

# «They went out from us, for they were not of us»

Zwingli's Judgment of the Early Anabaptists

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We will never know what the Reformation would have looked like if the reformers Luther, Zwingli or Calvin had been able to carry out their reforms without controversy. As it was, the theologies and the churches that emerged were fashioned within the context of vigorous interaction with opponents on the left and right. This commonplace judgment was especially true of the reforming efforts of Zwingli, whose work was early circumscribed by energetic adversaries.

Zwingli's early program was directed against the abuses of the medieval Catholic church in Zurich. He hoped to carry out this reform thoroughly and consistently with the assistance of all the evangelical groups in the city and the region. He expected that support for his campaign would be unquestioned. It was not to be.

## I.

Not very long after the City Council had decided in January of 1523 to guarantee the formation of the Zwinglian gospel in Zurich there were evidences of fissures in the Zwinglian design for the evangelical cause<sup>1</sup>. Of particular importance was the question of the payment of tithes and the related matter of usury. Underlying these issues were regional developments toward local autonomy, punctuated by evidence of anticlericalism, especially as it emerged outside the city of Zurich proper. Anticlerical sentiments were used by Zwingli himself in the development of his reform, but soon he found his own ideas being used against himself by erstwhile followers of his. Zwingli's efforts to establish true religion within the city were always carried out with an awareness of the complementary component of civic religion. The one without the other was not even conceivable in his work.

<sup>1</sup> There are numerous efforts to recount the «pre-history» of the separation of the Täufer from Zwingli. The following are useful: *J. F. Gerhard Goeters*, *Die Vorgeschichte des Täuferturns in Zürich*, in: *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie der Reformation*, Festschrift für Ernst Bizer, Luise Abramowski and J. F. G. Goeters, eds., Neukirchen-Vluyn 1969 [abbr.: Goeters, *Vorgeschichte*], pp. 239-281; *Robert C. Walton*, *Zwingli's Theocracy*, Toronto 1967; *Gottfried Wilhelm Locher*, *Die Zwinglische Reformation im Rahmen der europäischen Kirchengeschichte*, Göttingen 1979 [abbr.: Locher, *Reformation*].

He was soon to discover that some of his more spirited followers were fully able to divorce the two foundational elements of his reform.

In several outlying villages there emerged in 1523 complaints over the tithes, essentially a rural problem<sup>2</sup>. Some of these parishes in fact tried to decline their payments<sup>3</sup>. The discord seemed to have been put to rest by the publication in July of Zwingli's «Von göttlicher und menschlicher Gerechtigkeit»<sup>4</sup>. Further manifestations of discontent in regard to the use of images broke out in September 1523, perhaps in response to the preaching of Leo Jud<sup>5</sup>. The radical preacher at Höngg, Simon Stumpf, who had been active in the agitation against the tithes, was also implicated<sup>6</sup>. More certain measures were needed. The Second Disputation was called by the council to discuss the question of images and the sacrifice of the mass.

It may well be that with the disputation we have the coming together of Zwingli's rural and local radical opponents<sup>7</sup>. Certainly the prominent role played by Simon Stumpf in both camps suggests this conclusion. For Zwingli, however, the significance of the meeting was of more import for the course of the reform itself. If the First Disputation in January undertook to guarantee the Reformation in Zurich, the Second insured the nature of that reform<sup>8</sup>. The rejection of images and the sacrifice of the mass secured true religion for Zurich; the manner of implementing the decisions of the council preserved the civic religion under the leadership of the council working in tandem with the city pastors. It was at this point that he and his radical followers began to go separate ways. For while the radicals could accept the search for true religion in Zurich, they could not accept its application in terms of civic religion. After the decision of the council to publish Zwingli's «Kurze christliche Einleitung»<sup>9</sup>, and the commitment to move gradually in an orderly way to bring about the liturgical reform, it was only a matter of time until the radicals would be forced either to acquiesce or to express their disagreement publicly.

There is every reason to believe that Zwingli was optimistic about the course of the reform. There was little immediate negative response to the deliberations of October. The activist Simon Stumpf was first relieved of his post at Höngg in No-

<sup>2</sup> Locher, *Reformation*, p. 240.

<sup>3</sup> Goeters, *Vorgesichte*, pp. 256f. *Actensammlung zur Geschichte der Zürcher Reformation in den Jahren 1519-1533, ...* hrsg. von *Emil Egli*, Zürich 1879 (Reprint: Nieuwkoop 1973), Nr. 368 [abbr.: AZürcherRef].  
Z II 471-525.

<sup>5</sup> AZürcherRef, Nr. 414-416.

<sup>6</sup> AZürcherRef, Nr. 422.

<sup>7</sup> *James M. Stayer*, *Die Anfänge des schweizerischen Täuferturns im reformierten Kongregationalismus*, in: *Umstrittenes Täuferturn*, hrsg. von Hans-Jürgen Goertz, 2. Aufl., Göttingen 1977, p. 34 [abbr.: Stayer, *Anfänge*].

<sup>8</sup> Locher, *Reformation*, p. 136 sees the Second Disputation as the «breakthrough» of the Zurich Reformation.

<sup>9</sup> Z II 628-663.

vember and then finally exiled from Zurich on December 23<sup>10</sup>. Also during the previous week Conrad Grebel, an early devoted follower of Zwingli, had written to his brother-in-law, Joachim Vadian in St Gallen, a judgment of Zwingli and the reform that were proleptic for the storm that was to follow: «Illi neglecta sententia divina de non missando medium praescripserunt prudentia (scio) diabolica. ... Qui Zinlium ex officio pastoris agere putat, credit vel dicit, impie putat, credit et dicit»<sup>11</sup>.

## 2.

The radical elements were essentially silent during the first half of 1524. We have no record of the activities of Conrad Grebel until September. Zwingli, on the other hand, if not confronted with further immediate opposition from within Zurich, found every reason to note what was happening outside the city proper, especially for the implications these developments were to have for the relations of Zurich to the Catholic centers of power. The tensions between Zurich and the confederates began to mount. On January 13, the confederates met in Lucerne and complaints were heard concerning the «bösen schändlichen ketzerischen Handel» emanating from Zurich, which was described as the «Ursprung(sort) solcher Irrungen»<sup>12</sup>.

Later, on January 27 further reports of heretical activity were brought to the Federal Diet concerning heretical preaching and acts of iconoclasm<sup>13</sup>. It was further decided that the various *Orte* should give two representatives the power to speak concerning the Lutheran innovations with a view to warning Zurich about separating from the confederates because of such views<sup>14</sup>. A list of complaints was delivered to the City Council in February that described a variety of «Lutheran» activities in the region that, by implication, were fully the responsibility of Zurich and Zwingli, who was mentioned by name<sup>15</sup>. Clearly, the Catholic states, under the leadership especially of the *Five Orte*<sup>16</sup>, were becoming more aggressive. On April 20 it was decided by all the representatives with the exception of Zurich and Schaffhausen that they would remain with the old faith and continue preaching the gospel as it had been accepted and protected by the church. The

<sup>10</sup> AZürcherRef, Nrs. 441, 463. Further evidence that matters were in hand was the banishing of Klaus Hottinger and Lorenz Hochrütiner from Zurich and the fining of Hans Ockenfuss, all for their tearing down of a crucifix in Stadelhofen earlier in the Fall. See AZürcherRef, Nrs. 421, 442.

<sup>11</sup> Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer in der Schweiz, Bd. 1: Zürich, hrsg. von Leonhard von Muralt und Walter Schmid, Zürich 1952 [abbr.: QGTS], Nr. 8, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Amtliche Sammlung der älteren eidgenössischen Abschiede ..., 8 Bde. (vielfach weiter aufgeteilt), var. loc. 1856-1886 [abbr.: EA], vol. 4/I 1a, pp. 356-357.

<sup>13</sup> EA 4/I 1a, p. 360c-d.

<sup>14</sup> EA 4/1a, p. 361n.

<sup>15</sup> EA 4/1a, pp. 376-379. Tithes were specifically mentioned in addition to heretical preaching. See p. 377, nr. 6.

<sup>16</sup> the five Inner States of the Swiss Confederation.

abuses were to be «bestraft und ausgerottet»<sup>17</sup>, whether they be from «Luther, Zwingli or others»<sup>18</sup>. These actions of the confederates, coupled with the report of the execution of Klaus Hottinger in March in Lucerne<sup>19</sup>, left little doubt as to the intentions of the Catholic *Orte*. The pressure on Zurich was substantial. The Ittinger affair in mid-summer served to increase the tension. In the minds of the Catholic *Orte*, Zurich was fully responsible for the iconoclasm and unrest at Ittingen. Zwingli had preached disobedience to the ecclesial regulations, argued for clerical marriage and provided an ideological basis for the rejection of images. It was only a short step from such reforming ideas to the iconoclasm, looting, and burning at Ittingen. At this point in time Zurich was alienated from the Catholic states and was powerless to prevent the execution of its supporters. It was also clear that Zwinglian doctrine was seen as the source of the problem<sup>20</sup>. Nor should one forget the obvious factor of the peasant unrest that was emerging. Zurich's assumed complicity in the Ittinger affair tended to make the identification of Zwingli with the peasants an easy step for the confederates<sup>21</sup>. The very Reformation itself in Zurich was threatened. Against this backdrop of increasing pressure from the outside, the internal affairs of Zurich became critical during the last quarter of 1524.

### 3.

The clear alienation between Zwingli and his radical followers was obvious in September when Conrad Grebel and friends wrote to Thomas Müntzer. There is no record of Müntzer's having received the letters and it is not likely that Zwingli saw them. Nonetheless, they reflect the development of the radical Zwinglians and suggest how divergent the positions had become between them and their mentor. Grebel asserted that not only had the church fallen, but there was greater error at present than there had ever been. The evangelical preachers are to blame for this. He said, «nach dem wir aber die gschrift ouch zehand genommen habend und von allerley artiklen besechen, sind wir etwaß bericht worden und habend den großen und schädlichen mangel der hirten, ouch unseren erfunden, daß wir Got nit täglich ernstlich mit stettem sünftzen bittend, daß wir uß der zerstörung alleß göt-

<sup>17</sup> EA 4/I 1a, p. 412c.

<sup>18</sup> EA 4/1a, p. 413h.

<sup>19</sup> Heinrich Bullinger, *Reformationsgeschichte, nach dem Autographon* hrsg. von J. J. Hottinger und H. H. Vögeli, 3 vols., Frauenfeld 1838-1840 (Register: Zürich 1913; Reprint: Zürich 1985), vol. I, pp. 149-151. Although Hottinger had been exiled from Zurich earlier, he was still claimed by Zurich as the first martyr of the reformed faith.

<sup>20</sup> EA 4/1a, p. 478.

<sup>21</sup> Noteworthy is the following comment concerning a Zurich: «Der jetzige Vogt in den freien Aemtern im Aargau, ein Zürcher, befasse sich zu viel mit der lutherischen Neuerung [i.e. Zwingli's reformation]; wenn er dahin komme, um zu richten ... bringe er Büchlein mit und predige *dem gemeinen Mann* [i.e. the peasants] daraus.» EA 4/1a, p. 377, nr. 8 (Emphasis by the author).

lichen wäsens und uß menschlichen grewlen gefüert werdind, in rechten glouben und brüch Gottes kumind»<sup>22</sup>. He accused Zwingli of «faltsch schonen» and insisted that a very strict hermeneutic should be applied to allow only those practices that are explicitly commanded in Scripture. It was in this letter that the radicals put into writing for the first time that infant baptism is false. It is «ein unsiniger, gotzlesteriger grewel ... wider alle gschrift»<sup>23</sup>. The assessment by the radicals was to surface again in a short time. In the «Elenchus» Zwingli reported that there were conversations held between himself and the radicals on two Tuesdays in December. They were to be amicable conferences, but they were described by Zwingli as taking place in response to the assertion that infant baptism was a «summam abominationem»<sup>24</sup>.

A new and decisively troublesome issue had now surfaced with the question of baptism, one that would eventually symbolize all that was different between Zwingli and the radical Zwinglians. The conversations did not accomplish the desired reconciliation and so they were broken off – because of the anger and hatred that characterized the confrontations, according to Zwingli<sup>25</sup>.

The literary activity of December demonstrates how lively the issues had become once again between Zwingli and his internal opponents. In a letter to Vadian, Grebel noted what he had heard of Zwingli's activity: «Der Zwingli schribt vom gwalt. Ob er denselben kretzen werd, weiß ich nit; ist wol möglich. Er der Zwingli schribt ouch von den ufrüereren oder ufruor; darf wol unß beträffen. Sähend zuo; eß wirt etwas bringen»<sup>26</sup>.

At the same time Felix Manz was writing to the City Council, apparently without the knowledge that Zwingli was already writing his treatise as well<sup>27</sup>. In the «Protestation und Schutzschrift» Manz asserted that «kindertouff schlecht, falsch und auß dem endchrist, dem bapst und seinen anhangeren erwachsen und erdacht sey»<sup>28</sup>. He stated his belief that Zwingli had a similar view of baptism, noting that he was perplexed that Zwingli did not declare himself. He asked the Zurich theologian to put his arguments in writing, which he would then answer in writing since it was not easy for him to counter Zwingli in speaking<sup>29</sup>. What is noteworthy about the writing is that Manz apparently was addressing the council as if there were reason to believe that an accommodation or conciliation could be

<sup>22</sup> QGTS I, Nr. 14, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> QGTS I, Nr. 14, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> Z VI/1 36, 10. In his letter to Lambert of December 16, 1524, Zwingli described the discussions as taking place according to the norm of love, though marred by the contentiousness of the radicals. Z VIII, Nr. 355.

<sup>25</sup> Z IV 207, 12-18.

<sup>26</sup> QGTS I, Nr. 18, p. 30.

<sup>27</sup> *Adolf Fugel*, *Tauflehre und Taufliturgie bei Huldrych Zwingli*, (Diss. theol. Freiburg, Schweiz), Bern 1989, (EHS.T 380), [abbr.: Fugel, Tauflehre], p. 208, however, argues that Manz wrote in order to get the issue before the council before Zwingli could write.

<sup>28</sup> QGTS I, Nr. 16, p. 23.

<sup>29</sup> QGTS I, Nr. 16, p. 27.

achieved. The language is harsh in his condemnation of the rite of infant baptism, but the tone is appropriate and respectful without being obsequious. One could not tell from this appeal that there was no possibility of resolving the conflict with Zwingli and the council.

#### 4.

Zwingli had already begun writing «Wer Ursache gebe zu Aufruhr»<sup>30</sup>. It was also during this time that Zwingli wrote to Strasbourg and addressed for the first time the issue of baptism as a central issue in the disagreements between him and his followers. The tone is impatient and harsh, indicating the frustration that the reformer was experiencing in his discussions. He developed evidence for what was to emerge as the Zwinglian view on baptism, including circumcision as the basis for the New Testament rite of infant baptism. He seems to have been more concerned about the tone of the discussions. He charged the radicals with «contentiousness and stubbornness»<sup>31</sup> and with «whispering a lie into the minds of the simpleminded»<sup>32</sup>. He concluded by saying that we should not expect of baptism what only the grace of God can do. If we are to be dependent on God, then we do not need to argue so vehemently about an external sign<sup>33</sup>. This affirmation represents a fundamental theological concern of Zwingli. For Zwingli true religion was theocentric. Religion based on external practices had long been understood by him as false religion. Coupled with this key element in his Reformation came a concern for peace. His concluding remark, «Servet ecclesiam suam Christus!»<sup>34</sup> may be taken to represent more than a formal conclusion to a letter. It reflected his central concern.

With the «Ursache» Zwingli entered decisively into the public arena against the radical Zwinglians. It is a treatise that revealed unusual gifts of analysis and understanding<sup>35</sup>. An examination of this pivotal writing will illustrate the reformer's understanding of what was at stake in the confrontation with his alienated followers as he struggled to keep the Reformation unified and secure. He dedicated the treatise to Mühlhausen, but it was clearly written for Zurich in a time of

<sup>30</sup> Z III 374-469. The preface is dated December 7 while the treatise itself is dated December 26.

<sup>31</sup> Z VIII 269, 19. Also: Z VIII 272, 6.

<sup>32</sup> Z VIII 273, 30-31.

<sup>33</sup> Z VIII 275, 11-15.

<sup>34</sup> Z VIII 278, 5.

<sup>35</sup> «An analysis of current discontents which showed remarkable acumen and insight.» *George R. Potter*, Zwingli, Cambridge 1976, p. 160 [abbr.: Potter, Zwingli].

difficulty. Nor were the troubles to be regretted, for this was God's way of testing and proving that faith was authentic and true<sup>36</sup>.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the «Ursache» is Zwingli's description of the religious situation in Zurich. He divided those who were in favor of the Reformation into four distinct groups. The first were those who only support the changes because they hate and envy the papacy; they do not have real faith. It is better that one not opposes the papacy out of hate, but out of love of God and neighbor<sup>37</sup>. The second were those who were relieved to be free of church laws and regulations. These are not real Christians, who give offense to those who are<sup>38</sup>. The first two groups were not treated extensively and do not represent a major concern of the treatise.

With the next group we reach a source of considerable contention in Zurich, namely, those who brought hatred on the gospel by their refusal to pay interest, tithes or other debts<sup>39</sup>. The section suggested just how serious the question of tithes had become in the region of Zurich. Zwingli reiterated some concerns of his earlier treatise «Von göttlicher und menschlicher Gerechtigkeit». He treated the issue somewhat superficially in light of the complexities of the legal and practical issues being reviewed<sup>40</sup>, and eventually concluded that, although there were some abuses involved in the system, tithes and interest were to be paid as they represented legitimate debts. With the fourth group Zwingli arrived at the question of baptism<sup>41</sup>. With this treatment of those opponents who were soon to be labelled Anabaptists, Zwingli recognized the religious left wing in Zurich that would in the very near future break away from the civic Reformation to form their own church.

It is clear that there were several groups of «troublemakers» that Zwingli was forced to encounter at this crucial time in his reforming work. Given the increasing scrutiny that the city had been under during the previous year, it is understandable that Zwingli was interested in portraying those in the city who were likely to discredit the Reformation as essentially untrue to the gospel of Zurich's reform. It is equally transparent that the proto-Anabaptists were not the *only* group, but with this first published analysis of the incipient Täufer, it is now possible to see how Zwingli developed arguments against them.

As suggested in the letter to Strasbourg, there are definite theological concerns central to the reformer's reflections on all the troublemakers. Typically, for Zwingli, as well as other reformers including those against whom he was arguing, he began with the affirmation that he would say nothing without basis in the Word

<sup>36</sup> «Darumb söllend uns alle anfechtungen gotwolkommen sin; dann gott hat sy uns zuogesendt, das wir daran unseren glauben erinnerind; er bewärt uns damit.» Z III 375, 28-30.

<sup>37</sup> Z III 381, 21 – 383, 28.

<sup>38</sup> Z III 383, 29 – 387, 14.

<sup>39</sup> Z III 387, 15 – 403, 20.

<sup>40</sup> Potter, Zwingli, p. 162.

<sup>41</sup> Z III 403, 21 – 412, 13.

of God<sup>42</sup>. This was the foundation of his reform. Those who opposed him also claimed it as their own. He tacitly recognized that the radicals also utilized Scripture. His judgment was that they misused it and approached it in the wrong way. For this reason he urged them, «Hangend und stond dem götlichen wort unabgelassen by, aber mitt senfftmüetigem geist»<sup>43</sup>. It was their spirit that was wrong.

Not only must one affirm the scriptural basis for faith and practice, one must be prepared to interpret it correctly. The hermeneutical question was a central point of contention between Zwingli and the radicals. The theocentric principle is clear. If there are two apparently contradictory passages, then the one that ascribes more honor to God was the determinative one<sup>44</sup>. Those who denied infant baptism were ascribing too much importance to a human and external thing. This failing could be corrected if they paid attention to Scripture. When there was no clear passage in the New Testament, they should look to the Old to find a resolution to the difficulties<sup>45</sup>. His willingness to look back to Old Testament antecedents was to be a consistent problem in his dealings with the Anabaptists. There is also a Christocentric axis to Zwingli's arguments; the Christological focus of the early Zwingli persevered<sup>46</sup>. In addition, he developed a positive theology of infant baptism<sup>47</sup>. The many theological presuppositions to be found in his writings suggest the importance of the confrontation as a theological issue.

Zwingli's pastoral concern is also in evidence, a dimension not always appreciated in the Zurich reformer. He exhorted the troublemakers, «Bedenckend die ding, die zuo friden dienend und zuo erbuwnuß, das ist: lassend das Christenvolck im friden by dem süessen wort gottes läben; unnd buwend die ding, die zuo der eer gottes dienend; dann alle andre gebüw müessend nidergebrochen werden»<sup>48</sup>. In his writing, Zwingli revealed concern for those who would injure the simple folk<sup>49</sup>. His insistence that the children of Christians are «of God» reflects a similar interest<sup>50</sup>.

With these theological and pastoral concerns in mind, it is instructive to turn to the descriptions of the radicals that flow from Zwingli's pen. They follow the

<sup>42</sup> Z III 379, 25; 391, 2-3.

<sup>43</sup> Z III 407, 14-15.

<sup>44</sup> Z III 408, 20-23.

<sup>45</sup> Z III 409, 1-8.

<sup>46</sup> «Ein Christ sin ist nit schwetzen von Christo, sonder wandlen, wie er gewandelt hatt». Z III 407, 18-19. Also: Z III 380, 16 – 381, 20.

<sup>47</sup> The positive arguments concerning baptism, which are beyond the scope of this paper, are covered in the following: *William Peter Stephens*, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, Oxford 1986, pp. 194-217; Fugel, *Tauflehre*, passim; *Timothy George*, *The Presuppositions of Zwingli's Baptismal Theology*, in: *Prophet, Pastor, Protestant, the Work of Huldrych Zwingli after Five Hundred Years*, E. J. Furcha and H. W. Pipkin (eds.), Allison Park 1984, (Pittsburgh Theological Monographs, New Series 11), pp. 71-87.

<sup>48</sup> Z III 468, 23-26.

<sup>49</sup> Z III 406, 29-30.

<sup>50</sup> Z III 411, 21-22.



devil, who brings down the gospel and institutes justification by works<sup>51</sup>. They are too concerned about external matters, which ought to be banished from the hearts of believers<sup>52</sup>. Furthermore, their very way of conducting themselves is a source of concern. They are bitter, melancholic, too quarrelsome and are too unhappy with everyone, including themselves<sup>53</sup>. The abundance of *ad hominem* arguments undoubtedly grew out of the painful encounters that Zwingli and others were having with the radicals. The tension in the city is seen clearly in the reports<sup>54</sup>. Of particular interest is Zwingli's awareness of their views about government as well as their probable intention to establish another church<sup>55</sup>. Zwingli saw them as difficult to live with, on the verge of separatism, and unwilling to accept the legitimate role of government in protecting the church. These are the arguments that were used later against the growing Anabaptist movement; here they were presented on the eve of the actual separation.

It is not clear what Zwingli hoped to accomplish with the writing of «Wer Ursache gebe zu Aufruhr». It has been suggested that it was an attempt to bring about reconciliation with the radical Zwinglians<sup>56</sup>. The tone, however moderate in places, is hardly conciliatory. Given the context of the previous year's growing attacks from outside, it looks more like an attempt to gain the center ground and hold it for the Reformation. On the one hand, he has distanced himself successfully from the agitators against tithes outside the city and the impatient radicals within, while continuing to define his Reformation over against the medieval Catholic church. At this point he seems to have distinguished between the two radical groups. Locher's question is ultimately unanswerable, but is provocative: «Hat er die Tiefe der Kluft nicht gesehen oder nicht sehen wollen?»<sup>57</sup> This much is certain: the matter of baptism was not considered to be an «external matter» by his earnest and disappointed radical followers. Zwingli claimed the middle ground

<sup>51</sup> Z III 406, 20-24.

<sup>52</sup> Z III 407, 5-9. Also: «Was töubend ir denn für und für allein umb usserlicher dingen willen?» Z III 407, 20-21.

<sup>53</sup> Z III 405, 8-14.

<sup>54</sup> «Aber einist zämend sy iren mund nit von lasterred, vonn nachred, von nyd, zorn, zang und hassz, sunder sy sprechend: Welcher inen glych thuot, er habe ein grechten spiritum. Sind so guot, das sy nieman grüetzend, der inen begegnet unnd nitt gevallt.» Z III 404, 14-18.

<sup>55</sup> «Ietz wellend sy ghein obergheit haben; denn wellend sy die obergheit haben; doch so sye keiner ein Christ, welcher ein obrer sye. Bald wellend sy ein eigne kilchen haben; darnach so ein oberhand mit gwalt das predgen deß euangelii nit schirmen.» Z III 404, 5-9.

<sup>56</sup> *Peter J. Klassen, Zwingli and the Zurich Anabaptists*, in: *Gottesreich und Menschenreich, Ernst Staehelin zum 80. Geburtstag*, Basel 1969, p. 209 [abbr.: *Klassen, Zwingli*].

<sup>57</sup> Locher, *Reformation*, p. 244. See also *John H. Yoder, Täufertum und Reformation in der Schweiz*, Bd. 1: *Die Gespräche zwischen Täufern und Reformatoren 1523-1538*, Karlsruhe 1962, (SMGV 6), [abbr.: *Yoder, Täufertum*], p. 38: «So unterschätzt er nicht nur die Wichtigkeit der Fragen, die sie bewegten, sondern infolgedessen auch die Tiefe der Kluft, die sie schon von ihm trennte.»

successfully. All that remained for the left wing of Zurich's religious Reformation was separation.

5.

Separation came finally and definitively in January, 1525. Zwingli spent the next several months working closely with the City Council to regain the initiative and maintain control of the religious life of the city in the face of a lively religious awakening<sup>58</sup>. These folk were not just troublemakers. They appeared to be undermining Zwingli's work and were potentially stealing the initiative for reform in Zurich. Not only were they reforming baptismal practice in Zurich, precisely at the time that Zwingli was having difficulty in winning agreement from the City Council for an evangelical Lord's Supper, the Täufer were celebrating the Supper in their homes and elsewhere, under the leadership of obviously non-ordained persons<sup>59</sup>. Thus it looked as if a non-official church was coming into existence. Further, the reports were sufficient to suggest that this church was not merely a few disgruntled, disenchanting troublemakers, but a mass movement<sup>60</sup>. It was not limited to Zurich. Kessler reported that in St. Gallen there were as many as 800 Täufer and that when Zwingli heard that the town was overrun by Anabaptists he wrote his book «Von der Taufe, von der Wiedertaufe und von der Kindertaufe»<sup>61</sup>.

The Anabaptist movement as such was four months old when Zwingli once again took pen in hand to attack them. He developed both positive and negative arguments in his efforts to defeat them. He laid a theological foundation from which to establish the inadequacies of their endeavors combined with a critique of their impact on society.

<sup>58</sup> Several scholars have chronicled the birth of the Anabaptists in Zurich. The following provide both surveys and interpretations of salient features of the early time of the Anabaptists: *Fritz Blanke*, *Brüder in Christo, die Geschichte der ältesten Täufergemeinde (Zöllikon 1525)*, Zürich 1955; *George Huntston Williams*, *The Radical Reformation*, Philadelphia 1962; *Klassen*, *Zwingli*, passim; *Stayer*, *Anfänge*, passim; *Martin Haas*, *Der Weg der Täufer in die Absonderung*, in: *Umstrittenes Täuferium*, hrsg. von Hans-Jürgen Goertz, 2. Aufl., Göttingen 1977, pp. 50-78 [abbr.: *Stayer, Anfänge*]; *Yoder*, *Täuferium*, passim.

<sup>59</sup> There were numerous reports concerning the celebration of the Supper when the Täufer were together. E.g. see: QGTS I, Nrs. 42b, 50, 55, 56. The Council forbade Felix Manz not only to conduct baptisms, but also «brot brechen und derglychen handlungen». QGTS I, Nr. 42c, p. 50.

<sup>60</sup> Numerous reports as to the numbers of persons involved were given. Twenty-six names are listed on February 8 as being under arrest, but does not include Manz and Blaurock as well as other names that surface in the depositions found in QGTS. John H. Yoder suggests that eighty persons were baptized in three weeks; *Yoder*, *Täuferium*, p. 47.

<sup>61</sup> *Johannes Kesslers Sabbata, mit kleineren Schriften und Briefen*, *Emil Egli* and *Rudolf Schock* (eds.), St. Gallen 1902, pp. 148f.

Zwingli's fundamental theological concern was theocentric. The Anabaptists' unwillingness to admit children to baptism was evidence that they limit God, for the Spirit works wherever God intends or wills. «Ich wil got lassen würcken, wie und wen er wil»<sup>62</sup>. Furthermore, external practices have been abolished by Christ. No external thing can make us righteous<sup>63</sup>. These affirmations were the center of Zwingli's understanding of Reformation. The Täufer were wrong theologically. If one acts on the basis of wrong theology, the result will be the destruction of the church<sup>64</sup>. Similarly, their understanding of Scripture was defective and it was for this reason that they practiced rebaptism<sup>65</sup>. The ecclesiological issue is also prominent in Zwingli's analysis. The Täufer were attempting to establish a new church, for in rebaptizing they formed a sect<sup>66</sup>. Indeed, they recognized no church but their own<sup>67</sup>. The disruption and contention they brought will destroy the church<sup>68</sup>. Their actions were carried out without the authorization of the church and were contrary to the way that innovations are properly instituted<sup>69</sup>. By their very actions they were demonstrating that what they were doing was not done by the authority of the church.

Zwingli also undertook to portray the shortcomings of the Täufer in terms of their actions. They were guilty of shattering the peace, creating unrest, and destroying charity<sup>70</sup>. Precisely at the time that Zurich felt itself surrounded by neighbors who threatened to bring to an end the Reformation in the city, there appeared a contentious group who undercut the unity of the church. Much of the criticism directed against the Täufer suggests how much disruption and dissension they must have caused within the city by the manner in which they voiced their opposition. They were accused of inflammatory rhetoric. Anyone who contradicted them they called a heretic and the antichrist<sup>71</sup>. Zwingli complained that he had been defamed as a heretic to the simple folk<sup>72</sup>. Clearly, he suffered from the personal attacks made on him. This must have been particularly piercing to Zwingli, for many of these character assassins were at one time among his most ardent

<sup>62</sup> Z IV 242, 26.

<sup>63</sup> Z IV 216, 28-29.

<sup>64</sup> Z IV 254, 25-31.

<sup>65</sup> They especially misread the Old Testament, Z IV 212, 5-6. They fail to understand the scriptural origins of baptism, Z IV 258, 4-5. They practice rebaptism because they do not understand Acts 19, Z IV 268, 30-32.

<sup>66</sup> Z IV 206, 24 – 207, 2, Z IV 246, 7-8.

<sup>67</sup> Z IV 252, 13-14.

<sup>68</sup> Z IV 216, 11-12.

<sup>69</sup> «Wenn man dasselb anheben wil, sol der bischoff oder prophet die kilchen vorhin wol leren, und demnach der gemeind das urteil und erlobnus lassen.» Z IV 256, 9-11.

<sup>70</sup> Z IV 206, 19-20; 216, 7-9; 285, 1-3.

<sup>71</sup> Z IV 206, 20-21.

<sup>72</sup> Z IV 208, 7-8.

followers. Not only that, there were outsiders such as Georg Blaurock of Chur who came into the region and attacked Zwingli with shameful names<sup>73</sup>.

Zwingli himself was not unwilling to engage in name calling. He characterized the Täufer as guilty of heresy, sectarianism and partisanship<sup>74</sup>. While pretending humility they indulge in dishonorable talk with hateful words<sup>75</sup>. Their claims to live sinless lives are refuted by their «nydisch reden, liegen, uffruoren, schmähen, lestren»<sup>76</sup>. This sampling of Zwingli's portrayal of the Täufer in terms of personal polemic illustrates the sense of betrayal he felt. His citation of 1 John is especially poignant: «Darumb sy warlich die sind, von denen 1.Jo.2. stat:

<Sy sind von uns außgangen; dan sy wärend nit uß uns. Dann wärend sy by uns bliben»<sup>77</sup>. It was a point at which Zwingli and Zurich were vulnerable, for opponents outside the region were inclined to blame Zwingli for the rise of the Täufer. This helps account for his vigorous attempts to separate himself from them.

Zwingli also accused the Täufer of a deficient understanding of church history. They argued that infant baptism began with Pope Nicholas II, which the reformer dismissed with proof that it is certain that Augustine defended the practice, and this because it was an apostolic practice<sup>78</sup>.

The pastoral concern of Zwingli again emerged in his critique. Zwingli intimated that infant baptism stands to guarantee that Christian doctrine will be properly taught and that children will be instructed from youth on by their parents in a Christian way, and if the parents fail to do this, the godparents will insure proper instruction<sup>79</sup>. The pastor was quite certain that the Anabaptist practice of waiting until the age of accountability would guarantee that many young people would be lost to the church.

The treatise itself indicates how great the stress was for Zwingli and Zurich. It is long and disorganized. Zwingli knew this. In a letter to Vadian on May 28 he noted that the treatise was tedious<sup>80</sup>. In his «Predigtamt» he noted that due to the lack of time he had not been able to reread it; consequently there were some errors in it<sup>81</sup>. The writing not only shows signs of haste, but signs of disorganization. There are numerous passages where the train of thought is broken by an anecdote

73 «Und in sunderheit der [i.e. Blaurock], so mich offentlich außgesungen und geschrüwen hatt mit grossem wüeten und unbescheidenheit, ich sye ein kätzer, ein mörder, ein dieb, der war Antchrist, velsche die gschrift wirs denn der bapst ye geton hab.» Z IV 322, 27 – 323, 2.

74 Z IV 206, 22-24.

75 Z IV 210, 6-7 and 20-23.

76 Z IV 230, 24-25.

77 Z IV 208, 24-26.

78 Z IV 278, 23 – 279, 15.

79 Z IV 331, 17 – 332, 28.

80 Z VIII 331, 4.

81 Z IV 433, 13-17.

or a digression, which suggests that the Täufer affair had indeed come to weigh heavy in Zwingli's mind, so much so that his ability to concentrate was broken<sup>82</sup>.

6.

Soon after publishing «Von der Taufe» Zwingli published another treatise that addressed the Täufer from an ecclesiological point of view: «Von dem Predigtamt»<sup>83</sup>. A lengthy analysis is not necessary. Most of the arguments of the baptism book are reiterated here, but especially those that reflect the impact of the Täufer on the church. The main theme of «Predigtamt» is simple enough: the Täufer are self-appointed apostles who act, baptize, preach and carry out ecclesiastical functions without proper authority. They are not commissioned by the church and act without the approval of a bishop or parish congregation<sup>84</sup>. It is a simple enough argument, one that clearly makes the point that Zwingli's reform is the official Reformation and that of the Täufer is unofficial, one that in the final analysis will harm the godly, quiet Christians of the region. It is interesting to note that Zwingli clearly identified the Anabaptists with the tithes agitators, as he had not in December<sup>85</sup>.

What conclusions may now be drawn about Zwingli's judgments of the early Anabaptists?

First, the Anabaptists started to attract a following as well as unfavorable notice when the Reformation was not yet completely established. Precisely at the time that the radical Zwinglians were approaching separation, the Catholic states were paying more attention to the situation of Zurich in their midst. This made the question of unity within Zurich more urgent from the perspective of the reformer.

Second, the process of separation was spread out over a period of fifteen to eighteen months. It is possible to define the moment of separation as January 1525, but the radicals, and probably Zwingli, were attempting to resolve the issues with conciliation until that time.

Third, the two radical groups in the Zurich region, that is, the rural group of tithes agitators and the internal group of religious agitators probably were related early on, but were identified as one group by Zwingli only in May, 1525.

<sup>82</sup> E.g., see the following: Z IV 256, 27; 279, 15ff; 303, 12-13; 307, 11-12; 313, 22-27; 322, 27ff; 333, 9-10.

<sup>83</sup> Z IV 382-433.

<sup>84</sup> «Der iro lätzen wyß gibt kundtschafft, das sy so vil wolgelerter, wyser menner, so vil gotzförchtiger, frommer menschen verstand und warnung verachtet, und wider alle gründ des göttlichen wortes den widertouff angehebt und sich selbs für apostel ufge-worffen habend, und in eyn yeder kilchöre, da glych der bischoff und schaaff glöubig sind, den widertouff anhebend one verwilligung oder besuoehenn der gmeynd.» Z IV 386, 10-16.

<sup>85</sup> Z IV 388, 10.

Fourth, personal factors should not be overlooked. Zurich was a small city. The unrest created by criticism of the government and the Reformation took its toll on Zwingli himself and no doubt hardened his responses.

Fifth, the Anabaptists early accepted the efforts of Zwingli to establish true religion within Zurich, but did not agree with his complementary commitment to civic religion. This led to their disenchantment with Zwingli. The roots of the Anabaptist movement are to be found within Zurich and Zwingli's reforming efforts. The failure of Zwingli to win them over to his comprehensive view of reform eventually led him to disassociate himself from them. Zwingli also believed that there were theological as well as ecclesiological differences between them. For all these reasons he proclaimed, «They went out from us, for they were not of us.»

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