

HULDRYCH ZWINGLI: REFORMATION IN CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT. The Swiss reformer Huldrych Zwingli was a pioneering and domineering voice during the early sixteenth century, especially at the genesis of the Protestant Reformation. Despite his stature, Reformation historiography has sadly relegated Zwingli to a lesser status behind reformers such as Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, and John Calvin. However, his contribution to the changing religious ethos of Reformation Europe was pivotal, yet always accompanied by controversy. In fact, this essay will argue that almost all of the Reformation gains made by Zwingli over the course of roughly twenty-five years of ministry took place through conflict. All the Protestant reformers experienced an element of conflict as a part of their work. Such was the nature of religious renewal and reform in the sixteenth century. Still, conflict not only facilitated and drove Zwingli's Reformation, but was also a theme woven throughout his life. And in Zwingli's case war was both figurative and literal. His battles moved well beyond those of his contemporary reformers. Beginning with his haunting experiences as a young chaplain in the Swiss army and culminating with his early death on the battlefield at Kappel, conflict shaped Zwingli's life, ministry and theology. His was a life characterized by volatility; his Reformation was contested every step of the way. As a portrait of Zwingli emerges against the historic backdrop of war, division and strife, his lasting contributions to the convictions and practices of Protestantism, especially in Baptist and Presbyterian life, should become apparent.

KEY WORDS: Reformation, Reformed, Swiss, Zürich, Zwingli

Introduction

The date was 11 October 1531 and the scene could hardly have been more gruesome. The once tranquil Swiss countryside was littered with the dead and the dying. The stench of death mingled with the moans and cries of those clinging to life. Amid the carnage lay the bloody, lifeless body of Huldrych Zwingli. The fiery Swiss preacher, emboldened by his desire for a faith free from idolatry, had led the armies of Zürich into a battle against the Roman Catholic forces at Kappel. Zwingli's hope in this military ad-

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vancement was clear from the outset – expanding the reach of the gospel in his native Swiss lands. That prospect was now crushed under the weight of a violent, costly defeat at the hands of the Roman Catholic forces. The very Romanists he had chided from Swiss pulpits for nearly a decade had silenced Zwingli's prophetic voice.

Ironically, this unnerving scene mirrored the life of a man seemingly always in conflict. In fact, the battle that took his life in October 1531 ended a life characterized by strife. To understand the life and ministry of Huldrych Zwingli is to journey through a series of struggles that began when he was as an obscure Swiss chaplain and ended after he had become the 'people's preacher' of arguably the most powerful church in the Swiss Confederation. Zwingli grew in his understanding and appropriation of the gospel along the way. During this time, he also developed his own unique brand of Reformed Covenantal theology years before John Calvin ever stepped foot in Geneva. Moreover, Zwingli cast a unique picture of what Reformation should look like in Zürich, a city the reformer would forever be linked to in history. The gospel became central in all of his reforming efforts. Yet, Zwingli's stewardship of and proclamation of the gospel was always tempered by painful losses and combative encounters. Friendships were made and broken. Conflict was a constant. Such was that nature of Zwingli's life and ministry.

Idyllic Beginnings

For a life that ended in such a violent manner it could not have begun more peaceably. Ulrich Zwingli was born on New Year's Day 1484 in Wildhaus, a small Swiss village nestled at the foot of the imposing Toggenburg Mountains. Zwingli's given birth name was Ulrich. However, later in life he preferred the spelling Huldrych, which means 'rich in grace' (Gordon 2015: 160). Such a change embodied the many personal changes to come from his childhood. He was born into a farming family, so his youth was spent in a rustic setting. Though few details from Zwingli's youth have emerged, all evidence suggests a typical childhood. Therefore, one can only imagine the adventures of a boy growing up in the outdoors against the backdrop of a picturesque Swiss countryside. Thus, the struggle for survival in a harsh late-Medieval world must have been partially tempered by the exploits of a naive, energetic boy. While sparse historical evidence leaves one to wonder about Zwingli's childhood activities, his early experiences with Roman Catholicism would have been traditional. The village church served as the center of society and its cultural reach permeated all aspects of life. Swiss life in Wildhaus was liturgically ordered. Therefore, Zwingli the boy consumed a steady diet of Roman Catholic dogma alongside all the trappings of Rome's ceremony. This was all he knew and it would greatly shape his early years.

Apart from farming, Zwingli's father also served as a local magistrate. Thus, the family had close connections with and an influence over the community. Life in a rural village like Wildhaus also naturally fostered a strong sense of *Gemeinde*, or 'community' (Potter 1976: 10). Lives and livelihoods were interwoven in a society where people were dependent upon one another. Thus, Zwingli learned valuable lessons early on about the importance of community, civil authorities and the fragile, tenuous relationship between the two. These were ideas that undoubtedly shaped his views of the social structuring of church and state in Zürich later in life.

Family circumstance and monetary hopes charted a clerical course for Zwingli at the dawning of the sixteenth century. Once it was determined that Huldrych should set himself toward the priesthood, Zwingli was sent to his uncle Bartholomew, a priest in nearby Wessen, who began Huldrych's primary schooling. Although farming was the family livelihood, tilling the land provided well for the household. Thus, with parents of some financial means, the family was later able to send Huldrych to Basel so that he could be trained in the Latin letters. At the turn of the century Zwingli secured educational stints in Vienna and at the University of Basel where he was awarded a degree in 1506. Zwingli ascended toward the priesthood undeterred and with no evidence of deviation from Roman Catholicism. He was ordained that same year in 1506. Shortly thereafter Zwingli took up a position as a priest in Glarus.

A War Never Forgotten

While foreign to modern perceptions of Switzerland, soldiers were the chief Swiss export during the late-Medieval and Early Modern Periods. Swiss men were employed as agents of war, mercenaries whose exemplary military skills served the highest bidder. This frequently meant enlisting in the Pope's army or fighting for some foreign entity like France, as boundaries were redrawn by competing powers. The Confederation's mercenary economy invaded Zwingli's pastoral world during his time at Glarus. Serving as a chaplain to Swiss soldiers, Zwingli escorted his fellow countrymen into the Battles at Novara in 1513 and Marignano in 1515. Both campaigns ended with Swiss soldiers spilling their blood in Northern Italy for interests irrelevant to the Confederation. Often this meant Swiss on Swiss violence. Zwingli was left to shepherd those dying on the battlefield. Simultaneously he was trying to understand the horror of seeing so many young Swiss countrymen die for the political ambitions of others.

The devastation Zwingli witnessed on Italian soil compelled him to write against the mercenary trade. Two of his earliest literary works, *The Fable of the Ox* and *The Labyrinth*, were allegorical attacks on the industry as a whole (Jackson 1986: 27-34 and 50-54). While he decried the immoral nature of

the mercenary business, his overall argument became more biblically founded with the latter of the two works and less political in apology. This move toward a theological argumentation coincided with and provides evidence of a shift toward the priest's immersion into the Scriptures while at Glarus. Still, the virulent disdain Zwingli had for the Swiss mercenary enterprise did not drive him to pacifism. Both his later writings against Anabaptist non-resistance and his willingness to take up arms against Roman Catholic forces at the end of his life demonstrate as much. Thus, Zwingli was concerned that the Swiss avoid foreign entanglements, not armed conflict altogether (Potter 1976: 35-36).

Zwingli's personal war with the Swiss mercenary commerce yielded fruit later when he became committed to the Reformation. It certainly helped prepare the parish priest to hone his biblical arguments toward a future enemy—the idolatry of Roman Catholicism. Of greater importance though, is how this entire experience informed his developing views on the sacraments. When Zwingli eventually recast both baptism and the Lord's Supper during the Zürich Reformation, the Swiss preacher employed military imagery that radically modified the understanding of these two rites. Amid his efforts to reform the Zürich Church in the early-1520s, Zwingli initially retained the Roman Catholic notion that God acted in the sacraments, even as he jettisoned the idea that this activity was salvific. However, by 1525 the Swiss preacher reversed his position entirely. Continuing to maintain his belief that the sacraments were oaths, Zwingli later contended that baptism and the Supper were pledges made by individuals, not by God. Moreover, the person that offered their *Pfand*, or pledge, did so in two directions: toward the local faith community and toward God. This idea was clearly evidenced in Zwingli's work, *Of Baptism*, where he argued the following:

If a man sews on a white cross, he proclaims that he is a Confederate. And if he makes the pilgrimage to Nähenfels and gives God praise and thanksgiving for the victory vouchsafed to our forefathers, he testifies that he is a Confederate indeed. Similarly, 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. And the man who in the remembrance or Supper gives thanks to God in the congregation testifies to the fact that from the very heart he rejoices in the death of Christ and thanks him for it (Zwingli 1979: 131).

Here, the pledge of an individual person was emphasized. Donning Swiss dress and making a pilgrimage to the site of a key Swiss battle that established the Confederation, both purposeful signs of allegiance, became images of the human commitment made both to the church and to Christ (McGrath 2012: 175). The fruits of this ecclesiological shift would have consequences later once the division between Zwingli and Martin Luther

emerged in the late 1520s. This position also had a lasting impact in history, for both the Reformed and Baptist traditions largely retained this understanding of the sacraments. Still, to arrive at this modified position, a new reading of Scripture was required. This necessitated an acceptance of Renaissance humanism, which would come as Zwingli's time at Glarus ended and a new post at Einsiedeln began.

Shifting Commitments

Huldrych Zwingli likely engaged with Renaissance humanism when studying at Basel. However, it was during his time at Glarus from 1506-1516 that he became committed to the movement. This decision not only directed his thought moving forward, but would also shape the rest of his life. At its core, Renaissance humanism was a method of learning based upon an intellectual investment in ancient sources. The goal of humanist pedagogy was not to see the writings from antiquity as a treasure chest preserving ancient truth, but as an access point to ideas, learning, and argumentation that could direct both the thought and actions of people in their contemporary sixteenth century world (Baschera, Gordon, and Moser 2014: especially page 12). Sometime during 1515 or 1516, Zwingli met the Prince of the Humanists, Desiderius Erasmus. Here, the Dutch thinker's impression on Zwingli was undeniable, especially the biblical and Christocentric themes that guided Zwingli toward his later reforming ideas once in Zürich (Stephens 1986: 9-10). The exposure to humanism in general and Erasmus in particular set the stage for Zwingli's future battles with Roman Catholicism, which the preacher never could have foreseen.

Zwingli's immersion in the sources, especially the Bible, radically altered the Swiss priest's life in two substantive and enduring ways. His exploration of the Bible birthed in Zwingli a voracious love of learning, especially the original biblical languages. Given his circumstances, Zwingli set about a rigorous plan to teach himself the biblical languages and theology (Head 2017: 170). Erasmus' *Novum Instrumentum* greatly aided him in this endeavor, but so too did his immersion in the church fathers. Once his proficiency in the original languages of Scripture was wed with his appropriation of a historical, critical hermeneutic, Zwingli was loosed from the shackles of scholastic theology (Stephens 1994: 15). As Timothy George rightly argues, 'this spadework [the study of Scripture and the fathers] would later bear fruit in Zwingli's powerful expository preaching and biblical exegesis' (George 2013: 116). A change in theology and a future war with scholastic theology was inevitable.

Drinking from both Scripture and the church fathers dramatically altered Zwingli's personal life as well. For a number of years, the Swiss priest engaged in sexual affairs with women, especially during his time at Glarus

(Stark 2004: 92). Admittedly, clerical use of concubines was not only prevalent, but had a place of common acceptance in the late-medieval world (Plummer 2012: 11-50). Still, the Bible's teaching on morality began to stir conviction in Zwingli's heart. Sometime during his time in Einsiedeln (1516-1518) Zwingli set aside his fornicating ways. Although he later secretly married his former mistress, Anna Reinhard, it was clear that the Word was stirring change in the future reformer. The Bible was also beginning to set him on a collision course of conflict with time-honored ecclesiastical traditions: clerical celibacy and a customary tithing that permitted concubinage. However, that would be a battle undertaken while at Zürich.

A Revolutionary Departure from the Clerical Norm

Zwingli's persistent opposition to the mercenary trade and his developing skills in homiletics, evidenced during pastoral stints at Glarus and Einsiedeln, created a major detour in the reformer's life in late 1518. The prestigious position of *Leutpriester* ('people's priest') had come available in Zürich. Despite some opposition, Zwingli was awarded the honor of serving the Zürich community at the end of 1518. Once Zwingli began his work at Zürich on 1 January 1519, things were decidedly different; his priestly program deviated from the standard clerical norm.

Zwingli's pulpit ministry strayed from historic patterns in at least three major areas, all of which unwittingly helped to propel Zürich toward the Reformation. First, Zwingli instituted a preaching program that jettisoned the standard pericope in favor of *lectio continua*, an expositional, verse-by-verse style of biblical instruction, which he first employed in Matthew's Gospel (Packull 1995: 18). This was no small shift, but a dramatic reforming innovation. Though commonplace in modernity, expositional preaching was out of step with the conventional, time-honored means of the lectionary reading (Snively 1998: 250). This new style harkened back to the days of the golden-tongued Patristic preacher, John Chrysostom, and was clearly influenced by Erasmus (Gordon 2002: 51).

Second, even as the Swiss preacher's sermons were laden with biting, anti-mercenary attacks, he expanded the antagonism of his proclamation to include anti-clerical themes. Of chief concern here was Zwingli's maturing understanding and promotion of an evangelical understanding of the gospel. As Bruce Gordon has argued, 'From the pulpit he took on the 'enemies of the Gospel' and named them. They were priests, monks and even bishops, whose adherence to the material rewards of the church blinded them to the spiritual nature of God' (Gordon 2002: 52). Once again Erasmus' influence is easily discerned, as Zwingli placed a great emphasis on the inner person and morality. People in the Zürich community were exhorted to lives of repentance and moral improvement. That was what a proper un-

derstanding of the gospel produced in God's people who were exposed to true biblical prescriptions. This stood in stark contrast to the picture polemically painted by Zwingli of an immoral and temporally concerned clergy that had strayed from God. Zwingli began to see the Zürich community as the people of God, just as Israel had been in the Old Testament. Therefore, the gospel ushered in both individual and communal renewal.

Third, part of Zwingli's commitment to shepherding the Zürich faithful, meant giving the people access to the Great Shepherd's voice, Jesus Christ. This came not only in his repeated Christocentric readings of the Old Testament, but also in the preacher's willingness to allow the Bible to be read and studied in lay settings. In the early 1520s lay Bible study meetings, like the famous Andreas Castelberger and Johannes Kessler groups, began sprouting up (Roth and Stayer 2007: 49). While it is unclear if these groups formed at Zwingli's suggestion, at minimum he was ambivalent toward these assemblies. Zwingli's work to bring the *Zürcher Bibel* (or *Zwinglibibel*) to print in 1525 through Christoph Froschauer suggests he was favorably disposed to letting the Word do its work among the Zürich populace in the German vernacular (Locher 1979: 95-98). And work it did.

Each of the aforementioned ideas radically cast aside the traditions of Roman Catholicism. However, they also engendered a sense of excitement and religious renewal. The steady preaching of the evangelical gospel, paired with the saturation of the Bible into the people's lives, was changing the community. Those promotions made Zwingli allies and enemies in the faith. Yet, even as Zwingli's departure from the liturgical status quo injected a spiritual vitality into the community, it was not without unintended consequences. One would produce perhaps the most painful personal break in Zwingli's life with the Anabaptists; the other served as the catalyst to Reformation in Zürich. But before those effects were realized, Zwingli faced yet another battle, this time with a deadly opponent.

A Battle for Life Itself

Plague besieged Zürich in 1519 just as Zwingli began serving in his new post as *Leutpriester*. The Black Death was a mortal threat throughout both the late medieval and early modern periods. Roughly a third of the population was lost to plague, meaning all aspects of life were affected by its presence (Lindberg 2010: 26). Cities befallen by plague became wastelands of mortality ravaged by sickness and suffering. And while plague refused to discriminate on the basis of one's privilege or station in life, it was especially dangerous for priests. These were the men entrusted with the care of God's people, especially at that crucial moment when death transitioned one to the afterlife. Accordingly, Zwingli was put directly in harm's way.

In September 1519, Zwingli's body was attacked by plague. While he had previously ministered to those dying of the illness in years past, nothing prepared him for the life-altering experience of his own dance with death. As the Swiss autumn gave way to the chill of winter in Zürich, the coldness of death became increasingly palpable for Zwingli. Over the course of several months, plague ravaged the preacher's body as he struggled to survive. Yet, as Spring brought renewal to the Swiss countryside, so too was life slowly restored to the Swiss preacher's body. Even though plague had a nearly one hundred percent fatality rate, Zwingli cheated death.

Reminiscing on this battle with death, Zwingli later penned a song recounting this experience as he clung to life. A portion of his reflections was as follows:

Help, Lord God, help in this trouble!
 I think death is at the door.
 Stand before me, Christ, for you have overcome him
 To you I cry: If it is your will, take out the dart that wounds me,
 nor lets me have an hour's rest or repose.
 Will you, however, that death take me in the midst of my days, so let it be.
 Do what you will, nothing shall be too much for me.
 Your vessel am I, to make or break altogether (Hendrix 2009: 183-184).

Clinging to life physically, Zwingli learned an important spiritual lesson about releasing life to the providential hand of God. The Lord could be trusted in life, just as He could be trusted in death. The reformer's willingness to cede his fate to God is striking. Though the fullest expressions of Zwingli's position on the sovereignty of God would not come until his July 1531 work, *An Exposition of the Faith*, early seeds of this idea had their provenance in this fateful near death encounter (Jackson 1983: 235-293). In the end, the lyrics of this 'Plague Song' reveal just how formative that personal struggle was for the shaping of Zwingli's later theology.

A Battle over Sausage

Zwingli's rise in the priesthood had been the family plan from his earliest days of obscurity growing up in Wildhaus. Still, none could have envisioned that he would hold a prestigious clerical post at the illustrious *Grossmünster Kirche* or that he would become a famous Protestant reformer. The Swiss preacher's detour away from clerical anonymity came through a debate over eating sausages during Lent in 1522. Although Zwingli did not partake during this offense, his encouraging words incited the activity. He subsequently defended the act from the pulpit on the basis of a 'Christian freedom'. This shift away from externals and toward internals was emblematic of Zwingli's appropriation and proclamation of the evangelical gospel. It

was not any particular food that made a person right before God; it was his or her faith. This mentality soon extended into controversial issues like clerical celibacy, images, praying to the saints, and the Mass. Given his preaching from the Scriptures, these issues resonated with the people who were, in turn, beginning to push for reform. Internal heart changes were about to birth external changes for the Zürich Church.

The years 1522 and 1523 saw significant advancement in the gospel, but not without sacrifice and struggle. Given the religious unrest in Zürich, the Bishop of Constance turned his ire toward the city. Consequently, in 1522 Zwingli penned his first major apologetic confession of faith, *Archeteles*, as a response to the bishop's condemnation of Zürich's changing ethos (Jackson 1984: 197-292). Zwingli also continued to promote the advancement of non-clerical interpretation of the Bible through his writing, *The Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God* (Bromiley 1953: 59-95). Such activity garnered the preacher favor among a growing portion of the Zürich populace. However, it also raised concerns from outside the region, as Zwingli faced mounting charges of heresy from the Bishop and Roman Catholic apologists. Moreover, once Zwingli set aside his clerical benefice, the Zürich Council moved swiftly to create an office so that he might continue his preaching duties at the *Grossmünster Kirche* (Snively Jr. 1993: 33-45). This move was politically expedient for the Council, but posed subsequent problems for the civil authorities in the city. Shortly thereafter, Zürich was accused of promoting Luther's fanatical ideas at the Diet of Baden in late 1522. Here, the Zürich Council was chastised for not ousting their fiery, rogue preacher. Tensions were beginning to boil over as the situation for both Zwingli and the civil authorities was arguably at its most tenuous.

Amid the volatility, Zwingli labored alongside the civil magistrates to help bring stability to the situation by utilizing a well-known medium of discourse, the *Gespräch* ('disputation'). While verbal debate over theological matters extended back into the New Testament era, the *Gespräch* was largely used during the Middle Ages in academic settings as a means of shared discourse over contested matters (Thilo 1985: 148-150). However, Zwingli masterfully employed this same medium of debate in a public dialogue as a mechanism of reform. The First Zürich Disputation convened in January 1523 and attended to the growing charges against Zwingli, who even set the agenda for the discussions with his famous *67 Articles* (Furcha 1984). Despite modern perceptions of debates, these Reformation disputations were by no means unbiased; their rulings were almost always pre-determined. Thus, not surprisingly, Zwingli was absolved of any error as the disputation closed. The magistrates even permitted the continued preaching of the Word of God in Zürich. While the Council was clearly pushing for a *via media* with the use of ambiguous language regarding preaching, this was a tremendous

boon for Zwingli and the cause of the gospel. Although the Reformation would not be fully realized with the abolition of the Roman Mass until two years later in April 1525, a path toward formally establishing the Reformation in Zürich had been charted (Cameron 2012: 251). The Word of God would be the guiding light for the community and Zwingli would carry the lamp.

Partners in the Gospel Made and Lost

Following the First Zürich Disputation, another battle loomed on the horizon. This fight brought painful, personal consequences for Zwingli. The fruit of Zwingli's successful work since early 1523 grew from his advancement of the Scriptures among the people of Zürich. Those same informal, in-home Bible study groups that once agitated the religious status quo now continued the promotion of reform into the latter part of 1523. Given the paltry literacy rate, Zwingli built a stable of young, vibrant students to help lead in the expansion of Reformation ideas among the broader Zürich populace. Zwingli trained these gifted Renaissance humanists how to read the Word of God. These men were his students and they were his close partners in the gospel and the work of the Reformation.

Despite this shared work, questions about the pace of reform soon sowed seeds of division between 'Master Huldrych' and his students. After the First Zürich Disputation, unrest began to grow especially in the rural communes. A chorus of demands from rural churches desiring to be loosed from the oppressive tithe, paired with violent outburst of iconoclasm and the emptying of monastic orders, to create social and religious tumult (Goertz 1996: 10-11). As events spiraled out of control, a rift eventually became manifest at the Second Zürich Disputation in October 1523. At the conclusion of that debate, Zwingli relinquished to the City Council the final decision to formally move on religious issues like abolishing the Mass, the removal of images, and any deviations away from infant baptism. This judgment left the Swiss preacher's students in an uproar. Forced to walk a mediating position between the unbridled advancement of the gospel and the long-term viability of the Reformation, Zwingli opted for a path of political expediency where both might be realized in measured forms. On the other hand, his students wanted to move swiftly based on their understanding of God's Word and its superior authority. If the Bible was clear on certain matters, then changes needed to be made immediately and without reservation. In reality, both Zwingli and his students shared a belief in the authority of Scripture. However, their personal experiences and disparate visions about reform were slowly revealing two contrasting interpretations and applications of the biblical text.

Zwingli perceived that the Reformation was still in its infancy. Accordingly, he believed that without the civil authorities' support any hope of lasting reform would be lost. Thus, he began to subtly modify his hermeneutic, which led to the development of his 'Rule of Faith and Love' principle. The 'norm of love', as Zwingli argued in a letter from late 1524, was to be a guiding axiom in how the Bible was to be read and appropriated (Harder 1985: 304). In his 1527 anti-Anabaptist work, *Elenchus*, citing both Matthew 13: 24-30 and 18: 21-22, Zwingli later contended that Jesus 'shows that there are some things at which fraternal love may wink' (Jackson 1972: 182). Given his retention of the *corpus Christianum* ('territorial church'), certain concessions had to be made for a Swiss Church that functioned in a preglorified era. Therefore, Christian *charitas* (charity) was to direct both Scriptural interpretation and the practical application of Reformation. The larger aims of unity, order and stability for the church and state demanded as much. Zwingli's students were asking for that which was imprudent if not altogether impossible.

Zwingli's detractors, led by Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, Balthasar Hubmaier and Simon Stumpf, bristled at the pragmatic compromise made at the Second Zürich Disputation. Was the Bible not clear on the matters addressed at the disputation? More importantly, was the Word of God not a superior authority standing above the civil magistrates? Zwingli's reluctance to push the reform in Zürich toward what his understudies believed was a logical conclusion, led them to chide the reformer for this unexpected political pivot. In a December 1523 letter to Joachim Vadian, Conrad Grebel, recounting his growing frustration with Zwingli, lamented the following:

The cause of the gospel is in a very bad way here (if you can still believe a mistrusted one rather than a liar), and it began when you with senatorial foresight served as president when the consultation was held. On that occasion (God sees and it is in his ears), the Word was overthrown, set back, and bound by its most learned heralds' (Harder 1985: 275-276).

Thus, as Hans-Jürgen Goertz has astutely recognized, 'The watchword of *sola scriptura* thus not only united the Reformation's supporters... it divided them as well' (Goertz 2008: 587).

The biblicism of these future Anabaptists made fracture imminent and undeniable (Packull 1995: 31-32). By 1524 Zwingli understood that Grebel's and Manz's new reading of Scripture was leading them to gather a 'new church', one distinct from the Swiss State Church (Egli 1905: 207). Zwingli's erstwhile followers were paving a different path, one that eventually led the group toward a separatist, believers' church ecclesiology (Eccher 2014). The increased derision Zwingli incurred on a personal level reflected the ecclesiastical division that was unfolding institutionally. Once Grebel, Manz, and

Georg Blaurock reinstated believers' baptism on 25 January 1525, Zwingli was compelled to act (Williams 1957: 41-46). Here, the reformer unleashed a polemical fervor against these radicals in both word and deed.

In 1526, Zwingli worked closely with the city council to make rebaptism a crime punishable by death, based in large part upon a historic link between rebaptism and the Donatist heresy (Eire 2016: 248). Less than a year later that legal statute led Zwingli to do what would have been unthinkable only a few years earlier. On 5 January 1527, Zwingli oversaw the public drowning of Felix Manz, his former student and friend who had betrayed his teacher by playing a key role in the re-baptisms of 1525. Heinrich Bullinger, himself a pupil of Zwingli, recorded the details of Manz's 'second baptism' (Bullinger 1839: 382). The ripples of water on the Limmat River had only just subsided following Manz's execution when Zwingli began publishing scathing works against the new Anabaptist heresy. These writings culminated in a July 1527 work entitled *Elenchus*, which was his most exhaustive and polemical work against the radicals to date. This was penned largely in response to the *Schleitheim Confession*, the first Anabaptist confession of faith (Fast 1962: 60-71). It was also an attempt to snuff out the 'hidden ulcer' that Anabaptism presented to the Swiss Church despite the radical movement's loss of leadership (Harder 1980: 54). Although Zwingli continued to battle the Anabaptist heresy, this was to be the preacher's last word in print on the matter. It also closed the chapter on what had been one of the most painfully and personally grueling battles of his life. Yet, this was a chapter that had a profound impact on history, for it forced Zwingli to consider further his biblical convictions.

Conflict and Covenantal Theology

Zwingli's encounters with the Anabaptists undoubtedly left emotional scars given his earlier affinity for several of the movement's key leaders. Beyond those fractured relationships, the Anabaptists' rise served to refine and nuance Zwingli's later theology. At the heart of Zwingli's emerging beliefs was an important premise regarding the relationship between the two covenants, the Old and New Testaments. The New Testament Scriptures were an important weapon that he regularly employed to confront the idolatry of Rome. For instance, while introducing the findings of the Second Zürich Disputation in late 1523, Zwingli cleverly drew a parallel between the Roman Catholic priestly work during the Mass and the activity of the priests in the Old Testament. He subsequently argued from the Pauline Epistles and the book of Hebrews that the Old Testament sacrifices were 'only a figure of the coming Christ, the true Priest', which if continued presently only served to veil the true gospel (Harder 1985: 264). On the surface this might first appear to imply discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments, but

Zwingli's position was more nuanced than that. A sermon from July 1522 shows that earlier in the month Zwingli made a strong case not only for continuity between the two covenants, but also that the Old Testament was not to be abolished (Locher 1969: 96-97). In truth, this was Zwingli falling into the trap of proof-texting, which was common among all the reformers. The inconsistency of the reformers' hermeneutic was their consistency when defending their Protestant convictions. The Bible was made to work for them. Thus, when it served Zwingli's greater purpose to undercut the Roman Catholics, he highlighted the priority of the New Testament.

However, the Anabaptist rise in the mid-1520s required a different argumentation, for their reform program was largely based on a New Testament foundation (Packull 1999: 15-32). Therefore, to rebut the radicals Zwingli started reaching back to the Old Testament as a means of retaining certain practices like infant baptism. Embroiled in the Anabaptists' push for more extensive reforms, Zwingli penned *Those Who Give Cause for Rebellion* in December 1524 (Egli 1914: 374-412). This was his first major polemic against his former students. It also came at the behest of Martin Bucer who had asked Zwingli months earlier to craft a biblical argument for the retention of infant baptism (Egli 1911: 243). Bucer's city of Strasbourg, much like Zürich, was awash with radicals. Thus, this was a pressing question for the Protestant lands in the Swiss Confederation. Citing covenant continuity, Zwingli contended that infant baptism served as a parallel to the Jewish rite of circumcision (Roth 1999: 37). This position served to answer the Anabaptists' repeated charges against Zwingli. It also fit rather nicely with the preacher's belief that Zürich was a theocratic representation of Israel, which was a supposition that drove his reform efforts (Walton 1967: 79).

Beyond his hermeneutical development, 1525 also saw Zwingli institute a new practical mechanism of reform. Here, Zwingli instituted the *Prophezei* (or *Zürich Lection*) a school of learned scholars proficient in biblical Hebrew who were to direct the interpretation of the Scriptures for the Zürich community (Hobbs 1985: 144-179 and Opitz 2008: 420-421). This school, along with his strategic shift toward an expository preaching rotation from the Old Testament, was designed to foster Zwingli's belief that continuity between the two covenants must direct the Swiss Church beginning in 1525. The overlap with the Anabaptists' reinstatement of believers' baptism in January 1525 was no coincidence. Thus, Zwingli's war with the Anabaptists did not change his theology. On the contrary, the encounter recast his thinking, bringing that which was previously implied explicitly to the fore (Lillback 2001: 90). Zwingli not only further nuanced this premise to combat the radicals over time, but also established it as the foundation upon which Heinrich Bullinger and John Calvin would later build their Reformed Covenan-

tal theology. Consequently, the Anabaptists unwittingly left more than a believers' church and believers' baptism as a part of their legacy.

A Protestant Crisis at Marburg

Shortly after addressing the Anabaptist problem Zwingli was forced to turn his attention toward Germany and the towering reformer, Martin Luther. In what became arguably the most famous theological dispute of Zwingli's career, the Swiss reformer found himself at odds with Luther. Ironically the contested issue, the Lord's Supper, was one that was supposed to embody unity. However, as the events at Marburg in 1529 demonstrated, unity proved elusive.

During the early 1520s, Zwingli began articulating a reading of Matthew 26: 26 that argued for a symbolic interpretation of Christ's instituting words. There is no question that part of Zwingli's position was rooted in a reaction to Roman Catholicism. He was averse both to the doctrine of transubstantiation and to seeing the sacraments functioning as a means of saving grace. However, Zwingli's position was not mere reaction; it was mostly a by-product of his humanistic hermeneutic. Drawing heavily from Erasmus, Zwingli believed that the *literal* meaning of the Bible was dictated by historical context. Since Jesus was physically present at the Supper's institution, any corporeal presence must be rejected. Also, following an argument from Augustine, Zwingli believed that, since Jesus was presently seated at the right hand of the Father awaiting the *parousia*, Jesus' physical presence in the elements was precluded (Zwingli 1979: 255). Zwingli's humanistic principles also highlighted the *natural* meaning of the text as a part of that *literal* interpretation of Scripture. This view emphasized the most straightforward and 'natural' rendering of the text given the immediate context. According to Zwingli, what could be more 'unnatural' than the thought of eating human flesh? Moreover, wasn't cannibalism a pagan ritual.

In light of these arguments Zwingli leaned heavily upon *alloiosis*, a rhetorical device that argued the word 'is' in Matthew 26: 26 was not meant to imply a corporeal presence (Cross 1996: 105-122). Rather, the proper intended reading of that Matthew text was 'signifies' or 'represents'. The Swiss reformer also relied heavily upon John 6: 63 where Jesus referenced the deficiency of the flesh. Stressing canonical context, Zwingli argued that the location of Jesus' words immediately after instructions about the Supper earlier in John 6 meant a literal, corporeal presence could not stand.

Luther was well acquainted with a non-corporeal argument given encounters with his former colleague at Wittenberg, Andreas Karlstadt (Burnett 2011). By early 1525, Luther was also aware of Zwingli's commitment to a non-physical interpretation following the Zürich reformer's first printed statement on the Supper. Nevertheless, Luther allowed surrogates like

Philip Melanchthon and Johannes Bugenhagen to offer the initial literary salvos at Zwingli. This matter was of little concern for Luther at first; his attention was diverted more toward the German Peasants' War. However, Zwingli's position on the Supper began to resonate with other prominent figures including the Strasbourg reformers, Martin Bucer and Wolfgang Capito, as well as Basel's reformer, Johannes Oecolampadius. The weight of Karlstadt's error spreading to the leading Swiss reformers was too much to bear and eventually Luther was forced to wade into the fracas over the Supper.

The next few years saw increased discussion and discord among the reformers over the Eucharist. Despite the Strasbourg reformers' repeated efforts to mediate an amenable understanding of the Supper, the lines of division between Luther and Zwingli became further entrenched, their polemics more personal and cutting. By late 1528 and early 1529, the issue had come to a head. Political maneuverings by the Roman Catholics at the Second Diet of Speyer and the looming threat of the Turks who were pressing toward Vienna necessitated a political alliance among the splintered reforming factions. Standing alone was not going to have the holding power of a unified Protestant front. Thus, the Marburg Colloquy was set to convene in early Fall 1529 at the behest of Landgrave Philip of Hesse.

As with most Reformation dialogues the contested issues at Marburg presented deep divisions. That Luther did not even want to attend demonstrated his lack of optimism that an accord on the Supper could be found even before the colloquy convened. This reality was exacerbated by the fact that individuals often talked past each other in these discussions. Sadly, this would be the case at Marburg. The early rounds of discussions saw Luther and Zwingli judiciously kept apart, for fear their volatile personalities might derail discussion from the outset. Once they eventually faced each other, the meeting climaxed in a clever act by the Wittenberg reformer, which embodied the theological differences between the two. Luther ceded the idea that the elements must be eaten 'spiritually' and only became efficacious when consumed 'by faith'. However, in the throes of a discussion about the location of Jesus' body post-ascension, Luther began to elucidate his doctrine of ubiquity. This belief contended that Jesus, as the divine Lord, was not bound in His glorified body to space and time; He could be physically present in multiple places at once. Zwingli chastised Luther for his failure to present such an outrageous assertion without Scriptural support. No sooner had Zwingli completed his verbal assault than Luther unveiled the Latin phrase *Hoc est corpus meum* ('this is my body'), which he had preemptively concealed in chalk on the table prior to the session (Brecht 1990: 329-331). Were not the Words of Jesus enough, Luther queried? This dramatic encounter highlighted the irreconcilable nature of the positions present at

Marburg. Luther was never going to depart from the notion of *promissio* ('promise'), a central theme in his theology, which dictated his corporeal reading of the text (Bayer 2008: 53). Likewise, Zwingli's humanistic hermeneutic was not going to allow him to read the text in any manner that allowed for Jesus' physical presence in the elements.

The issue of Jesus' presence was not the only thing that divided the reformers at Marburg. The issue of purpose was also at stake in this quarrel. Given that the sacraments were understood as divine accommodations that offered believers the assurance of their faith, Luther could hardly imagine anything being more assuring than the same body and blood of Jesus that once secured salvation for those in Christ. On the other hand, given Zwingli's belief that individuals pledge themselves in the sacraments, Jesus' bodily presence was both unnecessary and unwarranted. Such mistakenly drew attention away from the person who pledged themselves via the Supper to the community and Christ. A corporeal reading diverted attention away from the real meaning of the Supper. Partaking in the Supper was also not a mere memorial for Zwingli, as is often mistakenly portrayed. Given his affinity for Renaissance humanism, Zwingli believed that the Supper elicited a deep, visceral experience in the act of remembrance. As he contended, 'When in faith they eat his flesh and drink his blood and recognize that they are given to them as an assurance, then their sins are forgiven, as if Christ had only now died on the cross' (Stephens 1986: 230). Thus, the remembrance made the passion narratives come alive in a tangible and vibrant way. Consequently, recipients were naturally inclined to pledge themselves toward God and their local church community given the reality of Jesus' sacrifice.

The lasting legacy of Marburg is one of division. Luther and Zwingli departed from their battle at Marburg no closer than when they first arrived. Their verbal sparring had only deepened the division. Even as the reformers at Marburg agreed on fourteen of the fifteen doctrinal matters of Protestant theology discussed at the colloquy, they left divided and discouraged. As time continued, those committed to the views presented by Luther and Zwingli grew into factions characterized by their respective names. And while Luther's views on the Supper remain today in the Lutheran tradition, future adherents of Zwingli's understanding are found in the Reformed and Baptist traditions.

Catastrophe at Kappel

The promotion of the evangelical gospel had an unmistakable impact upon Zürich during the late-1520s. The hated Mass had been abolished. White-washed church walls replaced the iconography of Rome. Clerical vestments gave way to a simpler, common liturgical form. More than anything, the

Word of God was the focal point of worship and had its voice expressed through thundering sermons. Through it all Zwingli had been at the center of the changes made. His impression was undeniable. Nevertheless, Reformation advancements betrayed a looming problem of fragmentation in the Swiss Confederation. While places like Zürich, Basel, and Berne embraced the Reformation, attempts at reform in Lucerne, Solothurn, and Zug had been snuffed out. The subsequent creation of Protestant and Roman Catholic alliances in the Confederation only heightened the growing tension and schism that seemed certain to arouse war. The Swiss Confederation was a powder keg of unrest and Zwingli was about to set it aflame.

Just as Zwingli came to see Zürich as a theocracy, he soon turned his attention to what he believed was God's purpose for the Confederation as a whole. His desire was simple. The Confederation was to rally around and find a collective identity in a unified Protestant front, not just economics and defensive allegiance. Ironically, while he had once contended that the people's hearts and minds needed to be won before practical changes were implemented, the success of the Zürich Reformation now emboldened him with a different plan. Zwingli wanted to force, militarily if necessary, the Catholic States to adopt Protestantism immediately. In practice, this meant the enforcement of three fundamental aspects: the preaching of the gospel, the abolition of the Mass, and the cessation of his old nemesis, the mercenary trade. For two years, he sought to rally the other Protestant States to join Zürich in battle to end Roman Catholic idolatry on Swiss soil. And for two years Zwingli nearly got his wish.

On 11 October 1531, Zwingli's dream was realized on the battlefield at Kappel, as the Zürich army set itself against those from the Catholic States. Zwingli envisioned the Zürich troops much like the army of Israel, conquering the enemies of God in a battle for Yahweh. Victory was as certain as God's holy Word. The spoils would be Swiss Protestant lands and a Swiss people with undivided and undefiled hearts for God. However, Berne's reluctance to engage in battle and a shrewd military opponent soon turned Zwingli's dream into a nightmare. The man who had prophetically called the people of Zürich back to Christ never saw this defeat coming. In the end, Zwingli's miscalculations cost him his life. The exact circumstances of his death remain unknown and shrouded in mystery. However, one thing is sure: Zwingli died on the battlefield, sword in hand. Once identified among the dead scattered all over the warzone, the Roman Catholic authorities convened a mock trial for the dead Swiss preacher. After finding him guilty on a variety of charges, the Roman Catholics at Kappel beheaded Zwingli's corpse, quartered his body as a traitor and burned him as a heretic, leaving an enigmatic legacy for many to ponder.

Conclusion

While Zwingli's life ended on a bloody battlefield at Kappel, the hope of reform, born of Zwingli's fervent disdain for idolatry and his pursuit of true religion, did not die there. Yes, Zürich faced massive financial and political ruin that lasted decades (Meyer 1976: 306). Yes, the Zwinglians were divided from the Lutherans and stood at odds with Roman Catholics in neighboring Confederate States. And yes, his former students, the Anabaptists were scattered and forced to gather their church amid harsh persecution. Nevertheless, Zwingli left in his twenty-seven-year-old successor, Heinrich Bullinger, a fire reminiscent of the one that once burned brightly in his own life. And though Bullinger had the unenviable task of mediating his mentor's theology and legacy to an ever-changing early modern world, the young preacher was up to the task. Though deceased, Zwingli's theology continued to give life, direction and inspiration to the Zürich Church for generations. Several of Zwingli's key theological beliefs are presently found in certain modern day Presbyterian and Baptist traditions, demonstrating his importance to the Protestant heritage.

Zwingli's journey toward realizing the Reformation was deeply complex and always tumultuous. From the beginning of his ministry until the end of his life, Zwingli's path was fraught with friction and discord. Yet, his passionate pursuit of true worship never allowed those struggles to deter him. The gospel, which had once brought about a personal renewal in his life, demanded as much. Therefore, whether it meant battles with the popular mercenary trade, Roman Catholicism, Martin Luther or even his closest of friends who had strayed from the truth, the fight was worth it. And fight he did.

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