

ment between these reformers. Zwingli believed only practices men-

14 Other Reformers

Let's Get Together

Sometimes friends cannot agree. When this happens, how do the persons involved resolve to handle their disagreements in a way that enables them to still remain friends?

Unity in Reform

Luther was not alone in his quest to reform the Roman Catholic Church. Ulrich Zwingli, a reformer from Switzerland, and John Calvin, from France, both began their reform movements after Luther.


Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin agreed on many points of Christian teachings. They agreed that the Bible is the holy and divinely inspired Word of God and the source of faith and doctrine. They rejected the notion that the Roman Catholic pope was God's appoint-

ed leader of the church on earth. They disagreed with the sale of indulgences and condemned the corruption within the church.

Disunity in Reform—Luther and Zwingli

But there was a disunity among these three reformers. Zwingli took a radical approach to church reform. He felt that anything in the church that wasn't specifically mentioned in the Bible needed to be discarded. Luther, however, was interested in discarding only those things that contradicted Scripture.

Luther and Zwingli's strongest disagreement was over Holy Communion. The Roman Catholic Church taught that when Christ's words were repeated over the bread and wine, these elements were actually changed or transubstantiated into the body and blood of



I don't think our differences are that important.

They are, because the entire Reformation is about what is Scriptural and what is not.

not to gather large groups of Christians together. Luther wanted to

Christ. Both Zwingli and Luther rejected the idea of transubstantiation.

Luther took Christ's words "This is My body" and "This is My blood" at face value. He believed that whenever people received the elements of Holy Communion, they also received Christ's body and blood. (See 1 Corinthians 10:16.) Zwingli rejected the idea of the real presence and said that Christ intended His words to be symbolic. He reasoned that Christ could only be present at one place at one time. The bread and wine must symbolize Christ's body and blood.

Luther and Zwingli met in 1529 to discuss this. Because of their differing ideas on Holy Communion, Luther refused to join forces with the reformers in Switzerland.

Disunity in Reform—Luther and Calvin

Calvin reasoned that, since God knows everything, all that happens must be according to God's will. He believed that God predestined some people to go to heaven and some to go to hell. Luther agreed that the Bible talks of predestination, but it was against Luther's beliefs to make statements that could not be supported by a clear passage of Holy Scripture. While God knows everything that will happen and wants all people to go to heaven, He does not cause some people to go to hell. They freely choose that route themselves when they reject Christ.

Calvin's theology affected his ideas about the Sacraments. He believed only those who were predestined for heaven received the blessings of God as offered in Baptism and Holy Communion.

Why Such a Big Deal?

Some criticized Luther for refusing to resolve differences with Zwingli. They wondered, "What difference does it make if we say that Christ's body and blood are really present or just symbolic in Holy Communion?"

Lutheran Christians responded that the reform movement would have been greatly weakened by compromise. At stake was more than the words "the body and blood of Christ." Luther believed Zwingli's ideas blurred the whole idea of how God comes to us. In the Sacraments, God is doing something real to us and for us. Zwingli's sacraments were mere symbols.

In Reflection

1. Is it necessary for churches to agree on everything? Why or why not?

[Churches should find unity in a trust in God's inerrant Word and in the confessions.]

2. Agreement on things such as hymn tunes is not necessary. A difference of belief about God and His plan for our forgiveness and salvation is a different matter. Luther felt the differences concerning the Lord's Supper were too important to allow compromise. List two other religious practices you believe should not be compromised.

[Answers may vary but might include the doctrine of the trinity, salvation by grace through faith, and the inerrancy of Scripture.]

Remember, the question is not "What did Luther or Zwingli or Calvin say?" The question is "What does God say?" God wants His people to use His Word as the only source and rule for their faith and life. Wherever this happens, His people become stronger and grow closer to Him.

To Review and Remember

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? *1 Corinthians 10:16*