

The Standard Bearer

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Reformation issue

The Reformation in Zurich:
Commemorating the 500th Anniversary, 1519-2019

A Christian view of affliction

Otho Wermullerus

Preaching and disputations: How Zurich became Reformed

Prof. Douglas Kuiper

Zwingli's confession: The Sixty-Seven Articles

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The School of the Prophets: Zwingli's legacy of Reformed education

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Heinrich Bullinger: Common shepherd of all Christian churches

Rev. William Langerak



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Contents

Meditation

- 51 *A spiritual and most precious pearl:*
A Christian view of affliction
Otho Wermullerus

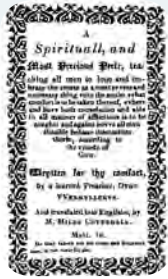
Editor's notes

Editorial

- 53 The sixteenth-century Reformation in Zurich
Prof. Russell Dykstra
- 54 Ulrich Zwingli: His life and work
Rev. Justin Smidstra
- 57 Preaching and disputations:
How Zurich became Reformed
Prof. Douglas Kuiper
- 59 Zwingli's confession: The Sixty-Seven Articles
Rev. Rodney Kleyn
- 62 The School of the Prophets:
Zwingli's legacy of Reformed education
Mr. Daniel VanUffelen
- 66 Zwingli's controversy with the Anabaptists
Rev. Kenneth Koole
- 69 Heinrich Bullinger: "Common shepherd
of all Christian churches"
Rev. William Lanagerak
- 72 Heinrich Bullinger's covenant view
Prof. Ronald Cammenga
- ### Reports
- 74 Reports of Classis East/West
Mr. Gary Boverhof /Rev. Joshua Engelsma



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Meditation

Otho Wermullerus (or Otto Wermüller), 1511-1552

A spiritual and most precious pearl: A Christian view of affliction

This treatise is a translation from the German of Otho Wermullerus, an eminent scholar and divine of Zurich, contemporary of Bishop Miles Coverdale. We include here parts of two sections from the treatise.

Source: Writings and Translation of Myles Coverdale, Bishop of Exeter, containing The Old Faith, A Spiritual and Most Precious Pearl [etc.], Parker Society edition, George Pearson, ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1844). Also available in the public domain on the Internet.

It will be well for the Reader to keep in mind, that the little work before him was written in very troublesome times, when the piety of the Reformers was exposed to the test of persecution under every form, and when such a publication must have been every way seasonable, and of the highest value to the suffering followers of Christ; and thus by its useful pages, he will learn to sympathise with the sufferers of past ages, and to give thanks to God, for his own Christian rest and peace.

From the preface to the first English publication, 1550

All manner of afflictions are sent and come from God of a loving and fatherly mind toward us

...We ought to receive with high thankfulness whatsoever God of a fatherly and loving mind, and not of any indignation towards us, sendeth unto us, whether it be to the flesh pleasant or grievous. The Lord God visiteth us with temporal and transitory misery, even for the very careful and fatherly heart that He beareth toward us, and not of any hatred or indignation against us (Job 5; Hosea 6; I Pet. 4; Heb. 12; Rev. 3). For God is reconciled and at one with all Christian men through His Son, and loveth them even from the very ground of His heart.

For the which cause, howsoever or by what manner of means it be that God punisheth and correcteth us, He doth it not because He hateth us, as though He would utterly refuse and cast us away; but of very pity and compassion, only to receive us as His children; to keep and preserve us, to exercise and practice us, to humble and to bring us down, and to stir and prick us forward; that prayer, faith, the fear of God, obedience, and other virtues, may wax and increase in us, to His honor and our salvation.

Testimonies for this have we, first: "As truly as I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but that he turn and live" (Ezek. 18). Here now doth God swear, that He doth punish, not to destroy, but to allure, reduce, and bring us unto penance. [And] "Whom the Lord loveth, him doth he chasten, and yet notwithstanding he hath pleasure in him, as a father in his child" (Prov. 3). This is an evident

testimony, that affliction, trouble, and vexation, are no tokens of the wrath and displeasure of God, but rather sure tokens of His grace, mercy, and favor, whereby God assureth us of His merciful will and fatherly heart toward us.

But forasmuch as God loveth this His spouse of His Son, namely, the congregation of the faithful, and mindeth to comfort her, and to be most beneficial unto her; therefore, like as He hath raised up Christ her bridegroom, head, and king, from death, even so will He also deliver her from all affliction, and give her a joyful victory of all such things as do oppress her. But it is the infirmity and fault of our weak eyes, that we cannot espy the merciful and loving goodness of God in and under the rod and scourge.

Whensoever we are visited with affliction and misery, it is our duty indeed, first to acknowledge and remember our sins, and again to consider the yoke and bands of the devil for sin; but we ought not to judge and imagine of such affliction according to the purpose and will of the devil, as he, of a malicious and a mischievous mind that he beareth us, mindeth toward us, which seeketh continually nothing else but the utter destruction and confusion of all mankind; but rather we ought to esteem and consider of all such troubles and afflictions, according as God meaneth, and so receive them, which of His mere goodness turneth them to our wealth and profit, working and finishing thereby our perfect salvation.

And wheresoever the heart cannot conceive this comfort, that God correcteth and punisheth for very merciful favor and love towards us, there of necessity must the temptation and grief be much the greater, and the party at length fall to utter desperation.

That only God for Christ's sake, and that of very mercy, love, and favor, doth correct and punish us

The very right and only cause of the merciful and fatherly will of God towards us have we in the only merits of Jesus Christ, unto whom we ought to lift up our hearts toward heaven, and to behold and consider Him with our minds continually, after this manner.

Our sins and misdeeds deserve hunger, death, war, pestilence, and all manner of plagues. Now hath Christ ransomed and made full satisfaction for all the sins that we have committed (Is. 53; John 1, 3; Rom. 5, 6, 8; Eph. 2; Col.

1, 2; I Pet. 3; I John 4; Heb. 9; etc.). He hath redeemed, paid, discharged, and made harmless unto us all our misdeeds with His bitter death, victories, and resurrection, and hath satisfied His Father's righteousness, as St. Paul doth testify very comfortably, saying: "Jesus is become and made unto us our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption" (I Cor. 1). So then now, if afflictions hurt us only by reason of our sins, and our sins be satisfied and discharged through the death and passion of Jesus, then must it needs follow, that all our afflictions also are likewise harmless unto us, and cannot hurt us.

Yea, Christ, with and through His passion and affliction, hath blessed and sanctified all manner of afflictions, that they all should serve and redound unto all faithful Christians for their greatest wealth, by the ordinance and provision of God, their heavenly Father. He is the true physician, which after He perceived that affliction did fear us, took upon Himself to suffer all manner of trouble, yea, the most grievous sorrows and extremities, because He would set and appoint a certain measure and end unto our sorrows, and also bless and sanctify, yea, and also make pleasant and delectable very death itself unto us.

Oh! if we could feel, behold, and consider the heart and mind of Christ, when He did willingly hang upon the cross, and suffered Himself so cruelly and painfully to be tormented and punished, for no other cause, but that He might utterly take away the whole strength of all our sins, sorrow, and death, and destroy hell, that none of them should hurt us; and again, that He tasted and drank of the cup before us, that we being sick and weak might the rather drink and taste of it after Him, forasmuch as no evil mishappened unto Him thereof, but immediately rose up again from death.

Oh! if the knowledge and remembrance of this might remain in our hearts upright, and shine continually before us: then should we never sink or faint, nor yet despair of the

mercy and goodness of God, although we should labor in never so dangerous and grievous battle, and though we ourselves should taste and feel the due punishment that our sins have deserved: then should we be able to stand stiffly against the gates of hell; and all manner of sorrow, heaviness, temptation, fear, and misfortune, should thereby be utterly consumed and swallowed up.

And even this is the highest and most special comfort that ever was heard or read of from the beginning of the world. He is only alone sufficient, if we consider Him and take hold of Him as we should do, to plant and graft such a mind in us, that we shall not only not sorrow nor be heavy, but also triumph and rejoice in and of our misery and affliction; as Paul triumpheth excellently and highly, where he saith, "If God hath not spared his only Son, but hath given him up for us all, how should he not give us all things with him?" (Rom. 8). What make we then with our vain fearfulness, care, sorrow, and heaviness? Wherefore, if we will be right Christians, we must with all thankfulness set forth, extol, and magnify this excellent, infinite, and heavenly grace and benefit of God, and the high and singular comfort which we have by Christ.

For all they that lack the knowledge of the benefit that we have by Christ, and refuse this excellent and high treasure, whether they be Jews or heathens, Mahometans or Popish, they cannot be able to give any true, perfect, or wholesome comfort, either to themselves or to any other, in any manner of fear or doubt of the conscience, or in any other affliction and necessity.

...Yea, what comfort soever they have sought, beside Christ, it is all nothing else but an augmentation of their sorrowful fear, and a training of them towards desperation. So that, without and besides the Lord Jesus, there is no manner of comfort, aid, nor succor at all to be looked for (Acts 4; Phil. 3).

Editors' notes

As the front cover indicates, our annual Reformation issue is devoted to the Reformation in Zurich. The decision to highlight Zurich is based largely on the fact that this year marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in this city located in the northeast side of Switzerland. In 1519, Ulrich Zwingli began preaching in the main church in Zurich. His preaching was astoundingly different from what the people had ever heard—he preached directly from the Bible. In this way God began the process of Reformation.

The Reformation in Zurich is largely overshadowed by two other major sixteenth-century reforms. On the one hand is the Reformation in Germany, marked by Martin

Luther's posting of his Ninety-Five Theses on October 31, 1517. On the other hand, John Calvin and the Reformation in Geneva get most of the attention from Reformed churches who trace their spiritual lineage back to Calvin. (Calvin came to Geneva the first time in 1536.) Sandwiched between those two mighty works of God is a third, namely, the Reformation in Zurich, where the two outstanding ministers were Ulrich Zwingli and his successor Heinrich Bullinger.

The goal of the issue is to enlighten as well as encourage Reformed believers as they learn of another aspect of God's reforming of His church in the 1500s out of the darkness and apostasy of Rome.



Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra, professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

The sixteenth-century Reformation in Zurich

The reformation of the church is God's work. God loves His church with an everlasting, unquenchable love. God's eternal counsel with regard to His church includes not only the selection of every member, but also the entire history of the church through time and eternity. That earthly history includes times of reformation in His church. In His perfect wisdom, God determines a process of apostasy, that is, that the church that once maintained the teaching and practices of the Bible, over a period of time, departs from biblical standards. Such departure always involves *doctrinal* apostasy, setting aside the truth for the lie. It spreads into *worship*, defiling the worship with idolatrous practices. The corruption spreads to the church's *government*, which often takes on the form of a hierarchy that oppresses those who criticize the church for her errors and godless living. And finally, the apostasy manifests itself in the *lives* of the members, who learn to transgress with the approval of the church.

When this happens, God does not forsake His beloved church. He reforms her. Reformation is a return to the Bible—its doctrine, worship, church government, and Christian life. Since true reformation is a genuine return to the Bible, it is a *spiritual* activity, and it begins in the hearts of believers. God raises up preachers convicted by the Spirit of sin and error first of all in themselves. With that conviction and the boldness of the Spirit, they begin to preach the word that is faithful to the Bible. The Spirit uses the preaching to work repentance and conversion in the hearts and lives of God's chosen people. God is reforming His church.

God uses different kinds of men, men eternally chosen and sovereignly formed by God for this work. The sixteenth-century Reformation of the church bears this out. God determined a Martin Luther, a spiritually minded man of tremendous strength of character and will. God prepared Luther to begin the process of reformation—the process of forming the church back to the Bible—after almost 1,000 years of the church departing. Luther would, by God's grace, bear the brunt of Rome's wrath and opposition. Luther's rediscovery, proclamation, and defense of the doctrine of justifica-

tion by faith alone tore down the whole corrupt structure of Rome's theology, worship, and church government. From Germany, the Reformation spread to the rest of Europe.

When Reformed people speak of *the Reformation*, they are usually thinking about Luther, his Ninety-Five Theses, and the events that followed.

However, God in His wisdom determined that the Reformation in the sixteenth century would have two related but distinct branches that would develop along different lines. The *Lutheran* churches developed their own confessions, liturgy, and church government. The other branch is the *Reformed* church. Why these two branches?

First, it should be clear that the Reformed branch was in harmony with the Lutheran on the essential issues, starting with the doctrines of sovereign grace, including justification by faith alone, the total depravity of man (with his bound will), and predestination. Reformed men like Calvin highly regarded Martin Luther and openly acknowledged their debt to him.

And yet, God determined that the Reformed branch would grow and develop separately.

Luther was God's instrument to bring down the whole system of Rome, as noted above. Luther then began to build the proper foundation with Jesus Christ as the Chief Cornerstone of the church. But his doctrine was primarily centered on soteriology (salvation), because that was the heart of Rome's error. God raised up John Calvin and many other Reformed men to build on Luther's foundation, but with doctrine that was more theological, that is, God-centered. That is the positive side of the purpose of God in separating the Reformed church from the Lutheran.

There is also a negative side. Lutheranism followed Luther in some of his weaknesses. His doctrine of the Lord's Supper, maintaining that Christ is physically in the bread and is chewed with the teeth, remains Lutheran teaching today. In addition, while Luther revered the Scripture and held it to be the only authority for faith and life, his view of the Bible's prescriptive authority in worship and church life was that, if the Bible did not

forbid something, then it was permissible. For example, since the Bible does not forbid images of Jesus, crucifixes in church may be allowed. Since the Bible does not forbid Christian rulers from exercising some rule in the church, it may be allowed.

The Reformed would take a different stance. Regarding worship and church practices, Zwingli maintained that if the Bible did not command it, the church was forbidden to practice it. For example, he removed choirs from worship and organs from the church buildings for that reason. This was the Reformed view of Scripture's authority followed also by John Calvin some years later. The Reformed churches would therefore develop in a different way than the Lutheran churches.

More significant is the error that crept into the Lutheran churches after Luther died. The issue of the Lord's supper remained a dividing line between the two branches of the Reformation, even thrusting them apart. But, in addition, the Lutheran churches became weak in the doctrine of salvation. Melancthon, Luther's bosom friend and comrade in arms in Wittenberg, had come to the position that fallen man's will had a small amount of power in it to will for good, and in salvation, to will in harmony with God's will. This is the error of synergism. To their credit, the early Lutherans did not budge on this, and their main confession, the Formula of Concord drawn up in 1577, maintains Luther's biblical position on the will of fallen man—it cannot and does not contribute anything in salvation. That is not to say that Melancthon did not have influence on some strains of Lutheranism.

Melancthon's influence is evident in the Formula of Concord in its weak, even contradictory, treatment of predestination. The Formula teaches election, though

it does not mention reprobation. But significantly, in this article on predestination, it affirms at least six times that God earnestly desires to save all men, and desires that all should be converted and believe in Christ.¹ By separating the Reformed branch from the Lutheran, God kept this grievous error, as well as synergism, out of Reformed doctrine, at least in its early development.

The significance of the Reformation in Zurich is set forth in the rest of this issue, including education for the children as well as an academy for an educated ministry; the emphasis on preaching; the doctrine of the covenant over against the Anabaptists; the Second Helvetic Confession; and Bullinger's influence in Reformed churches all over Europe, including England.

God raised up Zwingli, and Bullinger after him, for the reform of His church in Zurich. This was the start of the Reformation in Switzerland. Obedience to the Word of God was established as the foundation. After Zurich went for the Reformation, it spread to other major cities like Bern, Basel, and Schaffhausen, and then to many smaller bergs. And eventually, it came to Geneva (c. 1535). God raised up a host of extremely capable Reformed preachers to preach and to write throughout Switzerland, men such as Haller, Capito, Oecolampadius, Miconius, Hofmeister, Vermigli, Zanchi, Bucer, Farel, Viret, and Calvin, to name some of them. Any one of these Reformers is worth studying. But the point is, Reformed doctrine, church polity, worship, and walk of life was born and nurtured in Switzerland. And it began with Zwingli preaching the Bible in 1519 in Zurich.

1 Formula of Concord, Article 11—"The Eternal Predestination and Election of God," sections 7, 9, 11, and the negative (rejection) sections 1-3.



Ulrich Zwingli: His life and work

Rev. Justin Smidstra, pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Zeeland, Michigan

We know Ulrich Zwingli as one of the great leaders of the Protestant Reformation. When speaking of the men God raised up to reform His church, we mention the names of such men as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli all in the same breath. Yet, of these three servants of God, Zwingli is perhaps the least known to us. Zwingli was powerfully used by God to

inaugurate the reformation of the church in Switzerland. Zwingli's ministry laid foundations upon which the next generation of Reformers built. It is worth our while to become more familiar with this servant of God, who is also one of our spiritual fathers in the faith. That is the purpose of this article: to give a short historical overview of the life and ministry of Ulrich Zwingli,

the Reformer of Zurich, and the father of the Swiss Reformation.

Zwingli's early life and education (1484-1506)

Ulrich Zwingli was born on January 1, 1484, in the small shepherd village of Wildhaus, situated in a pristine valley among the snowcapped Alps. Zwingli's father was the village magistrate and had the moderate means to send his gifted son to school. Young Ulrich, born in a humble shepherd village, was destined by God to be a shepherd of a very different sort. The sovereign hand of God was preparing Zwingli to be His undershepherd, whose life's work would be leading God's people out of spiritual darkness into the light of Christ and the green pastures of gospel grace.

At the young age of five Zwingli was sent to live with his uncle Bartholomew in Wesen. There he began his formal education. Over the next nine years Zwingli went to schools in Basel and in Berne, two large Swiss cantons that later became strongholds of the Reformation. At the age of fourteen Zwingli entered the University of Vienna and then later the University of Basel.¹ In Basel he sat under the instruction of Thomas Wittenbach, a reform-minded scholar who taught theology at the university. Some of the first seeds of Zwingli's Reformed convictions were planted by Wittenbach's teaching.² In 1516, the budding young scholar graduated with a Master of Arts from the University of Basel. Zwingli showed zeal for studying the classical literature of Greece and Rome. His whole life he cherished a love of learning. However, God's chosen place for Zwingli—as with Calvin—was not the private study of the scholar, but the public pulpit of the preacher and pastor. God used Zwingli's classical education to prepare him to be a preacher of the Word. Shortly after leaving the university, Zwingli received a call from the vacant parish in the city of Glarus. By God's leading, the young scholar accepted and entered the sacred ministry.

Ministry in Glarus and Einsiedeln (1506-1518)

Zwingli was ordained into the priesthood by the bishop of Constance in September of 1506. For ten years he labored at his first charge in Glarus, the capital of the rural canton of the same name. Zwingli's large congregation was made up mostly of common people who knew little about God's Word. Zwingli busied himself preaching and teaching his flock. At this

time Zwingli was still more of a humanist scholar than biblical theologian. But even then, God used his preaching to bless the congregation in Glarus.

Being a scholar at heart, Zwingli continued to pursue his classical and biblical studies on his own. He taught himself Greek in order to study the New Testament in the original tongue.³ In good humanist fashion, he was a prolific writer of letters. He travelled to Basel to visit the renowned scholar Erasmus, whom he admired. As Zwingli developed as a Reformer, his relationship with Erasmus cooled considerably. Yet Zwingli never lost his admiration for Erasmus.

Zwingli's career as Reformer had its small beginning in Glarus. His earliest writings strongly criticized the common practice of Swiss men enlisting as mercenaries in the service of foreign powers. Zwingli himself served as a military chaplain during his ministry in Glarus. He went to battle with a company of soldiers from his parish. He saw firsthand the deplorable effects of mercenary service on the lives and morals of his countrymen. Zwingli also began to advocate for limited reforms of the church. He started questioning the unbiblical traditions of the Roman Catholic Church: papal authority, intercession of saints, and indulgences. The seeds of reformation were growing in his heart, watered and nurtured by his reading and preaching of the Scriptures.

After ten years in Glarus, Zwingli moved to another charge in the city of Einsiedeln. There he labored for only two years. In October of 1518 the most prominent church in the city of Zurich, the Great Minster, became vacant. Oswald Miconius, Zwingli's friend, who taught at the Great Minster's school, recommended Zwingli for the position.⁴ In God's providence Zwingli received the call. He accepted and became the next pastor at Great Minster.

Early ministry in Zurich (1519-1520)

Zwingli began his ministry in Zurich on January 1, 1519, on his 35th birthday.⁵ Zurich was one of the most prominent cities in the Swiss confederation. Zurich was populous and politically powerful, but also reputed for ungodliness. Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli's successor, called Zurich "the Corinth of Switzerland."⁶ Through the preaching and ministry of Zwingli, the city of Zurich became the cradle of the Swiss Reformation.

1 W. P. Stephens, *Zwingli: An Introduction to His Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 12.

2 William Boekestein, *Ulrich Zwingli* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 2015), 23.

3 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 8 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 24.

4 Schaff, *History*, 37-38.

5 Stephens, *Zwingli*, 16.

6 Boekestein, *Zwingli*, 43.

Upon arriving in Zurich, Zwingli tirelessly devoted himself to the chief labor of his office: preaching the Word. Zwingli began preaching systematically through whole books of the Bible. He abandoned the church's lectionary that assigned certain readings for each day. Zwingli began by preaching through the entire gospel of Matthew. He then proceeded to Acts, followed by several of the epistles of Paul. The people of Zurich embraced this new gospel preaching with enthusiasm. They heard the Word of God as never before! In Zwingli's preaching they heard about Christ and His atonement on the cross. They heard about God's free grace in Christ. What joy the hearing of the pure gospel brought to the people of Zurich! Zwingli's expository preaching was the root from which grew the Reformation in Zurich.

Zwingli was also a compassionate pastor who cared for his flock even at great personal risk. In August of 1519, a terrible plague swept through Zurich, killing nearly one fourth of the city's population. Rather than fleeing the plague, Zwingli remained in the city ministering to his flock. He brought the Word of the gospel at the bedside of countless sick and dying parishioners. Zwingli himself fell sick and came close to death. But the Lord preserved His servant.⁷

God used Zwingli's preaching of the Word not only to bring light to His people in Zurich, but also to cause Zwingli to mature as a Reformer. Zwingli's Reformed convictions did not come suddenly, but gradually. Although Zwingli lived at the same time as Luther, both men came to their Protestant convictions independent of each other. As Zwingli studied, preached, and pastored with the Scriptures, the Word of God mastered him. The gospel of Jesus Christ captivated him. The Reformation was born out of the Word of God.

The years of reformation (1520-1525)

The years of 1520-1525 were some of the most intense yet fruitful years of Zwingli's ministry. During these six, busy years the Reformation took root and blossomed in Zurich. In 1522 Zwingli preached a sermon on Christian liberty defending certain citizens who had disobeyed Rome's mandatory fast during Lent. That same year Zwingli and other clergymen petitioned the bishop of Constance to allow priests to marry. At this time Zwingli had already married a widow from his congregation named Anna Reinhart. Ulrich and Anna kept their marriage secret until 1524, when the Reformation in Zurich had progressed farther.⁸

⁷ Stephens, *Zwingli*, 17.

⁸ Boekestein, *Zwingli*, 62.

Over the course of the next couple years, three important public disputations were held in Zurich. Along with these disputations, the government of Zurich made decisions that advanced the cause of the Reformation. The first took place in Zurich's town hall. Over six hundred people gathered to hear the debate between Zwingli and Dr. Faber, the Roman Catholic delegate. Zwingli presented sixty-seven articles that summarized his views on Scripture, Christ, and the authority of the church. The city council judged Zwingli the victor and ordered the preaching of the Scriptures throughout the canton.⁹ The second disputation was held later that same year, with nine hundred in attendance. In this debate Zwingli refuted the Roman Catholic use of images and condemned the mass on the basis of Scripture. The Zurich council again judged in his favor.¹⁰ The third disputation was smaller and centered on the mass. In 1524 the city magistrates took action and began removing images from the churches. The year 1525 was the watershed year for the Reformation in Zurich. On Easter Sunday the mass was finally abolished and replaced with the Lord's Supper. For the first time in centuries, Zwingli administered the Lord's Supper in the Great Minster of Zurich along with the preaching of the gospel. The sacrament was celebrated at a table, not the altar. The elements were served using simple wooden utensils. With the abolishing of the mass, the separation from Rome was complete. Zurich was a Reformed canton.

Later ministry in Zurich and death (1526-1531)

The later years of Zwingli's life were marked by increasing involvement in the politics and government of Zurich, as well as efforts to form alliances with other Protestants. In 1529 Zwingli and Luther met at the Marburg colloquy in an attempt to unify the Swiss and German branches of the Reformation. The disagreement that kept them apart was over the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Luther refused to join hands with Zwingli.

During these years, strife flared up between the Swiss cantons that embraced the Reformation and those cantons that remained entrenched in the old Catholicism. Zwingli, out of zeal to protect the gospel, argued in favor of war. By the year 1531 war was on the horizon. The uneasy peace between the parties broke down. In October 1531 five Catholic cantons invaded Zurich. Poorly prepared to repel the invasion, Zurich was badly defeated at the battle of Kappel. Zwingli himself was killed in the battle. The defeat at Kappel and the loss

⁹ Stephens, 19.

¹⁰ Boekestein, 74-75.

of Zwingli was a heavy blow to the Reformed cause in Switzerland. But the Reformation was not defeated.

From a human perspective Zwingli's death was untimely. But this too was under the sovereign control of God. God raised up Zwingli at His appointed time and God took His servant home when his work was

finished. Zwingli's life and ministry were short. His ministry in Zurich lasted only twelve years. God accomplished everything that He purposed to accomplish through Zwingli in those twelve short years. The foundations were laid. God would raise up other men to build upon them.



Preaching and disputations: How Zurich became Reformed

Prof. Douglas Kuiper, professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

The settlement known today as Zurich, Switzerland, has a long history. Decades before Christ's birth, the Romans conquered the area of Germany and Switzerland. On the northwest shore of Lake Zurich, by the Limmat River, they found a settlement of barbarians, uncultured people. These were pagans, of course; Christ had not yet been born, so Christianity had not yet come to that region.

Within three centuries of Christ's resurrection, missionaries brought Christianity to the area. One of Zurich's claims to fame is that it is the site of the martyrdom of missionaries Felix and Regula, about the year 286. The city grew and developed, becoming a citadel of Roman Catholicism. A monastery and nunnery were located nearby, and the construction of the Grossmünster (Great Church—see the photo on the cover) began about 1100. In 1218 Zurich became a free city, and a century later became part of the Swiss alliance.

The year 1519 marks another significant milestone in Zurich's history: the beginning of the process of the city becoming Reformed. The teachings of the Reformation came to many cities, with the result that Reformed churches were formed in those cities. But in the case of Zurich, the city *as a political unit* committed itself to Protestantism and supported the teaching and promotion of Reformed doctrine and worship. How did this happen?

Zwingli's preaching

The preaching of Ulrich Zwingli was one factor in the city becoming Reformed. Several characteristics of his preaching are worthy of note.

First, Zwingli's preaching was *expository* and *systematic*. When he came to Zurich in December 1518, he began preaching through the gospel according to

Matthew, verse by verse. Between 1518 and 1525, he preached systematically through Acts, I Timothy, Galatians, I and II Peter, Hebrews, Luke, John, and other Pauline epistles. For the next several years he turned his attention to the Old Testament.

Second, Zwingli's preaching was *Christ-centered*, setting forth the fundamentals of the gospel of grace. Zwingli preached that Christ's sacrifice fully atoned for our sin and made the Romish mass both irrelevant and wrong. He also preached that Christ was an example to us of holy living.

Third, his preaching was *polemical*. He opposed Rome's abuses of doctrine and practice and showed that they were contrary to Scripture.

Finally, his preaching was *applicatory*. He spoke to the people, comforted the people, and exhorted the people, all on the basis of Scripture.

Such preaching was not entirely novel: Zwingli reminded others that the early church fathers had preached this way. Yet this kind of preaching was not common in Romish churches in the Medieval period. The practice in Rome had been that the priests read a selected portion from the Gospels or some other Scripture passage, and then read a homily for the day. In every church building, on the same day, the same Scripture passage and the same homily would be read. The homily was not written by the priest; it was either borrowed from a church father, or made by a higher-ranking official in the Romish church. And the homily was barely an exposition of that passage; its aim was to try to convince the people that the teachings and practices of Rome were, in some general way, based on Scripture.

Not always was this homily actually read. Many of the priests were illiterate, making it impossible to read

a homily. Besides, the Romish view of the sacraments taught that regular penance and the regular partaking of the Eucharist took away one's sins. This took away the incentive to read the homilies. For these reasons, Zwingli's preaching was revolutionary.

In His providence and grace, God used such preaching to cause the city fathers of Zurich, as well as the citizens generally, to choose in favor of the Reformation. He did so in at least two ways.

First, this kind of preaching gained Zwingli the attention of the people of Zurich. Zwingli had been preaching like this before he came to Zurich. Not so much during his priesthood in Glarus (1506-1516) did he begin preaching this way, but more especially during his time in Einsiedeln (1516-1518). Such preaching brought him to the attention of people in other cities. In the Fall of 1517, he declined an appointment to the city of Winterthur. A year later he accepted the appointment to Zurich. God used Zwingli's preaching to bring him to the attention of many people, and the call from Zurich reflected the desire of many to have expository preaching in Zurich.

Second, this kind of preaching was the means by which many people came to understand the Scriptures clearly, and by which they saw the errors of Rome. The reception of Zwingli's preaching by the people of Zurich demonstrated that the preaching of the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). As the apostle Paul went from *city to city* preaching the gospel, by which the Spirit brought many to conversion and conscious faith, so the preaching of Zwingli *in Zurich* was one means by which God caused the Reformed faith to take root and to spread throughout the surrounding area.

Zwingli's preaching was the means by which many people became convinced of the Reformed faith. However, it did not yet commit the city officially to the Reformation.

Disputations

The city's allegiance to the cause of the Reformation was the outcome of three disputations (debates) called by the Zurich city council. This city council included two branches: the Great Council, which had 162 members, and the Small Council, which had 50 members. Together these had authority, among other things, to appoint ministers. The progress of the Lutheran reformation required Luther to get the support of the local nobles, if not the princes or emperor. Zwingli, by contrast, needed the support of the city council.

Support him the council did. It officially approved his method of preaching, a method that the local Romish

bishop and others challenged. The difference between Zwingli and the bishop hinged on the question whether the pope's authority trumped that of Scripture (that is, whether Rome had official authority to determine what Scripture meant), or whether Scripture's authority was supreme. Disagreement on this question led to disagreement in other areas: May ministers marry? May baptism be administered in the language of the people, or must it be in Latin? Do images and crucifixes in the churches have any positive purpose, and if not, should they be removed from the churches? If the church administrators would not willingly remove them, should they be forcibly removed and destroyed? Should not Reformed worship practices be implemented *immediately*? Should those who were baptized by Rome but who now opposed Rome be *re-baptized*?

By supporting Zwingli, the city government had taken a stand for the Reformation. For this, Rome viewed the city council as unfaithful. The city council needed to convince the people that it was on the right side of the issue. So it called for three disputations. Here, too, the council showed its support of Zwingli: it insisted that the matters at the disputations be judged on the basis of Scripture, and it would determine which side won the debate.

The first disputation was held on January 29, 1523. To prepare for it, Zwingli drew up his Sixty-Seven Articles. Zwingli presented his case convincingly against his opponent, John Faber. Two other disputations were held in October 1523 and January 1524.

The outcome was that the council declared that Zurich cast its lot with the Reformation. The council also ordered all clergy in the city to recognize the authority of Scripture in their preaching and to follow Zwingli's method. It chose in favor of the Reformation's fundamental teaching (the final authority of Scripture) and its basic method (preaching the gospel as set forth in the Scriptures). But it made this choice knowing that it had the backing of the people. They had attended these disputations with interest; they loved their pastor, Zwingli; and they were willing to make the decisive break with Rome.

Significance

The hand of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ was directing all these affairs for the good of His church, and particularly for the spread of the Reformation.

Christ placed Zwingli in Zurich because Christ had ordained to use him there for the spread of the Reformation. The city's population in Zwingli's day was about 7,000. The canton (state) of Zurich, of which the city was the center, numbered about 50,000. The city was

not only a population center, but also an economic and political center. It is not surprising, then, that after the city became Reformed, it spread its influence throughout the surrounding region.

From Zurich, this influence spread first to Basel and Berne. From there it spread to other parts of Switzerland. Historically, this explains why the Swiss cantons developed as *Reformed* cantons in distinction from *Lutheran* cantons: the influence of Zwingli in these regions overshadowed that of Luther.

That the Reformation might spread, Christ kept the Romish church from opposing Zwingli. Rome persecuted Luther and tried to kill him, but it left Zwingli alone. Perhaps, had Zwingli lived longer (he died in 1531), he would have endured more opposition. Another possible explanation is that the pope and Romish church were at war with France and Italy, and needed the help that the hired armies from Switzerland could give. Better to let Zwingli alone than to upset the armies that could help Rome politically. Either way, Christ was directing history so that His cause would spread.

Even by using the city councils as He did, Christ's hand was at work. Reformed churches today emphasize

that Christ rules the church through officebearers, and that the civil government is to rule civil society. The rule of civil government affects the church to a degree, because the church lives in the world and in civil society; but the civil government does not rule the church in ecclesiastical matters.

This point the Reformers did not see—in part because church and state had always been so intertwined during the Middle Ages, and in part because the Reformers were addressing the foundational doctrines of the Reformation, such as the authority of Scripture and justification by faith alone without works. Yet Christ used the civil government of Zurich to guide the course of the Reformation. Still today, whether civil governments actively support Christianity or oppose it, Christ directs their affairs with the good of His church in mind.

Finally, the spiritual rule of Christ by His Spirit and Word was evident even then: the Zurich reformation was effected by the preaching of the gospel. Such preaching is always the power and wisdom of God unto salvation for all whom He has chosen in Christ and for whom He died.



Zwingli's confession: The Sixty-Seven Articles

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The Sixty-Seven Articles were prepared by Zwingli as “talking points” (theses for public debate) for the First Zurich Disputation held on January 29, 1523.¹ In the four years prior to this, Zwingli, a Catholic priest and cleric, had publicly preached against many Roman Catholic practices including the sale of indulgences, the veneration of saints, pilgrimages, the use of images in worship, the requirement of clerical celibacy, and the dietary restrictions of Lent. Practicing what he preached, Zwingli made a bold statement in 1522 by publicly eating sausage during an imposed period of Roman Catholic fasting and by getting married without

the sanction of the bishop (something strictly forbidden all Roman Catholic clergy).

When the weight of the Roman Catholic hierarchy descended on Zurich with a demand that Zwingli be charged with heresy and expelled from the city, the city council called for this public disputation to decide on their future—would they continue with Rome, or would they follow the theology of Zwingli? At the end of the disputation, it was decided that the city would follow the Reformation, and they rejected the errors of Roman Catholicism. The city council urged Zwingli “to continue to preach the holy gospel as heretofore, and to proclaim the true, divine Scriptures.”²

¹ The easiest place to find a complete copy of “The Sixty-Seven Articles” is online at <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/zwinglis-sixty-seven-articles>. A pdf printable version can be downloaded at <http://web.highland.net/jwest/67.pdf>.

² Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 7 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), 54.

So, what were these Sixty-Seven Articles, and how could they bring a city council to see the errors of Rome and officially break from the Roman Catholic Church?

These Articles are similar to Luther's Ninety-Five Theses both in content and form. Each of the Articles addresses, head on, some error and many of them state succinctly a doctrinal commitment. The adoption of these statements by the city of Zurich raised them from the level of "talking points" to becoming, really, the first of the Reformed Confessions, and a pattern that the Reformation would begin to follow in its adoption of confessions (succinct and clear doctrinal statements for the advancement of truth).

Reading through the Sixty-Seven Articles as Reformed Christians in the twenty-first century, we could easily find some things with which we disagree, even pointing out faults in the thinking and argument of Zwingli. However, we ought not and will not do that, because these were written at a time and in a context very different from our own. The Reformation was still less than ten years old, and for more than 1,000 years the church had been under the tyranny of papal rule. In that light, the statements and theology of Zwingli in the Sixty-Seven Articles are remarkable, indicating how great a work of God the Reformation was.

Scripture alone

Every reformation in the church is a return to the Scriptures. This was especially true of the Reformation of the sixteenth century under the leadership of Martin Luther and John Calvin. The same can be said of the leadership of Zwingli. The starting point and dominant theme of Zwingli's Sixty-Seven Articles is *sola Scriptura*. This is evident not only from the Articles themselves but also from Zwingli's introduction to the Articles:

The articles and opinions below, I, Ulrich Zwingli, confess to have preached in the worthy city of Zurich as based upon the Scriptures, which are called inspired by God, and I offer to protect and conquer with the said articles, and where I have not now correctly understood said Scriptures, I shall allow myself to be taught better, but only from said Scriptures.

A sample of the Articles also demonstrates Zwingli's high view of Scripture.

5. Therefore, all who regard other teachings equal to or higher than the Gospel, err. They do not know what Gospel is.

13. Where people heed the Word of God, they learn the will of God plainly and clearly, they are drawn to him by his Spirit, and they are converted to him.

16. In the Gospel one learns that human doctrines and decrees do not aid in salvation.

57. The true divine Scriptures know nothing about purgatory after this life.

62. Furthermore, they [the Scriptures] recognize no priests except those who proclaim the word of God.

Both Zwingli's introduction and these Articles give evidence to Zwingli's high view of Scripture as verbally inspired, as the only rule of authority for doctrine and practice, as trustworthy, and as fully setting forth the gospel of Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation. The validity of a doctrine or a practice is based, not on the weight of the one who declares it, whether pope or church councils, but on whether it is found in Scripture. In Zwingli's view, church councils had no authority independent of the Word of God.

Zwingli's high view of Scripture arose out of his own conversion, ministry, and movement towards the Reformation from Roman Catholicism. As a priest, ordained already in 1506, Zwingli took seriously the duties of his office in the church. He wrote of his early priesthood, "Though I was young, ecclesiastical duties inspired in me more fear than joy, because I knew, and remain convinced that I would give an account of the blood of the sheep which would perish as a consequence of my carelessness."³ This feeling of responsibility for his charge (rather than, like Luther, a personal quest for salvation) motivated Zwingli's increasing interest in Scripture. During a time when priests were mostly unfamiliar with the Scriptures, Zwingli became enamored with it. After purchasing a copy of Erasmus' Greek New Testament, Zwingli began teaching himself Greek and preaching regularly through the Gospels, Acts and epistles. Zwingli also did not recognize the apocryphal books as canonical.

Taking aim at Rome

Zwingli's high view of Scripture led him to denounce the Romish practices and theology of his day. The question in his mind was this: "Who has ultimate authority, the church or the Word of God?" The majority of the Sixty-Seven Articles are directed against specific practices of Catholicism and against the pomp, hypocrisy, externalism, and hierarchy of Rome. Whereas Luther allowed for many practices in the church that are not directly commanded in Scripture, Zwingli followed what we now call *the regulative principle*, that "what is not commanded is forbidden."

³ Mark Gail and Ted Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville: Christianity Today, Inc. 2000), 218.

Concerning Rome's view of church authority, Zwingli says, "All who say that the Gospel is invalid without the confirmation of the Church err and slander God" (Art. 1).

Concerning the papacy, "...those who have called themselves high priests have opposed the honor and power of Christ, yea, cast it out" (Art. 17).

Concerning the mass, "...the mass is not a sacrifice, but is a remembrance of the sacrifice and assurance of the salvation which Christ has given us" (Art. 18).

Concerning the intercession of the saints, "Christ is the only mediator between God and us; God desires to give us all things in his name, whence it follows that outside of this life we need no mediator except himself; when we pray for each other here on earth, we do so in such manner that we believe that all things are given to us through Christ alone" (Arts. 19-21).

Concerning good works, "Christ is our justification, from which follows that our good works, if they are of Christ, are good; but if ours, they are neither right or good" (Art. 22).

Concerning dietary restrictions, "No Christian is bound to do those things which God has not decreed, therefore one may eat at all times all food..." (Art. 24).

Concerning pilgrimages and holidays, "...those who fix time and place deprive Christians of their liberty" (Art. 25).

Concerning hierarchy, "All Christian men are brethren of Christ and brothers to one another, and the title of Father should not be assumed by anyone on earth. This includes orders, sects and factions" (Art. 27).

Concerning the chastity of priests, "...marriage is permitted to all human beings" [and] "all who are known as clergy sin when they do not protect themselves by marriage after they have become conscious that God has not enabled them to remain chaste" (Arts. 28-29).

Concerning church discipline and excommunication, "No special person can impose the ban [excommunication] upon anyone except the Church, that is, the congregation of those among whom the banned dwells, together with their watchmen" (Art. 31).

Concerning prayer and hypocrisy, "True worshippers call to God in spirit and in truth, without great ado before men. Hypocrites do their work so that they may be seen of men" (Arts. 44-45).

Concerning penance and the remitting of sins, "God alone remits sin through Jesus Christ; whoever ascribes this to a creature, robs God of his honor and gives it to one who is not God. This is sheer idolatry; Christ has borne all our pain and travail. Hence, whoever attributes to works of penance what is Christ's alone, errs and blasphemes God" (Arts. 50, 51, 54).

Concerning purgatory, "The true divine Scriptures know nothing about purgatory after this life" (Art. 57).

Concerning the priesthood, "The Scriptures recognize no priests except those who proclaim the word of God" (Art. 62).

What a comprehensive critique of Catholicism, and so early in the Reformation!

Christ alone

In these Articles, Zwingli's critique is aimed not only at the unbiblical practices of Rome, but also and primarily at the Roman Catholic denial of the gospel. The unbiblical practices of Rome are only a symptom of the denial of salvation "in Christ alone."

Early in the Articles Zwingli summarizes what the gospel itself is (Arts. 2-3):

The sum and substance of the Gospel is that our Lord Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, has made known to us the will of his heavenly Father, and has with his innocence redeemed us from death and reconciled us to God. Hence Christ is the only way to salvation for all who ever were, are, and shall be.

Following this, Zwingli emphasizes the headship of Christ and the union of all true believers to Christ their Head, in whom alone is their salvation. The salvation of believers is not in their membership in the Roman Catholic institute, but in their union to Christ. "All who live in this Head are his members and children of God. And this is the church, the communion of saints, the bride of Christ, *ecclesia catholica*" (Art. 8). Christ, he says, is "the only eternal high priest," who, "having sacrificed himself once, is to eternity a certain and valid sacrifice for the sins of all believers" (Arts. 17-18).

These truths are now very familiar to us, but in the early sixteenth century, after 1,000 years of papal error, these were a remarkable return to biblical teaching. Zwingli understood this when he also wrote:

13. Where people heed the Word of God, they learn the will of God plainly and clearly, they are drawn to him by his Spirit, and they are converted to him.

14. Therefore all Christian people shall use their best diligence that the Gospel of Christ be preached everywhere.

15. For in the faith rests our salvation, and in unbelief our damnation, for all truth is clear in him.

The effect of the Sixty-Seven Articles

Zwingli's aim in the Sixty-Seven Articles was to call the church to repentance, to continue the Reformation

through discussion and debate on the issues he had addressed, and to set the Scriptures down as the only basis for argument. This is clear from the last two articles and the conclusion:

66. All clerical superiors are to humble themselves instantly and erect the cross of Christ only and not the money box. Otherwise they will perish; the axe is laid to the root of the tree.

67. Should anyone want to discuss with me concerning interest, tithes, unbaptized children or confirmation, I declare myself willing to respond.

Let no one undertake here to argue with sophistry of human foolishness, but come to the Scriptures to accept them as the judge (for the Scriptures breathe the Spirit of God), so that the truth either may be found, or if found, as I hope, retained. Amen.

The presentation and adoption of Zwingli's Sixty-Seven Articles in Zurich led to a rapid reform in that city and beyond. Within months, a second public disputation was held, and within a year most of the Roman Catholic practices, including the mass, were abolished.

There was some opposition, but this mostly resulted in those who remained loyal to Rome leaving the city. A new liturgy was established by April of 1525 in which the congregation celebrated the Lord's Supper by sitting at tables to emphasize the meal aspect of the sacrament and used wooden cups and plates to avoid any outward formalism. The focal point of the service, in this new liturgy, was the sermon, and the priority of preaching over the sacraments was underlined by Zwingli's proposal to limit the celebration of the Lord's Supper to four times a year. In Zurich, the priestly orders were abolished, and the monasteries transformed into seminaries where the clergy were educated in the original languages and biblical preaching.

By the time Zwingli died in 1531, the Reformation in Switzerland had spread to the neighboring cities of Bern, Basel, and most of North and East Switzerland. In a similar way, God would later use the Heidelberg Catechism to bring the Reformation to the Netherlands. As an early confession of the Reformation, the Sixty-Seven Articles were used mightily by God to bring the church back to the Scriptures.



The School of the Prophets: Zwingli's legacy of Reformed education

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The Grossmünster

The iconic twin towers of the Grossmünster (Great Minster) still loom large over the city of Zurich, Switzerland. Completed in the thirteenth century after nearly 150 years of construction, the majestic cathedral was built to be a home for holy relics and a grand stage for the mass. But with the coming of Ulrich Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation in the sixteenth century, that all changed. Today, the Grossmünster is an architectural monument with a story to tell as it whispers its Roman Catholic roots and then thunders forth its Reformation heritage.



The Grossmünster holds a special place in the history of the Reformation, for it was here that the Reformed tradition began. When Zwingli ascended the pulpit here for the first time 500 years ago, he electrified the congregation with his bold expository preaching. Starting with the first verse of Matthew on January 1, 1519, he continued to preach systematically through the entire New Testament. From this spark of reformation in the Grossmünster sanctuary, the fires of reformation engulfed the city of Zurich and then blazed throughout Switzerland and beyond. The Lord was beginning a mighty work.

Entering the breathtaking immensity of the cathedral's interior today, a tourist would find it hard not to notice the impact of the Swiss Reformation. Zwingli taught that the preaching of God's Word is the centerpiece and the standard of congregational worship. Gone

are the idolatrous relics and images of the saints. Now the bare Romanesque architecture of the church creates a space of simple beauty. Gone is the revered high altar of the mass, which once sat far removed from the people atop the stairs in the choir. Now a pulpit soars over the pews of the nave and a baptismal font doubles as a communion table in the center of the church, brought down among the people. The Reformation transformed worship and repurposed the church's architecture and furnishings. In just a few years, the Grossmünster was transformed from a house of idolatry and ritual to a home for preaching and prayer.



At the Grossmünster today, there is something special about the empty choir too. In the open space at the eastern end of the church where the rites of the Latin mass once mystified an ignorant and superstitious people, Zwingli founded what he called the “School of the Prophets,” the very first Reformed theological school. It was an educational milestone that can hardly be overestimated. Zwingli's fledgling seminary would train the pastors of the Reformation, translate the Bible into the German language of the people, grow to become the first Reformed academy in church history, and lay the foundation for Reformed education throughout the world and up to the present time. In a very real sense, Ulrich Zwingli is the father of Reformed education; and the Grossmünster is where Reformed education was born.

Zwingli's education

From his rustic youth in the mountain village of Wildhaus to his multifaceted ministry in the bustling city of Zurich, Ulrich Zwingli was prepared and equipped by God for his calling as a Reformer and educator. His passion for education started at home, continued at school, and then characterized his entire ministry.

Zwingli was raised by a loving father who served as the village mayor and by a pious mother who reared their large family of ten children. One of Zwingli's biographers notes that “the mixing together of characters in a big family—shouts, arguments, games in common, smacks and rewards—achieve more, in an atmosphere of faith and hard work, than the smartest pedagogical recipes.”¹ At home, Zwingli learned to be zealous for the Lord, to be loyal to his country, to work hard on the

farm, and to discipline his young mind. His busy home was an indispensable forge for a life of learning.

Recognizing the brilliance of his young son and taking an active interest in his formal education, Zwingli's father sent him to a succession of excellent schools. At five years old, Zwingli went to live with his uncle, a former priest in the nearby town of Wesen, who tutored him in the rudiments of Latin. When he was ten, Zwingli attended preparatory schools in Basel and Bern, where he improved his Latin, delighted in classical literature, and blossomed as a musician, eventually mastering six instruments. Already at fourteen he was ready for the prestigious universities of Vienna and Basel, where he received a humanist education, studied scholastic theology, and acquired many lasting friendships. Before crowning his studies with a Master of Arts in 1506, Zwingli was profoundly influenced by the reform-minded professor Thomas Wittenbach, who introduced him to the Scriptures and taught him that “the death of Christ alone is the price of the forgiveness of sins.”² The seeds of Reformation were planted in Zwingli's soul through his university education.

When Zwingli became a priest at Glarus (1506-16) and then Einsiedeln (1516-18), he continued to study. The young pastor devoured books of all sorts and converted the second story of his house into a massive library teeming with nearly 300 volumes, “an extraordinarily large collection for a parish priest.”³ Inspired by the brilliant Erasmus of Rotterdam, he read with fascination the church fathers—Ambrose, Jerome, Chrysostom, and especially Augustine.⁴ Most importantly, Zwingli taught himself Hebrew and Greek during these years so that he could read the Bible in the original languages. When Erasmus published a Greek New Testament in 1516, Zwingli purchased it, copied his own pocket edition by hand, and then committed all of Paul's epistles to memory.

In the years ahead, Zwingli would have much to say about God's providence; but he likely thought little of it while he was being shaped by God's inscrutable hand to become a leading church reformer and a trailblazer in the field of Reformed education. Zwingli's life is an excellent demonstration of the myriad ways in which God uses both formal and informal education to prepare His people for their various callings.

² Rilliet, 27.

³ Michael Massing, *Fatal Discord: Erasmus, Luther, and the Fight for the Western Mind* (New York: Harper Collins, 2018), 515.

⁴ Steven J. Lawson, *Pillars of Grace* (Sanford: Reformation Trust, 2011), 431.

¹ Jean Rilliet, *Zwingli: Third Man of the Reformation*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 22.

Education reformation

Zwingli's unflagging commitment to Christian education became abundantly evident as soon as he began his ministry in Zurich (1518-31). When he took the pulpit at the Grossmünster, he announced to his new congregation that he would discard the homilies prescribed by the church calendar and instead preach clearly and systematically through the Bible. Zwingli wanted his congregation to comprehend the profound depths of God's Word.

But Zwingli's dedication to education was not limited to the pulpit. With his vision of bringing true biblical reformation to all of society, he understood clearly that a Christian society requires good schools.

Already in August 1523, as the Reformation expanded in Zurich, Zwingli penned a manifesto for Reformed education entitled *Of the Education of Youth*. It was "the first book to be written on education from a Protestant point of view."⁵ Written in the form of a letter to his teenage stepson Gerald, the pamphlet highlights the foundation, the content, and the goal of Christian education.

At the outset, Zwingli insists that the Bible is the foundation of the Christian school. Although he makes plain that the purpose of Reformed education is not to bring students to faith, for only God can do that, he insists that teachers must seek to nurture within their students an understanding of theological truth as it pertains to every subject. It is necessary, Zwingli writes, "to pray that he who alone can give faith will illuminate by his Spirit those whom we instruct in his Word."⁶

Next, Zwingli offers a rigorous model curriculum built on this biblical foundation. He stresses the necessity of Hebrew and Greek in order to understand the languages of the Bible. He prescribes Latin grammar and rhetoric for Christian communication. He implies an understanding of science and history and explicitly calls for mathematics, music, physical education, and even the mastery of a trade.

Zwingli concludes by highlighting the praiseworthy goal of Christian education: Christ-like conduct and service to others in every vocation. "From early boyhood," he writes, "the young man ought to exercise himself only in righteousness, fidelity and constancy; for with virtues such as these he may serve the Christian community, the common good, the state and in-

dividuals."⁷ Zwingli was not interested in education as an intellectual end in itself, but believed with all his heart that an education must express itself in a busy life of Christian discipleship and duty. In his stirring final paragraph, Zwingli declares, "The true Christian is not the one who merely speaks about the laws of God, but the one who with God's help attempts great things."⁸ As Zwingli makes plain, the goal of Reformed education was—and is—a life lived fully according to the Word of God in Christ-like service to others and for the glory of God alone.

Having set forth his vision of Reformed education in print, Zwingli worked tirelessly to put his program into practice. As the Reformation advanced in Zurich, monks and nuns abandoned their former way of life; and the Zurich city council confiscated the monasteries and their assets. In December 1524, Zwingli saw to it that these properties and funds were used to establish a citywide system of schools.⁹ In April 1525, the city council placed Zwingli on the new school board and appointed him the *Schulherr*, the director of education in Zurich.¹⁰ He immediately began reorganizing the schools under the supervision of the Grossmünster according to his robust Reformation ideal.¹¹

School of the Prophets

Zwingli's culminating educational achievement was the founding of the very first Reformed seminary in church history. From the beginning, he knew that the churches of the Swiss Reformation would need an educated ministry. His central educational aim was, therefore, to equip Reformed pastors to translate, exegete, preach, and teach God's Word.

Already in September 1523, Zwingli secured permission from the city council to reorganize and expand the failing Carolinum, the Latin school of the Grossmünster, in order to start a Reformed seminary; but he was at first stymied by insufficient funds and by colleagues opposed to the Reformation. Finally, on June 19, 1525, Zwingli's theological school held its first assembly within the Grossmünster.

Zwingli named his new seminary the *Prophezei*, "the

⁷ Zwingli, 113.

⁸ Zwingli, 117.

⁹ Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 323.

¹⁰ Karin Maag, *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education, 1560-1620* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1995), 133.

¹¹ Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 30.

⁵ William Boyd and Edmond J. King, *The History of Western Education*, cited in Paul A. Kienel, *A History of Christian School Education*, Vol. 1 (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design Publications, 1998), 259.

⁶ Ulrich Zwingli, *Of the Education of Youth*, trans. G. W. Bromley, *The Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. 24: *Zwingli and Bullinger* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 104.

School of the Prophets,” and called its Bible studies “prophesyings.” Taking his inspiration from I Corinthians 14 (verse 4 states that “he that prophesieth edifieth the church”), he understood that ministers function as New Testament prophets as they proclaim God’s Word. Philip Schaff summarizes Zwingli’s view this way: “The preacher is a prophet: his duty is to instruct, to exhort, to comfort, to rebuke sin in high and low places, and to build up the kingdom of God; his weapon is the Word of God.”¹² But the school was not limited to clergy; it was open to all, free of charge. Zwingli saw the need for every child of God to understand the Scriptures, for every believer is a king, a priest, as well as a prophet under Christ.

Meeting five days a week in the choir stalls of the Grossmünster, Zurich ministers, seminary students, city residents, and foreign guests gathered with their Bibles to compare the Hebrew and Greek texts of Scripture with the Latin Vulgate in a quest for biblical accuracy. After a morning prayer and a day of translation, exegesis, lecture, and lively debate, the Bible study culminated in a German sermon for the eager townspeople.¹³ They began with Genesis and proceeded slowly and methodically through the Bible. By Zwingli’s death, six years later, they were still working their way through the Chronicles.

From the beginning, the School of the Prophets was blessed with gifted professors. In addition to Zwingli, whose exegetical works were entirely the fruit of his lectures, the faculty included Konrad Pellikan (1478-1556), a Hebrew scholar who wrote an eight-volume commentary on the Bible; Leo Jud (1482-1542), a friend of Zwingli who spearheaded a faithful translation of the Bible into German; Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562), an Italian Reformer who produced a brilliant dogmatics; Heinrich Bullinger (1504-75), the successor of Zwingli who published volumes of theological work and guided the school for 40 years; and Rudolph Gwalther (1519-86), who succeeded Bullinger and circulated his own Latin sermons on the New Testament. So influential were these teachers that Marten Micron, a Dutch pastor in London who once studied at the school, referred to them as “our fathers, teachers and guides in the reformation of the church.”¹⁴

For almost 35 years, until John Calvin opened his Geneva Academy in 1559, the School of the Prophets was the only Reformed seminary in the world. It trained an army of pastors for the Reformation church-

es of Switzerland; it produced the famed Zurich Bible, “the Bible of the Swiss Reformation”; it generated a vast catalogue of theological writings; and it inspired a host of Reformed schools in Switzerland, Germany, Poland, England, Scotland, and the Netherlands.¹⁵

After the death of Zwingli in 1531, the School of the Prophets expanded to become the renowned Zurich Academy, meeting in the cloister attached to the Grossmünster and offering courses in science, mathematics, politics, rhetoric, biblical languages, and Reformed theology.¹⁶ Much later, in 1833, the Zurich Academy became the prestigious University of Zurich, the largest university in Switzerland. Today, the university’s logo contains a silhouette of the Grossmünster, a fitting nod to the school’s Reformation roots in Zwingli’s School of the Prophets.

Zwingli’s legacy

In 1519 the advent of the Swiss Reformation also marked the beginning of Reformed education. On this 500th anniversary, every Reformed believer ought to give hearty thanks to God for Ulrich Zwingli, the father of the Swiss Reformation and the father of Reformed education. Zwingli’s personal example teaches us the importance of wide reading and lifelong learning; his educational handbook reminds us that the Bible must be the school’s firm foundation; and his theological school bequeaths to us a rich heritage of Reformed instruction.

For the past 500 years, countless Reformed grade schools, high schools, colleges, universities, and seminaries have flourished the world over. Indebted to Zwingli’s School of the Prophets, these Reformed institutions have carried on the Reformer’s sense of Christian community, his goal of service to others in every vocation, and his commitment to the primacy of God’s Word in the classroom. They too have been “Schools of the Prophets,” insofar as they have faithfully equipped their students to comprehend and proclaim the glorious Word of God more fully.

The Grossmünster memorializes this educational legacy today. The southern side of the church contains a captivating doorway called the Zwingli Portal. The gigantic bronze



12 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), 66.

13 Maag, *Seminary or University?*, 131.

14 Benedict, *Christ’s Churches*, 61-62.

15 Benedict, 30.

16 Hans J. Hillebrand, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, Vol. 4 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 317.

doors depict 24 scenes from the Swiss Reformation, 16 of them from Zwingli's life. How fitting that one of these engravings depicts Zwingli teaching his congregation God's Word from the pulpit and another portrays him translating the Bible with his School of the Proph-

ets. To a casual tourist, these may seem like irrelevant details on obscure cathedral doors, but they speak volumes to a thankful believer who has come to know the inestimable value of a truly Reformed education.



Zwingli's controversy with the Anabaptists

Rev. Kenneth Koole, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches and co-editor of the *Standard Bearer*

Like Luther in Germany, Zwingli was compelled to deal with Anabaptist “brethren” in Zurich and the Swiss cantons.

What is significant about the Anabaptists is that they were supporters of the Protestant movement and the Reformers, men who had been former allies and, in some instances, even personal friends—Carlstadt with Luther, and men such as Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz with Zwingli. For the Reformers, this made having to distance themselves from these former allies, and finally having to denounce them, all the more painful and difficult. “They have sprung from us,” Zwingli was reported to have lamented.¹

Those who took the lead in the Anabaptist (“re baptize”) movement were men who at the beginning of the Protestant movement considered themselves students of the Reformers. Having heard them preach and read their writings, these men were convinced of the rightness of the Reformers’ cause, of the evils of the Romish church against which the Reformers testified, and who sought to stamp them out.

The Anabaptist leaders were full of zeal. They echoed the Reformers in condemning the corruptions and abuses of Rome, in holding to the Holy Scriptures as the one final authority in doctrine and life, in rejecting the idolatrous mass, and in emphasizing salvation *all* of grace and justification not by works but by faith—faith alone based on the work of Christ alone.

At the beginning, good men to have on your side. Or so it seemed.

However, in time, it became plain that these men were misguided in their zeal, zealots who had a taste for power and being at the forefront themselves, men

who were convinced that in the end the Reformers such as Luther and Zwingli did not go far enough or fast enough to remove and destroy everything that savored of Rome.

This latter unhappiness with the Reformers became plain in what is known as the iconoclast riots. As multitudes in Germany renounced their Roman Catholicism with its abuses, converting to Protestantism under Luther’s preaching and pamphlets that called for worship with preaching at its core, the zealots stirred up the people to cleanse their places of worship, purging them of all forms of Romish idolatry, beginning with the plethora of images to be found in the cathedrals and chapels.

Mobs boiled through towns and villages, invading churches and shrines, smashing every image in sight, including stained-glass windows depicting saints and the Virgin Mary. From there, the fervor spread to the renouncing of civil magistrates who tried to interfere. In southern Germany the peasants were encouraged to rise up and seize various properties, taking over whole towns, so that the ‘righteous’ might share them, having all things in common (as they read the New Testament book of Acts) and establish their own city-states, ruled not by wicked (Romish) magistrates but, supposedly, by biblical laws and “charity” (community of goods).

Europe’s civil magistrates watched in horror. Especially was this true of those of the well-ordered Swiss cantons.

Due in large measure to Zwingli’s influence in the Swiss cantons where magistrates were sympathetic to the Reformation, these excesses did not run riot through Switzerland. In Zurich Zwingli was able to persuade those with ‘fanatical’ tendencies to bring their grievances to the council to persuade them of their convictions. In this way they would show honor to the

¹ J. Rilliet, *Zwingli: Third Man of the Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 139.

God-ordained magistrates, an emphasis that loomed large in all of Zwingli's teachings. It had its desired result. In the words of Jean Rilliet, "within two weeks the churches were cleared; altars, saints, and madonnas vanished under the expert supervision of people whose job it was.... The bareness of protestant worship banished the ceremonies and display of Catholicism."²

Other Swiss towns followed suit.

But this did not end the inevitable rupture with those of the Anabaptistic spirit.

Having gained one concession and having little regard for civil authorities when their regulations for due process of law opposed the zealots' demands for immediate action, lead agitators stirred up groups of people simply to dismiss common practices and replace them on the spot with "Spirit-approved" innovations, council approved or not. In Zurich a vocal group formed and, under the prompting of some fiery preachers, began to demand that Zurich strive for a community of perfection worthy of the early apostolic church. Issues were too important and urgent to wait for less enlightened council members to see the rightness of their demands for change. It was time to distinguish between the truly "holy" and the merely "lukewarm."

Zwingli and the council feared where this unbridled spirit was heading. Could it somehow be tempered or derailed?

In December 1524 Zwingli published a pamphlet entitled *Who Are the Trouble Makers?* As Rilliet phrases it, the pamphlet "depicts [the Anabaptist leaders] with merciless irony."³ Zwingli describes them as men

...[more] puffed up by their knowledge of the Gospel than aflame with the spirit of charity.... They ceaselessly criticized other men, discerning what [others] lack to be good Christians, but do not look at themselves. Besides this, they are full of contradictions. Sometimes they will not have magistrates, at other times they want them while insisting that no Christian should exercise public office. It so happens that they accept the idea of a church, but assert that authority should not protect the preaching of the Gospel by the use of force.... Infant baptism, to hear them talk, is the worst of sins. In addition, their talk is replete with slander, jealousy, anger, and hatred. They cease to greet those who displease them, and, if an estimable man continues to greet the opponents of the Gospel, him too they exclude from their acquaintance. They fail to understand that this contentious spirit is not spiritual but carnal. They forget that strife over words can serve no useful purpose,

as St. Paul reminds us (2 Tim. 2) and everywhere they argue, in the streets and in the shops....⁴

It was over the issue of infant baptism, that "worst of sins," that matters came to a head. The zealots began insisting that all infant baptism cease, the church replacing it with adult believer baptism only in the interests of a church composed only of truly spiritually mature, holy members. In February 1525 a gathering of the zealous took it upon themselves to rebaptize those requesting it, knowing full well neither Zwingli nor the city's council approved.

The leader who convinced the gathering to proceed with rebaptism, Grebel and Manz, were arrested and tried. For this first offense, they were only threatened and fined. But once released, they persisted in their agitation. A summer of disturbances ensued in and around Zurich, "ranging from the refusal of certain individuals to submit their infants for baptism to the disruption of sermons, the smashing of baptismal fonts, and the gathering of (re-) baptized believers into separatist conventicles."⁵

The magistrates, confronted by this spirit of defiance, feared it would spill over to revolution as it had so recently in Germany. They moved decisively to cut it off. The unity of the Christian faith within the city was once more at stake, this time threatened from within. The lead agitators were arrested. Manz, as the ring-leader, was sentenced to death by water, tied and drowned—considered no more than poetic justice. Grebel was whipped and banished.

To both Zwingli's and Zurich's credit, they did not fight the Anabaptists and their condemnation of infant baptism simply by threat and the sword. Following the first arrests in early 1525, the council embarked on a public defense of infant baptism with Zwingli defending the practice in open forum. Opportunity was given to the people to respond with questions so that Zwingli might answer every objection. This he did at a number of public forums, to which he added a number of pamphlets setting forth the biblical basis for infant baptism.

It becomes plain from even a cursory study of Zwingli's development of infant baptism, that it deserves more attention than it has been given in Reformed circles.

Defending infant baptism over against the Anabaptists who denounced it as a fountain of every kind of doctrinal error and spiritual evil (just as the mass had been) compelled Zwingli to develop a covenantal explanation.

⁴ Rilliet, 142.

⁵ Timothy George, "The Presuppositions of Zwingli's Baptismal Theology" in *Prophet, Pastor, Protestant: The Work of Huldrych Zwingli After Five Hundred Years*, Ed. E.J. Furcha and H. Wayne Pipkin (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publ., 1984), 71.

² Rilliet, *Zwingli*, 86.

³ Rilliet, 142.

Zwingli was committed to running a course between the Romish corruption of the rite of baptism with its “automatic grace” and the Anabaptist’s radical rejection of infant baptism itself. Zwingli had no intention of ‘throwing the baby away with the dirty bath-water.’

To a great degree, he could sympathize with the Anabaptists and their rejection of Rome’s rite of baptism as to doctrine and corrupted ceremony. Up to this point Protestant Zurich had modeled its baptismal rite after Luther’s practice, a practice that retained much of the ‘received baptismal tradition’ of the church. The old Latin ceremony, along with sprinkled water, included “a double signing with the cross, blowing under the eyes, placement of salt in the mouth and spittle on the ears and nose, and anointment with [consecrated] oil.”⁶

Zwingli repudiated such practices as a “form of magic,” and as worthless “human additions.”⁷ He drew up a drastically revised order of baptism in which, as the title read, “all additions, which have no foundation in the word of God have been removed.”⁸

Zwingli’s revised baptismal ceremony was as biblical simplicity—water sprinkled on the infant’s head by an ordained minister in the name of God Triune.

As well, he rejected root and branch Rome’s doctrine of *ex opera operato*—grace automatically worked by the sacramental water—whereby every baptized infant (and adult, for that matter) is at that moment born again, one’s original guilt washed away.

As Zwingli wrote to a certain Thomas Wittenbach: “You can wash an unbeliever a thousand times in the water of baptism, but unless he believes, it is in vain.” And again, “How could water, fire, oil, milk, salt, and such crude things make their way to the mind?”⁹

For Zwingli, to give such power to the sacrament as Rome did, was to deny salvation by Christ alone and the grounding of one’s salvation in the grace found in Him by faith alone. Is the splashing on of a little water to replace the sole sufficiency of Christ’s atoning blood and sacrifice? Never!

With such simplicity of the rite and rejection of Rome’s doctrine the Anabaptist heartily agreed. But now the great question: Why yet retain baptism of infants? How was that biblical rather than another Romish invention and corruption of the ceremony?

It is in answering that question (ten years prior to the younger Calvin arriving at Geneva) that the cove-

nantal mind of Zwingli the Reformer shines, advancing beyond Luther.

One of the strands of Zwingli’s argument against the Anabaptist involved the salvation of infants who died prior to being baptized. The death of infants was commonplace in that age. Zwingli reminded his audience that Rome maintained that unbaptized infants were not saved. Were the Anabaptists ready to maintain that all those infants of Christ’s church dying prior to being old enough to believe and be baptized were not saved? Was this not similar to Rome? The one, Rome, requiring water baptism to be saved; the other, the Anabaptists, insisting that children had to be old enough to believe, or they perished.

Once the concession was made that children dying in infancy could be saved (and what Protestant was ready to deny that?), Zwingli could argue that salvation did not depend on active faith being present, but on the sovereign grace (election) of God. And it stood to reason, then, that baptism as a sign of being washed and bought by Christ’s blood could be applied to infants of believers before they could exhibit faith. They too were to be considered redeemed by the blood of Jesus and baptized by the Holy Spirit, whose life-giving baptism does not depend on any means.

A stronger strand in Zwingli’s defense of infant baptism was his insistence on the close connection between circumcision and baptism. Zwingli pointed out that Jesus had been both circumcised *and* then baptized by John the Baptist,

...thereby joining the rites of the two dispensations and signifying they were of equal value. Zwingli argued that the circumcised Christ’s baptism by John means that “Scripture discloses not two covenants in which God acts differently for our salvation, but rather *one covenant in two dispensations*. The baptisms of the church and [by] John are precisely the same because the gospel he preached is the very one we proclaim: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!”¹⁰

Zwingli’s point was, seeing the two signify the same thing, then as circumcision was applied to infants as members of God’s covenantal people in the Old Testament, so ought baptism be applied to infants of believers in the New Testament.

As Timothy George points out,

Zwingli is unequivocal about the children of Christian parents: they are saved whether baptized or not. Just as God’s covenant of grace extended not only to Abraham

6 George, “Zwingli’s Baptismal Theology,” 72.

7 George, 72.

8 George, 72.

9 George, 73.

10 George, 81.

but also to his seed, in like manner [writes Zwingli], “our children are included in the covenant just as much as [his] were, for we [also] are sons of the promise.” The basis of this inclusion is not the personal holiness of the parents, but the promise and election of God.¹¹

Another advancement of Zwingli in the doctrine of infant baptism was his insistence that the church see to it that she baptize only the infants of *believers*, that is, those who made a credible confession of faith. Stated Zwingli, “We do not allow children to be brought to baptism unless their parents have first been taught [the true doctrine].”¹²

This in stark contrast to Rome, who required little more than church membership of those who presented their infants for baptism. Neither ignorance nor ungodliness was a barrier.

It is this requirement insisted upon by Christ’s church that answers the charge of the Anabaptist that infant

baptism plants seeds of corruption in the church, because, they argue, all and sundry are received as members, even the unholy and profane with their children.

Not so where apostolic church discipline is maintained!

It is worth noting that Zwingli, due to his insistence that Christ was the one only way of salvation (*der eynig weg*), could not bring himself to label either baptism or the Supper as “means of grace.”¹³ Such a phrase sounded far too Romish. Faith was to be placed in Christ and His work *alone*. Surely, to view baptism as a “means of grace” would imply putting one’s trust in something in addition to Christ’s atoning work alone. Therefore, it was to be viewed only as a sign, a teaching device.

For all that, Zwingli, compelled by his controversy with the Anabaptist, paved the way for Calvin’s fuller, covenantal baptismal theology. Calvin certainly was not ignorant of the writings of his insightful Swiss predecessor.

11 George, “Zwingli’s Baptismal Theology,” 78.

12 George, 82.

13 George, 73, 74.



Heinrich Bullinger: “Common shepherd of all Christian churches”

Rev. William Langerak, pastor of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan

Dazed and vulnerable after the disaster at Kappel, the fledgling Protestant church in Zurich turned to a young refugee pastor for leadership. King Jesus’ rebuke of His servants had been severe. Twenty-five pastors were dead. Among them, Zwingli, whose body was drawn, quartered, and burnt; a grim warning to any who dared replace him. Associates were in hiding. And nearby Bremgarten had just surrendered to advancing Catholic forces. Terms: Expel their pastor. The pastor, Heinrich Bullinger, flees to Zurich. His wife Anna, forbidden to leave, arrives days later. With love stronger than death, she overpowers the guard, lets herself out the city gate, and trudges the twenty miles to Zurich in the dark carrying their two young children. The King, who had taken so much away, had also graciously well provided for His church.

Heinrich Bullinger was born in Bremgarten on July 18, 1504. He was youngest of seven children born to

Anna Wiederkehr, daughter of the town miller, and Heinrich Bullinger senior, an organist and deacon who was chosen parish pastor in 1495, shortly before marriage. Since papal law forbade clerical marriage, Anna’s father took him to court; but the tribunal allowed him to retain his office and the marital union. Still, Anna’s two brothers threatened to kill Heinrich senior, and the threat remained until 1506 when the brothers became casualties of war.

Heinrich junior’s education began early. At four, well before the normal age of seven, he entered the town’s Latin school where he learned to use the language as if it were his native tongue. At eleven, he left for the School of the Brethren of the Common Life in faraway Emmerich along the German-Dutch border. In his diary he records the rigorous discipline, the renaissance humanism he learned, and the house-to-house singing for his supper, not from parental neglect, but because

his father wanted to teach him pity and generosity for the poor. In February 1519, only sixteen months after Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses, fourteen-year-old Bullinger returned home to find his father under the ban, fined, and sued in Zurich by an indulgence peddler named Samson, whom he had barred from Bremgarten. At his trial, Zwingli, who began preaching that January, came to his defense. The court lifted the ban, cancelled the fine, and sent Samson packing over the Alps with word that he should be glad to keep his horses and wagon laden with coin. In September, Bullinger entered the university whose faculty Luther dubbed “the asses of Cologne” for officially condemning his writings. They burnt Luther’s books November 15, 1520, three days before Bullinger received his Bachelor of Arts. He was sixteen.

Bullinger claims that at the time he was still ignorant of Lutheran and papal doctrine. This changed quickly. While still in Cologne studying for his Master of Arts in order to become a Carthusian monk, Bullinger also began studying the Bible, church fathers, Luther, and with special delight, Melancthon’s *Loci Communes*. Sometime late 1521 to early 1522, still only seventeen, he renounced monkery and the mass. In April 1522, after receiving his degree, he returned home. He then became director of the Cistercian monastery in Kappel on condition he be excused from taking vows and attending mass. Immediately, he began lecturing on the New Testament for the twelve resident monks and anyone else interested. Within a month, the images were removed, murals whitewashed, and the mass abolished. In his six years there, Bullinger lectured through twenty-one New Testament books, published lectures on six of them, and wrote essays on marriage and the virtuous woman. In time, most of the monks learned trades, left the monastery and married, including Abbot Joner who had hired Bullinger.

October 17, 1527, twenty-three-year-old Bullinger proposed to Anna Adlischwyler, a former nun still living at a defunct convent in Zurich. In his proposal he wrote: “The greatest, surest treasure that you will find in me is fear of God, piety, fidelity and love, which with joy I will show you.” Anna, whose father was dead, accepted; her mother objected and tried to annul the engagement. She failed, but the court ordered the couple to remain apart until the mother consented. She never did, but died in July 1529. A month later, Heinrich and Anna married.

Anna was a remarkable woman. She mothered thirteen children, eleven her own, two adopted. On her husband’s meager salary, she provided for her large family, cared for the sick and poor in Zurich, and gave hospital-

ity to a constant stream of guests from all over Europe. Her care for English refugees received the thanks of Queen Elizabeth. In Zurich, she was known by everyone simply as “mother.” The Black Death would take Anna, two daughters, and the family maid Britta. Anna died on September 4, 1564, nine days after contracting the plague while caring for Heinrich, who also had gotten it. Heinrich was so sick, he could not attend her funeral. He would survive and live eleven more years, but with acute kidney trouble.

Ironically, Heinrich junior replaced his father as pastor when his father converted. In February 1529, ten years after turning away Samson, sixty-year-old Heinrich senior told his congregation that for the past twenty-three years he had not taught the truth of Scripture. The town council promptly deposed him. The citizens concurred, but also voted to abolish the mass and request Zurich for a new pastor. In the meantime, they invited junior to preach. The day following his sermon they burned the church’s images. On June 1, they ordained him pastor. He served Bremgarten until November 20, 1531, when he was expelled in the aftermath of Kappel.

Within two days of arriving in Zurich with his father and brother John, Bullinger was asked to preach. Catholics, emboldened by Kappel, sharpened their daggers; the council, scarred by Kappel, was leery. And with good reason: Bullinger and Zwingli were closer than brothers; and even when Bullinger first preached, he thundered such a sermon that some thought Zwingli had risen from the dead. But Bullinger was not Zwingli, and had broken with him on the matter of taking up the physical sword. So when Zwingli visited shortly before Kappel, Bullinger walked with him to the next city, said a tearful farewell, and they never met again. On December 31, 1531, Bullinger was appointed Zwingli’s replacement in the Great Minster of Zurich, where he served honorably and faithfully until his death at age 71 on September 17, 1575.

Like Calvin, the primary concern of Bullinger was to feed his own flock. To that end he reformed the schools; authored curricula, catechisms, and standards; supervised the formation of new schools, a college and seminary; and oversaw the training of hundreds of new teachers and pastors. His first six years he preached six to seven times per week. In his lifetime, he preached through every book of the Bible once; all the prophets, gospels, and Pauline epistles two to three times; and Hebrews four times. He excelled at making the complex plain. Pellikan, professor of languages in Zurich, said he had one of the greatest minds of his age, yet was the simplest of preachers. Calvin wrote that he right-

ly received much praise because he combined simplicity with learning. And when a visiting high-born man once complained of his common speech, Bullinger responded that he preached to the pews full of shabby caps and shawls.

Bullinger had an ecumenical spirit that showed early and often. In 1528, he attended the Bern Disputation against Catholicism. In 1531, he was to attend the Marburg Colloquy with Luther, until his council said no. In 1536, he co-authored the First Helvetic Confession in an attempt to unify with Lutherans. After Calvin's return to Geneva (1541) and Luther's invective against the "false and seductive preachers" of Zurich that "take the poor people to hell with them," Bullinger focused his attention on unifying the Swiss. In 1549, he wrote with Calvin the *Consensus Tigurinus*—a unifying agreement that affirmed the real spiritual presence of Christ in the Supper and restricted its grace to the elect.

Bullinger was a prolific and widely read author. He wrote over 12,000 letters (more than Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin combined) to people from students to kings throughout Europe. He wrote major theological treatises: *On the Lord's Supper* (1528); *On Images* (1529); *Warning to the Faithful of the Shameless Disturbance, Offensive Confusion, and False Teachings of the Anabaptists* (1531); *The One, Eternal Testament or Covenant of God* (1534); *The Authority of the Holy Scriptures* (1538); *On Christian Marriage* (1540); *The True Perfection of Christians* (1551); *The End of the World's Present Epoch and Future Judgment of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (1557); and *A Manual on How the Persecuted Should Respond* (1559). Bullinger wrote history books on the monastery at Kappel (1526), the city of Zurich (1531), the origin of error (1539), the Anabaptists (1560), and a massive history of the Swiss Federation and Reformed churches from 1306-1533 (1567). Bullinger wrote commentaries on every book of the New Testament. He published 618 sermons, including 170 on Jeremiah (1561); 66 on Daniel (1565); 190 on Isaiah (1567), and 100 on Revelation (1557)—which went through 20 editions and was translated into German, English, and Dutch.

But none of his published sermons were as popular as *The Decades* (1551)—50 sermons that systematically treated all of Reformed theology. Written in Latin for scholars, it was quickly translated and became an international best-seller among the laity. The Latin edition was reprinted 77 times. In Germany and Holland, the vernacular version was simply known as "The Housebook," and went through 137 editions. In England it became a standard textbook. a'Lasco said *The Decades* pleased him much. Peter Martyr said preachers who

read it could instruct people abundantly and profitably. Calvin called it a gift of the Spirit.

Nothing Bullinger wrote unified the Reformed churches more than his Second Helvetic Confession. Written as a last testament of faith when he contracted the plague, it would become, according to Schaff, the most authoritative of all the continental Reformed symbols, with the exception of the Heidelberg Catechism. It would be translated into every major European language and Arabic. Friedrich III, who commissioned the Heidelberg Catechism, had it translated into German. Beza translated it into French. Besides wide distribution in the Palatinate, Holland, and England, the Second Helvetic Confession was also officially adopted by the Reformed churches of Neufchatel (1568), Scotland (1566), Hungary (1567), France (1571), and Poland (1578).

Bullinger made two notable and related contributions to Reformed theology. The first is his doctrine of the covenant, which he developed while writing against the dispensationalism of the Anabaptists. The second were several key developments on marriage: there is one institution of marriage even as there is one covenant of grace; marriage is analogous to or a picture of the one eternal covenant of grace; since marriage was instituted before the Fall, marital life itself is good and honorable (against the notion that marriage is mainly to avoid fornication and to procreate, which mitigates an inherent sinfulness of intercourse); lastly, although Adam was created first as head, God instituted marriage for the mutual blessedness of both married persons equally.

Bullinger is relatively obscure today, in part because only six of his major writings are translated into English. But one measure of his significance is the high regard he had among peers. When Ursinus was driven from Breslau in 1560, he went to study in Zurich, not Geneva. Olevianus wrote this to Bullinger: "Any sound wisdom in reformed thought, we owe it in large part to you."¹ And none other than Beza called Bullinger "the common shepherd of all Christian churches." High praise, considering that Beza knew Calvin's influence had already eclipsed that of Bullinger. And neither should any obscurity of Bullinger today change that assessment.

¹ Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism* (John Knox Press; Louisville, KY), 37.



Heinrich Bullinger's covenant view

Prof. Ronald Cammenga, professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

Development of Bullinger's view

The doctrine of the covenant has occupied a large place in the development of the Reformed faith since the days of the Reformation. Much of the impetus for this development is to be credited to the Swiss Reformers, particularly to Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575). More than anyone before him, he gave a large place to the doctrine of the covenant. Bullinger was the first Reformed theologian to write an entire treatise on the covenant of grace. His *De Testamento Seu Foedere Dei Unico Et Aeterno Brevis Expositio* (*A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God*) was published in Zurich in 1534.¹ It is the first full treatment of the doctrine of the covenant of grace ever published. Not only did Bullinger treat covenant as one of the important doctrines of Scripture, but he was among the first to view all of theology from the perspective of the covenant. He saw the doctrine of the covenant as the overarching doctrine of Scripture and spoke of the covenant as “the target at which all Scripture aims.” He said that the truth of the covenant includes “the entire sum of piety.”

Early on, the press of circumstances forced consideration of the covenant upon the Swiss Reformers. It was especially the threat posed by the Anabaptists that became the occasion for their development of the doctrine of the covenant. For Bullinger this was also the case. Much of what Bullinger had to say regarding the truth of God's covenant belonged to his polemics against the Anabaptists. This was true of especially two aspects of his covenant theology: the truth of the one, everlasting covenant of grace and the truth of the inclusion of the children of believers in the covenant. The Anabaptists denied both of these precious truths, which are taught clearly in the Holy Scriptures.

Bullinger vehemently defended the truth of the one, everlasting covenant of grace, including believers of both the Old and New Testaments. The title of his work on the covenant is *The One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God*. God's covenant is one and eternal: “There is therefore one covenant and one church of all the saints before and after Christ, one way to heaven, and one unchanging religion of all the saints.” At the same time—and this follows from the truth that the covenant is eternal—its substance does not consist merely in earthly privileges, but in the spiritual blessings of salvation. The promises of the covenant, said Bullinger, “are not only material but also spiritual.”

Bullinger also defended the inclusion of the children of believers in the covenant. The children of believers are “indeed heirs even though they, in their early years, do not know that they are either children or heirs of their parents” in the covenant of grace. The children of believers “are the seed of Abraham and they are in the covenant.” Since the children of believers are included in God's covenant of grace, they ought also, Bullinger argued, to receive the sign and seal of their inclusion in the covenant, which is the sacrament of holy baptism. The children of the faithful belong to the seed of Abraham and, as the seed of Abraham, ought to receive the sign of the covenant. That sign in the Old Testament was circumcision, whereas in the New Testament it is baptism.

Unilateral or bilateral covenant?

As the doctrine of the covenant developed, one of the key issues that divided theologians was the issue of the nature of the covenant itself. Some theologians came to defend a bilateral view of the covenant, rather than a unilateral view. The covenant came to be regarded as a pact or agreement, which depended on mutual fulfillment of certain conditions. The covenant came to be regarded as a conditional covenant, rather than an unconditional covenant. Along with that view, theologians differed on those with whom God establishes the covenant of grace. Those who taught a unilateral, unconditional covenant defended the truth that God established His covenant with the elect children of believers. Those who

¹ All the quotations in this article are taken from the translation of *A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God*, by Heinrich Bullinger and translated by Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, included as “Part Two” of their book, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).

taught a bilateral, conditional covenant taught that God establishes His covenant with all the physical children of believers, that is, with all the children who receive the sacrament of the covenant, baptism.

As the view of a bilateral, conditional covenant developed, some of its supporters reached back and appealed to Heinrich Bullinger. They alleged that he was the father of the bilateral, conditional covenant view. Some went so far as to contend that Bullinger, and his predecessor Ulrich Zwingli, deliberately developed their conditional covenant view over against the rigidly unilateral covenant view of John Calvin and his successor Theodore Beza. The latter, they alleged, improperly applied their strict predestinarian views to the doctrine of the covenant, whereas the former—Zwingli and Bullinger—did not do so.²

It is true that Bullinger did speak of “conditions” of the covenant. In his *A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God*, he said:

Now we come to the conditions of the covenant. Those who are connected by covenants are joined together by certain regulations, so that each of the parties might know its duty, namely, what responsibilities the primary party might have toward the other, and what in return the primary party might expect from the other.

But is Bullinger’s use of this language sufficient to charge him with holding to a conditional covenant view in the way in which men today understand the conditional covenant? In the early stages of the development of the doctrine of the covenant did Bullinger teach that the covenant is established by God with every one of the natural children of believers, but that actual participation in the covenant is limited to those only who fulfill certain conditions, most notably the “condition” of faith? Did Bullinger teach a conditional covenant in the same way in which Klaas Schilder, William Heyns, and the men of the Federal Vision teach a conditional covenant? Did he teach a conditional covenant in the same way in which those who left the Protestant Reformed Churches in the 1950s taught a conditional covenant?

Unilateral covenant of grace

I am convinced that Bullinger did not teach such a conditional covenant. I am convinced that Bullinger taught fundamentally the same view as John Calvin, and that along with Calvin his doctrine of the covenant was

informed by his view of predestination. I am convinced that Bullinger taught a unilateral and unconditional covenant of grace. Taking into account that the doctrine of the covenant was in the early stages of its development, Calvin and Bullinger were in fundamental agreement as to membership in the covenant of grace.

To begin with, Bullinger insisted that the “ineffable mercy and divine grace of the eternal God are proven” in the fact that God establishes His covenant, which is “not in any way because of the merits of humans but rather out of the sheer goodness which is God’s nature.” He reckons that mere mortals cannot comprehend the greatness of God and the majesty of His power in that He “joined himself in covenant with miserable mortals corrupted by sin.” He goes on to say that “[t]his indisputably is the origin of our religion and its primary point: we are saved solely through the goodness and mercy of God.”

In characteristically unilateral language, Bullinger also referred to God’s covenant in the Second Helvetic Confession (1566). In Chapter 20, “Of Holy Baptism,” he writes:

For to be baptized in the name of Christ is to be enrolled, entered, and received into the covenant and family, and so into the inheritance, of the sons of God...God who is rich in mercy, does freely purge us from our sins by the blood of his Son, and in him does adopt us to be his sons, and by a holy covenant does join us to himself, and does enrich us with divers gifts, that we might live a new life.

That Bullinger taught a unilateral covenant view is also seen from the fact that he insisted on a thoroughgoing double-predestinarian view. Those who depict Bullinger as advocating a bilateral covenant attempt to distort Bullinger’s view of double predestination. Some go so far as to contend that Bullinger denied a double decree of predestination. They attempt to demonstrate that Bullinger denied reprobation and wanted nothing to do with Calvin’s teaching on reprobation³

This is at best a mistaken view and, at worst, a deliberate distortion of the facts. To pit Bullinger against Calvin in this regard is inexcusable. They were, in fact, in fundamental agreement.

It is one thing to say that Bullinger’s view of predestination was a more moderate view than that of Calvin. But it is quite another thing to maintain that there was an essential difference between Calvin and Bullinger regarding the doctrine of predestination. It is one thing to

2 Those who wish to consider this matter in greater depth are referred to my article in the April 1997 issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, entitled “Bullinger’s Covenant Conception: Bilateral or Unilateral?” pp. 41-63 (prts.org).

3 The interested reader is referred to *The Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformation Thought*, by David A. Weir, and *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition*, by Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker.

say that Bullinger expressed concern over certain statements made by Calvin respecting reprobation. But it is quite another thing to contend that Bullinger repudiated reprobation. It is one thing to say that Bullinger was concerned in his teaching of predestination not to make God the author of sin. But it is quite another thing to hold that in order to avoid making God the author of sin, Bullinger rejected the doctrine of reprobation.⁴

In his published sermons known as *The Decades*, Bullinger defended the truth of double predestination, including both election and reprobation. In one place he wrote that “the predestination of God is the eternal decree of God, whereby he hath ordained either to save or destroy men; a most certain end of life and death being appointed unto them.” In another place he said that “God by his eternal and unchangeable counsel hath fore-appointed who are to be saved, and who are to be condemned.” In a lengthier passage he went on to say:

Therefore, if you ask me whether you have been elected to life or predestined to death, that is, whether you are of the number of those who be damned or to be saved, I respond simply from the evangelical and apostolic Scripture: if you have fellowship with Christ, you have been predestined to life and you are of the number of the elect; but if you are estranged from Christ, however strong you might appear to be in virtues, you have been predestined to death or foreknown, as they say, to condemnation.

In another place Bullinger is equally as strong in affirming double predestination.

Predestination, preordination or predetermination is

⁴ This is exactly what McCoy and Baker do in their book, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition*.

that arrangement of God by which He appointed all things to a definite goal, but especially man as the lord of all things, and this by His holy and just plan, judgment or decree. Now also the election of God is from eternity, by which He indeed elected some to life and others to death. There is no reason for election and predestination except the good and just will of God saving the elect without cause but damning and rejecting the reprobate with cause.

The truth of predestination determined, in Bullinger’s view, membership in the covenant. Those who were included in the covenant were the true and spiritual children of Abraham, not all the children of the flesh. He said in one place that God’s covenant of grace “always has been one and will remain one...as it is in [God’s] eternal predestination.” Those whom God has eternally predestinated belong to God’s covenant. They and they alone are those with whom God has established His everlasting covenant.

We are indebted to a great extent to Bullinger, and to the Swiss Reformers generally, for our doctrine of the covenant. They did not develop the doctrine of the covenant in its entirety. They did not pass on to us a full-blown covenant view, with all the particulars and distinctive developments that have taken place since their day. But what they passed down to us is the doctrine of the covenant in its fundamental aspects. They passed on the acorn out of which the splendid oak of the unilateral, unconditional covenant of grace has grown, under the unction and leading of the Spirit. The treasure that is ours to enjoy came from the investment that they made in developing the glorious truth of the covenant. They planted; what they planted was since their time watered; and what is ours we must develop and defend for the generations that are to come.

Reports of Classis East/West

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches met on September 11 and 12 this year at Southwest PRC. This meeting was chaired by Rev. H. Bleyenbergh.

Wednesday morning was filled with the examination of Jacob Maatman, pastor-elect of Southeast PRC, Grand Rapids. He preached his specimen sermon on Mark 8: 34-35. The sermon critic committee stated it well, “Jacob demonstrated a good ability to expound and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to do so in such a way that a Protestant Reformed congregation would be edified. Jacob’s sermon was faithful and Reformed in the exposition of the text, well-grounded in

the biblical and historical context, and included appropriate applications for all of us as God’s disciples.” This was unanimously adopted by the Classis and received the concurrence of the synodical deputies.

Pastor-elect Maatman then proceeded to his examination. Throughout he displayed knowledge of God’s Word, a love for the truth, and a willingness to live a life dedicated to service to God’s church. Classis unanimously approved his examination to which the attending synodical deputies concurred. Southeast PRC was advised to proceed to his ordination to the ministry of the Word and sacraments. That ordination took place

on September 27, with Rev. Maatman's grandfather, Professor David Engelsma, officiating.

Byron Center PRC came to Classis requesting approval for the organization of a daughter congregation, Unity Protestant Reformed Church in the Byron Center/Jamestown area. There are 139 confessing members and 90 non-confessing members that intend to become charter members. This was passed unanimously with the concurrence of the synodical deputies. Rev. A. Laning was appointed as their Moderator. Pulpit supply for the evenings was granted by Classis.

Kalamazoo PRC forwarded with their approval the request of Rev. M. DeVries for emeritation, effective January 1, 2020. Classis East approved this request with the concurrence of the synodical deputies. Rev. H. Bleyenbergh expressed thanksgiving to our God for the faithful labors of Rev. DeVries. Rev. DeVries labored in the congregations of Southwest, Edgerton, First Edmonton, Wingham, and Kalamazoo over the course of 41 years. Kalamazoo PRC was also granted pulpit supply for the evening services in January 2020. Rev. D. Noorman was appointed Kalamazoo's moderator.

In closed session, a consistory sought the advice of Classis to proceed to the second announcement of discipline according to Article 77 of the Church Order. After hearing evidence of the impenitence of the individual and of the labors of the consistory, Classis advised the consistory to proceed.

Thursday was dedicated to the treatment of several protests, appeals, and an overture. One appeal was declared legally before Classis; however, Classis did not agree with the appellant that his consistory was required to respond to or prove wrong every ground or contention if they had already rescinded the decision being appealed. A protest was declared illegally before Classis because the requirements of Article 30 and 31 of the Church Order were not met. Another protest was declared illegal due to the fact Classis at a previous meeting did not sustain the same charge, nor the brother's subsequent protest of that decision. An appeal was sustained with regard to the consistory's manner of dealing with a complaint and the consistory was advised to deal with the protest without causing undue delay. Another appeal was judged not legal because Article 30 of the Church Order had not been met. A protest regarding a decision of the May meeting of Classis was not sustained. And Classis declared an overture illegal because it did not satisfy Article 46 of the Church Order and it did not meet the definition of an overture in the "Explanation of the Rules for Protests, Appeals, and Overtures."

Classis approved the payment of this meeting's expenses amounting to \$2,859.39.

Zion PRC will host the January 8, 2020 meeting of Classis East, D.V.

Gary Boverhof, Stated Clerk Classis East

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met from September 25-27, 2019, in Calvary PRC (Hull, IA). The meeting was capably chaired by Rev. Ryan Barnhill (pastor of Peace PRC), who was serving in this capacity for the first time in his ministry.

Noticeably absent from the meeting was one of the elder delegates from Immanuel PRC (Lacombe, AB), who remained home to support a family in the congregation whose teenage son had recently died in an automobile accident.

The night before Classis convened, the delegates gathered with the Calvary congregation to worship God and to hear the specimen sermon of Mr. Matt Kortus, pastor-elect of Hope PRC (Redlands, CA). He preached on Philippians 4:6-7 and displayed clearly the gifts that God has entrusted to him for the proclamation of the gospel.

The following day was largely taken up by the joyful work of examining Mr. Kortus. Throughout the exam he gave a good account of the intellectual and spiritual gifts necessary for the ministry. Classis unanimously

approved his examination, and the synodical deputies from Classis East heartily concurred. The brother plans to be ordained and installed into the ministry on October 6, with Rev. Nate Decker (pastor of Grandville PRC) officiating. We give thanks to the Lord of the harvest for supplying another faithful laborer.

In closed session, a consistory sought the advice of Classis to proceed with the erasure of a baptized member. After hearing of the individual's impenitence and the labors of the consistory to this point, Classis took the sad decision to advise the consistory to proceed with erasure.

Also in closed session, Classis treated an appeal from an individual regarding the discipline work of a consistory. Classis ruled the appeal not legally before it.

Classis also had before it four protests against decisions taken at its March meeting in closed session. After much deliberation, Classis decided not to sustain the protests in several matters and to sustain them in certain other matters.

Following a question that arose with the report of

the stated clerk, Classis approved a number of guidelines that the stated clerk can follow when he receives requests for confidential material from an individual who is not an officebearer.

Classis adopted a pulpit supply schedule for Immanuel PRC: Rev. Engelsma (November 10 and 17), Rev. Barnhill (December 8 and 15), Rev. Guichelaar (January 5 and 12), Rev. Laning (January 26 and February 2), Rev. N. Langerak (February 23 and March 1), and Rev. J. Langerak (March 15 and 22). Classis also adopted a pulpit supply schedule for First Edmonton PRC: Rev. Lee (October 20 and 27), Rev. Regnerus (November 10 and 17), Rev. Kortus (December 8 and 15), Rev. R. Kleyn (January 5 and 12), Rev. De Boer (January 26 and February 2), Rev. Key (February 23 and March 1), and Rev. Brummel (March 15 and 22).

Classis sustained the protests of five protestants with regard to their objections to Classis' decisions in March 2019 and declared those decisions to be in error. The decisions that were declared to be in error were 1) to sustain an appeal against a consistory's decision to read an apology in response to the member's protest of Rev. Marcus' preaching concerning providence, and 2) to advise the consistory to proceed to his suspension. Classis did so with the following grounds:

1. Although Rev. Marcus' teaching on providence was erroneous, suspension according to Articles 79-80

of the Church Order was not the proper way of addressing it.

2. Classis erred in its judgment that Rev. Marcus' proposed apology was not adequate.

3. Nowhere in its grounds did Classis demonstrate that the statements of Rev. Marcus were explicitly contrary to the teachings of Scripture and the confessions.

4. Classis erred in giving as a ground for suspension that "such a suspension would give the consistory time to do an investigation into the extent of his teaching in the congregation, especially with regard to the instruction of the catechism students."

5. Classis erred in giving as a ground for suspension that Rev. Marcus "cannot labor effectively in the congregation with a cloud of suspicion hanging over his orthodoxy."

6. Classis erred in giving as a ground of suspension that certain statements of Rev. Marcus were "suspicious," which statements are not inherently wrong.

Classis made apology to First Edmonton consistory and to Rev. Marcus for the advice given in March. Classis will continue to address matters that pertain to this case when they reconvene on Tuesday, November 5. Please remember the Classis in your prayers as they take up this important work again in a month.

The expenses of this part of the meeting totaled \$12,447.28.

Rev. Joshua Engelsma, Stated Clerk, Classis West

Announcements

Index

The *Standard Bearer* digital index (Volumes 1-95) is now available for purchase. The cost is \$10.00. To order, visit www.rfpa.org.

Teacher needed

The Edmonton PR Christian School is in need of a full-time teacher for the 2020-2021 school year. The school will be starting with grades 1-5 minus grade 4. Please contact Gord Tolsma at gr.tolsma@gmail.com / 780-777-5780.

Reformed Witness Hour

Revs. W. Bruinsma

November 3—"Miriam's Lamentable Fall"
Numbers 12

November 10—"The Faith of Rahab"
Hebrews 11:31

November 17—"Thanks Be to God!"
II Corinthians 9:15

November 24—"Jael: Blessed Above Women"
Judges 5:24-27