W. P. Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer*, Cambridge 1970, 213–59.

children on their membership of God's people and on God's word about them and election of them (Schaff 224, Müller 107.5–9), the reference to the sacraments as signs of Christian fellowship (Schaff 224, Müller 106.36–38), and the relating of the eucharist to remembering and giving thanks (Schaff 225–26, Müller 104.23–25, 32–33). Moreover, the last part is effectively a summary of Zwingli's Seven Virtues of the Sacraments, apart from the second which says almost exactly the opposite of what Zwingli said. Interestingly it is given as a response to the challenge of attributing too little to the sacraments, as Zwingli's original statement was a response to the challenge whether – in the light of what he had written – the sacraments had any virtue. (Schaff 226, Müller 107.34–44)

The presence of many Zwinglian emphases does not alter the fact that the articles go beyond Zwingli's statements. Yet this does not mean that Zwingli could not have agreed to the Confession, given the developments in his understanding of the sacraments and the safeguards in the Confession. The Confession, however, unlike much in Zwingli is an affirmation of what the sacraments are rather than a repudiation of what they are not, and it states in various ways what God offers and imparts in them. Luther's positive, though critical, response to the Latin text is, therefore, not surprising.

3 *The Zurich Agreement (1549)*

Political as well as theological influences led to the Zurich Agreement.²⁴ Calvin needed Zurich's and therefore Bullinger's support in his relations with Bern and in his concern to help French Protestants through a Swiss alliance with France. Moreover, both Bullinger and Calvin saw the need for an agreement in the light of the Council of Trent and the Augsburg Interim. (In 1548

²⁴ Among many discussions of the Zurich Agreement and the relations of Bullinger and Calvin, the following may be noted: A. *Barclay*, *The Protestant Doctrine of the Lord's Supper*, Glasgow 1927, especially pp. 137–79, 227–31; Bizer, *Studien*, especially pp. 229–99; André *Bouvier*, *Henri Bullinger: Le Successeur de Zwingli*, Neuchâtel 1940, 110–49; U. *Gäbler*, *Das Zustandekommen des Consensus Tigurinus im Jahre 1549*, in: *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 104 (1979) 321–32; T. *George*, *John Calvin and the Agreement of Zurich (1549)*, in: T. *George* (ed.), *John Calvin and the Church*, Louisville 1990, 42–58; J. C. *McLelland*, *Meta-Zwingli or Anti-Zwingli? Bullinger and Calvin in Eucharistic Concord?* in: E. J. *Furcha* (ed.), *Huldrych Zwingli, 1484–1531. A Legacy of Radical Reform*, Montreal 1985, 179–95; Paul *Rorem*, *Calvin and Bullinger on the Lord's Supper*, in: *Lutheran Quarterly* 2 (1988) 155–84, 357–89; Paul *Sanders*, *Heinrich Bullinger et le «zwinglianisme tardif» aux lendemains du «Consensus Tigurinus»*, in: *Zwing.* 19 (1992), especially 319–23.

For the editions of the Agreement, see HBBibl I Nos. 624–50. For the text, see Müller, *Bekanntnisschriften* 159–63.

the imperial army reached Constance, only miles from Zurich.) Nevertheless the detailed discussion between Bullinger and Calvin and Bullinger’s unhurried approach, even with the army at Constance, show that political factors were not decisive. An agreement between them was not certain. Bullinger was strong in his defence of Zwingli, of whom Calvin had written critically. Calvin, moreover, was perceived as a Lutheran, and he was also a friend of Bucer, who was suspect in Zurich.

The failure of the First Helvetic Confession to achieve the expected understanding with Luther had irrevocably damaged Swiss relations with Bucer.²⁵ Swiss endeavours to establish communion with Luther had met with rebuffs, which reached their climax in Luther’s *Brief Confession*.²⁶ In it he attacked them as «fanatics and enemies of the sacrament» (WA 54.141.19) and as «murderers of souls ... with hearts totally possessed by the devil» (147.33–34), and referred to Zwingli’s becoming «totally a heathen» in *Exposition of the Faith*. (143.15–16)

It is not surprising that Luther’s attack on «their blasphemous and deceitful heresy» (141.26) led to a vigorous defence of Zwingli and Oecolampadius. The defence was, however, that of the Zurich ministers, even if written by Bullinger.²⁷ It has a Zwinglian character with the centrality of remembrance and a strong emphasis on faith. Yet there are divergences from Zwingli. Thus, although remembering appears to be our remembering, yet the summary states that in the church the Lord holds his suffering and our redemption in fresh remembrance (78v). Again, although it is their faith in Christ which feeds believers and makes them participants in God’s grace and forgiveness and communion with Christ (71v), yet in communion an unbeliever may become a believer and then share in Christ (73r).

After replying to Luther in *True Confession*, Bullinger presented his view in *On the Sacraments* and gave a copy to Calvin. This began a dialogue with Calvin, which led to the Zurich Agreement.²⁸ As each in turn criticized the

²⁵ In 1537 Bullinger opined that there seemed no end to confessions, as he mentioned seven attempts by Bucer to secure agreement with the Swiss (HBBW 7. 293.10–294.27). Moreover, with his retractions and his acceptance of the Augsburg Confession Bucer appeared Lutheran.

²⁶ For the text, see: D. Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar, 1883–). Bizer (Studien 229–33) outlines some of Luther’s comments on Zwingli and the Swiss from 1539 to his «derb und hart» *Brief Confession*, noting that Luther did not change his position by a hair’s breadth. Then he concludes, «Die Konkordie ist am Zwinglianismus der Schweizer gescheitert»!

²⁷ For the editions, see HBBibl I Nos. 161–69. For the text, see No. 161. Bucer commenting on this work refers to the memorial of an absent Christ. See Traugott Schiess (ed.), *Briefwechsel der Brüder Ambrosius und Thomas Blaurer 1509–1548*, Freiburg 1908 and 1910, vol. 2, 358.

²⁸ In «Calvins Urteile über Zwingli» (Zwing. 11 [1959] 66–92), Fritz Blanke discusses Calvin’s references to Zwingli. He notes that Calvin was influenced by Luther in his critical comments

statements of the other, their emphases and concerns become clear. Calvin offered a substantial critique of Bullinger's work (CO 40.480–489). For example, to Calvin Bullinger's statements implied Christ's absence rather than his presence, separated the sign and what it signified, denied that the sacraments offer what they signify, and rejected the use of instruments. In response, Calvin insisted on the presence of Christ through the power of the Spirit, though he is in heaven (481), on God's truthfulness and therefore the unity of the sign and what it signifies (482), on God's effecting at the same time in us what he represents by the sign (482), on God's using the sacraments as instruments without their taking anything from God (485). This critique led to silence on Bullinger's part and it was months before contact was renewed and the issues were discussed again. An irenic letter setting out Calvin's views led Bullinger to identify 26 points for comment. (CO 35.693–700) Through correspondence, Bullinger's preferred method of dialogue, they came to a closer understanding.

The central issues can be focussed in the use of certain words: exhibit, instrument, through, and at the same time. Bullinger disputed the statement that Calvin did not bind grace to the sacraments by reference to Calvin's assertions that what is figured in the sacraments is exhibited to the elect and that those receiving baptism at the same time receive forgiveness of sins. To Bullinger Calvin does not differ from the papists who teach that the sacraments confer grace on all who receive them. (693) Bullinger objected to the use of through as seeming to attribute something to inanimate signs and proposed «God acts and works in the hearts of the faithful while (*dum*) the sacraments are received» instead of «God works through the sacraments» (694). Bullinger also challenged Calvin's statement that «the sacraments are instruments of the grace of God». It seemed to attribute something to the sacraments, unless instrument means sign. It is God who confers grace and the gifts of salvation. It is he who exhibits these things (not, as Calvin says, the sacraments), and he does so through the Holy Spirit and faith, faith being the gift of God through which we receive his gifts. (695) Bullinger can accept

on Zwingli's earlier sacramental views. He approved, however, of Zwingli's rejection of the bodily presence, while disapproving his failure to affirm the presence of Christ or communion with him. Calvin appears not to have read Zwingli's later views, but to have accepted others' positive interpretation of them, and referred to them mistakenly as if they were the same as his. For Calvin's critique of Zwingli and Luther, see for example *A Short Treatise on the Lord's Supper* (1541) in: Calvin: Theological Treatises (trans. J. K. S. Reid; London 1954), 163–66. Usteri (pp. 734, 741) attributes too much to the influence of Calvin, regarding Bullinger as simply Zwinglian before his contact with Calvin. See J. M. Usteri, *Vertiefung der Zwinglischen Sakraments- und Tauflehre bei Bullinger*, in: *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 65 (1883) 730–58. For the correspondence with Calvin and the Bern Articles, see W. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss (eds.), *Ioannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia* (Corpus Reformatorum Vols. 29–87) (Brunswick and Berlin, 1863–1900) (abbreviated as CO).

Calvin’s statement that the sign is not empty, if that means not useless, but not if it means that the sign contains what it represents. (700)²⁹

In reply (CO 35.701–704) Calvin defended and explained his position, not least the role of the Spirit, election, and God’s faithfulness, and challenged some of Bullinger’s statements. He drew on the New Testament in rejecting the opposition in Bullinger between God and the role of instruments (702–703), and also Bullinger’s apparent view that if God acts then instruments cease (703–704). The Holy Spirit uses the sacrament as an instrument, but is the author of what is given. The effectiveness of the sacraments is related to God’s truthfulness, for God would appear to deceive in his promises, if believers did not receive what is offered in the sacraments. (702) (Calvin explained that *simul* was used in the sense of *similiter* [similarly].) (704) He distinguished his position from that of the papists, as unlike them he held that not all but only the elect receive what the sacraments offer. The whole effect depends on election and the sign is useless unless God works in us through his Spirit. (701) Calvin does not regard the sacraments as containing what they figure literally, but in the sense that the Lord performs inwardly by the power of his Spirit what is testified by the outward sign. (707) Calvin notes Bullinger’s reference to the eucharistic signs as commemorating the one-for-all sacrifice of Christ for us, but also his neglect of the daily offering of Christ to us that we may be one with him. The body sacrificed for us is daily food for us. (705) There is a repeated stress on communion with Christ. (705–708)³⁰

Bullinger responds positively to Calvin’s comments (CO 35. 709–716), but without changing what he held on the sacraments as means of grace – «all good things are conferred on us through the Spirit of God, received through faith, and sealed by the sacraments». (713) He insists that it is God who «exhibits his gifts to us through his Spirit», while «the sacraments offer them to us sacramentally and so represent and seal them». (709) He argues that the instruments do not cease because God alone acts, but what God alone does they do not do. (712) Interestingly in his comments on the first point, Bullinger ignores the fundamental term election, which Calvin says distinguishes his position from the papists, and speaks rather of the faith of communicants. He allows that «because of the faith of the communicant there is a certain conjunction of the grace of God and the sacraments». (709)

The Zurich Agreement, with its 26 articles, is wholly concerned with the sacraments, whereas only three of the First Helvetic Confession’s 27 articles concern the sacraments. Its clear focus is Christ. It states that one must start

²⁹ The references are to points 1, 4, 7, and 23.

³⁰ The references are in order to points 4, 7, 2, 9, 1, 23–24, 13, 15–16, 23–24.

from Christ and salvation, if one is to speak comprehensively about the sacraments, as they are appendices of the gospel. (Müller 159.27–29)

The explicit presentation of the sacraments begins significantly with spiritual communion to which the sacraments testify. (160.23–28) This and the following article have many characteristically Zwinglian emphases – with the sacraments as badges of Christian profession, inciting us to thanksgiving, exercising faith, appealing to our senses, and recalling the death of Christ to our memory. (160.29–39) There are also Zwinglian emphases in other articles: the role and necessity of faith (161.3–4, 12–14, 162.1–2), receiving spiritually (161.4), the power belonging to God, working by his Spirit, and not to the sacraments (161.20–26), the distinction between the sign and what it signifies, so that the latter is not in or attached to the sign (163.23–28), the figurative interpretation of «This is my body» (162.43–163.2), the rejection of a local presence, transubstantiation, consubstantiation, and the adoration of the sacrament (162.36–41, 163.9–14, 23–28), and the seeking of Christ in heaven (162.38–40).

Several important elements in the Agreement, however, are not present in Zwingli and some are not present in the First Helvetic Confession or not in the same way. In the Agreement as in the Confession the sign and what it signifies (the substance) are not separated from each other, but in the Agreement this is made explicit. In keeping with the Confession article 8 states that the Lord truly presents what the sacraments truly figure (160.40), and article 9 adds that the sign and the things signified are distinct, but not disjointed (161.1–3). This positive relationship between the sign and the thing signified is expounded in terms of the sacraments as seals and the promise contained in them. As the sacraments are seals of God's grace, there is no doubt that God grants us within by his Spirit what they figure to our senses. (160.41–43, cf. 162.8).³¹ What is new here is the role of the Spirit, which is surprisingly absent from the earlier Confession.

In the sacrament the emphasis is on the promise not the sign, for it is the office of the promise to lead us to Christ. (A contrast is made between the promise and a bare sign. Indeed, separated from Christ, the sacraments are nothing but empty masks.) (161.7–19) The stress on the promise is something which Bullinger and Calvin met in their reading of Luther, and it features in both of them. Later the Agreement states that in the proper sense the Spirit alone is the seal and not the sacrament (161.37–39), and that there is no inherent virtue in the sacrament, not even if we understand by that the promise which distinguishes it, «for it is God alone who acts by his Spirit». (161.20–23)

³¹ The Bern article states that the sacraments exhibit what they figure, whereas Bullinger rejects this use of exhibit.

Article 13 (161.27–32) speaks of the sacraments as instruments³² which God uses and by which he acts efficaciously. (The word is *organum* not, as in the Bern articles, *instrumentum*.) But lest this be misunderstood, the article at once states that the sacraments, like ministers, are nothing unless God makes them effective. God acts efficaciously through them, but certain qualifications are made about the sacraments, the minister, and the recipient. Such a balance is typical of Bullinger and of the Agreement. Thus God acts where he pleases, and the power is his, it is not the sacrament’s or the minister’s. (161.27–31) The gifts of God are offered to all, however not all participants receive what is offered to them, but – according to articles 16 and 17 – only the elect, and they receive by the secret power of the Spirit. (162.6, 161.43–48, 162.4–5)³³ In article 18 people’s receiving depends on their faith; nevertheless their faith does not affect what God offers in the sacrament, for the sacraments always retain their power. (162.6–10) Faith is needed to receive the sacraments, yet at the same time it is stated that the sacraments also nourish, confirm, and increase faith. (161.37–39, 162.20–24) Article 15, however, has already affirmed that the Spirit is the author and perfecter of faith and that we may not ascribe to the sacraments anything which belongs to salvation. (161.37–42)³⁴ Although these articles speak of the sacraments as instruments and aids, they affirm «We agree therefore that it is Christ alone who truly baptizes inwardly, and who in the supper makes us share in him». (161.33–36)

The Zurich Agreement is neither Bullingerian nor Calvinian. Both would have expressed their views differently, but both could affirm what it affirmed, even if offering their own interpretations. It could be described as a Calvinian view expressed within the constraints imposed by Bullinger’s theology or Bullinger’s view stretched to embrace Calvin’s. The correspondence reveals their differences, for example, on the sacraments as instruments or as exhibiting. Yet both were able largely to accommodate the other’s views, in substance if not in emphasis.³⁵ The fact that the Bern articles were

³² They are also described as helps, which is not typical of Bullinger. (161.25,35)

³³ The Bern article, unlike article 16, uses exhibits «ut sacramenta illis exhibeant quod offerunt» (CO 35.719). (The word exhibit is also omitted in article 8.) In article 17 he states that only the elect receive the reality (*veritas*) of the signs and not the reprobate.

³⁴ As they were not concerned with relations to Lutherans, the question of those without faith merits only half a sentence. For them the use of the sacraments confers no more than if they had abstained. It is rather destructive for them. By contrast the faithful who share in Christ in the sacraments also share in him before and outside the sacraments, as one sees with Paul and Cornelius. (162.12–19)

³⁵ In replying to Bucer, Calvin implies that he would have been glad to have expressed more clearly and fully the effect of the sacraments and what the Lord confers. (CO 41.439) The agreement uses the word exhibit (in article 8) but not in relation to the sacrament, and it is not included in article 16 despite its presence in the corresponding Bern article. Calvin accepts the

the basis of the agreement does not mean that Calvin's views dominated, for Gäbler («Consensus Tigurinus» 329) rightly observes that they had influenced each other. The Calvin of the Bern articles was the Calvin who had been in dialogue with Bullinger. Therefore, to give one example, he did not include in them *simul* which Bullinger had earlier criticized. In an agreement what is denied may be as important as what is affirmed. The balancing of assertion and qualification does this here and enables the agreement to be mutual.

Differences from Zwingli as well as similarities are evident in the agreement. It is surprising, therefore, that both Bullinger and Calvin assert their continuity with Zwingli and Oecolampadius. In 1554 the Zurich ministers refer to Marburg and to what was agreed. They refer to the sacraments as fostering and confirming faith, «as organs through which God acts efficaciously in his elect». «God truly testifies in them what he figures and at the same time (*simul*) in a secret way presents and fulfils what he testifies, joining to them the efficacy of his Spirit.»³⁶ They claim that after this was agreed at Marburg, Luther still refused to give his hand to Zwingli and Oecolampadius. They then added, after quotations from them both, that on the eucharist they taught as Calvin. (CO 43.276–278) Calvin asserted that they would not have changed a word in the Agreement. (CO 37.11)

One may question whether Zwingli taught as Calvin taught, but it is still possible to argue that Zwingli could have signed the Zurich Agreement. At first sight this may cause surprise, as some positive affirmations about the sacraments go beyond what Zwingli wrote.³⁷ However, key elements of his theology are present and the qualifications added to non-Zwinglian statements could well have satisfied him as they did Bullinger. Most importantly the Agreement denied that the sacraments confer grace, rejected the bodily presence and the bodily eating of Christ, and opposed trust in created things. It affirmed the centrality and necessity of faith, the sovereignty of the Spirit, the distinction between the sign and what it signifies, the eucharist as a testimony and a memorial, the presence of Christ's body in heaven, the figurative interpretation of the words of institution, and the relevance of John 6:63. There are elements in the agreement which are not Zwinglian, but in some cases they are qualified in a Zwinglian way and in others his theology can be interpreted or stretched to include them. Though he argues for Christ's pres-

use of *organum* instead of *instrumentum*, although that is neutralised for Bullinger by the assertion that all the power is of God. Bucer held, if not quite accurately, that the Zurich Agreement contained no more than the First Helvetic Confession. (41.350–58)

³⁶ The Marburg articles do not refer to the elect, nor to God's offering and fulfilling at the same time what he testifies.

³⁷ These include such statements as «The Lord truly presents what the sacraments truly figure» (Müller 160.40) and «Thus in the supper Christ communicates himself to us» (162.18).

ence in terms of «where two or three are gathered in my name», yet elsewhere he speaks of Christ as present and acting through his Spirit. (S VI/I 758.33–35) Though he stresses the distinction and not the conjunction of the sign and what it signifies and does not speak of the Holy Spirit’s making the sacraments effective, yet he does say that «the same Spirit effects all these things, who draws, sometimes without, sometimes with the instrument». Though he sees the commemoration as referring to Christ’s death and the sacrament as a sign of grace already given and not a sign of grace being given, yet he uses analogy to interpret the sacraments («as bread sustains human life ... so Christ alone ... sustains ... the mind». [Z VI/V 158.1–3]). Though he does not speak of faith’s being given in the sacrament, yet this is compatible with what he says about the Spirit’s effecting all things. Though he does not relate the effectiveness of the sacraments to the doctrine of election, yet his doctrine of election could possibly be developed in this way.

4 *The Second Helvetic Confession (1566)*

The Second Helvetic Confession³⁸ differs from the other two. They were in effect confessions of churches, with several authors, of whom Bullinger was one. The Second Helvetic Confession was Bullinger’s personal confession, which became a confession of Elector Frederick III of the Palatinate and also of the Reformed Churches. As a part of Bullinger’s last will and testament, it embodies the faith expressed in Bullinger’s ministry, but it also reflects the conflict with Lutherans and the conclusion of the Council of Trent. It covers the themes of the First Helvetic Confession in its 30 chapters, though in a different order and at much greater length.

Before the three chapters (19–21) on the sacraments³⁹, some elements of Bullinger’s sacramental theology, such as the role of the Spirit, the use of means, and the relation of the outward and inward, are clearly expounded. Thus in the first chapter Bullinger states that although no one comes to Christ «unless he is inwardly enlightened by the Holy Spirit», yet «we know that God wills the word of God to be preached outwardly as well». (Müller 171.22–23) In the same context Bullinger insists that «God can enlighten whom and when he will, even without the outward ministry». (171.34–36)

³⁸ For the Confession, see especially Ernst *Koch*, *Die Theologie der Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1968, and Joachim *Staedtke* (ed.), *Glauben und Bekennen*, Zürich 1966. For the editions of the Confession, see HBBibI Nos. 433–552. For the text, see Müller, *Bekenntnisschriften* 170–221.

³⁹ McLelland (p. 368) sees the Zurich Agreement as the formative document behind the sacramental teaching of the Confession. See J. C. *McLelland*, *Die Sakramentslehre der Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, in: *Staedtke* (ed.), *Glauben* 368–91.

Later, after quoting John 6:44 and 1 Cor: 3.5–7, Bullinger makes his characteristic distinction between what is done outwardly and what is done inwardly. «Let us, therefore, believe that God teaches us by his word outwardly through his ministers and that he inwardly moves the hearts of his elect to faith by the Holy Spirit», adding that all glory is to be given to God. (200. 31–34)⁴⁰

The first paragraph (205.29–40) which defines the sacraments gathers up emphases from the earlier confessions. There is a clear statement that God «seals his promises» and «performs inwardly the things he represents outwardly and so strengthens and increases our faith through the working of God's Spirit in our hearts». In the midst of these affirmations, which are not typical of Zwingli, there are Zwinglian references to the senses and to memory. In this chapter God is manifestly the subject of the sacraments, for «Christ still works in the sacraments» and «God works in his own ordinance». (206.15, 19)⁴¹ Although the sacraments are not described in Calvinian terms as instruments or means of grace, Bullinger moves towards this later with the use of meanwhile (*interim*) in the statement «Outwardly bread is offered by the minister ... And meanwhile inwardly by the working of Christ through the Holy Spirit they receive also the flesh and blood of the Lord and feed on them to eternal life.» (210.26–31) It is important for Bullinger not to ascribe to the sacraments what belongs to God either by the use of a word such as instrument or by making the sacrament the subject of the sentence. This typically Zwinglian concern is constantly expressed by Bullinger's ascribing all power to God.

There is in the article a balance typical of Bullinger. An affirmation is often balanced by a careful qualification, and the disapproval of those who claim too much is balanced by the disapproval of those who believe too little. Thus Bullinger stresses the role of the minister in saying that «the faithful, when they receive the sacraments from the ministers, know that God works in his own ordinance». However, he adds that the minister gives the sign, while it is the Lord who gives what it signifies. (206.17–24)

Bullinger rejects the Roman view that the symbols are changed into what they signify. But he balances this by asserting that the elements are not mere bread and wine, but holy signs, for Christ «did not wish the faithful to re-

⁴⁰ Koch (Theologie 318–20), Rorem (Calvin and Bullinger 382–83), and Dowey (p. 233) emphasize the important relationship of outward and inward in the Confession. For Dowey, see Edward Dowey, *Der theologische Aufbau des Zweiten Helvetischen Bekenntnisses*, in: Staedtke (ed.), *Glauben* 205–34. Walter Köhler, however, refers to their separation in Bullinger – see: *Dogmengeschichte als Geschichte des christlichen Selbstbewusstseins*, Zürich 1951, 322.

⁴¹ Locher rightly observes, when commenting on this, that Christ is more strongly the subject of the sacramental action in Bullinger than in Zwingli. G. W. Locher, *Die Lehre vom Heiligen Geist in der Confessio Helvetica Posterior*, in: Staedtke (ed.) *Glauben* 327.

ceive only bread and wine ... as they do at home, but also to communicate spiritually in the things signified». (207.38–40, 44–208.3) Likewise Bullinger disapproves both of those who attribute the sanctification of the sacraments to words spoken by the minister and of those who regard the sacraments as superfluous, despising the signs because they already have what the signs signify. Similarly, he repudiates the Roman and Lutheran view that «grace and the things signified are so bound to and included in the signs, that whoever share in the sacraments outwardly also share in grace and the things signified». But he balances this by affirming that the character of those receiving does not affect what God offers in the sacraments. The influence of Calvin is evident in Bullinger’s insistence that the integrity of the sacraments does not depend on the worthiness of the ministers or the faith of the recipients, but «on the faith, truth, and sheer goodness of God». Our «unbelief does not invalidate God’s faith», who offers us what the sacraments signify. Moreover, in this passage Bullinger refers to God’s offering *at the same time* what is signified in words. (208.19–32)

The chapters on baptism and communion cohere with that on the sacraments. There is the parallel of what we do outwardly and what the Spirit does inwardly (209.14–18, 210.23–26), with the use of the word meanwhile (*interim*) on one occasion (210.28–31), the association of election with baptism (208.46)⁴² and faith with communion (e.g. 210.5), and the use of analogy (209.18–21, 211.11–14).

A detailed comparison between Zwingli’s later writings and this Confession reveals many elements common to both.⁴³ They include: the definition of a sacrament in terms of the sign and the thing signified, and the distinction between them, though Bullinger adds to them «the word» (205.33), the reference to the senses and a contrast between the outward and the inward (205.36–37, 206.23–24, 208.16–18, 209.14–18, 210.23–31, 211.37–41), the use of analogy (209.18–21, 211.10–19), a focus on the action rather than the elements (205.32), the role of faith (205.37, 206.17, 40–41, 207.46, 208.1, 3, 210.5, 11, 17–18, 28–30, 211.10, 19–20, 22–23, 28–29, 33–36, 39–42, 46–48, 212.2–3, 6, 8–10, 13–15, 36–38), and the use of spiritual or spiritually (206.41, 208.3, 209.21, 210.5, 17–18, 211.1–10, 28–29, 39, 45). With the eucharist there are: the rejection of bodily presence and bodily eating and the affirmation of spiritual and sacramental eating (210.36–212.15), the role of John 6 and in particular of John 6:63 (210.41–43, 211.12–19, 23–31), the understanding of

⁴² Koch’s assertion (Theologie 286) that baptism has «keine effektive Bedeutung», but is to be understood in terms of the sacraments as «Erinnerungszeichen» appears to conflict with Bullinger’s understanding of election and the gift and work of the Holy Spirit. See, for example, Müller 206.29–32, 208.42–45, 209.14–18.

⁴³ Some elements, such as the sacraments of the Old and New Testament are not discussed, as they were not matters of controversy.

the sacrament as thanksgiving and memorial (212.43–213.1) and a witness to the church (212.3), the moral dimension of the sacrament and the sacrament as an oath (209.22–29, 212.31–42).

But for all the similarities with Zwingli, there are important differences of emphasis and some differences of substance. The Confession is fundamentally positive in its presentation of the sacraments, unlike *Account of the Faith* and *Letter to the Princes*. It is primarily concerned with what the sacraments are, not with what they are not. (Zwingli's approach is more positive in *Exposition of the Faith*, though its emphasis is different from the Confession.) The Confession emphasizes what God does (206.15, 18, 23–32). He is the subject of the sacrament. Bullinger refers to God, or Christ, or Christ by his Spirit acting in the sacraments (206.18, 15, 210.30–31) or to the Holy Spirit's acting in us (205.37–38, 206.30–31, 209.15). He speaks of God's offering us and Christ's feeding us. (208. 22–32, 210.17–18) What God does inwardly is related to as well as contrasted with what the minister or sacrament do outwardly. Sometimes there is an apparently temporal link, with the use of the words «meanwhile» and «at the same time». (208.22–29, 210.28–31) This more positive relating of what God does in the sacraments is expressed in what Bullinger had drawn from Calvin about God's truthfulness, so that the sign is joined with what it signifies, rather than as in Zwingli contrasted with it. (208.21–33, 207.40–208.4, 19–32)

The role of the Holy Spirit is more clearly focussed in the Confession than in Zwingli. The term spiritual is, at least on occasion, more clearly related to the Holy Spirit than sometimes in Zwingli, and in John 6:63 there is a stress on the second half, on the work of the Spirit, whereas in the later Zwingli the stress was often on the first half, on the flesh not profiting. (211.11–19) Furthermore, Bullinger uses Zwingli's comparison with the sun to illustrate Christ's presence, but develops it significantly in terms of the Holy Spirit. For Zwingli, the sun's body is in one place, while its power pervades all things. (Z VI/II 807.17–19) But in this comparison Bullinger argues «how much more is Christ ... present with us spiritually», understanding «spiritually» in terms of the Holy Spirit by reference to John 14–16.⁴⁴ (212.22–28)

In the later Zwingli the sacraments are said to increase faith, but this is related to their appeal to the senses. In the Confession this argument is not used, though, of course, for both of them it is the Spirit who gives and increases faith. (205.35–38) Bullinger, as Zwingli, wrestled with why sacramen-

⁴⁴ In this context he uses, as Oecolampadius, Bucer, and Calvin, the phrase «sursum corda». Bullinger refers to lifting our eyes to heaven, though not to «sursum corda» in 1525–26. (HBTS 2.105. 8–9, 115.1–2). References to the Holy Spirit could be simply to the fact that Christ is not present now bodily, but in the Holy Spirit (HBTS 2.60.27–35).

tal eating is necessary if one has eaten spiritually.⁴⁵ He goes further than Zwingli in speaking of «receiving something» and one’s faith «being kindled and growing more and more». (211.41–46) He uses election twice in relation to circumcision and baptism, as in the First Helvetic Confession. This is not typical of Zwingli’s use of election, nor of its wider use in reference to the sacraments in the Zurich Agreement. There are other elements, such as the stress on God’s promises and the sacraments as seals, which are characteristic of Bullinger, but not of Zwingli. (205.35, 206.12, 14, 38–39, 209.14, 210.20–21, 214.4)

The various differences between the Confession and Zwingli’s presentation of the sacraments are clear evidence that the Confession is not Zwinglian.⁴⁶ It is, however, possible that Zwingli could have affirmed it, as it safeguarded the major concerns which he expressed. Despite their differences, Zwingli’s later works and the Confession have a family likeness.

5 Conclusion – Bullinger and Zwingli

One of the clearest differences in sacramental theology between Zwingli and Bullinger is that in Bullinger it is God who is the subject of the sacraments. This is manifest in each of the confessions, though more obviously in 1549 (articles 7, 8, 12–14) and 1556 (articles 19 and 20) than in the brief exposition in article 20 in 1536. It is this which is most striking, along with the contrast between the essentially positive presentation of the sacraments in the confessions and the largely negative presentations, even in Zwingli’s later writings.

There are other differences, most notably the role of election and that of the Holy Spirit. Election is used by Zwingli in defence of infant baptism, but not in his exposition of the sacraments nor in particular of their effectiveness. It is, however, used in all these confessions. In the first and third it is used only in relation to baptism. In the Agreement, however, it is used of the sac-

⁴⁵ Bühler (p. 231) argues that what Bullinger says about sacramental eating is far from the disputes between Zwingli and Luther. See P. Bühler, Bullinger als Systematiker – am Beispiel der Confessio Helvetica Posterior, *Zwingli* 31 (2004) 215–35. In *Exposition of the Faith*, however, Zwingli uses the term sacramental eating positively, though not as explicitly as Bullinger. Bullinger says that the communicant enjoys the thing itself, whereas Zwingli says, «you eat him sacramentally . . . when you do inwardly what you perform outwardly, when your heart is refreshed by this faith to which you bear witness by the symbols». Zwingli’s concern is to repudiate an eating «naturally or in substance». His emphasis is, therefore, on us and our faith and only secondarily on our then receiving his forgiveness (Z VI/V 147.3–12, 149.15–150.4, 145.5–7).

⁴⁶ For widely differing views of how Zwinglian or how Calvinian the Confession is, see for example Koch, *Theologie* 326–27.

raments in general to indicate those in whom the sacraments are effective. Calvin's use of it in his correspondence with Bullinger (CO 35.701) probably accounts for its much larger role in the Agreement in articles 16 and 17.

There is no reference to the role of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments in 1536. This is surprising given Bucer's part in revising the Confession. By contrast the role of the Spirit is prominent in the Agreement (articles 8, 12, 15, 16, and 23) and also in the Second Helvetic Confession (articles 19–21). The Holy Spirit has an important role in both Bucer's and Calvin's understanding of the sacraments, but Bullinger was not necessarily dependent on them. It is at least as likely that he was influenced by Augustine. Of course, the sense that everything is dependent on the Spirit is common to Bullinger and Zwingli.

One of the more surprising differences between Bullinger and Zwingli is in the use of the word instrument (*instrumentum*). Bullinger criticizes the use of the word and avoids it, even in the Zurich Agreement, where he accepts the word *organum*. For him the word instrument implies that the sacraments have something of their own, apart from God. Zwingli, however, has no difficulty with the word instrument because of his insistence that God is the cause of all things. He sees people and things as instruments and not causes. What is attributed to them comes in fact from God not them. Indeed he gives precisely the example of the sun as an instrument (Z VI/III 112.18–113.5, 165.5–16) which Calvin was later to give in response to Bullinger's unease with the term instrument. (CO 35.704) This difference may relate to their different understanding of God's sovereignty. For Zwingli God's sovereignty meant that God was the cause of all things, even of sin (Z VI/III 187.8–11). Bullinger, by contrast, repudiated a view of God's sovereignty which would make him the author of sin.

The similarities as well as the differences between Zwingli and Bullinger can be seen in their use of inward and outward and comparable terms. Zwingli draws from Augustine his strong sense of the sovereignty of God, who acts inwardly in drawing people, while we act outwardly with our planting and watering, as well as the difference between eating inwardly in the heart and outwardly with the teeth. Zwingli contrasts the outward and the inward, emphasising the necessity of what God does inwardly. The stress on God's sovereignty and freedom raises the question whether the outward is really necessary. In his comment on Luke 6:13, Zwingli asks what need Christ has of apostles, if people do not believe unless God draws them inwardly. He answers partly in terms of what God wills and partly in terms of the way we are made: we are not angels, but have outward senses. (S VI/I 582.18–28) Elsewhere in 1531 he states that what God does in the heart, he does through instruments, such as the apostles whom he sent to preach. (Z XI 476.25–28)

Zwingli accepted the Marburg article on the outward word which says that the Spirit «effects and creates faith through and with the spoken word». His belief, however, in the freedom of the Spirit was safeguarded by the fact that it is the Spirit not the word who effects faith and the statement that he does so «where and in whom he wills». (Z VI/II 522.12–17) The contrast between inward and outward is related to Zwingli’s conviction that «God alone can purify the soul or inward man», otherwise salvation would be at our disposal, for we can do outward things such as baptism. (Z IV 267.1–9) He raised this objection in 1525, when rejecting the view that at the same time as we administer the sacraments to someone, what they signify happens inwardly. (Z III 761.1–8)

Zwingli’s concern to maintain the sovereignty of God in our salvation led to great caution in what he said about word and sacrament as well as the ministry. To him Roman and Lutheran views of the sacraments put salvation at our disposal and were, therefore, a return to Judaism. This led him, quite apart from his neo-platonism, sharply to distinguish the outward and the inward, and to lay the stress on the inward. He could, however, affirm the outward, as long as the freedom of the Spirit was safeguarded, as in the Marburg articles.

The Augustinian parallel of outward and inward was, of course, used by other Reformers. Bucer used it from the beginning and in the early 1530s used it positively, as he did in describing Zwingli’s position in 1536. Bullinger stood broadly in the same Augustinian tradition. The sense of the Spirit’s working inwardly is present in the Zurich Confession (HBBW 4.423.54, 426.139–143) as is the Zwinglian statement that the Spirit draws, as he wills, sometimes without, sometimes with the instrument. (HBBW 4.423.54, 426.139–43, 427.175–77)⁴⁷ Although the words inward and outward are not used in the First Helvetic Confession, the fifteenth article expresses what underlies them. It features in 1549 and 1566.⁴⁸

Two factors, at least, led Bullinger to a more positive relation of the outward and inward than Zwingli: his positive presentation of what the sacraments are and of what God does in them, and the need, both theological and political, to seek unity with the other Swiss churches as well as with Luther. The latter led to an accommodation with others, as it had done with Zwingli

⁴⁷ It also uses analogy to describe the sacraments, which is comparable with the parallel of inward and outward. (425.126–426.130)

⁴⁸ Gerrish argues (pp. 239–40) for three expressions of eucharistic theology in Reformed Confessions – symbolic memorialism (Zwingli), symbolic parallelism (Bullinger), and symbolic instrumentalism (Calvin). (In the second and third there is communion with Christ in the Lord’s Supper.) He holds that in *Exposition of Faith* Zwingli’s symbolic interpretation «is developed in the direction of a kind of parallelism». B. A. Gerrish, *The Lord’s Supper in the Reformed Confessions*, in: *Theology Today* 23 (1966) 224–43.

at and after Marburg. The accommodation could be achieved, as in 1549, by a careful balance of emphasis. Contact with Calvin, however, perhaps not least his insistence on God's truthfulness, enabled Bullinger to stress, more than he might otherwise have done, the conjunction as well as the distinction between the outward and the inward.

Interpretation is governed by our perception of others. When a theologian is perceived as essentially on or not on your side, then he is interpreted in the light of that. This was true of Bullinger's perception at different points of Bucer and Calvin, as it was of their view of Zwingli. Bucer interpreted Zwingli's view of the sacrament positively in 1536, a year notable for his closer association with Luther. Bullinger asserted the continuity of Zwingli's teaching with his and the Zurich Confession in 1534 (HBBW 4.370.3–371.9) and with Calvin and the Zurich Agreement in 1554 (CO 43.276–278). Calvin also, despite his earlier criticism of Zwingli's views, affirmed that Zwingli would not have changed the Zurich Agreement. (CO 37.11) That could be true, but it is equally true that in their different ways the Confessions of 1536, 1549, and 1566 show important differences between Zwingli and Bullinger as well as continuity.

Abstract

The article considers how far Bullinger is Zwinglian in his understanding of the sacraments by reference to the three Confessions of 1536, 1549, and 1566. It does this by examining first Zwingli's later writings on the sacraments, to which Bullinger refers, and then each of the Confessions. The Zurich Agreement is set in context by an analysis of the correspondence between Bullinger and Calvin. Much of what Zwingli wrote is concerned with what the sacraments are not, whereas the Confessions are more concerned with what they are. In the Confessions, moreover, God is the subject of the sacraments, and there is a clear conjunction as well as a distinction between the sign and what it signifies. The article shows the continuity between Zwingli and Bullinger as well as the important differences.

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