

Ulrich Zwingli

I. Introduction

A. Overview

1. “Third man of the Reformation” (Jean Rilliet)
 - a. Luther → Dominated German-speaking Reformation
 - b. Calvin → Dominated Reformed heritage
2. Background
 - a. Contemporary of Luther
 - b. Influenced by best humanist ideas of Erasmus
 - 1) Attention to the text over tradition
 - 2) Straightforward expository preaching
 - c. Worked in Zurich, Switzerland
 - 1) A Swiss patriot
 - 2) Died in Battle of Kappel (1531) serving city’s forces as chaplain
3. Place in History
 - a. No organized “Zwinglian theology”
 - b. Pioneer of Reformed system
 - c. Founded Swiss Reformed Church

B. Disputes that Define His Theology

1. Zurich’s disputation over the Reformation (1523)
 - a. Debated Zwingli’s 67 Articles before city council
 - b. Persuaded the city of Zurich to embrace the Reformation
 - 1) Argued for reform based on Scripture
 - 2) Demonstrated his reliance on the secular arm
 - c. Reforms followed
 - 1) Rejected tradition: abolished the mass, simplified worship, marriage of priests
 - 2) “Prophecy”: Daily instruction of all clergy Scripture
 - d. Marked **break w/ Rome**
2. Disputation over baptism w/ Anabaptists (1525)
 - a. Sparked by Anabaptist presence in Zurich
 - b. Differences between Zwingli and the Anabaptists
 - 1) Speed of the Reformation (Anabaptists: “Reformation without tarrying for any” vs. bringing along the whole flock)
 - 2) Involvement of the state: Magisterial Reformation vs. Radical Reformation
 - 3) Difference in baptism → a symptom of the difference in the nature of the church (inclusive vs. gathered)
 - c. Zwingli eventually supported forcible repression of the Anabaptists.
 - 1) In context the Anabaptists were “revolutionaries,” not simply people with different religious beliefs
 - 2) Marked **break with Anabaptists**
3. Marburg Colloquy: Disputation with Luther (1529)
 - a. Meeting between Luther & Zwingli to promote Protestant unity
 - b. Division
 - 1) Zwingli thought Luther did not go far enough in cleansing the church of “popish” corruption

- 2) Luther thought Zwingli was a fanatic for rejecting the real presence in the Lord's Supper
- c. Key point: Lord's Supper
 - 1) Dispute centered on the meaning of the words "This is my body"
 - 2) Real presence vs. symbolic presence
- d. Debated four days and eventually drew up a statement about what they agreed on (14 points) and disagreed on (1 point—the Lord's Supper).
 - 1) Luther claimed Zwingli rejected the "surface" meaning of the Bible
 - 2) Luther spurned the idea of fellowship because of this point, telling the Swiss they were "of another spirit."
- e. Marked **break with Luther**

II. Theology of Zwingli

A. Character

- 1. More "rationalist" than Luther—working out paradoxes and inconsistencies
- 2. More deeply influenced by the humanist tradition w/ love of philosophy

B. Church and State

- 1. In the magisterial tradition
 - a. Actively united church and state: "The Christian man is nothing else but a faithful and good citizen and the Christian city nothing other than the Christian church."
 - b. Saw magistrates as God's ordained leaders
 - c. Contrasts among reformers
 - 1) Luther: Secular power furthers agenda of church reform
 - 2) Calvin: Church stands as adviser to state
 - 3) Zwingli: Church and state basically coextensive.
- 2. Inclusive church: All citizens belonged
- 3. Shepherd/flock imagery
 - a. "For God and His People"—Zwingli seeing the citizens as his flock
 - b. Idea contributed to his support for repressing the Anabaptists, who were a threat to both state and church—his "flock"
- 4. Like most Reformers, heir to the Middle Ages
 - a. Thousand years of state churches (since Constantine)
 - b. Reformers saw corruption of the church from the papacy, not Constantine

C. Worship

- 1. Plain, austere, eliminating most music, all images (Reformed churches: "four bare walls and a sermon")
- 2. Concerned about distractions from the truth
- 3. Illustrates the **regulative principle of worship** of Reformed tradition
 - a. Whatever is not commanded is forbidden, i.e., what is not mandated in Scripture may not be used in worship
 - b. Cf. Luther's **normative principle** (whatever is not forbidden is permissible)
 - c. Further developed by Calvin/Reformed

D. Salvation

- 1. Justification by faith alone—Adopted independently of Luther
- 2. Stress on election
 - a. Counterpoint to Catholic teaching on merit & grace
 - b. Known for his teaching of "elect pagans" and pious heathens"

3. Thought original sin involved corruption, but not guilt
4. Law and Gospel (from Gonzalez)
 - a. Followed Thomas Aquinas in seeing a threefold division of the law
 - 1) Civil law (nation of Israel)
 - 2) Ceremonial law (Jewish rites)
 - 3) Moral law (eternal)
 - b. Uses of the Law (Reformed)
 - 1) Condemn sin
 - 2) Point to Christ
 - 3) Provide the norm for Christian behavior (“third use of the law”) [law reveals the will of God]

E. Sacraments

1. “Memorial” or “symbolic” view of the sacraments
 - a. Lord’s Supper memorializes the sacrifice of Christ
 - b. Baptism symbolizes one’s union to the church and the cause of Christ
 - c. No inward change as a result of the sacraments.
 - d. Criticized for a “bare memorial” view
 - e. Rejected Mass for the priests in favor of communion for the people (George)
2. Baptism
 - a. Functions as a “badge” of one’s allegiance
 - b. Equates baptism w/ circumcision and introduction into the covenant
 - c. Originally leaned toward the idea of adult baptism
 - d. Eventually defended infant baptism
 - 1) Some charge he changed to support his state church views
 - 2) Threefold argument (George)
 - a) Analogy of circumcision & infant baptism
 - b) Inferences from NT
 - c) John’s baptism was Christian baptism
 - Baptism of John same as baptism of the church
 - Jesus was circumcised & baptized (neither of which he needed) → unites covenants
3. Lord’s Supper
 - a. Zwingli feared that views such as those of the Lutherans detracted from a focus on Christ and led to idolatry
 - b. Equated Lord’s Supper w/ the Passover
 - c. “This *is* my body”
 - 1) Depends on what the meaning of “is” is
 - 2) For Zwingli, “is” means *signifies*
 - 3) The Lord’s Supper is, in a sense, a metaphor (like “I am the vine”) that points to a reality behind it: the broken body and shed blood of Christ.
4. His sacramental views a root of covenant theology

F. Heritage

1. No “Zwinglian” church/denomination
2. Marked a bolder break than Luther: Paved the way for Calvin
3. Seen as oppressor by many in Free Church tradition
4. Major legacy: Sacramental view