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WHY DID LUTHER REFUSE ZWINGLI'S HAND OF BROTHERHOOD AT MARBURG?

The first four days of October mark the anniversary of the memorable meeting between Luther and Zwingli at Marburg. At this celebrated conference Zwingli offered the hand of Christian brotherhood and fellowship to Luther; but Luther refused it. Why did he do this? Before we proceed to answer this question, we shall do well to review the events that led up to this colloquy.

Charles V had concluded a treaty with Pope Clement VII and had solemnly pledged himself to suppress Protestantism. The German Protestants formed a defensive alliance in which the Landgrave of Hesse, Philip the Magnanimous, was anxious to have the Swiss included. Zwingli was equally anxious for this. But an obstacle was in the way — the controversy between the Lutherans and Zwinglians on the Lord's Supper. Who had begun this controversial conflict? That is a question which Reformed writers usually pass over in silence, for they know that Zwingli was the author of this heated and unhappy controversy.¹⁾ It is an undeniable fact that prior to the year 1524 Zwingli and his friends were at one with Luther in teaching the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. In 1521 Oecolampadius, Zwingli's friend, called it

1) See Luther's Works, St. Louis Edition, vol. XX, col. 772; XVII, 1534, Luther's Letters, De Wette, vol. III, 43.

blasphemy to deny the real presence, and in 1523 Zwingli solemnly avowed his agreement with Luther.²⁾

But while Zwingli was solemnly declaring his agreement with Luther, he was secretly dissenting from him in the article of the Lord's Supper. He did not have the courage, however, to express this dissent, and thus played the part of a hypocrite. He practically pleads guilty to this charge in his famous letter to the Lutheran preacher Matthew Alberus at Reutlingen.³⁾ This letter, which is dated November 16, 1524, contains his first public denial of the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Contemporaneously he defended Carlstadt's doctrine both from the pulpit and before the Zurich Council. The following month he sent copies of the so-called Alberus letter to a number of theologians in Southern Germany. In March, 1525, he published his "Commentarius de Vera et Falsa Religione" (Commentary on True and False Religion). Five months later the "Subsidium" or Supplement followed. In September, 1525, Oecolampadius attacked the real presence in a tract entitled, "De genuina verborum Domini: 'Hoc est corpus meum' juxta vetustissimos auctores expositione liber" (Tract on the true exposition of the Lord's words: "This is my body," according to the most ancient authors). In February, 1526, Zwingli sought to popularize his new doctrine in a German treatise entitled, "Ein klare Unterrichtung vom Nachtmahl Christi." About a year later, February 28, 1527, he issued his "Amica Exegesis" (Friendly Exposition), and in March, 1527, his "Fruendliche Verglimpfung und Ableinung" (Friendly Criticism and Defense).

Despite their amicable titles, these writings abound in coarse, contemptuous, bitter, and truly blasphemous statements. In a letter written to Michael Stiefel, May, 1527,⁴⁾ Luther

2) For documentary evidence see Ernst Solomon Cyprian's "Unterricht von kirchlicher Vereinigung," pp. 166. 183 sq.

3) St. L. Ed. XVII, 1526.

4) De Wette III, 172 sq.; St. L. Ed. XXI a, 936.

says: "There is no offense or cruelty⁵⁾ of which he does not accuse me, so that even the Papists, my enemies, do not wound me as these our friends do." Zwingli and his friends called Luther's doctrine an absurd superstition, an impious and silly error. They termed the Lutherans new Papists, stupid men, Capernaïtes, flesh-devourers, anthropophagi, blood-drinkers, idolaters, men who worship a baked god, etc. The God of the Lutherans they called a god made of bread, an eatable and drinkable god.⁶⁾

Although Zwingli had thus begun the controversy and was continuing it with increasing acrimony, Luther kept silent for more than a year. Zwingli felt offended because he did not reply to his arguments. Although Luther had already set forth his opinion at length, in 1523, in his treatise, "Vom Anbeten des Sakraments," and again, in 1525, in the treatise, "Wider die himmlischen Propheten," the Zwinglians clamored: "Why does Luther keep silent? why does he not come out with his opinion?"⁷⁾ They were determined to draw him into the conflict. But as he was busily engaged in other important work, he allowed his friends to answer for him. He did not take up his pen against Zwingli till the year 1526, when he wrote a preface to the German translation of the Swabian Syngramma.

So long as this sacramentarian conflict continued, Philip of Hesse could not hope to unite all the Protestants against Charles V. So he invited the leaders on both sides to meet in his castle at Marburg for the purpose of composing their doctrinal differences. The conference was held October 1—4, 1529. Zwingli and his associates, who had most strenuously denied that the body and blood of Christ are present in any sense in the sacrament, now admitted a spiritual presence, but persistently refused to believe in the real presence. Luther

5) While Zwingli was accusing Luther of cruelty, Anabaptists were being drowned in public at Zurich. See Koestlin, *Martin Luther, sein Leben und seine Schriften*, II, p. 73; Hausrath, *Martin Luther*, II, p. 198.

6) St. L. Ed. XVII, 1526. 1535; XX, 735. 771. 1768 sq., et passim.

7) De Wette III, 202; St. L. Ed. XVII, 1581.

was requested to draw up a series of propositions embracing those points of doctrine concerning which it was thought that both parties agreed. He consented, and drafted the so-called "Marburg Articles."⁸) In the last article he declares: "We all believe and hold with regard to the Supper of our dear Lord Jesus Christ, that it ought to be celebrated in both kinds, according to the primitive institution; also, that the mass is not a work by which one obtains pardon for another, whether dead or alive; also, that the Sacrament of the Altar is a sacrament of the very body and blood of Jesus Christ, and that the spiritual eating and drinking of this body and blood is especially necessary to every Christian. In like manner, as to the use of the sacrament, we are agreed that, like the Word, it was given and ordained of Almighty God to excite weak consciences to faith and charity by the Holy Spirit." The only point left in dispute was "whether the true body and blood of Christ are *bodily* present in the bread and wine." To the surprise of the Lutherans, Zwingli and his associates signed these articles, and thereby ostensibly receded from all their errors but one. We say ostensibly; for later developments showed that Zwingli dealt deceitfully with Luther. Within ten months after the Colloquy, he wrote his "Fidei Ratio," which he intended to present at the Diet at Augsburg in 1530. In this confession of faith he repeated those errors which he had seemingly repudiated over his own signature at Marburg. And in his "Christianae Fidei Brevis et Clara Expositio," which appeared shortly before his tragic end (October 11, 1531), he went so far as to assert that such heathen as Hercules, Theseus, Socrates, Aristides, Antigonus, Numa, Camillus, the Catos and Scipios will be found in heaven with the Patriarchs.⁹) Why this dishonesty and deception? Because they were anxious to appear to be at one with the Lutherans and to be admitted to the Protestant alliance. Zwingli said with tears in his eyes: "There are no people on earth with whom I would rather be united

8) St. L. Ed. XVII, 1939 sqq.

9) Zwinglii Opera IV, p. 65; St. L. Ed. XX, 1767.

than with the Wittenbergers." The Landgrave urged both parties to acknowledge each other as brethren. Zwingli was more than willing to do so. Bursting into tears in the presence of all, he approached Luther and offered the hand of fraternal fellowship to him. But Luther refused it, saying: "Ihr habt einen andern Geist als wir" (You have a different spirit from ours). His associates, especially Melanchthon, agreed with him. "Behold their folly," said the mild Melanchthon, "although they condemn us, they nevertheless desire of us to be regarded as brethren."¹⁰)

This rejection of Zwingli's hand has received many unfavorable criticisms. The Reformed and indifferentistic writers regard it as highly discreditable to the great Reformer. With but few exceptions, they all ascribe it to hatred, envy, want of charity, contentiousness, obstinacy, and the like ignoble motives. This harsh, uncharitable censure, which is to be found in nearly every non-Lutheran history and cyclopedia, need not surprise us, however; for Luther's critics view his conduct at Marburg through glasses that are colored by partisanship or by religious indifference. They are either the spiritual children of Zwingli, or they have drunk of the intoxicating cup of indifferentism and unionism. To expect praise and approval of Luther's attitude at Marburg from such persons would be expecting a psychological miracle.

These critics ascribe his rejection of Zwingli's hand to personal hatred and envy. But the charge is false and unfounded. There is not a scrap of evidence which shows that Luther hated Zwingli, or that he was jealous of him. It is true, in a letter to Melanchthon, dated October 27, 1527,¹¹) Luther says: "I deem Zwingli most deserving of holy hatred, who treats the holy Word of God so impertinently and frivolously." But notice that it is not personal animosity, but *holy* hatred of which he considers Zwingli worthy. And the reason why he considers him worthy of holy hatred is not that he is a

10) De Wette III, 514; St. L. Ed. XVII, 1956.

11) De Wette III, 216; St. L. Ed. XV, 2630.

personal rival, but because he handles the holy Word of God so impertinently and frivolously. When Zwingli fell in the battle at Cappel, Luther did not rejoice; his heart was filled with unspeakable grief so that he thought for two nights that he would die for sorrow.¹²⁾ Yes, in a letter written to the Landgrave May 20, 1530, he appeals to God as a witness that he did not resist Zwingli out of hatred or pride.¹³⁾ Zwingli had indeed given him ample reason for rancor and resentment. He had without cause attacked him most violently. He had heaped upon him insult and abuse. He had called his doctrine an absurd superstition, a relapse into papacy, an impious and silly error. He had applied to him and his friends such vulgar and vilifying epithets as flesh-devourers, blood-drinkers, anthropophagi, and the like. But all this biting sarcasm, all this bitter abuse, all this virulent calumny Luther did not even refer to at Marburg. Not a word of reproach escaped his lips. Was that a proof of uncharitableness? Was that a manifestation of personal rancor? Indeed, if this was not an evidence of charity and meekness overflowing, then we have never known what love and meekness are.¹⁴⁾

Moreover, the hand which could not accept Zwingli's hand of brotherhood did nevertheless pen the following concluding paragraph of the Marburg Articles: "But although at present we are not agreed on the question whether the true body and blood of Christ are bodily present in the bread and wine, still *each party shall show to the other Christian love*, so far as each one's conscience may permit."¹⁵⁾ A few days after the conference he wrote to his friend John Agricola: "Finally they asked that we should at least acknowledge them as brethren, and this the Prince urged strongly, but it could not be conceded to them. However, *we gave them the hand of peace and love*, that meanwhile the hard words and writings should rest, and

12) St. L. Ed. XX, 1682 f. 1766.

13) De Wette IV, 26; St. L. Ed. XVII, 1963 sq.

14) Cf. St. L. Ed. XX, 1768. 1770.

15) Ibid. XVII, 1942 sq.

each teach his opinion without invective, but not without defense and refutation."¹⁶) From this it appears very plainly that Luther did not deny them his love. On the contrary, he assured them both by word of mouth and in writing that he entertained charitable sentiments toward them, and this promise he solemnly ratified by giving them his right hand. "We gave them the hand of peace and love." Was that uncharitableness?

That Luther's refusal of Zwingli's hand of Christian brotherhood and fellowship was not prompted by uncharitableness, but rather by charity, must appear to every one who knows what charity is. For what is charity? True, genuine, Christian charity is not a maudlin sentiment which yields to the neighbor even in such things as are against God and his own good. Such pliancy or facility does not deserve even the name of good nature. Love of the right kind rather requires that we warn and reprove our erring neighbor. The Law says: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him," Lev. 19, 17. To withhold such reproof is a sin against love, a practical hating of the erring brother. True love will not suffer him to continue blindly in error. It seeks to lead him to the knowledge of the truth. St. James says: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death." (Ch. 5, 19. 20.) Now, Zwingli had evidently erred from the truth. His view of the Lord's Supper was a grave and dangerous error. Even John Calvin considered it a "false and pernicious opinion."¹⁷) It was, therefore, Luther's duty to "rebuke" the erring Zwingli. No one will say that he neglected this duty. To show that this reproof was administered in good earnest he refused to fellowship him so long as he continued in error. Had he yielded to Zwingli, had he entered into brotherly fellowship with him, he would have

16) De Wette III, 513 sq.; St. L. Ed. XVII, 1955.

17) Calvini Opera, X b, 345 sq.

violated the law of Christian love. By accepting his right hand of fellowship he would have encouraged him in his error. For Zwingli would have interpreted such acceptance of his hand as a quasi recognition of his doctrine. He would have said to himself: Luther regards the disputed doctrine of the Lord's Supper as an open question. He is not quite sure that his opinion is the only correct one, and grants my opinion the right of existence. Thus Luther would have given offense to him. Instead of saving him from the error of his way, he would have strengthened and confirmed him therein.¹⁸⁾

The charge, then, that Luther rejected Zwingli's hand of fraternal fellowship because he lacked love is false and unfounded in every point and particular. All the evidence shows that he was truly charitable, and that charity was one of the chief motives that prompted him to deny Zwingli's request. Had he done otherwise, the charge of uncharitableness would indeed be in place. But in the light of Scripture and history this accusation is clearly an ignorant or an infamous calumny.

Luther's refusal of Zwingli's hand did not proceed from want of charity. Neither was it the result of *contentiousness*. Strange as the statement may seem—the great Reformer, whose life was a conflict, was ever averse to strife. His soul ever yearned for peace and quietness. He always engaged reluctantly in disputation. "They err greatly," says Carlyle, "who imagine that this man's courage was ferocity, mere coarse disobedient obstinacy and savagery, as many do. Far from that. . . . No accusation could be more unjust than this of mere ferocious violence brought against him. A most gentle heart withal, full of pity and love, as the truly valiant heart ever is."¹⁹⁾ His experience was that of the Psalmist, who says: "I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war," and that of the Prince of peace whose ministry was a series of conflicts with error and errorists.

18) De Wette IV, 29; St. L. Ed. XVI, 2306; XVII, 1946. 1965. 1971; III, 1770.

19) *Heroes, and Hero-worship*, p. 164.

The statement that Luther was not fond of contention, but rather longed for peace, is borne out by a mass of incontrovertible evidence. We have already shown that he waited more than a year before he entered the literary conflict on the Lord's Supper. Does that spell love of strife and dispute? When he was finally compelled to take up his pen, he did so with regret. He would much rather have employed his time in other and better work, such as translating the Bible. "I would fain have peace, if it were possible, and issue the Prophets."²⁰⁾ When Bucer and Capito, who had adopted the Zwinglian view, sent a messenger to him, urging him not to enter the conflict, he answered: "*Nothing do we desire more than peace, which we have hitherto taught and carefully kept with all, as much as lay in us, their own conscience being witness that we were not the first to begin this tragedy, but were forced to reply. But to keep silent forever is not in our power [non est integrum], since they (I mean Zwingli and Oecolampadius) have by their published writings agitated the minds, unless they wish that we abstain from the ministry of the Word and the care of souls. It is intolerable to keep silent while they speak, and to give way to those who trouble our Church.*"²¹⁾ As a minister of the Word he felt himself in duty bound to confess his faith, to strengthen the weak and simple, and to preserve them from Zwingli's pernicious error. But before he entered the conflict, he requested his friends to pray for him that Christ would guide his pen to His glory. At the same time he deeply deplored the dispute and dissension, which he called a "tragedy," an "unhappy quarrel and schism" which "wrought great harm," inasmuch as it strengthened the Papists and proved a serious impediment to the progress of the Gospel.²²⁾

That Luther was not actuated by contentiousness is shown also by the friendly spirit which he manifested at Marburg, as shown above. Brenz, who attended the meeting, wrote to a

20) St. L. Ed. XX, 846.

21) De Wette III, 43; St. L. Ed. XVII, 1534.

22) De Wette IV, 559; St. L. Ed. VI, 624—630; XII, 896 sq.

friend: "With the exception of a few sallies, all was transacted in the most courteous manner and with the greatest gentleness. Only Oecolampadius, whom we had all expected to be milder, appeared at times to be somewhat irritated [*paulo morosior*], yet without contumely; Zwingli excused his harsh language with his Swiss nature. No other address was heard than 'dearest Sir, your charity,' and the like. It might have been said that Luther and Zwingli were brothers and not adversaries."²³) Although Luther was not able to accept Zwingli's hand of brotherhood, he did give him *the hand of peace*. "We gave them the hand of peace and love, that meanwhile the harsh words and writings should rest, and each teach his opinion without invective." After his return to Wittenberg he said from the pulpit: "The affair is in such a state as to afford fair hope. I do not say that there is a fraternal union, but a friendly concord."²⁴) These facts should prove to any unprejudiced person that Luther's rejection of Zwingli's hand was not influenced by contentiousness.

Neither did his refusal mean that he had no heart for true Christian fellowship. On the contrary, he deeply deplored the existing dissension and earnestly longed and prayed and worked for true union and fellowship, not only now and then, but at all times. Says Bayne: "When any who desire his

23) D'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation*, p. 462; Guericke, *Kirchengeschichte*, 7. Ed., III, 169.

24) St. L. Ed. III, 1770. — Zwingli, "whose heart was large and fraternal," who exhibited such easy control over his lachrymal glands, soon laid aside the mild tone which he had assumed at Marburg, and began to boast of his "victory" over Luther to whom he applied such soft epithets as "impudens" and "contumax," saying: "If ever any one has been defeated, then the impudent and obstinate Luther was defeated before all the world." D'Aubigné, 467. In his *Ratio Fidei* he referred to the Lutherans as people, "qui adollas Aegyptiacas respectant" = who look back to the flesh-pots of Egypt. This was written a few months after the meeting at Marburg and by the same man who had grasped Luther's hand in token that "the harsh words and writings should rest." Thereby he proved that his humility and friendliness, his silent tears, and his offer of fraternal fellowship were all feigned. De Wette IV, 29; St. L. Ed. XVI, 2306.

friendship avow that, for them, the eating of Christ's flesh in the Supper means only spiritual eating, he tells them with candid sharpness that he can have no fellowship with them. His tone is not acrimonious. It is rather that of affectionate sadness. But it is decisive. . . . It cost him more effort to be coldly steadfast against those who took the spiritual view of the sacrament than to stand firm against the Pope. . . . The distress occasioned him by severance from those with whom he had first undertaken the enterprise of reform was heart-breaking."²⁵) In a hymn which he wrote during the sacramentarian controversy (1525), he pours out his ardent desire for true union in these words:

Thou sweetest Love, grace on us bestow,
Set our hearts with heavenly fire aglow,
That with hearts united we love each other,
Of one mind, in peace with every brother.

Is that the language of a man who loves strife and dissension?

In the closing paragraph of the Marburg Articles he says: "But although *at present* we are not agreed on the question whether the true body and blood of Christ are bodily present in the bread and wine, still each party shall show to the other Christian love, so far as each one's conscience may permit, and *both parties shall earnestly implore Almighty God that He would confirm us by His Spirit in the true understanding. Amen.*"

In a letter to Amsdorf (October 27, 1529) he says: "I am glad, my dear Amsdorf, that you are so glad about our Marburg Synod, diminutive indeed in appearance, but in point of fact efficacious."²⁶)

To the Strassburg jurist Nic. Gerbel he wrote (October 4, 1529): "Love and peace we owe also to our enemies. We gave them to understand, of course, that, if they would not change their opinion concerning this article also, they may indeed enjoy our love, but that they cannot be accounted by us as brethren

25) Bayne, *Martin Luther*, II, 460 sqq.

26) De Wette III, 518; St. L. Ed. XXI a, 1371 sq.

and members of Christ. You will judge what fruit is come of this. To me it certainly appears that not a very small part of the offense is taken away where the contention of writing and disputing is publicly removed; indeed, we had not expected that we would accomplish so much. *Oh, that also that one remaining impediment [scrupulus] be finally removed by Christ! Amen.*"²⁷⁾

January 22, 1531, he wrote to Martin Bucer: "I want you to believe me, as I told you also at Coburg, that I wish this dissension of ours settled, even though my life had to be sacrificed three times over on account of it, because I saw how necessary your fellowship is to us, how much harm [the dissension] has done and still does to the Gospel, so that I am certain that all the gates of hell, the whole Papacy, the whole Turk, the whole world, the whole flesh, and all evils whatsoever, could not have done so much harm to the Gospel, if we were united. But what shall I do in a matter which cannot possibly be done? You will, therefore, not ascribe it to obstinacy, if you wish to do right, but to my conscience and to the urgency of my faith, that I decline this union. I had magnificent hopes after our Coburg Colloquy, but so far that hope is not established. May the Lord Jesus enlighten us, and perfectly unite us, — this is the burden of my prayer, this is the burden of my supplication, this is the burden of my sighs," *hoc oro, hoc ploro, hoc gemo.*²⁸⁾

A few days later, February 1, 1531, he wrote the following to Duke Ernest of Luceneburg: "Your Princely Grace shall believe that next to Christ, my Lord, I desire nothing more earnestly than that these people were thoroughly united with us; no death could be too bitter for me which I should not be willing to suffer to bring this about."²⁹⁾

When the Landgrave of Hesse made another attempt to unite the Lutherans and Zwinglians, Luther wrote (December 17, 1534): "For God is my witness, that, if it were pos-

27) De Wette III, 511 sq.; St. L. Ed. XVII, 1953.

28) De Wette IV, 217; St. L. Ed. XVII, 1975.

29) De Wette IV, 220; St. L. Ed. XVII, 2003.

sible, I would remove this dissension at the price of my body and blood, even if I had more than one body.”³⁰⁾

His Commentary on Galatians, which appeared in 1535, contains the following paragraph, which shows both his earnest longing for union and the condition of union: “They falsely accuse us of breaking charity, to the great hurt and damage of the Church. But we protest that *we desire nothing more than to be at peace and unity with all*, and to exercise charity toward them, provided they leave unto us the doctrine of faith entire und uncorrupt; to the which all things must give place, be it charity, an apostle, or an angel from heaven.”

When he heard that the churches at Augsburg were inclined to come to an agreement with the Wittenbergers, he expressed his unbounded joy in the following letter to the Augsburg pastors (July 20, 1535): “For in this whole course of our Gospel I have met with nothing that has given me more pleasure than, after this unhappy dissension, finally to look forward to, yea, to see a sincere union between us. . . . Therefore I pray you for Christ’s sake, who has begun this work of His in you, that you would continue and persevere in this fruit of the Spirit, and embrace us with arms and hearts of pure love, even as we embrace and receive you into the bosom of sincere faith and unity. And be firmly persuaded in Christ that nothing can be imposed upon us by you which, for the confirmation of this union, we should not also be glad to do and to suffer, and, if it be necessary, everything. For after this union is confirmed, I shall with tears of joy sweetly sing: Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for I shall leave after me peace for the churches, that is, the glory of God, the punishment of the devil, and vengeance on all enemies and adversaries. May Christ govern you and perfect you in this mind, that my joy may be fulfilled, and that after so many crosses and hells I may at least have a happy hour to depart this life. Amen.”³¹⁾

30) De Wette IV, 572; St. L. Ed. XVII, 2051.

31) De Wette IV, 613 sq.; St. L. Ed. XVII, 2070. See also XVII, 2074. 2077 sqq. 2082. 2119. 2143. 2161; XXI b, 2012.

This mass of documentary evidence sufficiently shows that it must have cost him more effort to say "no" at Marburg than at Worms. At Worms he had to contend with the temptation of fear. But his heroic faith triumphed over this temptation with ease. At Marburg, however, he was under the powerful pressure of other and more perilous circumstances: The Landgrave was urging him with might and main to acknowledge the Zwinglians as brothers; Zwingli was begging for brotherhood with tears in his eyes; his own heart was aching because of the disastrous disruption in the ranks of the Protestants; his soul was burning with desire for union and fraternal fellowship. And yet he declined Zwingli's hand. His reasons for doing so under such circumstances must have been good and strong indeed.

One of these motives has already been dwelt upon. It was charity. But love was not the only incentive. When he rejected Zwingli's hand, he said: "*Thr habt einen andern Geist als wir,*" You have a different spirit from ours. What is the meaning of these celebrated words? The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (IX. ed., vol. 15, p. 83) says: "He refused Zwingli's hand. 'You have another spirit from us,' he said, meaning that there was no objective basis of faith between them owing to what he thought to be Zwingli's rationalism." Zwingli's rationalism did not exist merely in Luther's thoughts. It had a real, palpable existence in fact. Zwingli did not treat Scripture as the only source and norm of faith, but in a number of doctrines followed his reason. It is possible that he was not conscious of following the dictates of Dame Reason; but this does not alter the fact of his having been a rationalist. Even d'Aubigné says: "If Luther had yielded, it might have been feared that the Church would fall into the extreme of Rationalism."³² Zwingli's rationalistic spirit manifested itself very plainly in regard to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. He was not able to deny that the exceedingly simple and transparent words of institution, if taken in their literal sense, teach the real presence

³²) *History of the Ref.*, p. 465.

of Christ's true body and blood in the eucharist. But to his mind this doctrine appeared impossible, incredible, and altogether out of harmony with other doctrines, such as the doctrines of the person of Christ and His ascension. His main argument against the real presence ran thus: Christ has a real human body, and as regards this real human body, He ascended into heaven. Now, a real human body cannot be in several places at once. Therefore the real human body of Christ cannot be in the sacrament. Hence the words of institution must be explained figuratively. But this is not explaining Scripture by Scripture or according to the analogy of faith, but according to the philosophical principle: A real human body cannot be in several places at once. "Dies Argument ist nicht aus der Schrift, sondern ist Vernunft."³³⁾ His rationalistic spirit cropped out very plainly when he replied to Luther at Marburg that "God does not propose incomprehensible things to us."³⁴⁾ It was, therefore, merely a happy inconsistency that he did not deny the whole body of incomprehensible doctrines. If it had not been for Luther's unwavering steadfastness, it is probable that Zwingli would have fallen into this extreme of rationalism. This spirit of rationalism, which led him to reject the real presence, and his persistent adherence to his sacramentarian error, prevented the much desired union at Marburg. Zwingli tried hard to make it appear as if they were united, in order that Luther might recognize him as a brother. But Luther replied again and again: "You have a different spirit from ours." He meant to say: You are trying to make it appear as if your party and ours were at one in doctrine and faith. But this is not true. Your spirit, your doctrine and faith does *not* agree with our doctrine and faith. We accept the words of institution in simple faith, but you criticise and rail at this faith. It is evident, therefore, that you have a different doctrine and faith; and this being the case, I cannot accept your hand of fraternal fellowship. "They promised

33) De Wette III, 510; St. L. Ed. XXI a, 1365.

34) St. L. Ed. XVII, 1944. 1948.

with many words, they would go so far as to say with us: Christ's body is truly present in the Supper, but in a spiritual manner, in order that we might deign to call them brethren, and thus to simulate unity. It was this which Zwingli, publicly weeping in the presence of the Landgrave and all, requested, saying about as follows: 'Es sind keine Leut auf Erden, mit denen ich lieber wollt eins sein, denn mit den Wittenbergern.' With the greatest diligence and effort they were at work on making it appear that they agreed with us, so that they could never bear to hear me say: You have a different spirit from ours. They were inflamed altogether as often as they heard these words. Finally we conceded this, that while they are indeed not brethren, they nevertheless should not be deprived of our love, which is due even to an enemy. Thus they were greatly displeased, because they could not obtain the name of brother, but were compelled to depart as heretics."³⁵)

Zwingli was a heretic. He held and defended a false doctrine in spite of repeated admonitions. The doctrine of the Lord's Supper concerning which he taught falsely is not an unessential doctrine. It forms one of the chief parts of every catechism. Nor is it a theological problem, an open question. God has clearly revealed it in plain passages of Holy Writ. Neither did Zwingli err in ignorance and weakness (XXIII, 303). Had such been the case, Luther would certainly have dealt with him differently.³⁶) He had been "rebuked" and "admonished" during the space of five years. But despite all these efforts to win him, he obstinately maintained his peculiar view of the sacrament, and expected Luther to yield. Thus he made it impossible for Luther to join in fraternal fellowship with him. For God has plainly, expressly, and strictly prohibited fellowship with such as obstinately persist in denying clear doctrines of Scriptures. Our Lord says: "Beware of false prophets!" His holy Apostle writes: "A man

³⁵) Luther's letter to Jacob Probst, June 1, 1530: De Wette IV, 28 sq.; St. L. Ed. XVI, 2305 sq.

³⁶) St. L. Ed. XVII, 1964 sq.

that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject." And again: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and *avoid them.*" St. John, the Apostle of love, writes: "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." These plain passages are a wall of separation erected between us and false teachers. Our duty toward false teachers, therefore, is not to unite with them, but to avoid them. To cultivate religious fellowship with them is not a virtue, but a vice. As long as God does not command us to tear these passages out of the Book, we cannot join in fraternal fellowship with false teachers.

To these and similar passages Luther appeals in his writings as a warrant for his refusal to fellowship the sacramentarians.³⁷⁾ So long as Zwingli refused to relinquish his error, Luther could not grant his request without sinning against God and his conscience. Said he to Bucer at Marburg: "We declare to you once more that our conscience opposes our receiving you as brethren."³⁸⁾ To John Agricola he wrote: "Finally they asked that we should at least acknowledge them as brethren, and this the Prince urged strongly, but it *could not* be conceded to them." To his congregation he said in his report of the Marburg meeting: "Brotherhood they requested of us, this we refused them for the present and *could not* make promise thereof. For if we received them as brothers and sisters, we should have to acquiesce in their doctrine."³⁹⁾

The last quotation points to still another reason why Luther refused to fellowship the Zwinglians. Such fellowship would have meant that he acquiesced in their false doctrine.

37) De Wette IV, 25. 351 sq.; St. L. Ed. VII, 598; XVII, 1962 sq.; XX, 1682, *et al.*

38) D'Aubigné, p. 463.

39) St. L. Ed. III, 1770.

By such tacit approval he would have become *particeps criminis*. God would have pronounced him a partner of false teachers and a sharer in all those fearful blasphemies which Zwingli and his friends had uttered about the "baked god" of the Lutherans. "Therefore they knew that we could not be flesh-devourers, blood-drinkers, Thyestes, Capernaites, nor localists, and our God no baked god, wine-god, etc. Now, how should and could I take on my poor conscience such coarse [unge-schwungene] blasphemy of the impenitent enthusiasts and blasphemers. . . . St. John says 2 John 10: 'If there come any, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.'" ⁴⁰⁾ Again he says: "So Christ wishes to say [Matt. 7, 6]: When you see that they despise your preaching and trample it under foot, then you shall have no fellowship with them and go out from among them, as He says also Matt. 18: 'He that neglects to hear thee and the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.' . . . This I and all that preach in good earnest do, lest we become partakers of their sin. For it is not God's will that we should so play the hypocrite with our sectarians as if their doctrine were true." ⁴¹⁾

Observe that Luther calls fellowship with false teachers *hypocrisy*. That is the proper name for such fellowship. External union between such as are not agreed in doctrine and faith is essentially dissimulation. If people who inwardly disagree outwardly act as if they agree, they sham and dissemble. That such feigning is grossly immoral is evident even to a non-Christian. Yet Zwingli endeavored to draw Luther into such a counterfeit union. "They conducted themselves toward us with incredible humility and friendliness; but, as it now appears, all was feigned, that they might draw us into a counterfeit union and make us partakers and patrons of their error." ⁴²⁾ But Luther was a stranger to such sham and hypocrisy. While

40) St. L. Ed. XX, 1769 sq.

41) St. L. Ed. VII, 598.

42) De Wette IV, 29; St. L. Ed. XVI, 2306.

the advocates of outward union amid inward disunion extol peace and charity as the noblest possessions and denounce Luther's "intolerance, contentiousness, and uncharitable obstinacy" as an unpardonable crime, Luther knew a higher and more precious possession — Truth and Honesty. Said he: "If I must have a fault, I would rather speak too harsh and burst out with the truth too unreasonably, than ever dissemble and hold back with the truth."⁴³) He was, as his name signifies, "lauter," that is, sincere, candid, free from hypocrisy.⁴⁴) "He was always utterly honest and outspoken," says Geo. P. Fisher.⁴⁵) "He was in the deepest depth of his soul a believer in truth. His whole soul was steeped in reality. His eye was single, and his whole body was full of light."⁴⁶) The union he longed for was not a painted, counterfeit union, but a candid and sincere union ("candida et sincera concordia"), an agreement in doctrine and faith. "The Word and doctrine must effect Christian unity or fellowship; where it is alike and agrées, the rest will follow; where it is not, no unity will remain anyway."⁴⁷) That is the only union permitted by God. St. Paul says: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all *speak the same thing*, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be *perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*," 1 Cor. 1, 10. To bring about such union he was willing to do everything, to suffer everything, yea, to die. But with union grounded on falsehood, and ordering him to speak and act lies, he could not and would not have anything to do. That he prevented such false and feigned union,

43) De Wette II, 306; St. L. Ed. XX a, 481.

44) The name was originally written Luder, Lüder, and Leuder. Luter was the middle high German of the modern lauter.

45) *The Reformation*, p. 151.

46) James Freeman Clarke in *Events and Epochs in Rel. History*, p. 256. — To Bucer and Wolphardt he wrote, February 29, 1532: "Ego sum homo candidus, nihil minus possum, quam simulare et dissimulare: sed quidquid dico in hac summa eucharistica causa, ex corde dico." De Wette IV, 344.

47) St. L. Ed. IX, 831.

we readily admit, and thank God who gave him strength to oppose and prevent it. For had he yielded, the Church would soon have fallen "into the extreme of Rationalism." Such unwavering opposition, however, and unflinching firmness should not be called "obstinacy," unless obstinacy means firmness in holding out against persuasion to evil. If that be the meaning attached to the word by his critics, then Joseph was obstinate when he said to Potiphar's wife: "How, then, can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Then all the prophets and apostles and confessors of the truth were obstinate; yea, then Christ Himself was obstinate; for His attitude toward error and errorists was one of implacable opposition. —

God grant us more of such sanctified stubbornness! We need it. For in these days of indifferentism and unionism we are sorely tempted to enter into fellowship with teachers of error. Union is the idol of our age; and all who refuse to worship this idol are cast into the fiery furnace of slander. When the representatives of the Synodical Conference at Detroit refused to cultivate fellowship with the Ohioans and Iowaans, our opponents raised a hue and cry against us. Their pulpits and periodicals rang with the charge of uncharitableness, bigotry, intolerance, and the like. Such bitter charges naturally chagrin us, for we, too, have flesh and blood. But our greatest grief is that our opponents make it impossible for us to fellowship them. We would fain regard and embrace them as brethren if it were possible. We know, alas! how this dissension is impeding the progress of our dear old Lutheran Church. But what can we do? Here is the divine command: "Avoid them!" We cannot evade this divine command without violating our conscience. Taking our stand on this and similar Scriptures, we say to our opponents with a clear conscience: We cannot cultivate brotherly fellowship with you, for "you have a different spirit from ours."

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