

Personal Conviction and Pastoral Care: Zwingli and the Cult of Saints 1522–1530

by PAMELA BIEL

According to Oskar Farnet, Huldrych Zwingli arrived in Zurich in January 1519 with definite ideas about the nature of true religion. His program for reforming the religion of the people of Zurich into its pristine state included a complete rejection of the cult of the saints. On theological and Scriptural grounds Zwingli rejected the conception of a saint as it was understood by the mediaeval Church, rejected pilgrimages, relics, and icons. Nonetheless, Zwingli was not able to eliminate the cult immediately; the Zurich city council did not abolish the cult until nearly six years later. Even after the city fathers had formally outlawed the cult and decreed that the images were to be covered, the matter was hardly settled.

One may attribute the ongoing discussion, in which Zwingli took an active part, to two facts: within the territories that became Protestant in Switzerland, as in much of mediaeval Europe, the cult of the saints was the touchstone of popular piety and as such could not simply be eliminated by the say-so of priest, prophet or politician; and the treatment of the saints came to be seen by the Catholic neighbors of Zurich as the litmus test of heresy. Zwingli was aware of these two facts and they tempered his treatment of the cult. This paper will examine the ways in which Zwingli tried to accomplish his theological ideal – *elimination of the cult – while maintaining order within Zurich and good relations with necessary political allies*. By examination of Zwingli's work between 1522 and 1530 I investigate how the Reformer's principles worked in the practice of a sixteenth century city. Thus one may see the cult as a stalking horse for the larger issues of the Reformation in Switzerland, namely how to actualize Reformation ideals in an urban context.

The statement with which I opened this discussion, that Zwingli was a Reformed theologian in 1519 upon his arrival in Zurich, is not as obvious as it might sound since many argue that Zwingli did not achieve a complete Reformation outlook until several years after his arrival in Zurich. Nonetheless Zwingli's attitude at this time can be characterized by three typical Reformation principles. One hallmark of this attitude can be seen in his first action upon his arrival at Zurich: on January 2 he began a series of sermons in which he preached straight through the Gospel of Matthew. This not only demonstrates a typical Reformation desire to approach the Word of God directly, but it expresses Zwingli's humanism as much as his ideas about Reformation. This plan involved a radical abandonment of the usual lectionary and Zwingli himself

characterized it as “ein für deutsche Menschen unerhörtes Unterfangen” in a letter to a friend.¹

In 1519 Zwingli was also capable of criticizing the Roman Church, although he was still receiving a papal pension. His criticisms resemble those of Luther, in that he perceives the Roman Church as filled with Italians greedy for the money of his fellow countrymen. In late 1518 Beatus Rhenanus wrote Zwingli:

Risimus abunde veniarum institorem, quem in literis tuis graphice depinxisti. Dant belli ducibus literas pro perituris in bello. Quam sunt haec frivola et pontificiis legatis indigna! Quid non tandem excogitabitur, ut nummis nostris potiatur Italia? Nec vero risu haec digna puto, sed lachrymis potius.²

Finally, Zwingli had adopted by 1519 an explicitly Pauline anthropology. The Pauline principle, that a person is only made righteous by her complete and total faith in Jesus’ redemptive death, was a centerpiece of all Reformation theology. Zwingli incorporates this idea into his all-pervasive Christology and it first appears in his plague poems of 1519.

These three Reformation principles – insistence on the primacy of Scripture, opposition to the Roman Church of the day, and Pauline anthropology – are described by Wayne Pipkin in his unpublished dissertation “The Nature and Development of the Zwinglian Reformation”³ as a ‘false-true’ religious principle. Pipkin may oversimplify in his claim that Zwingli judged each instance as either adhering to Scriptural principles or deviating completely from them; yet retained as a conceptual tool this principle provides the advantage of showing that Zwingli had a clear and definite perception of what constituted true religion in January of 1519.

Given this background, the reasons why Zwingli came to reject the cult of the saints seem fairly clear, and quickly become familiar after reading even a few of Zwingli’s tracts. As he said in 1523, “man die bild nit sölle machen, man sölle sy nit anbetten, man sölle sy ouch nit eeren...”⁴ Not only does the cult of the saints not appear in the Bible, but when the Bible does mention images they are condemned. Zwingli conflates the cult of the saints with its prime manifestation, images of saints, and called the two “abgöttere”, idolatry or that which turns people away from God.

Zwingli primarily objected to the cult for this very reason: it turns people away from Christ. He explains the genesis of his conviction that the veneration of the saints deprives Christ of due honor. In 1523 he wrote:

¹ Cited in *Oskar Farner, Huldrych Zwingli – Seine Verkündigung und ihre ersten Früchte*, Zurich 1954, 29f.

² Z VII 115₁₋₅

³ *Wayne H. Pipkin, The Nature and Development of the Zwinglian Reformation to August 1524*, unpublished thesis: Hartford Seminary Foundation 1968.

⁴ Z II 707₂₃₋₂₆

Ich hab vor 8. oder 9. jaren ein trostlich gedicht gelesen des hochgelerten Erasmi von Rotterdam, an den herren Jesum geschriben, darinn sich Jesus klagt, das man nit alles güts by im sücht, so er doch ein brunn sye alles güten, ein heilmacher, trost und schatz der seel, mit vil schönen worten. Hie hab ich gedacht: Nun ist es ie also. Warum suchend wir denn hilff by der creatur? Und wiewol ich darneben andre carmina oder gsang bim eegenanten Erasmo fand an sant Annen, s. Michaelen und andre, darinn er die, zü denen er schreib, als fürmünder anrufft, hat doch dasselb mich nit mögen bringen von der erkantnus, das Christus unser armen seelen ein eyniger schatz sye . . .⁵

Since Zwingli thought that the cult of the saints focussed the Christian's attention on something other than Christ, it had to be eliminated.

Further, Zwingli thought that the cult of the saints, as displayed in pictures in churches and in relics, lead necessarily to idolatry, the most heinous sin of the Old Testament. He conceded that idolatry and saint-worship were not one but noted, "Ich schätz ouch nit als böss sin an'n heiligen hangen als an'n abgötten, wiewohl ich weiss, dass es verdamlich ist, so man die hoffnung uff die creatur hat."⁶ Later in the same work, Zwingli denotes the scholastic distinction between *latría*, *dulia*, and *hyperdulia* as "trumpenwert". In the course of the second disputation at Zurich Jacob Edlibach tried to separate the issue of the cult from that of idolatrous representations of the saints. Zwingli cut him off, saying, "Es gilt nit meinen. Bringent die götlich gschrift harfür!"⁷ It is interesting to note that when images were clearly not liable to be worshipped Zwingli allowed them to remain in his churches,⁸ indicating that the real issue in removing pictures from churches was idolatry and not distraction from the Word of God as it came to be for other reformers.

To Zwingli the cult was, by its very nature, a manifestation of false religion since it lacked Scriptural substantiation, caused idolatry, and distanced people from Christ. Zwingli understood both the use of images and the Mass, which he also wished to eradicate, as attempts by people to achieve God's favor by means other than simply throwing themselves on God's love and mercy. Aside from the presumptuousness of such attempts, they are doomed to fail because only the love and righteousness of God are effective for salvation. Thus Zwingli attacked the role of the saints as mediators or intercessors. This constituted his primary theological objection to the cult. Other aspects of veneration may have appeared to Zwingli to be unappealing, or silly, or designed to lead the simple astary, but owing to the Christological emphasis in his theology, a trait fostered by his reading of Paul, it is the saints as intercessors which disturbed Zwingli most of all.

⁵ Z II 217₈₋₁₉

⁶ Z II 170₃₂₋₃₃

⁷ Z II 711₃₄₋₃₅

⁸ *Hans Fb von Campenhausen*, Die Bilderfrage in der Reformation, in: Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte 68 (1957) 100.

Given his great store of theological ammunition, one might wonder why Zwingli did not simply fix his sights on the nearest saint and blast away. To a certain extent he did, or attempted to, yet it turned out that not only were the saints fairly agile at eluding his fire, but also that various reasons made marching around the walls singing to the Lord a more practical mode of opposition than a frontal attack. Zwingli was aware of certain pragmatic reasons which prevented him from simply eliminating the cult and its manifestations at one fell swoop.

First, and perhaps foremost in Zwingli's mind, was the fact that the cult was the vehicle for popular religion in Switzerland as well as across Europe at this period. The pictures of the saints were the *Biblia pauperum* for a mostly illiterate population. Pictures in churches gave rudimentary instruction, strengthened the memory, and encouraged devotion. Perhaps stemming from the important role played by the saints in early education, people came to expect help and holiness from the saints, an attitude which had been criticized from the twelfth century forward.

The influence of the cult of the saints pervaded all aspects of popular life and consequently abrupt elimination of it would have been devastating, if not impossible. Conrad Schmid advocated the removal of the cult but noted, "man sol ie dem schwachen sinen stab, daran er sich hebt, nit uss der hand ryssen, man gebe im dann ein anderen, oder man fellet inn gar ze boden."⁹

Another issue tempering the Reformer's desire to eliminate the cult of the saints was the intricacy of Swiss politics. From the start Zwingli had linked the reformation of religion to the issue of mercenary service, a subject of considerable interest to Rome. In 1521 Zurich had sent a contingent of mercenaries to assist in the Piacenza expedition. They were not paid in full, although Zurich annually sent representatives to Rome to request payment. After the advent of Zwingli, the papacy refused payment on account of the nefarious Lutheran heresy rampant in the city-state. As G. R. Potter notes, "Papal money was scarcely likely to be paid to heretics."¹⁰ Lutheran or not, Zurich had a good case: the men had been sent on the expedition with no religious strings attached, fulfilled their part of the bargain, and thus were entitled to payment.¹¹ Zwingli was certainly not making it easy for the Council to obtain payment since he was continually involved in disputes and arguments. Before 1522 at least two published tracts had appeared against him. One was by Conrad Hoffman, the other anonymous. Along with various complaints about his style of preaching, the attackers complained that he had defamed Mary, questioned the efficacy of the saints and claimed the cult was unbiblical.¹² Zwingli had also written several tracts in which he referred to the Pope in a most disparaging manner.

⁹ Z II 704₃₀₋₃₃

¹⁰ G. R. Potter, *Zwingli*, London 1978, 227.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 227.

¹² *Farner*, *Op. cit.* 180.

Zwingli's remarks notwithstanding, the issue here was whether the city of Zurich was cherishing, venerating, defending, and protecting the Roman Church. Since Zwingli's initial attack on the saints did not so much as question the possibility of intercession as it questioned the ability of Rome to decide infallibly on matters of doctrine, the city's attitude toward the saints could not but be read as indicative of its attitude toward the Mother Church.¹³

Breaking with Rome had consequences for Zurich beyond offense to the person of the Pope or monies for mercenary service left uncollected. Once Zurich made herself objectionable to the Pope she would become equally so to the majority of the Swiss Confederation. When the Zurich Council forbade the Mass and ordered that each church cover the images of the saints, the Catholic cantons had few choices. War with Zurich, one of the most powerful cantons, would have been impractical because of Zurich's military might and because such action could have unfavorably influenced those cities which had not yet taken a firm stand, notably Bern and Basle. Ostracism of Zurich, even if it had been possible, given Zurich's central location and the importance of her grain-growing suburbs, could have meant the end of the Swiss Confederation as it had existed for nearly two centuries. Thus serious attempts were made by the Catholic cantons to reconcile Zurich with Rome. In the face of such good-will violent suppression of the cult would have been both rude and counterproductive.

Zurich also had continually to combat the charge that she was the home of the radical element hated and feared by Reformed and Catholic alike. Beginning with the breaking of the Lenten fast in 1522, and continuing with Zurich's role in protecting the arsonists and iconoclasts in the Ittingen affair of 1525, it did not seem that those who charged the Zurich council and Zwingli with encouraging Anabaptist, anarchist, and violent parties were far from the mark. If Zurich chose to break with Rome, the onus was on her to prove that anarchism was not the only alternative to Roman Catholicism. The weight of this proof stayed the city council's hand when it came to the elimination of the cult. International considerations, likewise, shaped Zurich's and Zwingli's attitude about the saints.

There were several different ways that Zwingli could go about the elimination of the saints and the "bilddienst" associated with it. Zwingli attempted to eliminate the cult his first year in Zurich. He forbade adoration of the saints, prayers to the saints on behalf of the dead, and pilgrimages. The reaction was immediate and hostile; as Charles Garside notes, "Evidently Zwingli had discovered that preaching against the cult of the saints involved an assault upon the nerve-center of people's faith."¹⁴ Zwingli's second way of approaching the

¹³ *Else Beurle, Der politische Kampf um die religiöse Einheit der Eidgenossenschaft, Linz 1920, 20.*

¹⁴ *Charles Garside Jr., Zwingli and the Arts, New Haven 1966, 95.*

cult was by way of education. If the people could not digest the solid food of Scripture and Reformed religion, they had first to be fed on milk and sops until they were weaned. This plan for educating the people suffered from pressure from both sides: some felt that only the Roman Church could teach the people about matters of belief and some felt that Zwingli proceeded too slowly in his work. Zwingli envisioned a clergy which would, in an imitation of Christ, mediate the Gospel to the people.¹⁵ The radical element, however, took matters into their own hands on occasion by fits of iconoclasm aimed at spurring along the education of the people. Although Zwingli deplored such disorderliness, he understood the outbursts of violence as indications that the people were ready to dispose of the various trappings of what he perceived of as false religion. Zwingli also depended, to a great extent, upon the Zurich council and the magistracy to help effect the removal of the cult of the saints by a combination of the tireless teaching of the ministers and the cooperative endeavors of the ministry and the magistracy.

Although Zwingli's suggestion in 1519 that the Zurichers renounce entirely the cult of the saints met with no success in July of 1522 he again seemed to hope that the saints along with a long list of misguided practices of the Roman Church would vanish at his suggestion. At first glance Zwingli seems not to have learned anything after his first three and a half years in Zurich, yet the fact of the matter is that *Eine freundliche Bitte und Ermahnung* stems from Zwingli's first experiences in openly defying the Roman Church. The famous sausage incident at the home of the printer and personal friend of Zwingli, Froschauer, had caused Zwingli publicly to assume the position that he had long held in private. The publication of *Von Erkießen und Freiheit der Speisen* in April had provoked a reaction from the Bishop of Constance but no recognition of the larger issue by the city council. Later Zwingli had confronted the immobility of the Roman Church on the matter of clerical celibacy.

The revision of Zwingli's original plea for clerical marriage, now translated into German and addressed to the people of the Swiss Confederation, appeared in July 1533 under the title cited above. *Eine freundliche Bitte* lists a number of abuses by the Roman Church of true religion; included in this list is the practice of creating saints on a daily basis along with taxes and tithes. Having been completely ignored by the bishop, to whom these issues were initially addressed, Zwingli proceeded to present these matters of ecclesiastical polity to the people as a whole. This democratization of religious authority reflects both a despair with the established hierarchy and a belief that the Holy Spirit guides each and every Christian making each potentially capable of formulating theological opinions.

¹⁵ Jacques Figi, *Die innere Reorganisation des Grossmünsterstiftes in Zürich von 1519 bis 1531*, Affoltern 1951, 38.

Eine freundliche Bitte did not serve its author's covert purpose of uniting the Swiss against Rome. Although many within Zurich stood behind Zwingli, outside the city opposition was mounting. Zwingli wrote several more treatises to explain his position to his countrypeople; the largest and most complete of these, the *Archeteles*, appeared in August 1522. In September Zwingli published the *Predigt von der ewig reinen Magd Maria* in which he considered the issue of intercession.

The sixteenth century had seen a blossoming of the cult of Mary, due in part to the sanction given to it by Sixtus IV at the end of the fifteenth century.¹⁶ Zwingli himself was hardly exempt from interest in the Virgin, as Locher has argued.¹⁷ The popular esteem for the Virgin made the widespread rumors that Zwingli had called her a trollop devastating. In order to counter such accusations, which implied that all of Zurich was blaspheming the Virgin and acting in an irresponsible manner by retaining Zwingli as Leutpriester, Zwingli published his sermon.

Zwingli opened by asserting that he has nothing but praise and respect for Mary. Even so, "Das Ave Maria is nit ein gebet, sunder ein grüz unnd ein lob."¹⁸ Mary can, ultimately, do nothing more for humanity than she has already done, namely give birth to God incarnate. This limitation of Mary's powers rests on the fact that "er (Jesus) ein einiger mitler ist zwüschend got und dem menschen, in dem, das er sich ein rantzung oder lossgelt ussgeben hatt für alle menschen."¹⁹ Given the exemplary nature of the life and faith of Mary, she would be aware of Christ's singular role and all of the false and self-glorifying ways by which people praise her image would offend her greatly.

In this sermon, which is far less political than his earlier works, one may note the emergence of two important themes which dominate Zwingli's treatment of the cult of the saints. The first characteristic is Zwingli's stalwart desire to publish what he perceives as the truth of the Bible in spite of the unpopularity of the message. Political concerns and a sensitivity to the issues of the day mediate his personal conviction at various times during his career, yet periodically throughout his tenure in Zurich, Zwingli assumed an unpopular stance on such issues as mercenary soldiery and pensions. The second characteristic exhibited by this sermon comes to temper the violence of his personal feelings. This is the desire not to cause offense to the people. Although cynics may suggest that this concern with offense stems from a "more bees with honey" principle, in fact some have read his attitude as part of Zwingli's conception of his mission. Siegfried Rother devotes a long section of his monograph to Zwingli's

¹⁶ Documentation to be found in *Willi Meister, Volksbildung und Volkserziehung in der Reformation Huldrych Zwinglis*, Zurich 1939, 86 et passim.

¹⁷ *Gottfried W. Locher, Zwingli's Thought: New Perspectives*, Leiden 1981, 47ff.

¹⁸ Z I 408²³

¹⁹ Z I 426¹⁰⁻¹²

self-conception of himself as an instrument of God.²⁰ If Zwingli had as pronounced a *Sendungsbewußtsein* as Rother suggests, then causing offense would be more serious than merely adding to a list of enemies. Alienation from Zwingli's message would be alienation from the Word of God and would endanger the soul. Bringing people into the fold of true believers becomes a matter of eternal life and death, a responsibility which Zwingli as a pastor took seriously.

Whether or not the Zurich council agreed with Zwingli's idea of his own mission, by the end of 1522 they could not ignore his teachings. So, as was customary in many Swiss and imperial cities in the sixteenth century, a public disputation was arranged.

The disputation of January 1523 generated three documents, the 67 *Schlußreden* around which the debates were to be held, a transcription of the disputation itself, and the *Auslegen und Gründe der Schlußreden*, which appeared six months after the debate and which is one of Zwingli's most comprehensive theological platforms.

The following articles of the 67 *Schlußreden* are those relevant to the topic at hand:

3. Dannenher der einig weg zur sälligkeit Christus ist aller, die ie wärend, sind und werdend.
18. Dass Christus, sich selbs einest uffgeopfert, in die ewigheit ein wärend und bezalend opfer ist für aller gloubigen sünd; . . .
19. Das Christus ein einiger mitler ist zwüschend gott unnd uns.
20. Das uns gott alle ding wil in sinem namen geben; darus entspringt, dass wir usserhalb diser zyt keines mitlers dörfend denn sin.
21. Das, so wir für einander uff erden bittend, das in der gestalt thüend, das wir allein durch Christum uns alle ding gegeben werden verträwent.
58. Das urteyl der abgescheidnen ist allein got bekant.²¹

The first thing to note is that nowhere in the above cited articles, or, in fact, anywhere in the *Schlußreden* has Zwingli explicitly mentioned the cult of the saints. One might imagine that Zwingli was not anxious to bring up this touchy subject before the gathering of over 600 people, lay and clerical,²² especially since Zwingli's position on this issue would not have been popular. Nonetheless, when in the course of the debates Johannes Fabri, sent by the Bishop of Constance, was forced to pronounce the doctrine of veneration that of the Roman Church, Zwingli lept in, delighted, "Lieben brüder in Christo!" he exclaimed,

Es ist on zweyfel nitt on sunder geschick und willen gottes beschehen, das min herr vicari eben von der anruffung oder fürbittung der heiligen und der müter gottes thüt reden.²³

²⁰ *Siegfried Rother*, *Die religiösen und geistigen Grundlagen der Politik Huldrych Zwinglis*, Erlangen 1956, 28.

²¹ Z I 458₁₆₋₁₇; 460₆₋₇; 460₁₂; 460₁₃₋₁₄; 460₁₅₋₁₇; 464₁₈

²² *Potter*, *Op. cit.* 100.

²³ Z I 506₄₋₇

The Reformer then goes on to decry the cult of the saints upholding, in no uncertain terms, the role of Christ as the sole mediator for humanity. Zwingli demonstrates throughout the course of the debate his all-pervasive Christological emphasis. Zwingli condemns the cult because he exalts Christ as the only way to salvation, a perpetual offering to God the Father, and the sole mediator for humanity.

The *Schlußreden* appeared only a few days before the actual debate, an inadequacy which provoked complaint but not withdrawal by Fabri and others. The disputation was more or less orderly, although the fact that it was conducted in the vernacular allowed more heckling than would have been possible had the disputation been in Latin. The issue of the saints arose, as mentioned before, when Fabri attempted to defend the Roman Church's stand on veneration and to answer the charge that he had tortured a priest from Baden to force a retraction of statements made about the saints. Fabri made scant mention of the charge of torture, but admitted that he had examined the erring priest and found that he held "vil unbillicher, ungöttlicher, unchristlicher meynung"²⁴ as regarded the saints. Zwingli, who assented to at least some of the opinions under scrutiny, stated that the doctrine of the saints required clarification because it has confused so many.

Zwingli then demanded elucidation of the doctrines of veneration and intercession supported by proof from the Bible. One might pause with Zwingli's request to examine what has transpired thus far. Apparently, Zwingli's teaching against the cult had been enthusiastically received by ministers in other cantons. Further the arrest proves that the ecclesiastical hierarchy considered the issue of the cult of critical importance. Zwingli also admitted responsibility for the erring preaching, just as he admitted that he himself had knowingly preached contrary to the wishes of the Roman Church. Here the issue is the intercessionary role of the saints and Mary, not the images which later came to occupy the central role in Zwingli's polemic. Finally, Zwingli demanded proof from Scripture, denying the importance of the various traditions of the Church which Fabri had already cited.

Thus in debate Zwingli delineated the most basic points of conflict with the Roman Church. Six months later he published his *Auslegen und Gründe der Schlußreden* to clarify his intentions once again. The preface of this work identifies its primarily pastoral thrust.²⁵ Zwingli dedicated this tract to those people who have been alarmed by the *Schlußreden* and the reports of the disputation. In this way Zwingli's intent in this work was similar to that of his sermon on Mary. Unlike the sermon, however, the *Auslegen* is a pedagogical and not a dis-

²⁴ Z I 502₁₇₋₁₈

²⁵ Z II 14 et seq.

putative work, familiar in its tone but adamant: he tells his flock exactly what they are to believe.

In his gloss of article XIX «Das Christus ein einiger mitler ist zwüschend gott unnd uns») and article XX also on intercession, Zwingli discussed the cult of the saints. He notes that the New Testament presents no evidence for the role of the saints as intercessors. To prove the contrary point, Zwingli cites John XIV:6 «No one comes to my father but by me.» Having stated his theological position in some detail, Zwingli turns to the simpler people and says, «Nun hand still unnd hörend min that und glouben.»²⁶ With this he begins a series of what can only be understood as common-sense arguments about why people should cease to invoke the saints as intercessors. He points out that it simply makes no sense to say a Pater Noster to a saint, since the opening of the prayer says perfectly well to whom it is addressed. Further, Zwingli noted that no matter how blessed, the saints are still created beings and it is «verdämlich... so man die hoffnung uff die creatur hat.»²⁷ Such hope is «ein schmach Jesu Christi.»²⁸

It seems useful to understand the first two stages in Zwingli's attack on the saints as addressed to theologians and simple Christians respectively. Zwingli gave the cool intellectual reasons to eliminate the cult and followed with a series of warmer emotional reasons. One may understand the final gloss on article XIX as directed to the pastors of the German-Swiss cantons, in which Zwingli explains why those people responsible for the care of souls must stop saint-worship. Here Zwingli advocates the removal of images and altars because no matter how often people claim that they will not worship images they inevitably do so.²⁹ Nonetheless, Zwingli noted that such abuse is hardly the fault of those who indulge in it. They, blameless, have been led by a cruel shepherd into damnation. Zwingli makes it clear that certain people have a God-given responsibility to prevent vain superstition.

Following this claim Zwingli concentrated his attack on the images themselves. This tactic confirms the pastoral thrust of the entire treatise, since the images were the most obvious manifestations of the cult. In this work Zwingli made use of all of the Old Testament weaponry against the images and deliberately conflated the issue of icons or images with the crime of idolatry.³⁰ He again glossed the use of *sanctus* in the Bible asking, «wenn wend ir lernen, dass sanctus einen frommen heisst und nit einen säligen?»³¹

²⁶ Z II 169₅₋₆

²⁷ Z II 170₃₃₋₃₄

²⁸ Z II 172₂₉

²⁹ Z II 219₅ et seq.

³⁰ Z II 199₃₋₄

³¹ Z II 202₄₋₅

Continuing along this line Zwingli suggested tearing down all the images in churches so that the people would be prevented from falling into unconscious idolatry. Set in the context of Zwingli's plea for a comprehensible liturgy and prayer this remark does not seem as dangerous as it might initially. Zwingli objected to images because people are so likely to abuse them. Thus pastors must remove images since they are bound to interfere with the progress of understanding the Gospel.

Typically Zwingli closed this rather lengthy treatise with an apology in which he excused the brusque tone and rough style, explaining that he had written the exposition to incite anger at the godless, and stating that if he had caused offense, he was truly sorry. Again Zwingli noted the effects that his writing might have, hoping finally to avoid offense and alienation while still accomplishing his task.

One can easily believe Zwingli's claim that the awkwardness of his *Auslegen* was due in part to haste. Zwingli kept the Zurich printers very busy in 1523. It was also a good year for disputations; the second disputation at Zurich took place in late October, less than ten months after the first. While Zwingli marshalled his forces for this debate he carried on a lively correspondence which included thoughts on the Mass, and he wrote two major treatises published at the end of August and the beginning of October.³² The Mass, along with the problems of images, were the foci of the second disputation.

The second disputation at Zurich was a simpler affair than the first: there were only two topics for debate and Zwingli's opposition was meagerly represented. The events of the summer months preceeding the gathering, however, gave the first article of debate explosive potential. Bullinger reported that this topic was «dass die bilder von gott und in h. Schrift verboten synd. Desselhalb under den Christen nit gemacht, noch geehrt, sunder abgethon söllend werden.»³³

The interest in this topic stems from the fact that by the time of the disputation the people in Zurich's territory had changed the mood of the last phrase of the thesis from subjunctive to indicative. The outbreaks of iconoclasm were spurred by the preaching of Leo Jud and others, as the disciplinary records note.³⁴ In the *Fraumünster*, which stood within the city walls, vandals had smashed the lamps before the altars of the saints and splashed holy water on the ground in mockery.³⁵ At St. Peter's Hoengg, and elsewhere there were demon-

³² On July 30 Zwingli published *Von göttlicher und menschlicher Gerechtigkeit*; the two works concerning the Mass were *De canone Missae epicheresis*, an historical survey which appeared in late August and *De canone Missae libelli apologia*, which appeared in October.

³³ S I 473

³⁴ *Emil Egli* (editor) *Actensammlung zur Geschichte der Zürcher Reformation*, Zurich, 1879, 160.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 159.

strations and damage. At Stadelhofen a mob pulled down a crucifix which stood on private property.³⁶ When the Small Council of Zurich jailed the delinquents there was a public outcry and so, at the suggestion of the three Leutpriester, the culprits were released on bail until the matter could be settled by disputation.

The two accused could have rested easy, given the nature of the disputation. The Reformation party encountered no serious opposition and the best arguments came from those who wished that the city would follow a more radical path than that on which it had embarked to date. The bishop's representative, Conrad Hoffman, had previously complained of the excesses of the hierarchy and had sided with Zwingli against mercenary service. It was, according to Potter, «More a demonstration than an exchange of views, a propaganda exercise rather than a debate.»³⁷

Leo Jud gave the first scholarly essay on the subject, a resounding condemnation of idolatry. Sebastian Hofmeister, a former Franciscan converted by Zwingli's preaching, added that not only should pictures not be worshipped by Christians, but that they also do not belong any place within the house of God.³⁸ Perhaps the most intelligent comment was made by Conrad Schmid, who, after rehearsing Jud's condemnations,³⁹ explained that the images have to be removed gradually so as not to alienate the people.⁴⁰ The only picture a believer needs is the one of Jesus within her own heart.⁴¹ Zwingli utilized many of the ideas and most of the rhetoric of this speech repeatedly throughout his career.

The groundwork having been laid by his cohorts, Zwingli then spoke. He, too, recapitulated the various biblical denunciations of idolatry. Yet he then invoked the example of Timothy and Titus to show that «Dergelychen, sölte man die usseren götzen nit abweg thun, bis das die inneren götzen der anfechtungen abgthon wärind...»⁴² Zwingli assumed this mild position only temporarily. When Hans Widmer, a staunch opponent of Zwingli, suggested that the saints present examples of right living for the simple, Zwingli agreed but noted nonetheless, «zudem wäre Christus unns allein zů einem vorbild geben zů leben, und nit die heyligen, dann das houpt muss uns füren und nit die glyder.»⁴³

Thus Zwingli appears to present a somewhat inconsistent position. His uncharacteristic wavering is best understood as resulting from the pressures upon the Reformer from within Zurich. The incident at Stadelhofen frames the problem nicely. The radicals advocated the immediate abolition of all images. Ideal-

³⁶ Potter, *Op. cit.* 130.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 133.

³⁸ Z II 691

³⁹ Z II 699

⁴⁰ Z II 704

⁴¹ Z II 705₆₋₈

⁴² Z II 710₆₋₈

⁴³ Z II 714₃₋₇

istic folk, unconcerned with the economic significance of their actions for the city, they did not care whether a given image was owned publicly or individually; any and all must be destroyed. Thus they pulled down a crucifix erected by a grain merchant in his yard outside the town of Stadelhofen. This action caused the perpetrators to be jailed and, more importantly, it raised the question of whether Zurich was responsible for the protection of private property if that property presented an inducement to idolatry. Zwingli's teaching appeared to sanction the destruction of an idol, which did not favorably impress the city government anxious to protect Zurich's status as a market town. Hence Zwingli invoked the image of Timothy and Titus to demonstrate both his distance from and his disapproval of the «götzenstürmer» and to reiterate the importance of action taken in harmony with the needs and best interests of the populus.

Another reason for Zwingli's moderation rests on the fact that to a large extent the eyes of Switzerland were trained on him at this disputation. Even though the bishops of Constance, Chur and Basel, and the University of Basel had refused to send representatives, up to 900 people, 350 of them clergy, packed the hall. The people were crammed in so closely that they could not kneel to pray.⁴⁴ Zwingli had to prove that although many perceived him as the spokesperson for the Reformation in Switzerland he was far from sanctioning destruction of private or municipal property.

Zwingli wrote *Eine kurze christliche Einleitung* at great speed following the close of the debates; the work appeared on November 17. It was to be, as was the *Auslegen* of six months earlier, a clarification of Zwingli's position. The *Einleitung* was also to provide a working plan of action for newly reformed ministers and congregations within the Zurich territory. Already by November a great part of the population in the countryside around Zurich was refusing to take part in the Mass, where it was given at all. The city council sent the *Einleitung* to the bastions of the old faith, to the bishops who had failed to attend the disputation and to the university. This act of defiance had less effect than the reception of the work by the ministers in the countryside. This reception served to make uniform the heretofore disparate Zwinglian movement.

The *Einleitung* reads smoothly and has as its cardinal principle the centrality of Christ to Christians. Zwingli contrasted false Christians to those who truly follow Christ. False Christians take matters into their own hands instead of obeying civil authorities. They burn monasteries, drown nuns, and generally act unrestrainedly upon their own desires.⁴⁵ Zwingli chided such actions as being both wasteful and unlawful: disobedience to civil authorities qualifies in this context as a type of sin. Abuses are to be corrected by teaching people and gently leading them to right action.

⁴⁴ Farner, Op. cit. 435.

⁴⁵ Z II 650

Zwingli further articulated his position about the images in this tract. As he understood it, the problem lies not so much in the painted or carved images themselves, but rather in how the believer receives such images in her heart. Once the person has cleansed her heart images will not trouble her; on the contrary, their «blödigkeit» will become apparent.⁴⁶ The real danger is when images lead to idolatry among the untutored.⁴⁷

From this summation it seems clear that Zwingli stated in this treatise explicitly what implicitly had informed his speeches at the second disputation. He clearly wished to demonstrate that he did not agree with the Anabaptists. Robert Walton argues that with this treatise and the preceding debate Zwingli committed himself fully to the idea of all reform being executed from within the state and under the guidance of the magistracy.⁴⁸ The position of moderate, guided changes in the church was one that civil authorities could sanction and, almost as importantly, the governments of the surrounding cantons would not perceive as constituting a threat to good order in the Confederation.

Such political considerations began to figure in Zwingli's attack on the cult especially after 1523. The peace which Zurich had enjoyed for the past several years evaporated and at the same time she began to implement her new policies. In late 1523 the Zurich council had issued a mandate calling for the closing of the triptychs, covering of images and cessation of processions.⁴⁹ The first demonstration of Zurich's new policy came at the start of the new year. In February 1524 the feast of the purification of the Virgin was celebrated without processions, to be followed by an especially stark Lent and Eastertide. Palm Sunday was denuded of its procession of relics, nobody crept to the cross on Good Friday, both of which were long-standing Zurich traditions.⁵⁰

In the face of such behavior, the Catholic cantons decided to call an organizational meeting. The five regions, «die fünf Orte» – Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Lucerne, and Zug – met for the first time in April 1523 with the resolve to root out the Zwinglian, Lutheran, or Hussite heresies wherever they might exist. After the summer months this intention became more feasible. Each Swiss canton had sent troops to assist Francis I in Italy except for Zurich. Following Francis' defeat at Milan the men returned to central Switzerland disgruntled, unpaid, and with little loot. Thus the Catholic forces suddenly had available to them a vast assembly of men ready, eager, and able to attack any enemy which promised substantial monetary recompense. Zurich badly needed protection.

The Catholic cantons looked to Zurich's suppression of the cult of the saints in order to evaluate the profundity of her heresy. Part of this estimation de-

⁴⁶ Z II 657₁₉₋₂₃

⁴⁷ Z II 657₂₄₋₂₈

⁴⁸ *Robert C. Walton, Zwingli's Theocracy*, Toronto 1967, 181.

⁴⁹ *Egli*, Op. cit. 186.

⁵⁰ *Potter*, Op. cit. 138.

pended upon the *Christliche Antwort ... an den Bischof von Konstanz über Bilder und Messe* which appeared in August 1524 under the auspices of the Zurich council, although it was probably written by Zwingli. In June Zurich had removed the images from her churches – they had merely been covered the previous December – buried her relics, and ceased organ music and exorcisms. Such actions were in exact contradiction to the orders of the Church.⁵¹ The bishop, consequently, demanded an accounting, as did the canton of Lucerne, Zurich's largest and most aggressive neighbor.

In response to this demand Zurich said that the separation of the Catholic cantons and consequent dissolution of the Swiss Confederation were against the hopes and desires of Zurich; her only objective was to prevent the Word of God from being shamed.⁵² To begin with this treatise marshalls the biblical evidence against the images. Citing the ten commandments, Deuteronomy V, and the eradication of ceremonials by Jesus, the author concludes that the cult of the saints is idolatrous and unbiblical.⁵³ The danger of images lies in the fact that sooner or later the image comes to be confused with the thing that it represents. When, later in the treatise, the Zurichers confess the errors of which they have been guilty in the past and which they now seek to rectify the list corresponds to the cult of the saints as it appeared in the sixteenth century. Repeatedly the author argues that the problem does not really lie in the images themselves, but in the use that people make of them.

Whoever wrote the *Christliche Antwort* was in close contact with the people of Zurich. He knew what saints had control over what problems, «Sant Apollonien für das zanwee, sant Erasmus für 's buchwee, sant Antonien für das wütend fhür, sant Vindelin ... etwas wider ze finden, sant Notpert, dass sy helffe gebären.»⁵⁴ Assuming that Zwingli wrote this tract, and the humanistic flavor and tone indicate that he did, one can see that he has changed his course of action somewhat in the treatise. In previous tracts he had called for education and then removal of the images; in this work, however, he advocates the physical removal of the manifestations of the cult as a part of the educational process.

Thus Zwingli's personal education in the administrative aspects of actualizing the Reformation in his city has advanced. Previously he had supposed that education alone would bring about the elimination of false religion. In 1524 he had come to the realization that education would not be possible so long as the people continued in their misguided course, daily confronted by the cult of the saints. His tactics in the *Christliche Antwort* reveal this newly acquired education: both his pastoral concern for the people and his strong personal feelings

⁵¹ Z III 148

⁵² Z III 153–155

⁵³ Z III 163

⁵⁴ Z III 177_{14–18}

about the cult are represented. He proved the latter by his projection of the emotion of penitence onto the people, who express contrition and resolve not to be swayed from their recently discovered path of true religion.

This newly discovered path involved the elimination of the images Zwingli so detested. In the period following the publication of the *Christliche Antwort* several of the territories close to Zurich removed the images of the saints from their churches. Such an action indicated that the city or territory allied itself to Zurich. Potter manages to untangle some of the legal knots involving dual jurisdiction of territories, but for our purposes it is enough to note that at this juncture the cleansing of churches was tantamount to alliance with Zurich. At various times such cleansing of churches erupted into violence; monasteries were looted and burned, private property assaulted. Zurich did what she could to protect those of her citizens actively involved in the disturbances from Catholic retribution while not unduly antagonizing the rest of the Swiss.

Zwingli was hardly idle, even in the face of such complex legal issues. In March 1525 he published his most complete and mature theological writing: *De vera et falsa religione commentarius*. Zwingli devoted Chapter 23 to the invocation of the saints. In this tract, once again, one may note that the focus although not the timbre of Zwingli's attack on the cult has altered. Instead of a concern with the use of false images in churches, he concerned himself with not causing offense to others, especially the king of France to whom he dedicated this work. Zurich would lose all hope of having France as her ally should her reformation be identified with iconoclastic violence. Another new note sounded by Zwingli in this tract is his interest in replying to international critics.

In the opening of Chapter 23 Zwingli referred to Josse Clichtove's work of 1523 *De Veneratione Sanctorum*. Although Zwingli claimed not to have read the work very carefully, this does not prevent him from saying that «Nescit infantissimus homo sanctas non eandem rem esse cum divis».⁵⁵ In fact it seems clear that Clichtove understood this distinction as he understood many of the subtler points of doctrine associated with the cult of the saints. Clichtove allied worship of the saints with respect for the Roman Church. He asserted that «Qui ecclesiam audit: Christum audit, eius sponsum & directorem, cuius filios».⁵⁶ Clichtove has correctly grasped that the Lutheran doubts about the efficacy of prayers to the saints are doubts about the authority of the Church. This point of view, which Zwingli shared with Luther, drew Clichtove's fire.

Obviously a great gap separated Zwingli and Luther yet by his answering of accusations made pointedly at the Lutherans Zwingli has, in a sense, placed himself within Luther's camp. Here Zwingli chose to become embroiled in an

⁵⁵ Z III 839₂₁₋₂₂

⁵⁶ *Josse Clichtove, De veneratione sanctorum*, Paris 1523, 9 recto.

international dispute with the respected Bishop of Chartres. Then, confirming what many had suspected, he allied himself with Luther.

Zwingli's ideas about education appear clearly in his *Commentarius*. These ideas relate closely to the problem of causing offense, as the following description of his argument will show. True to the pastoral mode, Zwingli opened his discussion by affirming that causing offense is the same as treating others with contempt. One avoids causing offense by careful and considerate teaching. Knowledge banishes sins, causes repentance, and ultimately turns people to God. Yet throughout the chapter entitled "De Scandalo"⁵⁷ Zwingli urges consideration for one's weaker brothers.

Interestingly enough, Zwingli chose the cult of the saints as an example of how one may accomplish right, considerate teaching. Intelligent and true Christians will be prompted by their consciences to correct those who worship the saints but such utterances will not convince untutored people. Ministers must handle these matters very carefully and in such a way that more are convinced and gradually turned to the Gospel even if it means holding back and waiting for a favorable occasion to present itself.

This position represents a considerable shifting of ground on Zwingli's part. Where previously the cult was one of the two issues on which he had centered all of his polemic and the elimination of which he accepted as the verifiable test of true religion, now it does not occupy such prominence. Consequently he approaches the subject late in his treatise. Although Zwingli never considered any manifestation of false religion to be *adiaphora*, in this treatise he deemphasized the importance of elimination of the saints. When the people become educated, when they understand that the Reformed religion does not threaten to cast them to the pavement and break their heads, then they will adopt it naturally and the whole problem of veneration will cease.

Zwingli's attitude suggested, however, a stronger viewpoint about veneration, and this new point of view constituted the most striking change in his outlook. Here one feels that Zwingli has altered his position for political reasons. He dedicated this work to Francis I, a Catholic, and declared that the whole issue of the saints was, in a manner of speaking, too hot to touch.

It is difficult to determine whether Zwingli has adopted this position out of political expediency or pastoral concern about causing offense. In fact Zwingli appears to have contradicted himself. He claimed education is the key to leading people away from false religion, yet he also said that in trying to teach people about the cult of the saints one may lose ground since people will resist true religion. This contradiction, however, points to his new conception of education. When one teaches people the precepts of true religion one presents the saving Grace of Christ as the guiding principle. Once people have grasped this

⁵⁷ Z III 888-889

then specific errors about saints, the Mass or the role of the clergy will vanish. Zwingli had no doubt that once people understood the saving message then the manifestations of false religion would wither away like so many dead leaves. This opinion is closer to Zwingli's earlier program. His return to it indicates the increasingly tense situation of Zurich and the harassed state of the Reformer.

This tension and Zurich's need for powerful allies manifest themselves in Zwingli's discussion of the relation of the abolition of images to public order. Given that images serve no purpose, and that they consume people's time and money, and that they often lead to idolatrous and forbidden worship, Zwingli felt it best that they be removed from churches. The churches must accomplish this removal without offense or disturbance of public order. Again Zwingli affirmed that "Debet doctrina praecedere, imaginum autem abolitio cum tranquillitate sequi; docebit autem omnia in omnibus charitas."⁵⁸ This concern for public order tempers Zwingli's belief that everything must orient itself toward the revelation of Christ. Significantly this emphasis appears in each chapter in which Zwingli discusses a topic on which there had been conflict with the Anabaptists.⁵⁹ Zwingli repeatedly affirmed that the bottom line for any change in religion is order and avoidance of scandal. He here disavowed any connection with iconoclasts, rebaptizers and the like.

These repeated disavowals and affirmations of the importance of public order match the growing number of accusations by various members of the now fractured Confederation that the popular disturbances – most of which are attributable to Anabaptist actions and repercussions from the Peasant's War in Germany – were caused by so-called Lutheran preaching going on in Zurich. The arena of these complaints expanded dramatically in late 1524, at the time when Zwingli was writing the *Commentarius*, when John Eck of Ingolstadt joined the fray. Eck's involvement has a two-fold significance: he made the internal problems and policies of Zurich a matter of international concern and he allied the Zwinglian party with the sectarians. The anxiety which both these charges engendered, coupled with Zwingli's desire to woo France, help explain Zwingli's desire to maintain his distance from the sectarians and to insist on the value of public order.

These pressures are reflected further in the next major tract in which Zwingli considered the cult of the saints and the relation of abolition of the cult to the maintenance of public order. In April 1525 Zwingli published *Antwort an Valentin Compar* in which he presented his opinions on the locus of religious authority, once again using the cult of the saints as the test case. Compar was a magistrate's clerk in Uri, one of the central Catholic cantons. At this time, when Zwingli would not risk passing through any of the central states for fear of his

⁵⁸ Z III 906₈₋₉

⁵⁹ specifically baptism, the Lord's Supper and images.

life, and when an international Catholic alliance seemed possible, the letter seems a strange undertaking. Nonetheless, Zwingli and Compar had maintained a correspondence for several years and the friendly, patriotic tone of this particular letter, as well as its concise definition of certain important issues explains why it appeared suitable for publication.

In this work Zwingli defends himself against the now familiar charge of impugning the honor of the Virgin and the saints.⁶⁰ He denies these charges once again, presumably needing to reiterate his defense because in Uri, where his writings had been banned as Lutheran, he was accused of preaching insurrection, innovation and defamation.

Again Zwingli adopts the position that the saints are but a test case not in themselves very important. In this context, Zwingli doubtless perceived that his attitude toward the cult was one of the wedges driving apart the Confederation. He opened this letter by invoking the figure of William Tell, "der gotskreffig held und erster anheber eidgnossischer fryhey." ⁶¹ He hoped, it seems, to reunite Switzerland in spite of religious differences or at least to gather allies from within the Confederation.

The entrance of Eck into the disputation had indicated forcefully to Zwingli that he was now operating in an area in which Zurich could not defend herself by her own power. Whereas the Catholic cantons would never have dared to attack Zurich directly, the wrath of Francis I, repeatedly refused mercenary soldiers by Zurich, and the hatred that Charles V bore toward all that he saw as heretical, presented the Reformer with a frightening prospect. Zwingli could expect little aid from the German princes who saw him as the creator of the sectarians who had done so much damage in Southern Germany.

Thus Zwingli stressed the commonality of purpose between the people of the Confederation, using terms like brotherhood, community and the like. The opening defense of his preaching appears to be a vindication of his position; he does not want the issue of the saints to come between the Swiss people. Even so, he chooses this very issue to exemplify how the Swiss have been duped by the Roman Church.

The first point of this demonstration centers, not surprisingly, on how people come to have access to the saving message of the Bible. Zwingli stated his belief in the accessibility and comprehensibility of the Bible. Each believer has the duty to read the Gospel in order to receive its message, and she does not need the Church to tell her what is so simple and obvious.⁶²

Such an affirmation indicates the pedagogical thrust of this letter. If people were aware of the message of the Gospel, if they would read the Word of God,

⁶⁰ Z IV 50₇₋₉

⁶¹ Z IV 48₁₅₋₁₆

⁶² Z IV 78₁₄₋₁₇

they would refuse all false teachings of the Romans, including the spurious teachings about the cult of the saints.⁶³ Zwingli describes the interlocking message of the Grace of God and the clarity of the Word with the intent to teach. He pauses in his discussion to clarify etymologies and he uses throughout a colloquial style.

Continuing in this friendly manner Zwingli proceeds to detail why, in spite of the goodness of the people called saints, people must vanquish the cult. Zwingli opens his attack not on images but rather on the number and variety of the saints. This variety has fractured the unity of the community of believers since each special interest group has its patron saint.⁶⁴ True worship, which occurs whenever a group of Christians meets in God's name, takes place without a multiplicity of altars; it occurs whenever people honestly throw themselves on the mercy of God alone.

Again education provides the way for people to understand and attain true worship. Zwingli believed that once people comprehended the nature of true worship they would, immediately and of their own volition, abandon such manifestations of false religion as altars, processions, and pilgrimages.

The theme of this early section of the letter is Zwingli's desire to protect the people from idolatry, and it is matched by the companion theme of the next section, Zwingli's desire to protect the people from offense deriving from violent outbreaks of iconoclasm. The Reformer explained the conflict between those who want to destroy all the pictures and those who want to protect them. Although personally dubious about the retention of images in churches without the accompanying idolatrous worship, and desirous of the speedy removal of all such stumbling blocks on the path of true piety, Zwingli rails against the disorder brought about by the "götzensturmer" party. He employs the usual refutation of such violent impulses: the important thing remains to eliminate idolatry from the heart before one attacks it physically.

In adopting this position Zwingli is responding to the various disorderly outbreaks of iconoclasm of the previous year. In fact he specifically mentions the issue of whether or not a crucifix constitutes an idol, answering the recent events at Stammenheim where a mob tore down a private cross, and obliquely alluding to the unfortunate Ittigen riot.⁶⁵ Yet in framing his response to contemporary events Zwingli juxtaposes two models of education which jar with one another, as happened in his *Commentarius*. On one hand, he states that people should remove images from churches because they inevitably lead to idolatrous worship, yet on the other hand he claims that the real idolatry occurs in the heart of the believer and all external signals are irrelevant. Reconciliation of these two positions seems to me not to be the point. Here Zwingli

⁶³ Z IV 78₁₀₋₁₄

⁶⁴ Z IV 105₄₋₁₀

⁶⁵ Potter, Op. cit. 148.

tries to express both his conviction that the images are bad *per se*, that they hinder education, while he remains aware that a too strong position on the issue threatened to alienate the people of Uri and to cause outbreaks of iconoclasm. Such alienation not only threatened the spiritual well-being of Uri, but also the political well-being of Zurich.

Zwingli closes this section of his treatise by refuting the idea of the images as a *pauperum Biblia*. He firmly believes that preaching presents the only way to teach the simple. Christ himself advocated preaching. Zwingli states, “diss hab ich mit vil Worten anzeigt ouch wider die, so sprechend, man erlerne die gschicht an der verbildung Christi, das doch nit möglich ist.”⁶⁶ Such pictures make the simple poorer but no wiser. In fact Zwingli suggests that monetary reasons alone allow the confirmation of the cult by Rome.⁶⁷

Zwingli has reformulated many of his familiar ideas in his letter to Compar: the unity of the Swiss, the importance of public order and preaching according to the Word of God, the message of the supreme saving Grace of Christ, the consequences of public education. The problems which had come to be paramount in the previous years subsided somewhat after the close of 1525 as Zwingli came to turn his attention to theological debates in the international sphere. In January 1528, however, Zwingli turned his attention once again to issues of local interest as it became increasingly likely that Bern could be brought over to the Reformed side.

The disputation scheduled for January 1528 in Bern made Catholics within the canton defensive. As with any disputation of this period, the Bern disputation was clearly a partisan affair. Berthold Haller and Franz Kolb wrote the agenda of the debate in German and Zwingli translated it into Latin. The Catholic representation was minimal – John Eck did not attend for many of the same reasons that Zwingli failed to attend the Basle disputation.

The ten theses for debate covered concisely much of the same ground as the Zurich debates of five years earlier. Again Christ is proclaimed the only saviour and redeemer of humanity and to this article it was pointedly added that, “deshalb ein andern verdienst der sälligkeit unnd gnüg thun für die sünd bekennen, ist Christum verlöugn.”⁶⁸ Article VI continued in this train of thought and in full read:

Wie Christus ist alleyn für uns gestorben, also sol er ein eyniger mitler und fürspräch zwüschent Gott dem vatter un̄ uns gläubigen angerufft werden. Deshalb all ander mittler und fürsprächen usserhalb disem zyt anzeruffen von uns on grund der gschriff uffgeworffen.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Z IV 121₂₅₋₂₆

⁶⁷ Z IV 121₁₀₋₁₄

⁶⁸ Text reproduced in *450 Jahre Berner Reformation* (Herausgegeben vom Historischen Verein des Kantons Bern, 1980) 152.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 153.

The seventh article called for an eradication of the images on account of the fact that veneration is forbidden in both Testaments.

Although these theses have a familiar ring, they also have some distinctive characteristics. Kolb and Haller attacked the cult of the saints directly. Where formerly the cult has been addressed only in its secondary manifestations here the authors address the heart of the issue: The role of the saints as intercessors for the people with God. Unquestionably Zwingli had alluded to this point and in the course of disputations had voiced his opinion. Yet he had always avoided provoking a frontal attack on the cult. These authors were well-liked Bernese clerics and so were free to approach the issue directly, doubtless with Zwingli's approval.

Second, and closely related to the previous point, stands the fact that, according to Zwingli's notes, the theses called for people to throw away the cult of the saints and especially the belief in the saints as intercessors. The apparent boldness of this formulation indicates how far the Reformation had advanced in Bern before the disputation had begun. The wording of the first six articles further proves Zwingli's influence by their emphasis on Christ. The city must give up the cult because it threatens the unique role of Christ.

Finally, in the article concerning the ever-present problem of the images, one notes a development of the Zwinglian position. Images are forbidden because they do not exist except to be worshipped, and the Bible forbids such worship. As Zwingli suggested in his letter to Compar, the very existence of images in churches hindered the education of people. Haller and Kolb, noting that images exist only to be worshipped, state outright "Wo sy in gefar der vererung fůrgestellt, abzethůnd syend."⁷⁰

The debate commenced on 6 January 1528. The first several days of this voluminously documented disputation concerned the power of the keys and the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Naturally in the course of the first days Zwingli was accused of having denied the importance of miracles, questioned the authenticity of the Virgin Birth and the sanctity of Mary.

When the disputation finally turned to the matter of intercession by and invocation of the saints Zwingli adopted a conciliatory tone, although he did not relinquish any ground. He had, early in the debate, affirmed the special status of the Apostles and Mary, but now he notes that no one, no matter how holy, may come between the believers and God except Christ. The saints may very well sit in the Holy Court at the side of God, but they cannot intercede for us with God.⁷¹ Zwingli never questioned whether the saints in heaven pray; but he doubted whether they hear our prayers to them, pray for us, or intercede for us in divine judgement. Without hesitation he affirmed that neither angels nor

⁷⁰ Ibid, 153.

⁷¹ Z VI/I 405 15-16, 29-34

saints can intercede with God, only Christ can in any way effect the fate of humankind.⁷²

During this part of the disputation there occurred a caesura, indicative of the disputors dislike of disrupting local custom. At the close of the debates of 21 January, which concerned the lack of Scriptural evidence for the cult, a recess was called for 22 January. This day was the feast day of St. Vincent, the patron saint of the city of Bern.⁷³

After this interlude, the debates proceeded apace. Zwingli affirmed his previous position about the images of saints: he opposed them because the Christian life ought to take its shape from the Word of God made internal and not from images either of God or the saints, which are external.⁷⁴ Zwingli continued with the logical outgrowth of this thought: as mere externals the presence or absence of images is a matter of indifference to the believer.

In the course of the month in which the disputation at Bern was held Zwingli preached twice. The first sermon was an exposition of the Apostles' Creed. This sermon expresses both the Christological emphasis of Zwingli's theology and his view of the Lord's Supper which would later cause Luther to reject him. Interestingly, the position of the saints in heaven arose in Zwingli's discussion of the real presence in the bread of the Lord's Supper. Zwingli did not deny that the Spirit of God enters the hearts of all believers at the sacrament, but affirming that Christ is in the elements in both his humanity and divinity seemed excessive to Zwingli. For if Christ is physically in the elements, "dann also müsst sant Gertrudt ouch zur gerechten des vatters sitzen unnd im brot sin..."⁷⁵ In instances like this one it is hard to tell if Zwingli is mocking the doctrine of the real presence or that of the saints.

In this sermon Zwingli defended himself once again against the charge of defaming the Virgin.⁷⁶ He also repeated a frequently used argument to gloss the phrase, "I believe in... the communion of the saints". The "gemeinsame der heiligen" simply means the community of pious people. He noted that even if the phrase had meant the saints in the vulgarly understood sense, still the Creed says nothing about their intercession: "Vom fürbitt aber sehend wir hie nit ein Wort."⁷⁷ The arguments in this sermon are those used in Zwingli's other theological writings and debates. He clearly believes that this group of people, which doubtless included as many clergy as lay people, did not need to be led gently to Reformation.

⁷² Z VI/I 406₁₀₄

⁷³ S II 172 note

⁷⁴ Z VI/I, 417₁₅₋₁₈

⁷⁵ Z VI/I, 470₂₄₋₂₆

⁷⁶ Z VI/I, 466₁₃₋₁₇

⁷⁷ Z VI/I, 490₂₆

Zwingli's last sermon in Bern was equally strident. Speaking directly to the people of the city, he urged perseverance in the good work begun in ceasing the Mass since, "Kurtz, es ist kein tugend ein tugend, wenn sy nit mit standhafft ussgemachet wirt."⁷⁸ He notes that it is relatively easy to remove the images from before the eyes but what really matters is whether they linger in the heart. In this sermon Zwingli adopts the somewhat self-contradictory position that "man sol die götzen zum ersten us dem Hertzen thun und demnach vor den ougen dennen"⁷⁹ while simultaneously urging the elimination of images from churches. Still he continues to urge consideration for the weaker neighbor and solicitude about causing offense.

What can one conclude about the writings produced at Bern in 1528? First, as Locher notes, "der eigentliche Sieger wurde doch Zwingli".⁸⁰ Next, one must note that the call for the disputation was made by members of the guilds and supported by the ministers of Bern in opposition to resistance from the conservative Small Council.⁸¹ This pattern conforms to that established at Zurich and it demonstrates that those to whom Zwingli preached, the simple craftspeople as opposed to the theologians, heard him. Thus the manner in which the debate occurred verified Zwingli's perception of his audience. Third, as in Zurich, the organs of city government shouldered the responsibility for seeking true religion by public disputation and appropriate action thereafter. Once decided on its course of action the community reorganized itself along Reformed lines.⁸² Fourth, Haller and Kolb's theses connected the Zwinglian understanding of Christ's role as mediator to the inappropriateness of the cult. This connection, while always implicit in Zwingli's writing, now is enunciated with inescapable vigor. Fifth, the issue of the saints as intercessors again has come to dominate the issue of the images. This supercession of the image issue occurred both because Zwingli understood that the people of Bern were advanced in their education in true religion and because the whole problem of icons and iconoclasm had come to have an unsavory flavor by virtue of association with the Anabaptists. Zwingli was aware of how his hearers were likely to receive his message and was careful to avoid alienation.

Sixth, and congruent to the fifth point, Zwingli admitted that such beings as saints exist, and that they pray to God. The implication of such admissions looms large. Zwingli contradicted his own criterion for articles of belief. Before this time he never publically admitted an article of faith that was without Biblical proof and had often stated that the idea of a saint is not biblical. Yet at Bern

⁷⁸ Z VI/I, 495₁₃₋₁₄

⁷⁹ Z VI/I, 495₂₀₋₂₁

⁸⁰ *Gottfried W. Locher*, *Die Zwinglische Reformation*, Zurich 1979, 278.

⁸¹ *Dan L. Hendricks*, *The Bern Disputation: Some Observations*, in: *Zwingliana* XIV, 568.

⁸² *Gottfried W. Locher*, *Die Berner Disputation 1528*, in: *Zwingliana* XIV, 547.

he admitted that saints exist. Either he consciously adjusted his teachings to avoid offense to the more sensitive auditors – although he was not so delicate on other points – or he allowed this doctrine to stand because he personally accepted it, as Locher would have,⁸³ or judged it harmless. He would then be in the position of affirming that his own judgement ought to take precedence over his formerly established criteria of Scripture. It seems most likely, however, that Zwingli allowed the doctrine to stand because denuded of images in churches, and given the clarity and certainty of the Word of God, he thought people would abandon it in time.

Finally, throughout all the proceedings at Bern one notes a growing concern with public order. Zwingli knew that if he could not clearly demonstrate that the Reformation did not lead to anarchy the city council of Bern would never accept the Zwinglian cause. Without such acceptance and support by Bern, Zurich would probably have been forcibly reconverted within the decade.

Yet even with Bern's support Zurich came to take a *laissez faire* attitude toward the cult in the course of 1529, especially after Zwingli's inconclusive meeting with Luther in September. The Catholic cantons, whose disorganization had previously precluded any serious threat to Zurich, began to regroup and urged that, in order to reunite Switzerland, a majority of states would decide federal affairs.⁸⁴ In spite of the conversion of Basel in February, Zurich knew that a majority vote would not be favorable to her situation. Thus she suggested that each parish or local community have the right to choose its own religious affiliation. As in the peace terms for the First Kappel War in June 1529, Zurich adopted a supremely tolerant stance.

By the opening of 1530 political and religious strife had escalated once again and made it imperative that Zwingli proceed with the utmost caution. When he published the *Fidei ratio* Zwingli attempted to balance Luther's increasing hostility and Charles' potential as a political ally. Consequently he carefully disassociated himself from the Anabaptists and worded his stance on justification so that it could, conceivably, have been agreeable to the signers of the Confession of Augsburg.

In as far as Zwingli treated the cult of the saints in this work what he omitted is as important as what he included. Item Three concerned the expiration of sins: Christ alone atones for sins so "relinquuntur ergo hic cum operum nostrorum iustificatio et satisfactio tum sanctorum omnium sive in terra sive coelis dependentium de bonitate et misericordia dei expiatio aut intercessio."⁸⁵ Notice that Zwingli has omitted the usual cavailing about the Mass. He continued to stress

⁸³ Locher explores the profundity of Zwingli's belief in Mary in his essay on the subject in *Locher Op. cit.* (1981).

⁸⁴ *Potter, Op. cit.* 112.

⁸⁵ Z VI/II 796₁₉₋₂₂

the importance of Christ in all doctrine and practice of Christians. Although at places in this treatise Zwingli notes that avoiding offense is crucial, here he focuses far more on matters of theology than on matters of pastoral concern. As a theologian he omits discussion of the images, the liturgy or other manifestations of the cult. Essentially he intends to win Charles over to his cause by theology alone.

In spite of such efforts, most historians agree that the *Fidei ratio* missed its mark. If Charles V read it he ignored it. The Reformers, most of whom probably did read it, could accept neither Zwingli's doctrinal teachings, nor his position that the magistracy was to function as the final arbiter and enforcer in religious matters. Luther wrote, "ich bekenne fur mich, das ich den Zwingel fur einen unchristen halte mir aller seiner lere, denn er helt und leret kein stück des Christliche glaubens recht."⁸⁶ The Catholics also read the document and Eck published a formal refutation in which he declared Zwingli to be a Turk and the originator of Anabaptism, and Zurich to be a supremely profane city.⁸⁷

In the period following the Diet of Augsburg Zwingli became convinced that the real danger to Zurich lay with the Emperor, not with the pope or Francis I. Thus Zwingli sought an alliance with Francis I, a long-time ally of the Bernese. George Potter indicates that such an alliance on the part of Zurich was "not an easy decision" because the canton had refused throughout her history to take part in such a pact.⁸⁸ Easily or not the struggle with the Catholic cantons, which had caused the First Kappel War, the growing threat from the Habsburgs, and the realization that the German Lutherans were bound to go their own way convinced Zurich to appeal to France for a treaty.

G. W. Broimley states that Zwingli wrote the *Christianae fidei . . . brevis et clara expositio* at the request of Francis I who, wary of alienating the pope, requested a statement of faith from Zwingli. The monarch, in his request, stressed his social and political as well as his theological misgivings about the ways that Reformed religion had affected Zurich.⁸⁹ Potter voices a different opinion, judging that,

Optimistic to the end . . . (Zwingli) seriously thought that the King of France, about whom he knew singularly little, or his sister, Margaret of Navarre, could be brought over to the evangelical side by perusal of a treatise, almost a tract.⁹⁰

The truth of the matter seems a combination of the two points. Zwingli did not compromise his former positions but he did phrase his teachings in such a way that they would be agreeable, in as far as they could be, to the Catholic King. Such an attitude is consonant with his previously articulated desire not to

⁸⁶ *Luther*, WA XXVI 342.

⁸⁷ *Potter*, Op. cit. 341.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 393.

⁸⁹ *G. W. Broimley* (ed), Zwingli and Bullinger, Philadelphia 1953, 240.

⁹⁰ *Potter*, Op. cit. 395.

cause offense. In many ways this treatise is strikingly similar to his earlier works, yet its tone is far less strident. One hears a very busy individual, stretched to the limit, articulate those things that he cannot leave unsaid, while at the same time trying to hold a myriad of political factors in balance.

The *Expositio* is a fine swan-song for Zwingli, encompassing as it does many of the themes appearing in his earlier works. Zwingli began by assuring Francis that:

Ex his, clementissime Rex, clare vides, nos neque divos neque sacramenta ex auctore aut loco movere, ut quidam nobis imputant, sed suo in loco ac dignitate manu tenere et custodire, ne quisquam eis non recte utatur.⁹¹

Carefully he continued that he has in no way ever dishonored or disregarded the Virgin, although he admitted that he does not allow her to be worshipped in the same way that God is.

As is plain from such a defense, the charge that Zwingli had defamed the Virgin dogged him until the end of his career. The first part of the defense is, however, more interesting. Zwingli linked the sacraments and the saints, denying that the saints are intercessors at the same time denying that the Church can intercede for those who take her sacraments. Each believer must establish a relationship with Christ, because no system can win the Lord's favor for her.

This attitude appears subtly throughout Zwingli's work for Francis. In a later passage he denied his connection with the violent church-destroyers while stressing the personal relationship between the believer and Christ:

Legitimumque ergo cultum tam divorum quam sacramentorem hunc tradimus ac docemus esse, quem Christus ipse tradidit ac docuit . . . si vitae sanctimonia religionem ornarunt, nos illorum vestigia imitemur, pii sancti, ac innocentes simus quomodo isti fuerunt . . . Hic neque in divorum cultu neque in sacramentorum instituto havetur, ut eam virtutem ac gratiam, quae solius dei est, possideant.⁹²

Thus what one should emulate is the saint's unique relationship to Christ because only God, not a saint or a sacrament or the Church can forgive sins.

Again Zwingli has side-stepped some of the potentially embarrassing issues linked to the cult. He has eschewed mention of images or the changes in liturgy or church architecture that would result from his proposed elimination of the cult. Actually "elimination" seems to be too strong, for nowhere in this text did Zwingli call for the removal of the images or even explicitly demand the cessation of worship at the altars. Having given Francis the groundwork, he hoped that the King would be convinced that Zwingli was no violent sectarian and would, moreover, be converted to the Reformed religion.

The *Expositio* exemplifies Zwingli's political nature and his ideas about edu-

⁹¹ S IV 45₃₇₋₄₀

⁹² S IV 46_{21-23, 27-29, 31-34}

cation, two themes which have manifested themselves in all of his writings about the cult. The central importance of Christ appears most vividly in this treatise and it is one of the few issues which has remained constant in the eight year span under scrutiny. Zwingli has altered his position on various other issues, sometimes for political reasons, sometimes because he realized that an earlier position was untenable, and sometimes because political events had made an earlier position untenable. Thus it is difficult if not impossible to separate tactical shifts from genuine changes in the Reformer's thought.

An inventory of the writings considered in this paper reveals four main theses around which one can order Zwingli's thought about the cult of the saints. I will list these in conclusion:

1) Zwingli's unshakable belief that Christ is the sole mediator between the people and God is outstanding. This is the foundation of his theology and cannot be overemphasized.

2) Zwingli wished to eliminate the cult because he saw a close connection between the cult of the saints, the role of the saints as intercessors, and images and the monetary and spiritual abuses by Rome of the Swiss people. Frequently Zwingli linked the cult of the saints to the oppressive system of taxation or noted how the variety of saints fractured the Confederation.

3) Tempering these two strong convictions stood Zwingli's need to let the people and their rulers know that he was not abusing the saints – his sincere desire to avoid offense.

4) The indications of Zwingli's closeness to the people pervade his writings – his cognizance of their customs, his frustratingly colloquial vocabulary – and these indications lead one to admire his sincerity and deny the charge that he was merely a political opportunist.

Pamela Biel, Department of Religion, Columbia University,
New York, N.Y. 10027, U.S.A.