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A table of contents for *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

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# THE LORD'S SUPPER AT THE CENTRE OF REFORMED FAITH AND CONDUCT WHY DID ZURICH DIFFER FROM WITTENBERG?

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The unmistakable unifying factor of the reformers was their unchanging commitment to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, in Christ alone by grace alone. Despite some varying nuances in the way they may have expressed the relationship between justification and sanctification, their confessions attest to their unity with respect to what they regarded as the not negotiable, central and fundamental basis of evangelical faith. They stood shoulder to shoulder against Rome's doctrine of the salvation by faith and works. A further shared tenet of the reformers was their total rejection of the teaching and practice of Rome concerning the doctrine of transubstantiation and the doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass.

The sharp disagreement between Luther (1483–1546) and Zwingli (1484–1531) at the Colloquy of Marburg (1529) with respect to the presence of the body of Christ in the eucharist has been well documented. In reality, there was agreement between these two reformers on fourteen of the fifteen articles. Indeed, as Peter Stephens has observed: 'in the fifteenth article on the Lord's Supper there was agreement on five points, and the question on which they disagreed (the presence of Christ) was put into a subordinate clause.'<sup>1</sup> Philipp I of Hessen had his hopes dashed of achieving a symbol of Protestant unity that he planned to be forged at Marburg. In the event, the dynamics of the ongoing strained relationship between Wittenberg and Zurich meant that any attempt towards a pan-Protestant movement would prove to be unsuccessful. The depth to which the relationship between Wittenberg and Zurich had deteriorated was reflected in Luther's ire which he openly expressed in his *Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament* (*Kurzes Bekenntnis von heiligen Sakrament*, 1544) and the sharp response of Bullinger (1504–1575) on behalf of the ministers of Zurich in the *True Confession* (*Wahrhaftes Bekenntnuss*, 1545). In the wake of Marburg, Zurich's refusal to endorse either the *Augsburg Confession* (1530) or the *Altered Augsburg Confession*,

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<sup>1</sup> W. Peter Stephens, 'Zwingli and Luther', *Evangelical Quarterly*, 71 (no.1, 1999), p. 51.

(1540) that Calvin was willing to sign, or, for that matter, the *Wittenberg Confession* (1536) were major hurdles to closer ties between Wittenberg and Zurich during challenging times for the Reformation in Europe. This was despite the sustained efforts of Bucer, in particular, over many years.

This paper seeks to examine the factors as to why there was such a fundamental disagreement between Bullinger and Luther and, therefore, between Zurich and Wittenberg, with respect to their understanding and practice of the eucharist. Despite the fact that both of these reformers were committed to *sola Scriptura* and *claritas Scripturae*, nonetheless, they remained divided on this fundamental aspect of evangelical faith and practice. After Luther had departed from the scene the *Consensus Tigurinus* (1549) which had been hammered out between Calvin and Bullinger was the object of vehement attack by the Lutheran scholars. The goal of this paper is to identify the major factors that led to Bullinger differing from Luther *so uncompromisingly* with respect to the eucharist.

## II. OVERVIEW OF BULLINGER'S PERCEPTION OF AND RELATIONSHIP WITH LUTHER

There is no doubt that, with respect to Luther, Bullinger did not 'play the man' despite their theological differences. He held Luther in high regard because of his fearless efforts for the cause of the Reformation. In his *History of the Reformation* which was written in the 1570s Bullinger portrayed Luther positively for his courageous stand against indulgences in the face of great opposition. In the course of events, Bullinger and Luther did not get to meet each other even though they did exchange correspondence.<sup>2</sup> In the 1530s they exchanged rather amicable letters. Yet by the late 1530s Bullinger became decidedly frank in what he wrote about Luther. For example, in his letter of 8 March 1539 to the town clerk of Bern, Bullinger shared the following opinions of Luther:

I recognize Luther as a man who has erred and is able to err, who ought to be admonished about error and controlled. I do not approve of those who have determined to build a bookcase out of our new understanding.<sup>3</sup>

By the mid 1540s Bullinger and Luther were writing rather less than amicable letters. Significantly, in Bullinger's letter to Joachim Vadian in May

<sup>2</sup> A helpful study of the correspondence between Bullinger and Luther may be found in James D. Mohr, 'Heinrich Bullinger's Opinions Concerning Martin Luther' (MA Thesis, Kent State University Graduate School, 1972).

<sup>3</sup> *Corpus Reformatorum: Johannis Calvinis Operae quae Supersunt omnia*, vol. X, p. 322.

1543 Bullinger complained about the way Luther treated the Zurich theologians:

Luther has never ceased, both publicly and privately, to condemn Zwingli and ourselves. We have written to him privately, just as decreed, but he did not respond, disregarding us and criticizing us sharply.<sup>4</sup>

The frequent correspondence between Bullinger and Bucer (1491–1551) provides a further window as to how Bullinger viewed Luther. In 1544 Bullinger wrote these words from his heart to Bucer:

I would rather die than disown the simple and certain truth of our church for a dream of concord. Better concord with the truth and discord with Luther than concord with him and discord with the truth.<sup>5</sup>

For his part, Luther made some rather derogatory comments about Bullinger which are recorded in the *Table Talk*:

This leads the sacramentalists astray. They speak according to their own ideas, but we speak what God says. Before the world existed, God said, 'Let there be a world,' and the world was. So it says here [in the Lord's Supper], 'Let this be my body,' and it is, nor is it prevented by the scoffing of Bullinger, who says that because the body of Christ isn't seen it isn't present. For in the former instance God created visible things but in the latter instance he created invisible, in such fashion as he wished.<sup>6</sup>

Bullinger did seek to be patient with Luther because of his regard for Luther. However, in time, his patience ran out.

### III. TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE YOUNG BULLINGER INFLUENCED BY LUTHER?

There is no doubt that the young Bullinger was strongly influenced and inspired by Luther's early writings and that, at the beginning, he admired and appreciated Luther's exegetical skills. In an entry in his *Diarium* in 1521 Bullinger records that 'I discovered that Luther comes nearer to the ancient theologians than do the scholastics.'<sup>7</sup> In this connection,

<sup>4</sup> *Die Vadianische Briefwechsel*, vol. VI, p. 322.

<sup>5</sup> Carl Pestalozzi, *Heinrich Bullinger: Leben und ausgewählte Schriften* (Elberfeld: Verlag von R.L. Friderichs, 1858), p. 227.

<sup>6</sup> *LW*, 54, p. 89.

<sup>7</sup> Emil Egli (ed.), *Heinrich Bullingers Diarium* (Basel: Basler Buch und Antiquariatshandlung, 1904), p. 6.

Susi Hausammann has analyzed how the young Bullinger closely followed Luther's exegetical method in his *Concerning the Matter of Scripture* (*De scripturae negotio*, 1523)<sup>8</sup> and his *Interpretation of the Epistle of Romans* (*Römerbriefauslegung*, 1525).<sup>9</sup> However, it is clear that, over time, Bullinger differed from Luther in the manner he exegeted Scripture. For example, Peter Opitz has studied the exegetical methods used by Bullinger as outlined by him in the preface to his combined volume on the commentaries of the Pauline epistles (1537). He concluded that Bullinger not only focused on the scope of the entire message of the canon, but, at the same time, promoted the use of humanist rhetorical methods as a tool by which to ascertain how to interpret the Pauline corpus as 'living human language and likewise as goal-directed speech.'<sup>10</sup> Indeed, that the tools of humanism so evidently underlie Bullinger's works led Irena Backus to conclude that Bullinger was 'the first person to establish a link between humanism and the Reformation.'<sup>11</sup>

Bullinger's alleged influence by and dependence on Luther has been strongly suggested by Garcia Archilla who argues that Bullinger relied heavily on Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), especially in *The Old Faith* (1537). He states that 'The similarities between Luther's paragraph and Bullinger's account are so extensive, that more could be understood of Bullinger by what he fails to take up, than by what he does indeed accept from Luther.'<sup>12</sup> However, while it may not be surprising to identify the same themes discussed by both Luther and Bullinger this does not necessarily indicate dependence, but, rather, drawing from the same well. In point of fact, a study of Bullinger's use of the Latin words

<sup>8</sup> Susi Hausammann, 'Anfragen zum Schriftverständnis des jungen Bullinger im Zusammenhang einer Interpretation von "De scripturae negotio"' in *Heinrich Bullinger 1504–1575: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum 400. Todestag Erster Band: Leben und Werk* ed. by Ulrich Gäbler and Erland Herkenrath (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1975), pp. 29–48.

<sup>9</sup> Susi Hausammann, *Römerbriefauslegung zwischen Humanismus und Reformation* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1970).

<sup>10</sup> Peter Opitz, 'Bullinger on Romans' in *Reformation Readings of Romans* ed. by Kathy Ehrensperger and R. Ward Holder (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), pp. 151–52.

<sup>11</sup> Irena Backus, 'The Church Fathers and the Humanities in the Renaissance and the Reformation' in *Re-Envisioning Christian Humanism: Education and the Restoration of Humanity* ed. by Jens Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 33–54.

<sup>12</sup> Aurelia A. Garcia Archilla, *The Theology of History and Apologetic Historiography in Heinrich Bullinger: Truth in History* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), p. 12, fn. 6.

for ‘covenant’ (specifically *foedus*, *testamentum* and *pactum*) in his treatise on the covenant (*De testamento*, 1534) and the *Decades* (1549–1551) reveals marked differences between Bullinger’s use of these terms and that of Luther.<sup>13</sup> While it is true that Luther did juxtapose the terms *foedus*, *testamentum* and *pactum* on one occasion in the *Babylonian Captivity*, nonetheless he did not, unlike Bullinger, view the terms *foedus* and *testamentum* as interchangeable. Luther regarded the eucharist as Christ’s *testamentum* that was ratified by his death, sealed by his flesh and blood and given under the bread and wine. Hence, for Luther, *testamentum* referred primarily to God’s ‘promise.’<sup>14</sup> This was particularly emphasized in *A treatise on the New Testament, that is the Holy Mass* (1520):

Now as the testament is much more important than the sacrament, so the words are much more important than the signs. For the signs might well be lacking, if only one has the words; and thus without sacrament, yet not without testament, one might be saved. For I can enjoy the sacrament in the mass every day if only I keep before my eyes the testament, that is, the words and promise of Christ, and feed and strengthen my faith on them.<sup>15</sup>

In reality, by the mid 1520s Bullinger had decidedly moved away from some of Luther’s teaching, particularly his understanding of the eucharist. A case can be made that Bullinger had hammered out his understanding of the eucharist during his purple patch at Kappel am Albis and had shared this with Zwingli.<sup>16</sup> Although Bullinger’s works may indicate hints to his reading of Luther, it appears that there is only one recorded reference to Luther in his pre-Zurich years.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Joe Mock, ‘Biblical and Theological Themes in Heinrich Bullinger’s »*De testamento*« (1534)’, *Zwingliana*, 40 (2013), pp. 28–31.

<sup>14</sup> Volker Leppin, ‘Martin Luther’ in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation* ed. by Lee Wandel Palmer (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 47.

<sup>15</sup> LW, 35, p. 91. Cf his comment in *Sermo de Testamento Christi* (1520) — ‘From this I gather, the general sense of the word “testament” is used when God contracts with men through the promise. In fact, these words signify the thing in the same way: pact, treaty, testament, promise’, WA, 9, p. 446.

<sup>16</sup> Joe Mock, ‘To What Extent Did Bullinger Influence Zwingli with Regards to His Understanding of the Covenant of Eucharist?’ *Colloquium*, (no.1, 2017), pp. 89–108; ‘Bullinger and the Lord’s Supper’ in *From Zwingli to Amyraut: Exploring the Growth of European Reformed Traditions*, ed. by Jon Balserak and Jim West (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), pp. 57–64.

<sup>17</sup> *Von warer und falscher leer* (Zürich, 14 May, 1527), p. 89b (Msc Nr. 376 in Stadtbibliothek Vadiana, St Gallen) as cited in Joachim Staedtke, *Die Theologie des jungen Bullinger* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag Zürich, 1962), p. 46.

Bullinger was greatly helped and inspired by Luther's early works as well as Melanchthon's *Loci Communes* but as he compared and contrasted the works of Luther and Melanchthon as well as those of the church fathers with Scripture he soon came to his own grasp and understanding of the message of the Bible as a whole and of the eucharist in particular. Fritz Blanke records that during his time in the cloister at Kappel am Albis it was Bullinger's practice to go to a corner and pray for the duration of the mass after the sermon during the Sunday service. He would then join with the others as they left the church.<sup>18</sup> Because of Bullinger's admiration of Luther as a person as well as his appreciation for Luther's early writings it may well be the case that he declined the invitation to accompany Zwingli to Marburg. Bullinger gave the main reason for not attending Marburg was that he had recently got married and had just commenced ministry as pastor at Bremgarten. However, I would like to propose that the underlying reason may well have been that he now differed so much from his erstwhile 'hero' on the eucharist, which he viewed so fundamental to evangelical faith, that he was reticent to meet him face to face.

#### IV. BULLINGER AND LUTHER DIFFERED IN THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF *CLARITAS SCRIPTURAE* AND EMPLOYED DIFFERENT HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES

The major difference between Bullinger and Luther was their approach to Scripture. When Bullinger replied with his *True Confession* to Luther's *Brief Confession* he appended Luther's work to his. This was Bullinger's way of indicating that he had carefully read and considered Luther's work and that he was urging Luther to pay attention to Bullinger's conclusions based on his reading of Scripture. When Bullinger was seeking to defend Zwingli and the church at Zurich from the attacks of Luther he referred to 1 Corinthians 14:32 where Paul points out that what is declared by prophets is subject to the control of the other prophets.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Bullinger subscribed not only to the priesthood of all believers but also to the prophethood of all believers.<sup>20</sup> The touchstone for this was the correct interpretation of Scripture. This was the spirit in which the *True Confession* was written and sent to Luther.

Jaroslav Pelikan pointed out that in his controversy with Eck at Leipzig and in the controversy over the eucharist Luther maintained four

<sup>18</sup> Fritz Blanke, *Der junge Bullinger 1504–1531* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag Zürich, 1942), p. 58.

<sup>19</sup> Daniël Timmerman, *Heinrich Bullinger on Prophecy and the Prophetic Office (1523–1538)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), pp. 191–95.

<sup>20</sup> Timmerman, pp. 74–79.

components of exegesis, *viz.* ‘the Scriptures as the Word of God, the tradition of the church, the history of the people of God, and the defense of doctrine.’<sup>21</sup> Luther’s oft cited declaration at the Diet of Worms that ‘my conscience is captive to the word of God’ was intimately linked to his conviction of *sola Scriptura*. As Arthur Skevington-Wood observed of Luther: ‘*Sola Scriptura* was not only the battle-cry of a crusade: it was the pole-star of his own heart and mind.’<sup>22</sup> However, with respect to the eucharist, for Luther it was a case of *sola Scriptura* in tandem with *his* manner of interpreting Scripture.<sup>23</sup>

Luther’s approach to Scripture was reflected in how he viewed its inspiration (*inspiratio*), its unity (*tota scriptura*), its clarity (*claritas Scripturae*) and its sufficiency (*sola Scriptura*).<sup>24</sup> He employed the following hermeneutical principles: personal spiritual preparation which involves the guidance of the Holy Spirit while the believer humbly uses competency in the biblical languages and reason, Scripture is its own interpreter (*Scriptura sui ipsius interpretes*) in that Scripture is its ‘own light,’ and, above all, the primacy of the literal sense. Through extrapolating the patristic principle of *analogia fidei* which affirmed that the message of Scripture gives a framework for interpreting its parts Luther developed a christocentric and a christological hermeneutic in line with his theology of the cross.<sup>25</sup> But perhaps the most characteristic hermeneutic that Luther used was to view Scripture in terms of ‘law’ and ‘gospel.’ Philip Melancthon regarded this as his greatest achievement. This can be illustrated by what Luther wrote in 1517: ‘almost all Scripture and the understanding of all theology depends on the proper understanding of law and gospel.’<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Luther the Expositor: Introduction to the Reformer’s Exegetical Writings*, LW, 56, p. 133.

<sup>22</sup> Arthur Skevington-Wood, *Luther’s Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (London: Tyndale, 1960), p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Albrecht Peters, *Commentary on Luther’s Catechisms: Baptism and Lord’s Supper* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), pp. 184–85.

<sup>24</sup> Mark D. Thompson, *A Sure Ground on Which to Stand: The Relation of Authority and Interpretive Method in Luther’s Approach to Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Not only did Luther regard Christ as the heart of the Bible but he also viewed the divine and human elements of Scripture through the lens of Christ’s incarnation. See Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), pp. 98–131 and Jens Zimmermann, *Recovering Theological Hermeneutics: An Incarnational-Trinitarian Theory of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), pp. 47–77.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Kolb, ‘Luther’s Hermeneutics of Distinctions: Law and Gospel, Two Kinds of Righteousness, Two Realms, Freedom and Bondage’ in *The Oxford*



Moreover, Luther came to the conviction that Scripture is the very word of God: 'the words and the order of the words are from God.'<sup>27</sup> Thus, because Luther held unswervingly to the clarity or perspicuity of Scripture he opposed any view that stated that Scripture is obscure or unclear in important matters and, therefore, requires exposition by tradition. His commitment to *claritas Scripturae* underlined his debate with Erasmus in 1524–1525 concerning the nature of the human will.<sup>28</sup> As Bernhard Lohse observed: 'Luther insisted that in its decisive utterances Holy Scripture is clear and unequivocal.'<sup>29</sup> John Webster made the following observation concerning Luther's understanding of *claritas Scripturae*:

What is so striking about Luther's account of *claritas* is his vigorous objectivity: Scripture is plain because it is illuminated by God's saving work [...] In short, for Luther, *claritas Scripturae* is a salvation-historical affirmation, a statement about the light of the gospel in which Scripture stands and which must illuminate the reader is Scripture's clarity is to be perceived.<sup>30</sup>

Like Zwingli, Bullinger emphasized the importance of the Spirit for interpreting Scripture. Indeed, Zwingli's emphasis on the *prior* role of the Spirit for interpreting Scripture led to Luther regarding Zwingli and the Zurichers as *Schwärmer* (radical spiritualists) which was effectively to group the Zurichers with the Anabaptists. More so than Luther, however, Bullinger applied the rhetorical tools of humanism to interpret the message of the canon of Scripture seen as a whole unit. He discussed the key principles of rightly interpreting Scripture in Sermon I.3 of the *Decades*. Possibly with influence from Irenaeus, Bullinger focused on the classical rhetorical categories of *hypothesis*, *economy* and *recapitulation* for interpreting the

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*Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology* ed. by Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel and L'Ubošmír Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> Mark D. Thompson, 'Reformation Perspectives on Scripture: The Written Word of God', *Reformed Theological Review*, 57 (no. 3, 1998), pp. 106–11.

<sup>28</sup> J.I. Packer and O.R. Johnston, *Martin Luther on the Bondage of the Will* (London: James Clarke, 1957), pp. 123–34. See Erling T. Tiegen, 'The Clarity of Scripture and Hermeneutical Principles in the Lutheran Confessions', *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 46 (1982), pp. 147–66.

<sup>29</sup> Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), p. 194.

<sup>30</sup> John Webster, 'Biblical Theology and the Clarity of Scripture' in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation* ed. by Craig Bartholomew, Mary Healy, Karl Möller and Robin Parry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), pp. 362–63.

canon as a whole as well as the individual sections of the canon.<sup>31</sup> In other words, Bullinger interpreted the words of the institution of the eucharist not only in the context of the gospel accounts or 1 Corinthians but also in the context of the canon as a whole. It also appears to be the case that the ministers of Zurich and Luther may well have had different understandings of Greek syntax.<sup>32</sup> This is illustrated by the fact that when Zwingli left Marburg he wrongly assumed that he had ‘won’ the debate because of his better grasp of Greek syntax which led him to declare: ‘The truth has so manifestly gained the victory that if the shameless and obstinate Luther be not beaten, there never was anyone beaten, although he never ceases boasting to the contrary.’<sup>33</sup>

The key issue was that, despite Luther’s approach to Scripture outlined above, he held resolutely to an *a priori* understanding of *hoc est corpus meum* taken in a literal manner. He argued that the text is not obscure and, therefore, requires no illumination from elsewhere in the canon. Neither Zwingli nor Bullinger could convince Luther of the relevance of the use of figures of speech elsewhere in Scripture such as Christ is the rock or Christ is the true vine. This fundamental difference in interpreting the copula *est* was a result of their different hermeneutical approaches. Luther remained unmovable while Bullinger maintained his position unswervingly. Hence there was an ongoing impasse.

## V. BULLINGER AND LUTHER HAD FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE SACRAMENTS

It is not easy to assess as to what extent Luther and Bullinger might have critically viewed medieval understandings of the eucharist, especially with respect to the presence of Christ. Gary Macy has recently outlined the plethora of views expressed by medieval scholars concerning the eucharist in the centuries prior to the 16th century.<sup>34</sup> Bullinger was well acquainted with Lombard’s *Sentences* but went back beyond even the church fathers to Scripture itself for his understanding and practice of the

<sup>31</sup> See my article ‘To What Extent was Bullinger’s “The Old Faith” (1537) a Theological Tract?’ *Unio cum Christo*, 3 (no. 2, 2017), pp. 137–54.

<sup>32</sup> See Oseka’s article for an analysis of the limitations of Luther’s grasp of Greek syntax — Mateusz Oseka, ‘Luther and Karlstadt Discussing the Syntax of *Verba Testamenti*’, *Reformed Theological Review*, 73 (no. 1, 2014), pp. 28–57.

<sup>33</sup> Samuel Simpson, *Life of Ulrich Zwingli: The Swiss Patriot and Reformer* (New York: Baker and Taylor Co., 1902), pp. 207–08.

<sup>34</sup> Gary Macy, ‘Theology of the Eucharist in the High Middle Ages’ in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages* ed. by Ian Christopher Levy, Gary Macy and Kristen van Ausdall (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 365–98.

eucharist. Luther, on the other hand, originally imbibed what was taught at the Augustinian cloister in Erfurt concerning the eucharist the practice of which was important to him for his need of regular affirmation of the forgiveness of sins. But he came to develop his own view from his interpretation of Scripture, from consideration of some medieval views and, most of all, from his rejection of the resacrifice of Christ. Prior to Trent, when the official Roman view was formulated, therefore, some Roman scholars may well have viewed Luther's understanding of the eucharist as a repackaging of what had already been mooted in the Middle Ages. Luther agreed that Christ's body was present but disagreed with the sacrifice of the mass and he rejected transubstantiation as the *method or mechanism* for Christ's bodily presence because it was understood through Aristotelian categories of 'substance' and 'accidents.' He stated: 'It is the true body and blood of the LORD Christ in and under the bread and wine and through Christ's Word commanded for us Christians to eat and drink.'<sup>35</sup>

Luther emphasized that God does not deceive in what he promises in the sacraments.<sup>36</sup> This is a reference to the words of institution or the *verba testamenti* which he interpreted as the *Summa et compendium Evangelii*.<sup>37</sup> He particularly underscored God's promise in that he gives (in the present to the believer) what he promises. In his *Babylonian Captivity* Luther almost retained penance as a sacrament because he personally wanted to be reassured regularly that his sins are (being) forgiven. Hence, for Luther, there is an intimate link between the sacraments and not only the giving of God's grace but also between the sacraments and salvation. This is reflected in his liturgies and in his catechisms. He referred to the saving work of Christ under word and sacrament.<sup>38</sup> In the dispute between Zwingli and Luther concerning the Eucharist, Luther complained that Zwingli's view was tantamount to what the believer does in the sacrament rather than what God has done and continues to do in the sacrament. Zwingli, on the other hand, claimed that Luther's link between the eucharist and the giving of God's grace denies the sovereignty of God who alone gives his grace to the believer. Indeed, Stephens concludes that the main

<sup>35</sup> Peters, *Catechisms*, p. 157.

<sup>36</sup> That 'God does not deceive' in the sacraments was also echoed by Calvin. See my 'Union with Christ and the Lord's Supper in Calvin', *Reformed Theological Review*, 75 (no. 2, 2016), p. 112.

<sup>37</sup> Peters, *Catechisms*, pp. 165, 166.

<sup>38</sup> Peters, *Catechisms*, pp. 43–48.

issue at Marburg was not the sacraments *per se* but, rather, salvation.<sup>39</sup> This analysis of Marburg was echoed by Vermigli.<sup>40</sup>

Luther's view of the link between the sacraments and salvation is reflected in the analysis of Robert Kolb and Charles Arand of Luther's understanding of baptism in that, for Luther, '*Baptism is God's sacramental Word that initiates the relationship between the heavenly Father and his reborn child.*' As Luther asserted in his *Small Catechism*, children early in their lives should learn that baptism "brings about forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe it, as the words and promise of God declare."<sup>41</sup> With respect to the eucharist, Albrecht Peters points out that in the *Large Catechism* Luther offers the insight: 'Christ's body that was offered is not only a "certain pledge and sign" of the testament of the forgiveness of sins, it is in reality "even that selfsame treasure," which the Lord instituted for us back then upon Golgotha and the He distributes to us today in the Lord's Supper.'<sup>42</sup>

Bullinger, on the other hand, had a fundamentally different understanding of the eucharist from that of Rome which, he claimed, had strayed from Scripture and the early church fathers. More so than other reformers he emphasized the parallels between circumcision and baptism and between passover and the eucharist.<sup>43</sup> They have the same 'substance' while 'in signs they are diverse, but in the thing signified equal.'<sup>44</sup> Just as passover looked back to God's act of redemption at the time of Moses and looked forward to its fulfilment in Christ, the true passover lamb, so the eucharist not only looks back at God enacting his plan for the salvation of the world but also looks forward to the consummation of God's plan at the *eschaton*. Bullinger thus viewed the eucharist primarily as a covenant sign and seal. In his commentary of 1 Corinthians he referred to the eucharist as a 'sign of the eternal covenant'<sup>45</sup> where the believer focuses on what

<sup>39</sup> W. Peter Stephens, 'The Soteriological Motive in the Eucharistic Controversy' in *Calvin: Erbe und Auftrag: Festschrift für Wilhelm Neuser zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Willem van't Spijker (Kampen: Kok, 1991), pp. 203–13.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Martyr Vermigli, *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation: On the Eucharist 1549* (Kirkville, Missouri: Truman State University Press, 2000), p. 121.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther's Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), p. 190.

<sup>42</sup> Peters, *Catechism*, p. 191.

<sup>43</sup> Joe Mock, 'Bullinger and the Lord's Supper', pp. 57–78.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Opitz (ed.), *Sermonum Decades quinque de potissimus Christianae religionis capitibus (1552)* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2008), p. 923. Unless otherwise stated, translations are those of the author.

<sup>45</sup> Luca Baschera (ed.), *Heinrich Bullinger Kommentare zu den Neutestamentlichen Briefen: Röm–1Kor–2Kor* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2012), p. 383.

God has done in demonstrating his grace (the completed work of Christ on the cross, his resurrection and his ascension to the right hand of God), on what God is doing in the present (in the life of the believer) and on what God will do in the future (eschatological perspective). The eucharist for Bullinger was effectively a covenant renewal ceremony. This is illustrated by his understanding that 'the Lord himself by the institution of the sacraments has bound himself unto us, and we again by the partaking of them do bind ourselves to him and to all the saints.'<sup>46</sup> This is further seen in the fact that in Zurich the eucharist was celebrated three times a year (Easter, Pentecost and Christmas) paralleling the three pilgrimage feasts of the Old Testament where every male was required to come before the Lord at the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>47</sup> Hence Bullinger emphasized the *koinonia* or fellowship of the elect in the eucharist in the context of union with Christ. This is a marginal aspect of the eucharist for Luther.<sup>48</sup>

The eschatological perspective is not lacking in Luther's understanding of the eucharist. He did acknowledge that the eucharist helps believers as they battle against sin, the flesh and the world.<sup>49</sup> However, it was Bullinger who particularly underscored the eschatological dimension of the eucharist. This was in accord with his constant emphasis of spirituality in light of the last judgment.<sup>50</sup> Several severe winters in the mid 16th century were cited by Bullinger as signs of the impending last judgment. This is not to mention the number of his own family members who died as a result of the plague. Thus Bullinger highlighted that the believer should focus on the judgment to come each time they partake of the eucharist. Bullinger saw the eucharist as a New Testament covenant renewal ceremony that encouraged the believer to look back at what Christ has achieved on the cross as well as to look forward to what Christ will achieve for the believer at the consummation when he comes bodily in his glory. In this context, Bullinger constantly urged believers to live *integer* in a right covenant relationship with God which was a major feature in all his works.

<sup>46</sup> Opitz, *Decades*, p. 882.

<sup>47</sup> There was a fourth occasion on the celebration of Zurich's martyrs, Felix and Regula (11 September).

<sup>48</sup> Peters, *Catechisms*, p. 221.

<sup>49</sup> Peters, *Catechisms*, p. 215.

<sup>50</sup> Bruce Gordon, "'Welcher nit gloub der is schon verdampft': Heinrich Bullinger and the Spirituality of the Last Judgement', *Zwingliana*, 29 (2001), pp. 29–53.

## VI. BULLINGER AND LUTHER DIFFERED IN THEIR CHRISTOLOGY

That Bullinger and Luther differed in their christology is particularly evident in their understanding of the two natures of the resurrected and risen Christ. What was at stake was Nicean theology. In this connection, McLelland concluded that the issue of christology was the major dispute at Marburg with respect to the eucharist.<sup>51</sup> Luther insisted that Christ was present bodily in the eucharist through the *communicatio idiomatum* in the context of the ubiquity of Christ's body. Zwingli complained that this was a Eutychian manner of viewing Christ. Bullinger emphasized that Christ was present spiritually but that his body was at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. He differentiated between bodily eating, spiritual eating and sacramental eating. Luther argued that this was a Nestorian way of regarding Christ. What underlay the fundamental difference between them was the salvation-historical perspective of the incarnation and the return of Christ at the *eschaton* with his glorified body. The difference between Zurich and Wittenberg was how to grapple with the tension of the absence and the presence of Christ in the eucharist. Douglas Farrow concluded that Luther was influenced by Origen in this whereas Zwingli and Bullinger followed the lead of Irenaeus whom they deemed closer to a right understanding of the relevant biblical texts.<sup>52</sup> Bullinger and the Zurichers feared that Luther's concept of the ubiquity of Christ's body meant a view of the incarnation that resulted in Jesus not being made man in the exact way that we are. That would have ramifications for understanding the atonement.

Bullinger and Luther also differed in their use and understanding of the church fathers. Although, for example, both often referred to Augustine, nonetheless, they cited him to different effect. Bullinger, for his part, significantly made several references to Theodoret because he adjudged him to have rightly interpreted Scripture concerning the two natures of Christ.<sup>53</sup> Theodoret does not appear to have been cited much by the reformers, but, as was his custom, Bullinger chose to refer to the fathers

<sup>51</sup> J.C. McLelland, 'Meta-Zwingli or Anti-Zwingli? Bullinger and Calvin in Eucharistic Accord', in *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism vol. 13*, ed. by Richard C. Gamble (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), p. 180.

<sup>52</sup> Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia: On the Significance of the Doctrine of the Ascension for Ecclesiology and Christian Cosmology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), pp. 173–75.

<sup>53</sup> Mark Taplin, 'Patristics and Polemic: Josias Simler's History of Early Church Christological Disputes' in *Following Zwingli: Applying the Past in Reformation Zurich*, ed. by Luca Baschera, Bruce Gordon and Christian Moser (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 41–80.

whenever he adjudged them to have correctly interpreted Scripture. In this connection, it is significant that Vermigli also made much use of Theodoret.<sup>54</sup>

## VII. CONCLUSION

The bone of contention between Bullinger and Luther was that, while he acknowledged that Christ was present spiritually in the eucharist, he was unswervingly opposed to any notion of Christ's *bodily* presence. He declared that Christ was present spiritually in the eucharist because 'we do not have the Supper without Christ.'<sup>55</sup> Indeed, he affirmed the 'spiritual, divine and quickening presence of Christ' in the eucharist.<sup>56</sup>

Despite this theological difference between them, Bullinger continued to display deference to Luther as a person and patiently waited for Luther to be convinced by his exegetical arguments for the eucharist. Although clearly distancing himself from Luther's view, Bullinger did not refer to Luther by name in the *Decades* but, rather, referred to him as an 'adversary.'<sup>57</sup> But there was no holding back in referring to Luther's view in terms of 'crying out and repeatedly crying out, "This is my body," "This is my body," "This is," "This is," "This is," "This is," "Is," "Is," "Is" while we repeat, "The word was made flesh," "was made," "was made."<sup>58</sup>

Bullinger sought for Zurich to remain in communion with Wittenberg despite their radical differences concerning the eucharist. He yearned for mutual respect and for receiving one another as members of God's family. The manner in which he responded to Luther's *Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament* indicated that he was patiently and earnestly waiting for Wittenberg to embrace what he believed to be the right biblical interpretation and practice of the eucharist. Interestingly, Bishop John Hooper (1495–1555) who was strongly influenced by Luther's early works when he was at Oxford and who was then later convinced by the writings of both Zwingli and Bullinger wrote strong words about Luther in his letters to Bullinger and others. For example:

<sup>54</sup> Douglas H. Shantz, 'Vermigli on Tradition and the Fathers: Patristic Perspectives from his Commentary on 1 Corinthians' in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda*, ed. by F. James III (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 117.

<sup>55</sup> *The Second Helvetic Confession*, chapter XXI.

<sup>56</sup> Opitz, *Decades*, p. 1026.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1021.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1017.

Let controversy be settled by the authority of the word, Let no one defend his opinion with obstinacy; but let us rather return unto the way of truth, and humbly acknowledge our errors, than continue always to go on in error without repentance, lest we should seem to have been in the wrong [...] I entreat you, my master, not to say or write any thing against charity or godliness for the sake of Luther, or burden the consciences of men with his words on the holy supper. Although I readily acknowledge with thankfulness the gifts of God in him who is now no more, yet he was not without his faults. I do not say this by way of reproach of the departed individual, because I know that no living man is without blame, and that we all stand in need of the grace of God.<sup>59</sup>

The above is extracted from Hooper's letter to Bucer dated 19 June 1548. The Bishop of Gloucester and Worcester illustrated his commitment to *sola Scriptura* and *claritas Scripturae* particularly when confronted with the *Six Articles* (1539). Moreover, he was willing to be martyred for his unswerving convictions, thus testifying that a correct biblical understanding of the Lord's Supper is at the centre of Reformed faith and conduct.

This article has sought to evaluate afresh the differences between Wittenberg and Zurich with respect to the eucharist. The respective charisma of Luther, on the one hand, and of Zwingli, on the other hand was clearly a major factor. Secondly, the dynamics of the differing political situations was not an insignificant factor. However, the most fundamental factor was the difference in the way Scripture was interpreted and applied in the life of the church. Bishop Hooper has been cited as one who was originally influenced by Luther and the arguments presented by Luther for his understanding and practice of the eucharist. But through his study of Scripture Hooper came to the conclusion that Zurich was closer to a correct understanding of Scripture with respect to the eucharist. Keith Mathison has commented that English speaking Presbyterian or Reformed churches have been too influenced by Zurich's understanding of the eucharist rather than the teaching of Calvin which he adjudges to be the closest to Scripture.<sup>60</sup> Mathison's aim is to reclaim 'Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper.' This article seeks to stimulate fresh evaluation of what Scripture teaches about the eucharist through considering, in particular, the thought of Bullinger.

<sup>59</sup> Hastings Robinson (ed.), *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation: Written During the Reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI and Queen Mary, Chiefly from the Archives of Zurich* (Cambridge: The University Press for the Parker Society, 1846), pp. 45–46.

<sup>60</sup> Keith A. Mathison, *Given for You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2002).