

HULDRYCH ZWINGLI AND HIS CITY OF ZURICH*

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One of the most fascinating aspects of Huldrych Zwingli's life is its multi-faceted character.¹ From the beginning of his work in Zurich in 1519, Zwingli became more and more active in a variety of roles and came to be involved in the most divergent issues. For the biographer, this situation creates considerable difficulty in finding the real thread of Zwingli's life and activity, if there is truly any such.

Where, for instance, is the center in 1526 (if I may choose an arbitrary year) for a person engaged in the following tasks?: parish priest at the Grossmünster, the main church of Zurich; a commentator and translator of the OT at the "Prophezei,"² the Bible school; and expositor of the NT at the Fraumünster, the second most important church of the city; a weekly preacher there; a theologian in the conflict with Luther about the Lord's Supper; a polemicist against Johannes Eck in the controversy over church authority; a defender of his own work against the Anabaptists; the "brain" behind the plan for a war against the Catholics in

*Adapted and revised from a paper presented at Andrews University on May 9, 1984, and submitted as an article in the original Dutch to the *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* under the title "Huldrych Zwingli in zijn milieu" (forthcoming, as of the present writing). I am indebted to Mr. E. Broekema of Amsterdam for the English translation of the original paper, and also wish to express gratitude to the *Archief* for the courtesy of permitting publication in English in this somewhat different form. (An enlarged treatment of the subject is scheduled to appear in 1985 in my book on Zwingli, to be published by Fortress Press in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.)

¹For a general overview of Zwingli's career, the best biography in English is George Richard Potter, *Zwingli* (Cambridge, Eng., 1976).

²For an explanation of the name and origin, cf. n. 37 below, and the material in the text itself which this note documents.

Switzerland; the sole witness in a lawsuit against the receivers of mercenaries; and an adviser to the public officials of Zurich.

Out of this variety of tasks, I wish here to deal with four aspects of Zwingli's career in Zurich that help to clarify his role in the context of the forces that were operative in the city at that time. But first, attention must be given briefly to two preliminary matters—an overview of Zwingli's life; and a glance at the Grossmünster's position and function as the institutional basis for Zwingli's reformatory work.

1. *Preliminary Observations on Zwingli's Career and on the Grossmünster in Zurich*

Brief Overview of Zwingli's Career

Zwingli was born on January 1, 1484, in the Swiss village of Wildhaus, the son of a well-to-do farmer. After taking the usual school and university training, completing the latter in Basel, he studied theology for about half a year, in 1506 (also in Basel). Subsequently, he served as a parish priest, first in the little rural village of Glarus (from 1506 to 1516) and then at the monastery of Einsiedeln (from 1516 to 1518).

On January 1, 1519, Zwingli began service as a parish priest at the Grossmünster in Zurich. There he came into conflict three years later with the competent bishop of the diocese, because of an attack on the regulations pertaining to Lent. Zurich's City Council, however, defended Zwingli. Moreover, it began slowly and gradually to withdraw the city from the episcopal authority, building up at the same time a well-organized evangelical church. This process was completed, essentially, in 1525.

Within Zurich during the next few years, the Anabaptists began to endanger Zwingli's reformation by setting higher renewal demands than the ones he required. Also, an attempt at unification with the Lutherans failed. The Colloquy in Marburg in 1529, which was intended to settle theological differences between the Swiss and Saxon reformers so as to make possible a large anti-imperial alliance, only highlighted and solidified the distinct difference in position between Luther and Zwingli on the Lord's Supper.

Meanwhile, in Switzerland the Reformation was developing in Basel, Bern, Schaffhausen, and some smaller territories. A con-

flict arose with those parts of Switzerland that had remained Roman Catholic—a conflict caused by the expansive efforts of the Protestants. In the course of the conflict and the open warfare that it entailed, Zwingli was killed at the Battle of Kappel on October 11, 1531.

The Grossmünster as the Institutional Basis for Zwingli's Work

My second preliminary remark deals with the Grossmünster as the institutional basis for Zwingli's activity in Zürich.³ The Grossmünster, erected in the ninth century (and to which belonged the church of St. *Felix* and *Regula*), was an institution of great influence on both the political and economic life of the city. It even owned land and villages outside Zürich and acquired the right to earn tithes and to appoint the ministers in those places. In spite of this far-reaching authority on the part of the Grossmünster, the Zürich City Council succeeded in obtaining a certain power or control through its appointment of new canons, the administrative body for the ecclesiastical institution; but, to be sure, the Council preferred to appoint such canons from among members of the old Zürich families in the Grossmünster.

Although theoretically twenty-four canons were in charge of the administration of the institution, the City Council acquired the right in the fifteenth century to appoint a layman as controller of the economic activities of the Grossmünster. Thus, the Grossmünster was rendered incapable of doing anything against the political and economic interests of the city. But in spite of this fact, it nevertheless formed an institution having a certain degree of autonomy in the small town of about 5,000 inhabitants.

The Grossmünster was, of course, mainly a religious institution. The canons had to say masses, dedicated and paid by the Zürichers. For operating the parochial work, the canons hired a

³Theodor Pestalozzi, *Die Gegner Zwinglis am Grossmünsterstift in Zürich*, Schweizer Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft, 9/1 (Zürich, 1918); Jacques Figi, *Die innere Reorganisation des Grossmünsterstiftes in Zürich von 1519 bis 1531*, Zürcher Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft, 9 (Zürich, 1951); and Hans Morf, "Obrigkeit und Kirche in Zürich bis zu Beginn der Reformation," *Zwingliana* 13/3 (1970), pp. 164-205.

parish priest, with three assistants. Therefore—and I stress this point—the post of parish priest at the Grossmünster lay precisely at the boundary between the secular city and the ecclesiastical institution.

Moreover, because of the fact that there was no university in Zurich, the Grossmünster also represented the scholarly elite of the town. Prior to Zwingli's arrival there, a group of reform-minded men had already endeavored to bring about changes in the spiritual life of the community, for they had taken keen notice of the spiritual misery of the late-medieval church. The Grossmünster was by no means a traditionally minded Catholic institution, and it is important to recognize that Zwingli from the very beginning of his stay in Zurich was accompanied and supported by a group of loyal friends devoted to the idea of a renewal of the church.

2. *The First Disputation in Zurich*

The first main facet to which I wish to call attention in my discussion of Zwingli's career is the context of the situation in Zurich as occasioned and revealed by the disputation held in the city on January 29, 1523—commonly referred to as the First Zurich Disputation. It is generally agreed that this disputation held a key position in Zwingli's own life and in the history of the Reformation in Switzerland. Nevertheless, the opinions about the intent and character of the disputation differ widely, and one can distinguish roughly three points of view:

1. That the disputation was a "put-up" job: The suggestion is that already beforehand, Zwingli and the Council had agreed upon the result. Thus, the whole affair was meant only to manipulate public opinion and to demonstrate Zwingli's and the Council's position of power.⁴

2. That the conference was truly in the line of late-medieval disputations and of the diocesan synods, but was something totally new from the standpoint that the civil administration took the initiative: The disputation, in this view, was therefore a "discovery" on the part of Zwingli, and the Council's intention was to provide

⁴E.g., Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven, Conn., and London, Eng., 1975), pp. 125, 136.

a broader basis for the decision that had already been made prior to the meeting. Thus, in a sense, the disputation and its results can be considered as the founding assembly of the evangelical church in Zurich.⁵

3. That the point of the matter was not so much a theological-ecclesiastical affair as it was a lawsuit: In this view, the Council, being responsible for law and order, had functioned to examine the accusations brought up against Zwingli. In such context, theological subjects were naturally also raised. Thus, the disputation must be understood as a measure for pacification, in addition to which it is noteworthy that the assembly claimed, as well, to have the authority to decide and have the final say on theological matters. Thus, it bypassed the traditional entities for such theological decisions—namely, theological faculties of universities and bishops in charge of the dioceses.⁶

What was the precise situation? In order to determine this, a bit of background history is necessary first. As early as the summer of 1522, it had become clear that the criticisms being leveled by Zwingli and his followers against the abuses in the Catholic church went further than did the usual late-medieval complaints. Zwingli's criticisms were directed against fasts, clerical celibacy, the privileged place of cloisters in the urban society, and the Catholic tithing system. Even more striking than Zwingli's criticisms, however, was the manner in which during the summer of 1522 the City Council wished to solve the problems—a manner clearly in contrast to the late-medieval procedure. In April of 1522, the Bishop of Constance, under whose ecclesiastical jurisdiction Zurich fell, sent a delegation to the city with the instruction to protest before the City Council against Zwingli's utterances.⁷ However, the Council did not simply receive this delegation with a view to subsequent adjudication; on

⁵Huldreich Zwingli's *sämtliche Werke*, ed. Emil Egli, et al., unter Mitwirkung des Zwingli-Vereins in Zürich (Berlin, 1905), 1: 443 (hereinafter cited as *ZW*); Bernd Moeller, "Zwingli's Disputationen. Studien zu den Anfängen der Kirchenbildung und des Synodalwesens im Protestantismus," 2 parts, *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte* 87 (1970): 275-324, and 91 (1974): 213-364; Heiko A. Oberman, *Masters of the Reformation: The Emergence of a New Intellectual Climate in Europe*, trans. Dennis Martin (Cambridge, Eng., 1981), pp. 210-239.

⁶Oberman, pp. 195-196, 229-230.

⁷*ZW* 1:137-154.

the contrary, the parish priest was allowed to defend himself before the Council against the charges of the bishop, with the Council itself acting as an arbiter between the bishop and his priest. The outcome was that the political body protected its subjects and required justification from the bishop for the existing ecclesiastical system.⁸ This meant, in fact, that as early as in April of 1522 the traditional system of relationship between the ecclesiastical and civil authorities was broken in Zurich.

The bishop naturally did not resign himself to this sort of result. He appealed to the Diet of the Swiss Confederacy and asked the allies for an intervention in Zurich. Consequently, on December 5, 1522, the Diet gave summons to repeal the "new doctrine" and to control book production in both Zurich and Basel.⁹

In Zurich itself too, of course, not everyone was pleased with Zwingli's criticisms. Among the most outstanding opponents were, first of all, members of the mendicant orders that Zwingli had attacked very fiercely;¹⁰ second, the economic elite of the city;¹¹ and third, some of the canons at the Grossmünster.¹²

Consequently, by the close of the year 1522 there were several different elements or constituencies involved in the conflict surrounding Zwingli's preaching: The Grossmünster itself must resolve the internal conflict concerning its priest, Zwingli; the City Council, in view of its responsibility for quiet and order in the city and countryside, had to make a decision for or against the outspoken parish priest; the bishop, who saw the existing ecclesiastical authority and institutions in jeopardy, could not but enter the fray,

⁸*Actensammlung zur Geschichte der Zürcher Reformation in den Jahren 1519-1533*, ed. Emil Egli (Zürich, 1879), no. 236 (pp. 76-77). (Photomechanical reprint ed. by DeGraaf in Nieuwkoop in 1973 has inserted additional half-title-page with title *Aktenammlung* . . .)

⁹*Amtliche Sammlung der ältern eidgenössischen Abschiede*, ed. Johannes Strickler, 4/1a (Brugg, 1873): 246-259.

¹⁰Cf. Zwingli's letter to Beatus Rhenanus, 30 July 1522, *ZW* 7: 549; Oberman, p. 214.

¹¹*ZW* 5: 402-415; Leo Schelbert, "Jacob Grebel's Trial Revised," *ARG* 60 (1969): 32-64; Walter Jacob, *Politische Führungsschicht und Reformation. Untersuchungen zur Reformation in Zürich 1519-1528*, *Zürcher Beiträge zur Reformationsgeschichte*, 1 (Zürich, 1970), pp. 62-66.

¹²Above all, Konrad Hofmann; cf. Pestalozzi, pp. 37-60.

unwilling to accept the solution that was surfacing; and, finally, the case had become one on the federal level, inasmuch as the other members of the Swiss Confederacy feared that by means of Zwingli's preaching, the Lutheran heresy would obtain a foothold on Swiss soil.¹³ Indeed, these four domains—the Grossmünster, the city of Zurich, the diocese and other Roman-Catholic institutions, and the Swiss Confederacy—remained till the end of Zwingli's life the most important spheres of influence impinging upon his activity and demanding his attention.

The disputation of January 1523 was obviously meant to bring clarity to the indistinct situation in Zurich's ecclesiastical and political relationships at that time. Zwingli himself more than once had asked for a disputation as a forum for the defense of his doctrine,¹⁴ and surely it was not against Zwingli's wish that the Council decided to reach a solution to the problems by means of a disputation. Be all that as it may, it is important that even prior to the disputation, there were judicial, ecclesiastical, theological, and political forces at work.

On January 3, 1523, the Zurich Council summoned all the clergy of the city and of the countryside to convene on January 29 at the town hall on the banks of the Limmat River.¹⁵ All were to have opportunity to make known their objections to Zwingli's sermons, and the Council was then to consider the criticism offered and to come to a judgment on the basis of the Bible. Thus, the Council was to act as a judge concerning doctrine. As a help for the discussion in the disputation, Zwingli hastily gave a summary of his preaching in sixty-seven articles¹⁶ (and incidentally, it is stated in these articles that the City Council is allowed to exercise such an arbitrarial function¹⁷).

¹³ZW 2: 144.26-32; Cornelis Augustijn, "Allein das heilige Evangelium. Het mandaat van het Reichsregiment 6 maart 1523," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, n.s., 48 (1967-68): 150-165; Ulrich Gäbler, "Luthers Beziehungen zu den Schweizern und Oberdeutschen von 1526 bis 1530/1531," in Helmar Junghans, ed., *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546. Festgabe zu seinem 500. Geburtstag* (Göttingen, 1983), 1: 482.

¹⁴ZW 1: 246.26-247.3 and 324.29-30; cf. Pestalozzi, pp. 56, 85.

¹⁵ZW 1: 466-468.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 458-465.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 462.19-21.

More than 600 persons met on January 29 for the disputation.¹⁸ Among them was a delegation from the bishop, led by Johannes Fabri. This episcopal delegation denied that the assembly had the right to discuss ecclesiastical matters of this kind, for such discussion must take place only at a church council.¹⁹

As for the disputation itself, as early as the afternoon of the 29th, the City Council made determination that no one had succeeded in demonstrating Zwingli to be a heretic.²⁰ Therefore, he was granted permission to continue preaching in the spirit of the sixty-seven articles, and so also were the other ministers.

As we evaluate the decision of the Council, it is of striking importance to take note of what was *not* said. Nothing, for instance, was stated about abrogation of ecclesiastical orders. (In this respect, everything was to remain as it already was, with only the future determining how the burning question would be solved.) The Council, moreover, did not formally range itself on the side of Zwingli and did not accept the sixty-seven articles as a basis for the Reformation in Zurich. On the other hand, the decision meant, of course, that Zwingli's preaching was legitimized and that he also enjoyed an enormous gain in prestige personally. In fact, the Council's stipulation to the effect that the ministers had to preach in harmony with Zwingli's manner and spirit meant that his conceptions received a sort of normative status; and this, in turn, anticipated his later role as an adviser of the public authorities.

Even though the City Council did not on this occasion make any concrete decisions concerning church organization, it did settle for the future the way in which resolutions pertaining to church affairs were made. For this purpose, no separate ecclesiastical institution was created (such as, for instance, a consistory); but rather, the public authorities retained full charge of ecclesiastical life. From the standpoint of the church, the only remaining independent office was that of minister—in Zwingli's terminology, the office of "prophet" and "shepherd."²¹ To Zwingli, the City Councillors were the repre-

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 472-569.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 491.3-6.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 469-471.

²¹Zwingli wrote a booklet with the title "The Shepherd"; see *ibid.*, 3: 1-68.

sentatives of the church community, and therefore they were allowed to speak and act in its name.

In sum total, then this First Zurich Disputation made visible for the first time in that city a sort of "teamwork" that would become typical of the Zurich Reformation and of Zwinglianism itself. Here we can see a clear difference from the situation that existed in Germany. Zwingli brought into the Reform tradition a concern for getting support directly from the political leaders.

With respect to the three current interpretations of the disputation, as outlined above, the following may now be said: (1) the result of the disputation surely was not pre-arranged; (2) there was no question of there being a foundational assembly; and (3) the disputation was indeed more than simply a juridical-theological trial. In short, a new system of making ecclesiastical decisions was being introduced.

This new system manifested its first expression of major proportions in the basic and sweeping ecclesiastical changes in Zurich which were effected in the year 1525. Included were the closing down of the cloisters as independent economic and juridical units,²² relief from the Catholic tithe regulations,²³ transformation of the sacrament of the Mass,²⁴ institution of a marriage court (which later also functioned as a morality-policing unit),²⁵ and finally the foundation of the Prophezei, the afore-mentioned Bible school. The only major Reformational entity still lacking was the synod;²⁶ it assembled for the first time some three years later, on April 21, 1528.

²²Ibid., 2: 461-466 and 609-616; also 6/3: 347, n. 6; Paul Schweizer, "Die Behandlung der zürcherischen Klostergüter in der Reformationszeit," *Theologische Zeitschrift aus der Schweiz* 2 (1885): 161-188.

²³James M. Stayer, Werner O. Packull, and Klaus Deppermann, "From Monogenesis to Polygenesis: The Historical Discussion of Anabaptist Origins," *MQR* 49 (1975): 96-98.

²⁴ZW 4: 1-24; Markus Jenny, *Die Einheit des Abendmahlsgottesdienstes bei den elsässischen und schweizerischen Reformatoren*, Studien zur Dogmengeschichte und systematischen Theologie, 23 (Zürich and Stuttgart, 1968).

²⁵Walther Köhler, "Zwingli vor Ehegericht," in *Festgabe des Zwingli-Vereins zum 70. Geburtstag seines Präsidenten Hermann Escher* (Zürich, 1927), pp. 166-169.

²⁶ZW 6/1: 529-534; Robert C. Walton, "The Institutionalization of the Reformation at Zürich," *Zwingliana* 13/8 (1972): 497-515.

At this juncture it may be useful to say a bit more about the way in which, under the new system, ecclesiastical decisions were actually made *in concreto*, and concerning the part played by Zwingli and the other ministers in the process. A certain pattern can be discerned, which in its ideal or typical form shows the following course:²⁷ One of the leading ministers—Zwingli himself or one of his colleagues—would bring up in his preaching the abuses which these clergymen considered present in the church. By this means, the question would become a “public issue.” Their followers would no longer accept the compromised traditional practices; for instance, they might refuse to pay the tithes. The City Council’s judgment was then sought, either by the ministers themselves or by other persons involved. It was customary that the Council would at this point set up a committee to consider the matter and to prepare a decision. On such committees, theologians were always included—very often, Zwingli himself. The committee would prepare a written statement of advice—advice that often was also explained orally in the meeting of the Council.²⁸ After that, the Council made its decision.

The sources concerning the deliberation of the committees are, for the most part, still extant; but the data about the deliberations in the Council meetings themselves are lacking, so that the proportions of “yes” and “no” votes are unknown (the minutes mention only that the decisions were affirmative or negative).

It is striking with what care and hesitancy the Council made decisions concerning the Reform activities. Often the committee proposals were sent back by the Council. Those concerning the Mass were referred several times before the Council’s acceptance in the form in which they were adopted.

In summary, the First Zurich Disputation inaugurated a new procedure for making decisions concerning church affairs in Zurich, but the Reformation that took place was a slow process. The rise and implementation of the new process, moreover, was open and

²⁷J. F. Gerhard Goeters, “Die Vorgeschichte des Täuferturns in Zürich,” in *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie der Reformation*, Festschrift für Ernst Bizer (Neukirchen, 1969), pp. 239-281; and Jacob, *passim*.

²⁸René Hauswirth, “Wie verhandelte das Parlament des Alten Zürich? Versuch einer Rekonstruktion von Ratsdebatten aus der Bullingerzeit,” *Zürcher Taschenbuch* 1973, n.s., 93 (1972): 30-49.

transparent. The political practice itself did not differ greatly from that of the pre-Reformation period, and the case was that Zwingli accommodated himself to the practice in Zurich, rather than the other way around.

3. *Zwingli's Political Role in Zurich*

The next question I wish to explore is Zwingli's role in the political affairs of Zurich. If one wonders whether Zwingli played any political role, then the answer must be, without any hesitancy, affirmative. Something other than that was not possible, in view of the function he served. The Grossmünster was a political-economic factor of eminent importance in Zurich society, and therefore always played a special role politically. The parish priests who served there in the pre-Zwinglian era were also political figures—for instance, Konrad Hofmann, who later was to become one of Zwingli's antagonists. And in the Reformation period itself, Zwingli was not the only theologian who acted as an adviser to the City Council, for this function was filled by his ministerial colleagues, as well. Perhaps even till now, historians tend to overestimate Zwingli's role as a political adviser, at the expense of these other figures. Nevertheless, although Zwingli was not the only adviser to the Council, he naturally played a primary role, and by his frequent appointments to committees, his impact was especially significant.²⁹

By 1529, the Reformation in Zurich was made secure. The Anabaptist influence had declined, the power of the rich persons responsible for mercenaries was broken, and, as already noted, a synodal organization had been introduced. The main thrust of the religio-political activities of Zurich was now shifting to a policy for extending the Reformation over the whole of Switzerland and safeguarding the results by means of alliances with political powers outside the Swiss Confederacy. Negotiations were conducted, for instance, with Hesse in Germany, with Venice in Italy, and with France.³⁰

²⁹Jacob, pp. 84-85.

³⁰René Hauswirth, *Landgraf Philipp von Hessen und Zwingli. Voraussetzungen und Geschichte der politischen Beziehungen zwischen Hessen, Strassburg, Konstanz, Ulrich von Württemberg und reformierten Eidgenossen 1526-1531*, *Schriften zur Kirchen- und Rechtsgeschichte*, 35 (Tübingen and Basel, 1968); Helmut Meyer, *Der Zweite Kappeler Krieg. Die Krise der Schweizerischen Reformation* (Zürich, 1976).

It is an established fact that Zwingli became increasingly occupied with these matters of inter-canton and international scope. He was regularly a member of those committees of the Council which were in charge of the preparation and the execution of the Council's decisions in this arena; and with respect to such committee activities, Zwingli held a unique position among the ministers. As far as is known, no other minister was appointed on committees of this sort between 1529 and the time of Zwingli's death in 1531. Thus, Zwingli was the only theologian in Zurich who during this period was occupied with the foreign policies of Zurich on an institutional basis.

Serving in this capacity, Zwingli also drew up proposals, which in part are extant.³¹ Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine his specific influence on the decisions that were reached in the committees. But certainly, he was rather highly regarded as an expert. In 1531, for instance, there were only three politicians who had been appointed to such committees more frequently than Zwingli³²—a fact that means nothing other than that Zwingli had taken a very prominent place among the politicians too.

On the other hand, it also remains an essential fact that he could never take part in the final and definitive making of the decisions, for such decisions were made in the Great Council, of which he was not a member. In this purely political function, he consequently remained only an adviser—albeit, one of the most important of such advisers.

In short, we may state that after the first war of Kappel in 1529, it became possible for Zwingli to submit ideas and suggestions for Zurich foreign policy in a rather direct way, placing them before the decision-making political bodies. In this respect of moving in a purely political environment, he stands apart from all the rest of the Protestant reformers.

In the final analysis, however, it is uncertain just how successful he was with his proposals. In any event, in 1531 there came such a drifting apart between him and the political bodies that he resigned as parish priest,³³ probably because the Zurich policies

³¹Meyer, pp. 29, 74.

³²Ibid., pp. 316-322, and p. 353, n. 68.

³³Gottfried W. Locher, *Die Zwinglische Reformation im Rahmen der europäischen Kirchengeschichte* (Göttingen and Zürich, 1979), pp. 527-528.

seemed too moderate to him. Only a delegation of Zurich politicians succeeded in making him change his mind. He was deemed indispensable, in view of the difficult situation in the summer of 1531, when strained relations of Zurich with the Catholic cantons reached the boiling point.

4. *Zwingli as Bible Teacher*

The next question I wish to address is that of Zwingli's activity as a Bible teacher. In a review of his activities at the Prophezei it is important, first of all, to consider the institutional aspects of the matter. As early as in 1523, Zwingli had challenged the autonomy of convents and cloisters,³⁴ and in September of that year the autonomy of the Grossmünster's convent was abrogated by a contract between the Grossmünster canons and the City Council.³⁵ Nevertheless, a certain economic independence was still granted to this institution. Moreover, in 1523 a plan was conceived for setting up a new training institute with public exegetical lectures at the Grossmünster. But not until some two years later could the plan be implemented, when the Catholic school-head Niessli died on April 3, 1525, and was succeeded by Zwingli. The latter very soon reorganized the school. The schools at both the Grossmünster and the Fraumünster came under the direct control of the City Council,³⁶ and the curriculum of the fourth class of the Latin school at the Grossmünster was amplified with lectures on the biblical subjects. This constituted the Prophezei,³⁷ the Bible school of the Grossmünster.

Unfortunately, our knowledge of this school is still fragmentary. For instance, it has not yet been sufficiently investigated as to whether the already-existing educational program at the nearby cloister of Kappel was influential in determining the Zurich educational reforms, nor has sufficient attention been given as to whether

³⁴ZW 1: 461.16-18; 2: 253.16-261.13.

³⁵*Actensammlung*, no. 426 (pp. 168-171).

³⁶Kurt Spillmann, "Zwingli und die Zürcher Schulverhältnisse," *Zwingliana* 11/7 (1962): 427-448.

³⁷The term "Prophezei" is derived from 1 Cor 14:26-33; cf. ZW 4: 393.26-419.6, 361-365, and 701.6; *Actensammlung*, no. 426, items 5 & 6 (pp. 169-170); Fritz Büsser, "Théorie et pratique de l'éducation sous la Réforme à Zurich," in Jean Boisset, ed., *La réforme et l'éducation* (Toulouse, 1974), pp. 153-169.

the Prophezei, in turn, was the model for the reorganization of other cloister schools in the countryside of Zurich. The curriculum and the division of the educational responsibilities among the teachers at the Prophezei are also not entirely clear. In any case, however, there was no intention to make the Prophezei into a university.

In the first years of its existence, the Prophezei functioned as an institution for the retraining of the ministers in the city of Zurich. It thus provided a sort of "continuing education," but one in which the preachers were absolutely obliged to follow the lectures. Every morning, except on Fridays and Sundays, the students from the fourth class of the Latin school, the canons, the ministers of Zurich, and learned guests from outside the town came together in the choir loft of the Grossmünster.

During Zwingli's lifetime, only the OT was explained according to a regular pattern at the Grossmünster. The procedure was as follows: A certain Bible passage was first commented on by the teacher of Hebrew; then it was explained by Zwingli on the basis of the Greek LXX; and finally, in addition to this exegetical work, one of the Zurich ministers gave a homily in German for the common people.

Paralleling his educational work at the Grossmünster, Zwingli also took part in the instructional program at the Fraumünster.³⁸ There he provided exegetical lectures on the NT at least once a week, following up the lectures by preaching for the common people, probably mostly on Fridays (Friday was the market day of the week, when many people from the countryside were in town).

From these activities in giving OT and NT lectures emerged Zwingli's exegetical works.³⁹ However, concerning the precise composition of these writings, countless unsolved questions remain. Zwingli's exegetical writings were edited by other persons in the sixteenth century, partly with the use of materials already published elsewhere, so that in point of fact it is never entirely clear whether Zwingli had given his lectures in this form. Indeed, it may be that thoughts from other publications or from other expositors

³⁸Walter E. Meyer, "Die Entstehung von Huldrych Zwinglis neutestamentlichen Kommentaren und Predignachschriften," *Zwingliana* 13/6 (1976): 285-331.

³⁹Cf. *ZW*, vols. 13 and 14.

have been included in the final text provided by the editors.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, we do not know of any manuscript containing a sermon or lecture directly from Zwingli.

Let me conclude: It is an established fact that Zwingli was active daily as an exegete for a learned public, and that his exegesis is characteristic of a close connection between scholarly explanation and preaching for the common people. At any rate, his activity at the Prophezei shows that Zwingli lived and worked in an intellectual environment and that he was not only an ecclesiastical and political activist.

5. *Zwingli's Own Concept of His Role as Reformer*

The final matter that I wish to explore concerning Zwingli is how he understood himself in his role as a reformer. How did he define his own position in all the varied activities in which he was engaged?

In seeking to answer this question we could think, of course, in the first instance, of his doctrine of ministry as it is presented in his book *The Shepherd*, which appeared in the year 1524. However, here I wish to bring out a different aspect: namely, the question as to how Zwingli saw his role in the conflict concerning the Lord's Supper. Within the context of this emerges an indication as to Zwingli's concept of his own place and the place of Zurich within the broader circle of Protestant reformers and with respect to the Reformation in general.

It was in the autumn of 1524 that Zwingli discovered what he thenceforth considered to be the true meaning of the word *est* in the words of institution of the Eucharist: This *est* must be interpreted as *significat*, and thus he rejected the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine. From that time onward, Zwingli's so-called "symbolic" view of the Lord's Supper remained firm, although later he did make certain changes and modifications in it.⁴¹

⁴⁰Ulrich Gäbler, *Huldrych Zwingli im 20. Jahrhundert. Forschungsbericht und annotierte Bibliographie 1897-1972* (Zürich, 1975), pp. 21-25.

⁴¹ZW 6/3: 231-291, esp. 244-245; cf. Stefan N. Bosshard, *Zwingli-Erasmus Cajetan. Die Eucharistie als Zeichen der Einheit*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für europäische Geschichte Mainz, 89 (Wiesbaden, 1978), pp. 76-89.

For us here, however, it is more important to ascertain the place that he gave to this discovery in the history of Christian thought. Of course, Zwingli was convinced that he had the correct biblical view. But beyond this, he took pains to demonstrate that the view was also that of the church fathers, especially Augustine. And naturally, he made polemical use of Augustine against Luther on this subject.⁴² Zwingli's view on the historical development concerning the Lord's Supper paralleled his view concerning the emergence of church structure: Both the Mass and papacy were medieval developments. Repeatedly in his addresses to Luther on the Eucharist, he reproached the latter with the thought that Luther was adhering to a view that originated only in the Middle Ages.⁴³

But there is more: In all of this, Zwingli was convinced that within the circle of Protestant reformers, it had fallen to his lot to accomplish the task of restoring the pristine doctrine of the sacraments. From his point of view, it was the merit of the humanist Erasmus to have rediscovered the Bible,⁴⁴ and of Luther to have broken the power of the papacy;⁴⁵ now it was he himself who was destined to add the capstone—the true doctrine of the sacraments.⁴⁶ So, in his opinion, there was to be seen a clear progression from Erasmus to Zwingli. Zwingli was—if I may say this in a somewhat exaggerated fashion—the finale or apex in the renewal of the church. He was restoring the model of the true Christian community.

In his own judgment, Zwingli was thus the most radical of the Protestant reformers, and his appraisal of the conflict about the Lord's Supper had to do, in a profound sense, with his own self-consciousness and self-conception. Therefore, for a number of years, he hoped to be able to convince Luther of the rightness of his own eucharistic views. It was only after the failure of the Colloquy of

⁴²Alfred Schindler, *Zwingli und die Kirchenväter*, 147: *Neujahrsblatt, zum Besten des Waisenhauses Zürich* (Zürich, 1984), pp. 48-50, 65-68.

⁴³Gäbler, *Huldrych Zwingli*, p. 486, n. 12.

⁴⁴ZW 5: 815.18-818.3.

⁴⁵E.g., *ibid.*, 2: 147.14-20, and 6/2: 247.2-4. See Locher, p. 90.

⁴⁶ZW 3: 786.1-4, 800.3-4, and 816.21-30; Paul Boesch, "Zwingli-Gedichte (1539) des Andreas Zebedeus und des Rudolph Gwalther," *Zwingliana* 9/4 (1950): 215-216; Gottfried W. Locher, "Eine alte Deutung des Namens Zwingli," *Zwingliana* 9/5 (1951): 307-310.

Marburg in 1529 that it became clear to Zwingli that there was no possibility for the development of a unilateral progression from Erasmus to his own work—a progression in which the Lutheran reform movement could be bent to the reform in Zurich. And consequently, from 1529 onward, his utterances became characterized by a fierce anti-Lutheranism.⁴⁷ The Lutheran Reformation and Zwinglianism, he saw to his dismay, would not follow each other up chronologically, but the two would remain in existence alongside of each other. In theory, of course, Zwingli still went on claiming his place as the most radical of the Protestant reformers; but he knew that Lutheranism could not be conquered, and he perceived that Zurich would not become the sole model for a Christian city.

6. *Conclusion*

In conclusion, I will endeavor to tie together the foregoing sketchy reflections by means of several summarizing observations.

First, the uniqueness of Zurich in Reformation history lies in a combination of several factors. Even before Zwingli's arrival in Zurich, this town on the Limmat played a very special political role within the Swiss Confederacy. Among the Swiss cantons, only Zurich refused to give support to the French king in his attempt to secure Swiss mercenary soldiers for his wars against the pope. Zurich alone stood on the side of the Hapsburg/papal party. Again, before Zwingli's arrival, the social-political situation in Zurich seemed to show tendencies of bringing about an increase of power on the part of the City Council. Moreover, the ecclesiastical situation in Zurich differed from that in such places as Basel or Strassburg, in that Zurich had no bishop within its walls, but was subject to the Bishop of Constance. Thus, the ecclesiastical affairs in Zurich could develop in an environment of somewhat less strict diocesan control. On the other hand, and in further support of this tendency toward ecclesiastical independence, was the fact that the Grossmünster of Zurich had a group of learned men who were well able to settle church affairs. So the basis for change was already present before Zwingli arrived, and the way was paved for policies and procedures that

⁴⁷Already his contemporaries noticed that; cf. Martin Bucer in his letter to Zwingli of 18 September 1530, in *ZW* 11: 139.12-140.22.

would aim at indigenous control of the whole of the political and ecclesiastical life of the city.

Second, it must be remembered that Zwingli was not alone in his work. During his whole lifetime in Zurich, he was accompanied by a group of academically trained friends who supported him and with whom he exchanged ideas. Furthermore, from about 1523 onward, Zwingli could rely also on a group of loyal politicians. Already in a very early stage of the reforming process, top figures in the political life of Zurich came to agree with Zwingli's position.

Third, in both theological and ecclesiastical terms, Zwingli was a leading figure in Zurich. His theology lay the basis for his preaching activity; and, it seems to me, his basic premise was that preaching must aim at the renewal of the whole community. Zwingli was convinced that the preachers would be asked in the final judgment whether or not they had endeavored to preserve the community from sin and sinners. In a sense, Zwingli tried to change the whole city into a cloister, the whole community into a body of Christ. Therefore, he attacked both the Anabaptists, who formed a separate group within the Christian body, and the Catholics, who maintained the existence of certain spiritual enclaves within the urban society.

Fourth, and finally: Aside from the contributions of his theological thinking, it may be said of Zwingli that he carried out his message *in person*. His participation in the battle at Kappel in 1531 was a clear expression of this fact. There he fought bravely indeed, as the oldest sources tell us.⁴⁸ With the Zwinglian defeat at Kappel, as well as Zwingli's own death there, ended the dream to be able to win not only Zurich but also the whole Swiss Confederacy to the Zurich model of renewal of Christianity. With that battle at Kappel, the expansion of the Reformation in northern Switzerland was immediately terminated, and the denominational map of German Switzerland was thereafter fixed for centuries to come.

Catholics and Lutherans alike commented on Zwingli's death—that obviously God had spoken out his judgment upon this heretic. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that Zwingli stands as an honest example of a preacher who cared about his fellow human beings and who cared about the community in which he lived and served. In my opinion, this is in itself a contribution to the history of Christianity that is worthy of both praise and emulation.

⁴⁸Locher, *Zwinglische Reformation*, p. 533.