

W. Peter Stephens

Zwingli and Luther

This article was originally given as a lecture at the University of Turku (Åbo), Finland. The author is Professor of Church History in the University of Aberdeen and currently serving as President of the Methodist Conference.

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Marburg could serve as a sub-title for my lecture, for it is a potent symbol of the relationship between Zwingli and Luther.¹ They met in October 1529 at the invitation of Philip of Hesse in an endeavour to resolve the conflict between them and those who stood with them. They failed to agree on the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper and that failure led to over four centuries of division between Lutheran and Reformed.²

Most scholars see Zwingli and Luther as in opposition to each other or at least as offering diverse understandings of the gospel. What interests people, therefore, is the contrast between them not the common ground. Even among theologians, for the ten (or perhaps hundred) who know of the disagreement at Marburg, there is only one who knows of the agreement. Yet the agreement was fundamental. They agreed on fourteen articles—on the trinity, Christ, original sin, redemption through faith alone in Christ, faith as the gift of God and as our righteousness before God, the outward word, baptism, good works, confession, government, tradition, and infant baptism.³ Moreover in the fifteenth article on the Lord's Supper there was agreement on five points, and the question on which they disagreed (the presence of Christ) was put into a subordinate clause.⁴ Of course even where they agreed, there were differences in their theology, but

1 Among the many studies of the Marburg Colloquy the most notable is that of Walter Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther. Ihr Streit über das Abendmahl nach seinen politischen und religiösen Beziehungen*, I *Die religiöse und politische Entwicklung bis zum Marburger Religionsgespräch 1529* (Leipzig, 1924); II *Vom Beginn der Marburger Verhandlungen 1529 bis zum Abschluss der Wittenberger Konkordie von 1536* (Gütersloh, 1953). He offers a reconstruction in *Das Religionsgespräch zu Marburg 1529. Versuch einer Rekonstruktion* (Leipzig, 1929).

2 In the Leuenberg Agreement in 1573 Lutheran and Reformed Churches affirmed communion with each other on the basis of their common understanding of the gospel. The Agreement dealt with issues which had divided them, including the Lord's Supper.

3 Z VI/II 521.4-523.11.

4 Z VI/II 523.13-27.

the differences should be set in the context of a fundamentally common understanding of the gospel.⁵

I.

As we consider the relationship between Zwingli and Luther, there is an important issue with which we should begin. It is this: Is the reformation to be understood—both historically and theologically—in terms of Luther? Did it, in other words, begin historically with Luther, so that all the other reformers were dependent on him for their reformation faith and work? And is it to be understood theologically in terms of him, so that all the other reformers are in effect variants of him or deviants from him? Some scholars, especially but not only Lutherans, would answer 'Yes' to both those questions. Others (and I am among these others) would answer 'No'.

Let me address each question in turn. First, the historical one: Is Zwingli dependent on Luther's teaching for his reformation faith and work?

Scholars are divided in their answer to this question, and their differences cannot simply be put down to national pride, with the natural desire of Swiss scholars to argue for Zwingli's independence of Luther and of German scholars to argue for his dependence on him. The evidence on which a judgement can be made is ambiguous. It is of three main kinds: Zwingli's marginal notes, Zwingli's writings, and Zwingli's own testimony.

The marginal notes are the notes that Zwingli made in his books in the years before and immediately after he came to Zurich in 1518. They are only partly published and the accuracy of some of what has been published has been called in question.⁶ They are, however, the only contemporary evidence covering this vital period in Zwingli's development, although they are only indirect evidence. They show what Zwingli noted both in other writers and from other writers, though of course not necessarily what he learnt from them. Nevertheless until more work has been done in this specialist area, no firm conclusions can be drawn. However the absence of marginal notes in his copies of Luther's works is one of the reasons for thinking that he was not dependent on Luther.⁷

5 For a general discussion of the relationship between Zwingli and Luther, see G. W. Locher, *Zwingli's Thought* (Leiden, 1981) pp. 142–232, J. Rogge 'Die Initia Zwinglis und Luthers. Eine Einführung in die Probleme', *Luther-Jahrbuch*, 30 (1963) 107–33, W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford, 1986) pp. 45–49.

6 See U. Gäbler, *Huldrych Zwingli. His Life and Work* (Philadelphia, 1986) pp. 34–36.

7 In *Die Anfänge der Theologie Huldrych Zwinglis* (Zurich, 1949) Arthur Rich argued convincingly for the independence of Zwingli from Luther. He has been followed by most scholars since then. See also G. W. Locher, *Die Zwinglische Reformation im Rahmen*

Zwingli's writings, with the exception of three poems, some letters, and an account of a battle, date from 1522 or later. By 1522 there is no doubt that his faith was a reformation faith and not simply a reforming faith.⁸ There is no clear evidence in his writings before 1522 of a dependence on Luther's writings for a reformation faith. Rather it seems that when Zwingli first read Luther he read him hastily, and that he looked to him for confirmation of his views in matters like the veneration of the saints, indulgences, celibacy, tithing, and the power of the pope. Rich argues that Zwingli's interest in Luther then waned until he had moved from a reforming to a reformation position.⁹

Zwingli's own testimony to his relations with Luther and to his development as a reformer comes in passages written between 1521 und 1527. These passages are in a letter to Haller in 1521, in *Archeteles* and *The Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God* in 1522, in *An Exposition of the Articles* in 1523, and in *A Friendly Exegesis* in 1527.¹⁰ It must be allowed that these passages could be coloured by hindsight and by Zwingli's concern to stress his independence of Luther, a concern which would be accentuated by the danger of being identified with someone already condemned as a heretic. However they offer a coherent view and one which in its fundamental standpoint is confirmed by other passages in Zwingli. They testify to Zwingli's turning to Christ and to scripture.

Zwingli points to the year 1515 or 1516 as the decisive year. In 1522 he wrote of beginning to rely altogether on scripture seven or eight years before; in 1523 of reading Erasmus's poem eight or nine years before; and in 1527 of being helped by certain people twelve years before. Besides referring to the decisive year, Zwingli referred to the decisive factors and denies that Luther was one of them. He claimed that he had begun to preach the gospel in 1516, which was what he stated two years before people in his area had heard of Luther. In *A Friendly Exegesis* in 1527 he invoked God as witness that he had learned the gospel from John, Augustine's tractates on John, and Paul's epistles which he had copied out in Greek, and that he had committed this summary of the gospel to writing. He referred to others, presumably Wyttenbach and Erasmus, who had understood the matter of the gospel more clearly than Luther or himself. He claimed that Wyttenbach had taught him that the death of Christ alone was the price for

7 (Continued) *der europäischen Kirchengeschichte* (Göttingen, 1979) pp. 87–90 and the earlier studies by O. Farmer, *Huldrych Zwingli II Seine Entwicklung zum Reformator* (Zurich 1946) pp. 310–347, and W. Köhler, *Huldrych Zwingli* (Leipzig, 1943) pp. 60–81.

8 I use the word reforming to characterise loosely the type of reform associated with Erasmus.

9 See A. Rich, *Die Anfänge* pp. 79–89.

10 These passages are in Z VII 484.10–485.5; I 256.13–18, 259.28–261.38, 379.18–32; II 144.32–150.25, 217.5–218.8, 225.19–227.7; V 712.24–724.24, 815.18–818.3.

forgiveness of sins and he contrasted this with Luther's seeming to attribute something to absolution.¹¹ Now Wyttenbach and Erasmus are also mentioned in *An Exposition of the Articles* in 1523. The reference to Wyttenbach is to his disputation at Basle, probably in 1515, in which he showed that indulgences were a deceit.¹² The reference to Erasmus is to a poem about Jesus, which Zwingli said he had read eight or nine years before and from which he had derived his faith that no one except Christ can mediate between God and us. In the poem Christ lamented that people did not seek all their good in him, although he is the fount of all good, a saviour of men. Zwingli contrasted this with the seeking of help in the creature, which is idolatry.¹³

There are several important elements here. First, it needs to be remembered that Zwingli saw the fundamental difference between himself and his opponents as between trusting in Christ and his atoning death and in anything created. For him therefore the fundamental turning came (through Wyttenbach and Erasmus) with his coming to this conviction. The Pauline understanding of sin and grace was almost certainly not present at that stage. There is in the years before the publication of his first extant reformation writings in 1522 a significant deepening of Zwingli's grasp of the gospel, which takes it beyond Erasmus.

Second, the turning to scripture and the beginning to preach the gospel occur in the same period. They can be distinguished, but they cannot be separated. To turn to scripture is to turn from man's word to God's word. In *The Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God* (1522) Zwingli spoke of having begun seven or eight years before to rely wholly on scripture, of hearing the teaching of God from his own plain word, and of seeking understanding from God rather than from commentators and expositors. It was a case of being taught by God and not by man.¹⁴ This passage is similar to one in *Archeteles* (1522) which may refer to the same experience in which under God Zwingli came to trust in God's word alone for attaining salvation, and in which he saw Christ, the light in which all things become clear, as the touchstone of all teaching.¹⁵

Third, Zwingli saw continuity not only between his understanding of scripture and the gospel in 1522 and 1523 (where there is undoubtedly a reformation understanding of them) and what he held in his early years in Zurich, and also between it and what he held in

11 Z V 712.9-724.24.

12 Z II 145.28-146.4.

13 Z II 217.5-218.8.

14 Z I 379.18-32.

15 Z I 259.28-261.38.

Einsiedeln or the end of his time in Glarus (in 1516),¹⁶ which is a period when some scholars see him as an Erasmian rather than a reformer. Zwingli's sense of continuity in his ministry finds an interesting parallel in the words of Bucer twenty years later. Bucer saw the continuity between Erasmus and Luther and wrote of Erasmus as showing that salvation comes from faith in Christ and not from ceremonies. He regarded Erasmus and Luther as raised up by God, and he recognised, beside scripture, both their part and that of the fathers in learning what true religion was.¹⁷

We cannot here examine in detail the factors that led to Zwingli's becoming a reformer. They are diverse. Some relate to the change that took place in 1515–16, some to the profounder grasp of the gospel and of scripture in his first years in Zurich. In relation to 1515–16 there were the learning of Greek, the disputation of Wyttenbach, the reading of Erasmus's poem, the meeting with Erasmus, the intensive study of Erasmus's works, the copying out of Paul's letters in Greek, the disastrous defeat of the Swiss which he witnessed at Marignano in September 1515, his sexual lapse while a priest in Glarus. In relation to his maturing in a reformation faith in Zurich there were his study of John, Augustine, and Paul, his suffering from the plague, the example of Luther at Leipzig, and perhaps his sense of failure as a person and a minister. Besides scripture, it is undoubtedly Augustine and Erasmus who were fundamental for his teaching.¹⁸ The point where Luther impinged most powerfully on Zwingli was not in his teaching but in his action. Luther's stand against the pope at the Leipzig disputation in 1519 made a profound impression on Zwingli so that years later he praised Luther's courage in being the one who acted like a David against Goliath, like a Hercules.¹⁹ In 1525 Zwingli claimed that already in Einsiedeln which he left in 1518, as well as in Zurich, he had asserted from scripture that the whole papacy was poorly based, yet neither he nor Erasmus for all their criticism of the papacy took the decisive step

16 Z I 88.10–89.2; II 14.11–14.

17 See W. Friedensburg, 'Martin Bucer, Von der Wiedervereinigung der Kirchen (1542)', *ARG* 31 (1934) 161–9.

18 Köhler ascribes a more formative role to Augustine than Rich. He sees the process as beginning in Einsiedeln. W. Köhler, *Huldrych Zwingli* pp. 68–74. Rich allows that there are marginal notes which may imply a reformation understanding of the gospel, but regards Zwingli as holding it intellectually rather than existentially. See A. Rich, *Die Anfänge* pp. 124–45, in particular p. 128 n.19. Schindler recognises the importance of Augustine for Zwingli, but questions the weight that has been placed on Augustine as an influence on Zwingli in his development. See A. Schindler, *Zwingli und die Kirchenväter* (Zurich, 1984) pp. 21–41. Busser stresses the influence of Erasmus on Zwingli. See F. Büsser, *Die Prophezei: Humanismus and Reformation in Zürich* (Bern, 1994) pp. 13–46.

19 Z V 721.5–723.3, 815.18–818.3.

that Luther took.²⁰ (Erasmus had the weakness of an Eli rather than the strength of an Elijah.) It was what Luther did rather than what he taught which impressed Zwingli.

I can comment only briefly on the second question that I raised at the beginning: Is the reformation to be understood theologically in terms of Luther, so that all other reformers are variants of him or deviants from him? Whether one answers 'Yes' or 'No' to this question, one faces the further question how the reformation is to be defined. Is it in terms of salvation or justification by grace through faith? Is it in terms of the authority of scripture? Is it in terms of the rejection of papal authority and jurisdiction? In different ways all three are involved. But in whatever way this question is answered it is not possible to define the reformation in terms of Luther, even if it is impossible to conceive of the reformation apart from him. He is not the standard by which every other reformer is to be judged. They have their own distinctive historical and theological contribution, much as the apostles had their distinctive contributions in the new testament writings and the early church.

II.

The second main area of interest can be dealt with briefly: it is the background of Zwingli and Luther and the way in which that helps to account for differences between them. Of course neither was simply a product of his background, yet the differences in their background helped to shape, even if they did not determine, their theology and their ministry. Although they were born within six weeks of each other (Luther on 10 November 1483 and Zwingli on 1 January 1484), they lived and developed in very different political, cultural, and theological worlds. Luther was a monk and a biblical professor, Zwingli was a parish priest, an army chaplain, and a humanist scholar. Luther was influenced by nominalist, Zwingli by Thomist and Scotist thought. Luther worked in Saxony with government in the hands of the Elector, Zwingli in Zurich with government in the hands of an elected council. They differed in their personal experience, their theological background, their form of ministry, their relation to humanism, their social and cultural environment, and their political system. Indeed of the four major influences on Zwingli (patriotism, humanism, scholasticism, and the fathers, particularly Augustine), three distinguish him from Luther, and in the fourth there are important differences.

There were also differences in their personal pilgrimage. Luther's was more strongly personal and Zwingli's more social and corporate.

20 Z IV 59.5-60.2. See also the later letter of Capito confirming this in J. W. Baum, *Capito and Butzer. Strassburgs Reformatoren* (Elberfeld, 1860) p. 29.

There is a parallel in Zwingli to Luther's cry 'How can I find a gracious God?' It can be found in an autobiographical reference to the words 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us' in *An Exposition of the Articles*, for through his agonised wrestling with words that seemed to make God's forgiveness conditional on his own forgiveness, Zwingli came to see his utter dependence on God's grace, and surrendered himself wholly to that grace.²¹ Yet Zwingli's sense of God's wrath was not simply nor so strongly personal and individual as Luther's. He had a sense of God's judgement on the whole people and therefore a sense of the gospel as freeing the whole people from God's judgement.

III.

These different elements in their background and experience throw light on differences in their theology.

There are various points of difference between Zwingli and Luther that we could consider.²² Luther speaks of law and gospel and that reveals something fundamental in his theology and in his understanding of both law and gospel, with the law driving us to despair of ourselves and the gospel raising us up. Zwingli speaks of gospel and law, and that reveals something fundamental in his theology, for the law does not simply accuse us and drive us to the gospel, but it also embodies the perfect will of God which we are to manifest in our lives. Indeed the law can even be referred to as gospel, because to the believer it is good news to know what God's will is. Luther stresses the word or perhaps rather the word through which the Spirit comes to us. Zwingli stresses the Spirit and the word, so that without the Spirit the word is ineffective. Luther stresses the unity of the person of Christ, so that, for example, by virtue of the *communicatio idiomatum* the body of Christ can be everywhere. Zwingli stresses the distinction of the natures, so that the body of Christ cannot be everywhere but, like all human bodies, only in one place; however by virtue of *alioiis* or the *communicatio idiomatum* there is ascribed to the one nature what properly belongs to the other. Luther stresses the parts of scripture (Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, 1 Peter, John, and 1 John) that show or present Christ. Zwingli stresses rather the whole of scripture, though he can also speak of John as the noblest part of the new testament, so that if you take it away 'you take the sun from the world'.

21 Z II 225.19–227.7. Neuser sees this as a vital stage in Zwingli's breakthrough. W. Neuser, *Die reformatorische Wende* (Neukirchen, 1977) pp. 139–44.

22 See, for example, G. W. Locher, *Zwingli's Thought* pp. 142–232 and studies of Zwingli's and Luther's theology, such as W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* and B. Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work* (Edinburgh, 1987).

Luther stresses the incarnation. Zwingli stresses rather the crucifixion and ascension. Luther glories in the humanity of Jesus Christ in which we know him who is the God-man. Zwingli glories in the divinity of Jesus Christ, for it is in his divinity that he saves us. Luther stresses Christ as saviour. Zwingli sees him also as teacher and example. Luther stresses the distinction of the two rules. Zwingli speaks of the rulers as shepherds and yet of the Christian's duty to depose not to say overthrow rulers. Luther stresses 'This is my body', while Zwingli stresses 'It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh is of no avail'.

IV.

The contrasting emphases are numerous, but in the last part of this lecture I will deal with one area in which a variety of those emphases can be seen: the Lord's Supper or as Zwingli often called it the eucharist. It is especially appropriate to concentrate on the eucharist, as the title 'Zwingli and Luther' is the title of Walter Köhler's magisterial two volume study of the eucharist.²³

The eucharist was a centre of controversy in the reformation, because it focused the fundamental differences between the reformers and their opponents in the medieval church and the differences among the reformers themselves. For Zwingli as for Luther it was man's salvation which was at stake in the controversy and each saw the other as imperilling it.²⁴ For Luther, Zwingli was denying the saving presence of Christ in word and sacrament and therefore depriving people of salvation in Christ. For Zwingli, Luther was placing faith in word and sacrament rather than in Christ, and therefore depriving people of their salvation in Christ.

Zwingli did not engage in direct conflict with Luther over the eucharist until early in 1527. However if we look at some of Zwingli's early writings in 1523, before the direct conflict broke out, before even the indirect conflict, we can see the use of terms and emphases that mark him off from Luther. In his first major systematic work, *An Exposition of the Articles*, Zwingli refers to Luther's use of the term 'testament', a use which he accepts, although he prefers the term 'memorial'. He also makes a sharp distinction between a sign and what it signifies, but in this instance it was in relation to the sacrifice of the mass.²⁵

23 More recent discussions include R. J. Goeser, 'Word and Sacrament: A Study of Luther's Views as Developed in the Controversy with Zwingli and Karlstadt' (Diss. Yale, 1960), E. Grötzing, *Luther und Zwingli* (Gütersloh, 1980) D. C. Steinmetz 'Scripture and the Lord's Supper in Luther's Theology', *Interpretation* 37 (1983) 253-265, and W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* pp. 180-93, 218-59.

24 See W. P. Stephens 'The Soteriological Motive in the Eucharistic Controversy' in W. van't Spijker (ed.), *Calvin: Erbe und Auftrag* (Kampen, 1991) pp. 203-13.

25 Z II 120.15-20, 121.2-7.

In the same work he stresses the role of faith and states that putting one's trust in the body and blood of Christ means putting it in Christ's death. In short, 'the body and blood of Christ are nothing other than the word of faith, to wit, that his body slain for us and his blood shed for us have redeemed us and reconciled us to God. If we confidently believe that, then our soul receives food and drink with the body and blood of Christ'.²⁶

In a letter to Thomas Wyttenbach,²⁷ also in 1523, the main issue is the presence of Christ, whereas in *An Exposition of the Articles* it is the sacrifice of Christ. In it there is the same stress on faith—with the presence of Christ dependent on or at least conditioned by faith. The whole emphasis is placed on the body and blood as given for us and thus on Christ and his saving death and our faith in this. The bread and wine are given to be eaten, and the stress is on the first half of Christ's word 'Take, eat', rather than on the second half, 'This is my body'.

The symbolic interpretation of the eucharist which is characteristic of Zwingli is not explicit in his early writings, though it is implicit in them. It was not until after he received Hoen's letter²⁸ in 1524 that Zwingli elaborated his symbolic interpretation, but that does not necessarily mean that he was dependent on Hoen for it. However it is from this point—in his letter to Matthew Alber in November 1524²⁹—that Zwingli refers to 'is' as meaning 'signifies' in the words 'This is my body . . .'. In doing this he rejects Carlstadt's view that 'this' refers to Christ's body rather than to the bread, although he commends Carlstadt's grasp of the nature of faith. He supports his interpretation from the fathers: Tertullian, Augustine, and Origen. However the exposition of 'This is (or signifies) my body' comes in the second part of the letter not in the first. In the first part Zwingli deals with John 6, which now begins to have a dominant part in his teaching. For him John 6 does not refer to the eucharist, but it does rule out certain views of the eucharist. It shows that it is the flesh of Christ as slain for us, and not as eaten by us, that is food for the soul. 'Eating Christ' in John 6 means believing in him. Eating his body means believing that he was slain for us. He contrasts bodily eating and faith, stating that if bodily eating could bless us there would be two ways of salvation: bodily eating and faith. We see also other elements which are important in the controversy with Luther: the contrast between Christ as God and as man, and the use of John 6:63 to attack the idea of eating the flesh, and of John 3:6 to show that eating the flesh cannot give birth to anything but flesh.

26 Z II 143.12–16.

27 Z VIII 84–89.

28 See Z IV 512–518.

29 Z III 335–354.

This letter to Alber in 1524 is already an implicit attack on Luther's view. Zwingli does not mention Luther, but Alber's position represents Luther's in many ways. These early writings show significant differences between him and Luther, which make controversy almost inevitable. Before the direct conflict with Luther in 1527, there were several important statements of Zwingli's position in relation to the Lutheran view,³⁰ and then in 1527 and 1528 four further major works on the subject.³¹ It is impossible to outline briefly the detailed arguments (theological and exegetical) which they used in debate with each other. There was force in the arguments on both sides, but with hindsight we can see that the matter was doomed from the start—first by their inability to grasp the fundamental concern that the other had and second by their perception of each other—for Luther saw Zwingli from the start in terms of Carlstadt and Zwingli saw Luther in terms of the papists. The controversy did not enable them to see the other person's position, but it did help to clarify their own positions, and with the Marburg colloquy at least the sharpness of the conflict was ended.

As we look back on the controversy we may ask: What is it in Zwingli's argument that was vital to his theology and what is the source of those vital elements?

First, the theocentric character of Zwingli's theology. Faith was central for Zwingli as for Luther. But whereas Luther spoke in terms of justification by faith and made the contrast between faith and works, Zwingli made the contrast between faith in God and faith in anything other than God, in the creature rather than the creator. Faith in anything other than God is idolatry. It deprives God of his honour. It was idolatry that Zwingli attacked—putting one's faith in something or someone other than God, and that included putting one's faith in the sacraments, just as much as putting it in good works. Saving faith is faith in Christ who had died for us; it is not faith in his bodily presence in the eucharist. Christ's bodily presence can no more save now without faith, than it could save when he was bodily with men and women in his earthly life.

Zwingli's view of the eucharist shows the consistently theocentric character of his theology. For him Luther's view not only endangered the placing of faith in God alone, but it also denied the sovereign grace of God and therefore put salvation at man's disposal rather than God's. For Zwingli word and sacrament are effective only where God makes them effective and this conviction accounts for the way Zwingli always relates the Spirit to the sacraments which are never effective by

30 See especially *A Reply to Bugenhagen's Letter, The Lord's Supper, and An Answer to Strauss's Book* in Z IV 558–576, 789–862 and V 464–547.

31 *A Friendly Exegesis, A Friendly Answer, Zwingli's Christian Reply, and Two Replies to Luther's Book* (Z V 562–758, 771–794, 805–977 and VI/II 22–248).

themselves. The sacraments are not automatically effective or effective for all, because the Spirit blows where he wills. We cannot make him act by our outward use of the sacraments. In his *Commentary on True and False Religion* he wrote: 'For in this way the liberty of the divine Spirit who distributes himself to individuals as he will, that is, to whom he will, when he will, where he will, would be bound. For if he were compelled to act within when we employ the signs externally, he would be absolutely bound by the signs . . .'.³² In the end it is the sacraments which need the Spirit, not the Spirit who needs the sacraments.

The same emphasis is found in Zwingli's later writings: such as *An Account of the Faith*. In it he writes: 'Moreover, a channel or vehicle is not necessary to the Spirit, for he himself is the virtue and energy whereby all things are borne, and has no need of being borne; neither do we read in the holy scriptures that perceptible things, as are the sacraments, bear certainly with them the Spirit, but if perceptible things have ever been borne with the Spirit, it has been the Spirit, and not perceptible things, that has borne them . . . Briefly, the Spirit blows wherever he wishes . . .' The quotation continues: 'Therefore, the grace of the Spirit is not conveyed by this immersion, or that drinking, or that anointing, for if that happened one would know how, where, by what, and to what the Spirit is borne'.³³

However the theocentric character of Zwingli's theology is not the only factor underlying the differences between him and Luther. There are others. A second important difference in Zwingli's exposition is his insistence on the distinction between the human and the divine natures of Christ. For Zwingli it is Christ as God who saves us, not Christ as man, Christ is present everywhere in his divine nature, but in his human nature he is in one place. His body, like our bodies, cannot be in several places at one time, but only in one place. To assert his bodily presence everywhere or in more than one place is to deny his humanity and ultimately therefore to deny our salvation. Zwingli does not deny his presence in the eucharist in his divinity, but only in his humanity. For Luther Zwingli's strong distinction between the two natures is Nestorianism, but Zwingli insists that—as in the Chalcedonian Definition³⁴—he holds to the unity of the person of Christ alongside the distinction between the natures. He argues for the absence of Christ's body on the basis of a wide range of new testament texts, primarily those that have to do with his death and his ascension.

32 Z III 761.4–8.

33 Z VI/II 803.

34 The accusation of Nestorianism was made by Lutheran and Roman Catholic opponents such as Burgauer at the Bern disputation and Eck in his attack on the first article of *An Account of the Faith* (Z VI/I 366.7–9, 27–8; VI/II 41.11–14; S IV 22.33–23.21).

A third important difference is Zwingli's insistence on the distinction between the sign and what it signifies. He uses this initially to argue against speaking of the mass as a sacrifice, on the basis that a sacrament—according to the classic definition—is a sign of a sacred thing, and a sign cannot be the same as what it signifies. The eucharist is not a sacrifice but is a sign or commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ. This view coincides with Zwingli's interpreting 'is' (in 'This is my body') as 'signifies'—an interpretation which he supports with a range of arguments (such as the figurative use of 'is' in other passages of scripture, the analogy of the passover, and the agreement of such an interpretation with the other passages which refer to the eucharist).

A fourth difference between Zwingli and Luther is evident in the platonist or neo-platonist view of body and soul or spirit that is probably part of Zwingli's Erasmian heritage. This meant that Zwingli could not allow that outward things could affect people inwardly. It underlies his insistence on a text like John 3:6 that what is born of the flesh is flesh. Moreover the positive role that he ascribes to the sacraments both in his early and his later writings is related to this. What they do is to appeal to the senses—and they are effective, precisely by their appeal to the senses, though even then not in confirming or creating faith.³⁵ However what separates Zwingli from Luther more fundamentally is not the Erasmian mould of Zwingli's theology (with its frequent, neo-platonist opposition of body and soul or spirit), but the theocentric character of his theology.

Thus his favourite text ('It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh is of no avail', John 6:63) is ultimately a sign not of his humanism or neo-platonism, but of the theocentric character of his theology. It is to be understood along with the other verses from John 6 to which he constantly turns: 'No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him' (6:44) 'And they shall all be taught of God' (6:45).³⁶

This view sees Augustine as a more potent influence in Zwingli's theology than Erasmus. Of the influence of Erasmus, there can be no doubt both in Zwingli's turning to Christ and in his turning to the scripture and the fathers, and in many emphases in his theology. But Zwingli has a more fundamental kinship with Augustine. Already in the marginal notes one can see the impact of Augustine on Zwingli. The tractates on John³⁷ are heavily annotated with references to 'believe and you have eaten' and to the flesh as of no avail. The statement that the body of the Lord in which he rose, can be in only

35 The most positive statement is in *An Exposition of the Faith* (Z VI/V 155–162).

36 See W. P. Stephens, 'Zwingli on John 6:63 "*Spiritus est qui vivificat, caro nihil prodest*" in R. A. Muller and J. L. Thompson (ed.), *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1996) pp. 156–185.

37 For the tractates on John, see Z XII 138–151.

one place is noted, and also that man according to his body is in one place, whereas God fills all things. Augustine's tractates on John 6 show how close Zwingli is to him at many points. There is a strong sense of the sovereignty of God who acts inwardly in drawing men, while we act outwardly with our planting and watering. There is the difference between the sacrament and the virtue of the sacrament, between eating inwardly in the heart and eating outwardly with the teeth, between the signs and what they signify. There is the assertion that the person who does not dwell in Christ does not eat his flesh (spiritually) and that his grace is not consumed by the biting of the teeth. There is the stress on the distinction of Christ's natures and the unity of his person.

Several of these points are precisely the points of difference between Zwingli and Luther. There is the sharp distinction between the sign and what it signifies, so that the sign cannot be what it signifies or it would cease to be a sign. There is the strong emphasis on John 6:63, though that may come from Erasmus, with its insistence that the flesh is of no avail, for it is the Spirit who gives life. There is the statement that the resurrection body of Christ can be in only one place. There is the clear distinction between the divine and human natures of Christ, though with the assertion of the unity of the person.

When you add to these points others, such as the sovereignty of God in acting inwardly while men act outwardly and the central role of faith (in statements like 'believe and you have eaten'), the influence of Augustine is evident. It is also easy to see how it could be admitted at Marburg that Augustine was on the side of Zwingli and Oecolampadius.

The differences between Zwingli and Luther were real, even though there was agreement on so much which was fundamental. In that sense the failure to agree in only one part of one article at Marburg reflects genuine differences between them. The inheritors of Zwingli and Luther in the Reformed and Lutheran tradition today mirror many of the differences that we have seen in Zwingli and Luther. Leuenberg, however, unlike Marburg, marks a meeting rather than a parting of the ways, a uniting rather than a dividing.

Abstract

The article explores the similarities and differences between the two Reformers. The author argues that the Reformation should not be understood in terms of Luther, whether historically or theologically. He is not the standard by which every other reformer is to be judged. Different elements in the background and experience of Zwingli and Luther shed light on their respective theologies. The article concentrates attention on their views of the Lord's Supper or Eucharist, and several significant differences are considered.