

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

THE PROPER CANDIDATE: AN EXAMINATION OF THE 1525 DEBATE  
BETWEEN ULRICH ZWINGLI AND BALTHASAR HUBMAIER CONCERNING  
BAPTISM

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the written debate that occurred in 1525-1526 between Balthasar Hubmaier and Ulrich Zwingli on the proper candidate of baptism. Both pastors held to the reformation principle of sola scriptura yet came to different conclusions as to what the Bible teaches about baptism. Hubmaier agreed with the Swiss Brethren in Zurich that baptism should be administered to believers only. Only those who have mindfully repented and have chosen to follow Christ are eligible for Christian baptism. Hubmaier's arguments for believers' baptism are presented in the second chapter. Zwingli, on the other hand, argued that the children of believers are entitled to Christian baptism. As circumcision was a sign of the Old Testament covenant with Israel, baptism is the sign of the New Covenant. The arguments for infant baptism by Zwingli are set forth in the third chapter. Next, Hubmaier's rebuttal of Zwingli is examined. Hubmaier pointed out inconsistencies in Zwingli's arguments. His strongest argument is the lack of example or instruction of infant baptism in Scripture. The fifth chapter outlines Zwingli's refutation of Hubmaier. Zwingli suggests that Hubmaier is causing division in the church and ignoring the Old Testament. His best argument is the example of entire households being baptized into the church. These households, conceivably, would have included children. Finally, the final chapter is an analysis of the arguments presented by Zwingli and Hubmaier, specifically in light of sola scriptura. While Zwingli made some compelling arguments, Hubmaier's argument that baptism is for believers only was more in agreement with Scripture.

To Allison

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

During the Protestant Reformation, the doctrine of baptism became a controversy for the new Christian groups. After 500 years, the doctrine of baptism continues to divide the church today. Understanding the protestant reformers' arguments concerning baptism will give the modern church a greater knowledge of the doctrine itself. Two reformers, Balthasar Hubmaier and Ulrich Zwingli, engaged in an extended debate concerning the proper candidate for baptism. Zwingli, like many reformers, continued the Catholic practice of infant baptism, but altered the meaning.<sup>1</sup> Hubmaier concluded that the Scriptures prescribe the practice of believers' baptism.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, all other forms of baptism, such as baptizing infants or non-believers, are contrary to Scripture.

During 1525, Hubmaier and Zwingli had a written debate on the doctrine of baptism, specifically who is the proper candidate for baptism. Zwingli favored baptizing infants into the church. Using Scripture, Zwingli argued that baptism was a sign of covenant people, as circumcision was to the Israelites in the Old Testament. For Zwingli, baptism was an external act that was merely symbolic. The practice of baptism had no eternal value. According to Zwingli, the election of God, not baptism, saved an individual. Zwingli supported baptizing infants because he believed that baptism was a continuation of the Old Testament practice of circumcision. Infants have been the primary candidate for Christian baptism since Augustine. The Reformation forced all

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<sup>1</sup> Infant baptism is also called Paedobaptism. Those who hold to Paedobaptism will have their child baptized soon after they are born.

<sup>2</sup> Believers' baptism is the practice of immersing or pouring water over a person based upon a confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Those who hold this believe that baptism is a sign or symbol of Jesus' cleansing and washing away of sin in the life of the believer.

doctrines to be re-examined. On baptism, Zwingli continued baptizing infants, although for different theological reasons.

Hubmaier, on the other hand, taught that baptism should be administered to committed, believing Christians. He taught that since infants cannot make a decision of faith they should not be baptized. Hubmaier reached this perspective through examining Scripture and finding no example of children being baptized. During the Anabaptist rebellion in Zurich, Hubmaier began to write in support of believers' baptism. Like the other reformers (Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin), Hubmaier was also committed to *sola scriptura*. The Bible alone was to be used for matters of faith and doctrine. Hubmaier was certain that infant baptism was not used in the New Testament's teaching on baptism. In addition, because infants could not make a decision to receive salvation, it would be illogical to baptize them into the church, since they do not yet have faith. Baptism, according to Hubmaier, is appropriate only for believers.

The battle over baptism between Hubmaier and Zwingli was an intense conflict. The doctrine was important for both men. The passion of both men on this subject is noticed in their writings. Both wrote extensively on the doctrine. Hubmaier and his wife were killed because of his commitment to the baptism of believers.

Perhaps surprisingly, the agreement on *sola scriptura* became the divide on many other issues during the Protestant Reformation. Baptism became another doctrine that was understood in different ways by theologians committed to Scripture. How could two men devoted to the principal of *sola scriptura* differ so heavily on this theological issue? What biblical texts did each use to defend his position, and how did he refute the other's

position? This thesis seeks to resolve these questions while analyzing the baptismal writings of both men.

The intent of this paper is to gain an understanding of the arguments presented by both Hubmaier and Zwingli concerning their doctrine of baptism. Balthasar Hubmaier proposed baptizing repentant believers while Zwingli defended a new understanding of infant baptism. Because of the lengthy writings by both men, their arguments can be understood regarding who should be baptized. The conflicts were over their understanding of the meaning, purpose, and candidate of baptism. This paper examines the arguments proposed by each reformer concerning their doctrine. It also seeks to understand what led the men to their different conclusions. Finally, a critique of their arguments is presented in light of their commitment to *sola scriptura*.

The doctrine of baptism continues to divide Christians today. The proper candidate for baptism is not the only aspect of baptism where the Christians disagree.<sup>3</sup> There is also no consensus on the proper method of baptism. Some groups pour the water, some immerse,<sup>4</sup> while others use water to mark the forehead. This paper examines the proper candidate of baptism (whether they should be an infant or a committed believer). The same positions held by Hubmaier and Zwingli continue to be held by Christians today. Lutherans and Presbyterians both would agree with Zwingli that infant baptism does not save, but is proper. While Baptists and groups descending from the Anabaptist movement would agree with Hubmaier that baptism should be for believers

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<sup>3</sup> The candidate of who should be baptized is the main disagreement. Should the candidate be an infant born into Christian family? Or should they be someone who has consciously made a decision to follow Christ and His teachings? This is the primary disagreement between Hubmaier and Zwingli.

<sup>4</sup> Even among those who agree in baptism by immersion there are groups who argue whether to immerse the candidate forwards or backwards. While most baptize once, others will baptize three times, in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



only. Hubmaier and Zwingli wrote much defending his own position and attacking the other. When Hubmaier was caught in Zurich, Zwingli went to the point of torturing Hubmaier to force a recantation of his views on baptism. The proper candidate of baptism made the two former allies in the reformation into bitter rivals. This thesis provides a greater understanding of Reformation history, history of both Hubmaier and Zwingli, and the history of the doctrine of baptism.

The position of the reformers was to base their theology on the Bible alone. Based on the principle of *sola scriptura*, no Pope, theologian, or government official has authority concerning theological doctrines; only the Bible is the source for religious doctrine. For Protestants, the doctrine of baptism is understood only through Scripture. Both Hubmaier and Zwingli used the Bible to argue their positions; however, they reached different conclusions. There is no clear evidence that the city council influenced Zwingli's position on infant baptism. The council had to approve of any reform in the Zurich church, therefore, Zwingli would have likely submitted to the council if he disagreed with them theologically. Zwingli briefly supported believers' baptism in 1523 but soon opposed it. On the other hand, Balthasar Hubmaier seemed to reach his conclusion based solely on the Scriptures.

The intention of this paper is to only focus on the baptismal theologies of Hubmaier and Zwingli. The doctrines of other reformers, such as Luther or Calvin, are not included, unless relevant. Modern understandings of baptism are not included. Finally, the church fathers will not be included, except in instances that Zwingli or Hubmaier cited them. There are references to the historical context of baptism as understood in 1525. This paper is not an examination of biblical baptism, but the biblical

arguments presented by Zwingli and Hubmaier. No additional verses or arguments that could aid their argument are provided. This thesis overlooks contemporary arguments for infant baptism and believers' baptism. The other doctrines held by either both Zwingli or Hubmaier are not be included in this thesis, unless related to the baptismal debate. The author will use primarily the works of the two reformers. Secondary sources are used only when necessary.

This paper attempts to understand the doctrines of baptism of Hubmaier and Zwingli. Their letters and books are the main source of research. The author analyzes the arguments of both Zwingli and Hubmaier. Their arguments defending their position and attacking their opponent's is examined. An evaluation of their arguments follows the study of them. The thesis seeks to find occasions when either of these men supported his particular doctrine by using arguments not consistent with Scripture.

The information for this thesis is the arguments set forth by Hubmaier and Zwingli. The most important aspect of the debate is to understand each of their arguments. Both reformers presented a detailed case for their respective positions. They also sought to show the mistakes of each other's position. Finally, their arguments are analyzed in reference to their consistency with *sola scriptura*.

The first chapter shows the problem and importance of the baptismal debate between Zwingli and Hubmaier. It describes the purpose and position of each one. Each chapter is summarized. The purpose of this is so the reader can understand the outline and design of the paper. The reader will have a grasp of the contents of the entire project.

Chapter two examines Balthasar Hubmaier's doctrine of baptism. This chapter begins with an introduction and brief historical background of Balthasar Hubmaier's life.

Hubmaier's biography is helpful in understanding the formation of his doctrine of baptism. He was not alone in his support of believers' baptism. The Swiss Brethren were a group that began as a part of the Zurich reform but then began to oppose some of Zwingli's teaching. After this biographical section, Hubmaier's doctrine of baptism is studied. This section explains the arguments Hubmaier used to support believers' baptism. The Waldshut reformer provided a thorough defense of believers' baptism in many of his writings. Hubmaier viewed baptism as an essential element for inclusion into the local church. Hubmaier's formation of baptismal ecclesiology is also briefly studied.

Chapter three focus on the doctrine of baptism according to Zwingli. After the introduction, the beginning section overviews the life of Zwingli. It examines his childhood, education, associations, his life as a reformer, and his death. In addition, the chapter describes the reformation in Zurich. The chapter briefly describes the Zurich reform. The next section provides arguments Zwingli used in supporting the baptism of infants. Zwingli believed that all infants ought to be baptized because they are a part of God's people. The children of Christians are born into the New Covenant. Baptism is a symbolic entrance into the kingdom. Zwingli taught that baptism succeeded circumcision. The conclusions that Zwingli reached on baptism is examined. In addition, how he interpreted certain passages. Finally, this chapter also includes some surrounding theological issues related to baptism that may have impacted his views on baptism.

The fourth chapter shows the argument Hubmaier used to refute Zwingli. Hubmaier provided many refutations against Zwingli's teaching. Hubmaier attempted to

show that Zwingli's arguments were not sound. If baptism was not for believers, according to Hubmaier, then it served no purpose. Hubmaier argued that infant baptism is meaningless. He explained that in the New Testament, only those who made a decision to follow Christ were baptized. Baptism was an antecedent to teaching and repentance.

Chapter five shows Zwingli's argument against Hubmaier's view. Zwingli argued that rebaptism had absolutely no basis in Scripture. He argued that baptism in the New Testament likely included children. Zwingli also argued that John the Baptist and the apostles baptized the children of believers. He also pointed out that there is no biblical teaching that forbids the baptizing of infants. Zwingli provides a detailed argument against baptizing believers as argued by Hubmaier.

Finally, in chapter six, the author summarizes the debate between Hubmaier and Zwingli. Here, the author expresses his own evaluation relating to each of the arguments presented by the reformers. This section also briefly covers the lasting impacts of their theological viewpoints today. Finally, the method that the reformers used Scripture is examined.

The primary research has been conducted through Liberty University library resources. The author has made use of Liberty's books and online database of journal articles, books, and encyclopedias. The Oxford series of books on Liberty's online database has been especially helpful. In addition, William Estep's *The Anabaptist Story* was a useful resource in understanding the Anabaptist movement.<sup>5</sup> The most useful source for Balthasar Hubmaier's writings is Pipkin and Yoder's translation into English,

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<sup>5</sup> William R. Estep. *The Anabaptist Story*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

published in 1989.<sup>6</sup> This text was be the primary source Reading this text helped the author formulate the ideas for this thesis.

Ulrich Zwingli has many different books that have recorded translations of his writings. Samuel M. Jackson and Clarence Heller translated Zwingli's *Commentary on True and False Religion* as an independent book.<sup>7</sup> H. Wayne Pipkin has a two volume set of Zwingli's early and later writings that was published in 1984.<sup>8</sup> Bromiley's translation of Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger's writings is likely the most popular and widely available source of Zwingli's works.<sup>9</sup> Finally, Henry Preble and George W. Gilmore's *Ulrich Zwingli: Selected Works* complete the primary writings used for this project.<sup>10</sup> These books provide the necessary documents relevant to the study conducted in this thesis.

Research was conducted at the libraries at Liberty University and The University of Virginia. The author also used books from his personal collection. The author used Liberty University's online research portal to access journal articles, books, and other resources. Additionally, books received through interlibrary loan were used when necessary.

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<sup>6</sup> H. Wayne Pipkin, and John Howard Yoder. *Balthasar Hubmaier, Theologian of Anabaptism*. Classics of the Radical Reformation, 5. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989.) Pipkin and Yoder will hereafter be referred to as "PY"

<sup>7</sup> Ulrich Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, Samuel Macauley Jackson and Clarence Nevin Heller eds., trans., 1929; repr. (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press 1981).

<sup>8</sup> H. Wayne Pipkin, trans., *Huldrych Zwingli: Writings*, vol. 1,2 (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publication 1984).

<sup>9</sup> G. W. Bromiley, trans., *Zwingli and Bullinger* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1953).

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., Henry Preble and George W. Gilmore, trans., *Ulrich Zwingli: Selected Works* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1972).

The objective of this thesis, first, is to gain an understanding of the doctrine of baptism as presented by Ulrich Zwingli and Balthasar Hubmaier. This provides dialogue for those studying the doctrine of baptism in historical or modern context. The thesis synthesizes their arguments from their multiple letters to understand their doctrine of baptism. This project also attempts to discover alternative reasons, if any, other than Scripture, for their doctrinal positions. Baptism is an important function in the Christian church. By better knowing the origins of the divide among Protestants today concerning baptism, churches cannot only understand their own theological persuasions, but also others who hold to different views on the doctrine of baptism.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BALTHASAR HUBMAIER'S DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM

Balthasar Hubmaier was a significant Protestant Reformer during the sixteenth century. He was the pastor of a small town church in Waldshut, Germany. Hubmaier's influence was far reaching in both Waldshut and the surrounding area. While he was a pastor in Waldshut, the city became a reformed stronghold. While many reformers in southern Germany had some degree of difficulty introducing reformation principles in their city, Hubmaier quickly led Waldshut to accept the reformation. Hubmaier's various writings persuaded other leaders to accept his theological ideas. Conrad Grebel, an Anabaptist leader, was waiting for Hubmaier to write on the issue of baptism.<sup>11</sup> The printing press allowed for the rapid and mass publication of writings. The pastor from Waldshut also used public debates to influence others to accept his teachings.

Hubmaier not only impacted Christian leaders during his lifetime, but his influence changed and strengthened later reformers and Protestant movements. Hubmaier had a significant influence on the Swiss Brethren that originated out of Zurich. The Swiss Brethren were the beginning of the Anabaptist wing of the Reformation. While Hubmaier did not completely agree with the Swiss Brethren, they did agree on the doctrine of baptism. Anabaptist leaders throughout the next century used Hubmaier's defense of believers' baptism extensively.<sup>12</sup> Hubmaier's writings became a reference for

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<sup>11</sup> Rollin S. Armour, *Anabaptist Baptism: A Representative Study* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press 1966), 27.

<sup>12</sup> Most Anabaptist historians (Armour, Bergsten, and Pipkin) group Hubmaier with what became known as regular Anabaptists. However, Hubmaier disagreed with some foundational principles that the later Anabaptists championed. Anabaptists reject Christians participating in the military or civil functions, while Hubmaier accepted and encouraged believers to participate in government. While the Anabaptists affirmed Hubmaier's doctrine concerning baptism, much of their agreement ends with baptism.

those who defended infant baptism. The reformer would also write influential books about the separation between church and state, religious persecution, and the freedom of the will.

The theology of Balthasar Hubmaier is unique in its independence from other theologians. Hubmaier was fully committed to accepting doctrine only from Scripture. The early 1520's was the birth of the reformation. Hubmaier agreed with other theologians only when he believed they were agreeing with Scripture. Hubmaier took part in the Second Zurich Disputation, which was predominantly a debate between Zwingli and the Swiss Brethren. Hubmaier was not a member or complete supporter of either group, but rather was independent of both. During the First Zurich Disputation Hubmaier agreed with Zwingli on the doctrine of *sola scriptura*. However, he disagreed with Zwingli on the Eucharist. During the Second Zurich Disputation, Hubmaier remained an independent theologian.<sup>13</sup> Mabry writes, "Instead of being a disciple of either party, Hubmaier seems more to have had his own positions on the various issues, on the basis of which he acts independently of each group."<sup>14</sup> Hubmaier's theological independence resulted in conflict with Zwingli and disagreement with most other reformers.

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<sup>13</sup> Kirk R. MacGregor, *The Sacramental Theology of Balthasar Hubmaier* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America 2006), 105-106.

<sup>14</sup> Eddie Mabry, *Balthasar Hubmaier's Doctrine of the Church* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America 1994), 50.



## Hubmaier's Life

Much of Hubmaier's beginnings remain unknown. He was born in the city of Freidburg in lower Germany. His date of birth is unknown but it is likely sometime between 1480 and 1485.<sup>15</sup> Limited information is known about Hubmaier's parents. However, they apparently had some financial resources, since they sent Hubmaier to school in nearby Augsburg.<sup>16</sup> John Eck, Hubmaier's future teacher, wrote once that Hubmaier came from a poor home.<sup>17</sup> At the Augsburg school he learned grammar, Latin, and other basic subjects.

From Augsburg, Hubmaier attended the University of Freidburg. He entered the university as a clerical student. Hubmaier received his Bachelor of Arts degree after one year of study. During this period, Hubmaier was not only a student, but also a priest.<sup>18</sup> He studied under John Eck, who would later become famous by debating Martin Luther. Because Hubmaier's parents could not afford to pay his university tuition, he briefly taught in the city of Schaffhausen. After briefly a brief stint teaching, he continued his studies in Freidburg. During this period, Eck became a mentor to Hubmaier. Eck left Freidburg in the fall of 1510 to teach at the University of Ingolstadt.

In February 1512, just over one year after Eck left Friedburg, Hubmaier followed him and became a student at the University of Ingolstadt. In September, 1512, Hubmaier

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<sup>15</sup> Torsten Bergsten, *Balthasar Hubmaier: Anabaptist Theologian and Martyr*, William R. Estep trans. (Valley Forge: PA: Judson 1978), 48-49.

<sup>16</sup> Estep, *Anabaptist Story*, 77.

<sup>17</sup> Bergsten, *Anabaptist Theologian*, 49.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

received his Doctorate of Theology from the University of Ingolstadt.<sup>19</sup> He then became a professor of theology at the university. Hubmaier was also a priest at the largest church in the city.<sup>20</sup> He was a successful preacher who became well known for his messages. By 1515 Hubmaier was the vice-rector of Ingolstadt University. Hubmaier was trained and raised thoroughly as a Roman Catholic. There is no reason to suspect that at this point in his life he questioned the official church.

In 1516 the young priest left Ingolstadt to become the preacher of the cathedral in Regensburg. This is the same period of time when Martin Luther nailed his *95 Theses* to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, to begin the Protestant Reformation. Hubmaier soon became a popular preacher in Regensburg. With his popularity he gained influence in the city. He led Regensburg in expelling the Jewish residents. Once they were gone, he used their synagogue as a shrine to the Virgin Mary and claimed that many miracles were performed there. As a result, the town soon became a popular pilgrimage site for Catholics. While the business community in the city enjoyed the new travelers, local monks did not approve of the new attention in Regensburg. Although Hubmaier was popular among his congregation, the monks forced him to leave.

Hubmaier accepted an invitation to become the pastor at the church in Waldshut. He began his ministry in Waldshut in 1521, when Luther's reform was spreading rapidly around Germany. While at his new church, Hubmaier began to read some of Luther's writings. The new Waldshut preacher soon became persuaded by the Lutheran doctrine of *sola scriptura*. Hubmaier met Erasmus in 1522, which would have likely furthered his

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<sup>19</sup> Estep, *Anabaptist Story*, 78-79.

<sup>20</sup> Bergsten, *Anabaptist Theologian*, 50.

conviction to search the Scriptures on all matters of faith.<sup>21</sup> This commitment to Scripture is essential in understanding Hubmaier as a reformer. Hubmaier did not universally follow any other reformer. He was not Lutheran, Zwinglian, nor a member of the Swiss Brethren. Hubmaier joined the Reformation just at the beginning of the Reformation. There was no “Reformation” doctrine except for the authority of Scripture. In Waldshut, Hubmaier increasingly studied and preached from the Bible. The new evangelical pastor became popular in Waldshut, to both the people and the city council.

Hubmaier soon began interacting with the Swiss reform led by Ulrich Zwingli. Waldshut was a close northern neighbor to Zurich; it was predictable that the reformers would interact.<sup>22</sup> Hubmaier participated in Zwingli’s First Zurich Disputation in 1523.<sup>23</sup> Many aspects of the reform were discussed, including baptism. During this disputation, Hubmaier advocated ending the practice of paedobaptism (infant baptism) and replacing it with believers’ baptism.

Hubmaier quickly embraced more drastic doctrines than Zwingli. In 1524, the German reformer wrote *Achtzehn Schlussreden* (Eighteen Articles) which were eighteen theses of his theology.<sup>24</sup> Believers’ baptism is mentioned in article eight, implying that believers’ baptism has already been implemented in Waldshut by the time of publishing. A third party account agrees with Hubmaier’s assertion that Zwingli disapproved of baptizing infants in 1523. Sebastian Ruckensperger noted, “Hubmör conferred with

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<sup>21</sup> Estep, *Anabaptist Story*, 80.

<sup>22</sup> Waldshut and Zurich are about 28 miles (45 km) away from each other. On the other hand, Luther’s home in Wittenberg is 507 miles (816 km) from Waldshut and 522 miles (841 km) away from Zurich. Hubmaier never met Luther while Zwingli met Luther once in 1529.

<sup>23</sup> MacGregor, *Sacramental Theology*, 106.

<sup>24</sup> P&Y, *Hubmaier*, 30.

Zwingli in the Zurich Graben regarding the Scriptures on baptism; there Zwingli said Hubmör was right . . . to baptize children after they have been instructed in the faith.”<sup>25</sup> This third party account confirms that Zwingli had agreed at the time that paedobaptism was not biblical.

Hubmaier released the constraint placed upon clergy, barring them from marriage. He had written in *Achtzen Schulssreden* that “To forbid marriage to priests and then tolerate their carnal immorality is to free Barabbas and to kill Christ. To promise chastity in human strength is nothing other than to promise to fly over the sea without wings.”<sup>26</sup> On January 13, 1525, Hubmaier married Elizabeth Hugline.<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth was committed to her husband and the reform he was instituting. She fled with him when he was escaping the Catholic authorities. In their last days, when he was enduring torture, Elizabeth was imploring her husband not to recant. Three days after her husband’s death Elizabeth was drowned in the Danube River.<sup>28</sup>

In April 1525, Wilhelm Reublin, an early reformer who supported believer’s baptism, baptized Hubmaier. Kirk MacGregor argues that Hubmaier had ceased baptizing infants sometime between 1521 and January 1523.<sup>29</sup> However, he had not been baptized, according to MacGregor, because he was ordained which excluded him from

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<sup>25</sup> MacGregor, *Sacramental Theology*, 107.

<sup>26</sup> Hubmaier, *Achtzen Schulssreden*, in *Hubmaier*, PY, 34.

<sup>27</sup> Bergsten, *Anabaptist Theologian*, 205-6. Coincidentally, Luther married Katie von Bora in the same year as Hubmaier married Elizabeth.

<sup>28</sup> Drowning was a common punishment by both Catholics and Protestants for those who practice “rebaptism.” For the authorities, it was the heretics’ “third baptism.”

<sup>29</sup> MacGregor, *Hubmaier*, 106-8.

the necessity of baptism.<sup>30</sup> Reublin had been expelled from Zurich for preaching against a distinct office of bishop. While preaching in Waldshut, in all likelihood, he preached the same message that expelled him from Zurich. However, Hubmaier responded to this message by being baptized by Reublin and then baptizing the other clergy members. If MacGregor is correct that Hubmaier had been practicing believers' baptism since about 1522, then the Swiss Brethren would likely have heard about the new practice in the nearby church.<sup>31</sup> If Hubmaier had already been baptizing confessing believers, then the Brethren would have already seen a precedent of believers' baptism. This would likely embolden them more on their conviction in 1525 of believers' baptism.

Zwingli and Hubmaier had a respectful friendship beginning in 1523. However, they would soon become theological enemies. Infant baptism had already ceased in Waldshut by the time Conrad Grebel began to lead his movement in Zurich. Ulrich Zwingli strongly opposed the Grebel group. When Zwingli began writing against believers' baptism, he was opposing the practice in Zurich. However, Hubmaier soon began defending the Swiss Brethren's baptism. This resulted in a heated written debate between Hubmaier and Zwingli concerning the proper candidate of baptism. His writings on baptism provided both an argument for believers' baptism and against infant baptism.

In less than a year, however, the Austrian army was closing in on Waldshut. Hubmaier had little choice but to flee. He left on December 5, 1525 and escaped with his wife to nearby Zurich. Zwingli soon captured Hubmaier and, under torture, he recanted his beliefs on baptism. He wrote his recantation and was going to publicly recant in the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 106.

Fraumunster church. However, instead of recanting in public, he defended believers' baptism. He was then arrested and, under torture, Hubmaier again recanted his beliefs.

Once released from Zurich, Hubmaier entered the town of Nikolsburg. This town was religiously open and allowed reformers. The Anabaptist reformation grew rapidly at Nikolsburg. Hubmaier is estimated to have baptized at least six thousand people during his brief time in the city.<sup>32</sup> An Anabaptist printer named Froschauer came to Nikolsburg and published many of Hubmaier's works. Hubmaier had a chance to write many of his books during this time. The last writing in Nikolsburg was titled *On the Sword* that supported Christians being involved in all phases of government. This was Hubmaier's most successful period of ministry in his lifetime.

On August 28, 1527 Hubmaier and his wife were arrested by Catholic authorities.<sup>33</sup> They were taken to Vienna, and then held in the castle of Kreuzenstein. Seven months later, he returned to Vienna to be tortured. This time, while he was under duress, Hubmaier offered no recantation. His torturers rubbed gunpowder and sulfur in his beard as he was led to the pile of sticks. On March 10, 1528, Balthasar Hubmaier became a martyr for his Christian faith. He died boldly without wavering in his faith. During the execution, his wife encouraged him to stay faithful. Three days after Hubmaier's death, the officials drowned Elizabeth.

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<sup>32</sup> Estep, *Anabaptist Story*, 94.

<sup>33</sup> How and where Hubmaier and Elizabeth were captured is not known. Ferdinand I, the Holy Roman Emperor, had ordered that Hubmaier, along with Hans Hut, be arrested. Ferdinand enacted the decree just two weeks before Hubmaier's arrest.

## Doctrine of Baptism

Balthasar Hubmaier was one of the first theologians of the Reformation period to begin practicing believers' baptism. Hubmaier has reached this conclusion after re-examining doctrines in light of *sola scriptura*. Hubmaier, along with some other reformers, concluded that there was no example of paedobaptism (infant baptism) in Scripture, so they baptized believers on the basis of a confession of faith. However, most reformers continued the practice of infant baptism, although the theology behind the baptism was altered.<sup>34</sup> This resulted in a division among reformers because of baptism. Hubmaier defended his new practice of believers' baptism on the basis of Scripture. While his theology was primarily derived from Scripture, he also used logical reasoning and the church fathers to defend believers' baptism. Contemporary and later Anabaptist reformers adopted Hubmaier's theology concerning baptism.

In the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, all doctrines were being examined under the qualification of *sola scriptura*. Hubmaier stated, "judge in your minds and consciences according to the simple Word of God. Let the Word of God alone be peacemaker and judge. Then you will not err."<sup>35</sup> The Bible is the primary source that Hubmaier used to defend his interpretation of baptism. His arguments for believers' baptism and against infant baptism were based on his convictions from Scripture.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Luther only moderately altered the Catholic interpretation. Luther taught that baptism was a sacrament that conveyed grace to the one being baptized. Zwingli, as noted elsewhere, saw baptism only as a sign. Signs did not provide any grace to the believer.

<sup>35</sup> Hubmaier, *On The Christian Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier PY*, 99.

<sup>36</sup> This section will only examine Hubmaier's arguments for believers' baptism. Chapter four shows his arguments against infant baptism based upon the Bible.

Since the second or third century, infant baptism has been the traditional practice of the church.<sup>37</sup> Church fathers Cyprian of Carthage and Augustine of Hippo were foundational to the later Roman Catholic understanding of baptism in post-Constantine Christendom.<sup>38</sup> Concern for the salvation of infants led to baptizing the children of believers in the third century. Hubmaier was educated in the historical development of church doctrine and he understood that he was standing against the traditions developed over centuries. However, the principle of *sola scriptura* led him to reject infant baptism.

The most frequent argument Hubmaier used for believers' baptism was that baptism followed faith as a result of biblical teaching. For Hubmaier, in every example in the Bible, faith preceded baptism.<sup>39</sup> He used many examples from Scripture to reinforce his point. One passage Hubmaier used is Mark 16:15-16, where Jesus instructed His disciples to "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."<sup>40</sup> From this passage, Hubmaier pointed out three commands by Jesus to the apostles. The first command is preaching, the second is faith, and only then should outward baptism happen.<sup>41</sup>

Hubmaier argued that the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus were two different baptisms. If Christ's baptism was for believers only, then John's baptism had to

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<sup>37</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell 2001), 528.

<sup>38</sup> Cyprian of Carthage died in 258 while Augustine of Hippo died 430. Their writings were heavily used by later Roman Catholic Theologians. The teachings on baptism by the two men influenced, and continue to influence, the Catholic understanding of baptism.

<sup>39</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier PY*, 101.

<sup>40</sup> All Bible references in this paper are from the English Standard Version (ESV) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2005).

<sup>41</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier PY*, 115.



be different. The interpretation of John's baptismal theology was important during the baptismal debate. John's baptism was only for a short period of time, mostly before the ministry of Christ.<sup>42</sup> Christian baptism begins after the resurrection of Christ.<sup>43</sup> David Steinmetz sums up Hubmaier's theology of John's baptism that, "John is a preacher who drives men to Christ, not an apostle who administers Christ's baptism."<sup>44</sup>

In the book of Acts, the apostle Paul came across about a dozen men who were baptized by John. However, they had not known about the death and resurrection of Christ and the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost. Since John's ministry was devoted to preparing the way for the Messiah, the men had no trouble accepting Paul's teaching about Jesus. John Pohill notes, "They [the disciples of John] knew only John's preparatory message. But John had prepared them well, and they immediately responded to Paul's good news that Christ the Messiah had come."<sup>45</sup> Paul baptized them with the baptism of Christ. John's baptism was not adequate; the apostle felt it was necessary to baptize them in the name of Christ.

Hubmaier used Acts 19 to demonstrate that the baptism of John and Jesus were not the same. Acts 19, according to Hubmaier, recorded the only proper example of rebaptism. He noted that there is an "obvious and tangible distinction between the two

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<sup>42</sup> Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1:19-34; 3:22-36.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16.

<sup>44</sup> David C. Steinmetz, "The baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus in Huldrych Zwingli, Balthasar Hubmaier and late medieval theology," in *Continuity and Discontinuity in Church History* (Leiden, MA: Brill 1979), 178.

<sup>45</sup> John B. Pohill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 399.

kinds of baptism.”<sup>46</sup> The baptism by John was administered to bring people to recognize their sins and to point to the coming Messiah. This was different from the Christian baptism that required belief and faith in Christ. John’s purpose was to point to Christ as the true physician and following him (John) was not sufficient.<sup>47</sup> Hubmaier wrote, “Now John pointed his disciples away from himself and directed them to Christ, who takes away the sins of the world, makes alive, and pardons sins.”<sup>48</sup>

An important aspect of Hubmaier’s interpretation of John’s baptism is that it was only administered to those who chose to repent. John had two roles as a prophet: to preach and baptize. Hubmaier observed that only those to whom he preached and who accepted his teaching were baptized.<sup>49</sup> John baptized only those who recognized their sins. Hubmaier provided an order of the baptism of John. First, John, as a prophet, preached the words of God to the people. Second, the people listened to the message. Third, those who were listening recognized their sin and repented. The fourth step was to baptize those who had repented of their former life. Finally, those who had been baptized lived a changed life and bore fruit. For Hubmaier, the most important aspect of John’s baptism was that only those who willingly repented were baptized. This was the same model that the apostles used for the church. Only those who were taught and repented were to be baptized.

Baptism is necessary for proper order in the church. According to Hubmaier, “Where there is no water baptism, there is not church nor minister, neither brother nor

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<sup>46</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier PY*, 104.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

sister, no brotherly admonition, excommunication, or reacceptance.”<sup>50</sup> Hubmaier understood baptism as an essential element of a functioning church. Baptism was necessary to recognize the visible church.<sup>51</sup> He writes, “There must also exist an outward confession or testimony through which visible brothers and sisters can know each other, since faith exists only in the heart.”<sup>52</sup> Along with entrance into the church, baptism allowed for discipline by the church. Once someone was baptized, they became accountable to the church. Hubmaier wrote, “But when he receives the baptism of water the one who is baptized testifies publicly that he has pledged himself henceforth to live according to the Rule of Christ. By virtue of this pledge he has submitted himself to sisters, brothers, and to the church so that when he transgresses they now have the authority to admonish, punish, ban, and reaccept him.”<sup>53</sup> Baptism is the entrance rite for the new believer to enter into fellowship of the local church. Members of the church body have the authority to rebuke him if he lives in a manner inconsistent with Scripture. Hubmaier writes in his *Summa of the Entire Christian Life* (1525) that, “he [the baptized believer] has surrendered himself already to live henceforth according to the Word . . . he herewith submits and surrenders to brotherly discipline according to the order of Christ.”<sup>54</sup> Hubmaier’s baptism officially marked full membership into the visible church.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>51</sup> There are generally two understandings of church. The first is called the “universal church.” This consists of all believers across the world and throughout history. The universal church can be thought of as the spiritual church that all believers belong. The second form of church is the local congregation gathering as a body of believers. This can be called the “visible church.” The visible church is the physical church whose members can be seen and counted. Hubmaier viewed baptism as an entrance into the local visible church.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Hubmaier, *Summa of the Entire Christian Life*, in Hubmaier PY, 85-86.

Regardless of the human understanding of baptism, Hubmaier noted that it is commanded by God and, therefore, must be obeyed. Even if the purpose is unclear, Christians must obey the commands of Christ. Hubmaier reported that, “God demands from us the most trifling and most unattractive works in order to test us and to cast down our worldly wisdom.”<sup>55</sup> The washing in water is not important, but obeying the command of Christ. Hubmaier pointed out that the name of each member of the Trinity was to be used in the baptismal formula. Hubmaier noted, “nowhere else in the Old or New Testaments can we find such high words put together in such an explicit and clear way. From this we realize once again the seriousness with which Christ wills that those who have been instructed in faith should be baptized. For a serious command demands serious obedience and fulfillment.”<sup>56</sup> Submission to baptism as a believer is obeying the direct command of Christ. Hubmaier warned, “Whoever does not do this is to be punished with many blows, as a servant knowing the will of His Lord.”<sup>57</sup> To ignore baptism, or to use baptism in another form, was to disobey the direct command of God. The Waldshut reformer recognized that baptism had no impact on salvation. However, given an opportunity, a true believer would be baptized out of obedience to Christ.

Hubmaier placed such an emphasis on baptism that he was charged with tying baptism and salvation together. After 1525 Hubmaier consistently taught that salvation was by faith alone. Baptism did not and could not save anyone. He wrote,

If now a person who has been brought through the Word of God to recognition of his sin confesses himself to be a sinner, and is further taught by the Word of God

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<sup>55</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier PY*, 126.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

that he should call upon God the Father for the forgiveness of his sin for the sake of Christ, and if he does that in faith and does not doubt anything, then God has cleansed his heart in this faith and trust and has remitted him of all his sin.<sup>58</sup>

Baptism or another kind of work cannot save because “salvation is bound neither to baptism nor to works of mercy. Being unbaptized does not condemn us, nor do evil works, but only unfaith.”<sup>59</sup> However, to Hubmaier, a true believer would be baptized if given the opportunity, “If he had been a true believer, then he would have taken the sign of Christ-believing onto himself.”<sup>60</sup> Baptism is not optional for the believer, because it is commanded by Christ.<sup>61</sup> For Hubmaier, baptism does not determine salvation, but a true believer would obey Christ and be baptized when given the opportunity.

Hubmaier does attempt to unite baptism and salvation by faith together. He proposes a hypothetical situation:

Indeed they [unbaptized believers] also could have said, ‘Yes, we do believe, yes, some of us have also already received the Holy Spirit. What need do we have of baptism? Faith saves us.’ No, not so. He who believes lets himself be baptized and does not continue to argue, because where water and a person to baptize him can be found, he has the order of Christ before his eyes. However, where the two not available, their faith is enough.<sup>62</sup>

An unbaptized believer is saved only if they did not have the opportunity to be baptized.

A true believer would accept baptism if given the opportunity. He wrote, “Without a doubt many thousands have been saved who have not been baptized, because they had no

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>59</sup> Hubmaier, *Dialogue with Zwingli's Baptism Book*, in *Hubmaier PY*, 191.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>61</sup> H. Wayne Pipkin, “The Baptismal Theology of Balthasar Hubmaier”, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 65 (January 1991): 47.

<sup>62</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier PY*, 124.

possibility to be baptized.”<sup>63</sup> But to those who have the opportunity yet are not baptized, “Christ would have considered him to be a despiser and transgressor of his words and he would have been punished accordingly.”<sup>64</sup> In Hubmaier’s theology, baptism was the next step in obedience after repentance and faith.

While Hubmaier is mostly known as a theologian, he was also a pastor. He had a great concern for his parishioners and the religious condition of their children. The religious culture had always taught that baptism conferred grace to the infant. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) taught that infants are condemned with Adam, but they can receive salvation by Christ through baptism.<sup>65</sup> Many people in Hubmaier’s congregation in Waldshut were concerned about the salvation of their children. Many parents were likely concerned about the possibility that their pastor could be wrong.

Hubmaier was sensitive while discussing unbaptized infants. Parents were concerned about their unbaptized children’s fate. The foundation of Hubmaier’s doctrine could not allow infant baptism. One receives salvation only when a person makes a decision to repent by faith. Parents naturally asked, ‘What then, happens to infants or young children who die?’ Hubmaier admitted that Scripture teaches that through Adam’s sin all are condemned.<sup>66</sup> However, he left open the hope that God would receive them. He wrote, “the hand of the Lord is not short, he does what he wills . . . He is Lord. He

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>65</sup> Bryan D. Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate 2006), 147.

<sup>66</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier* PY, 139.

has mercy upon whomever he wills.”<sup>67</sup> He added, “he can save the infants very well by grace since they know neither good nor evil.”<sup>68</sup> Hubmaier admitted that he viewed himself ignorant on the subject because it is not clearly revealed in Scripture. He did plead and hope that God would be merciful to them. Without a clear directive from the Bible, he concluded that there is nothing more to do than to commit the infants to the Father’s hands and ask that His will be done.<sup>69</sup>

Another indication of Hubmaier’s character as a pastor is shown by the fact that, he baptized ill infants if the parents insisted. While this practice contradicted his teachings, he conceded to baptize the infant to reassure and console the parents. Hubmaier wrote in a letter to a friend, “If there are parents of a sick child at a given time, who most earnestly wish the child to be baptized, I baptize it. In this matter, I take on the sickness myself along with the sickly little ones, but only for a time, until better instructed.”<sup>70</sup> This helps explain why that while Hubmaier affirmed believers’ baptism and condemning infant baptism, he would, on occasion, baptize infants.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 140-141.

<sup>70</sup> Hubmaier, *A Letter to Oecolampad*, in *Hubmaier PY*, 72.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ULRICH ZWINGLI'S DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM

Ulrich Zwingli is often referred to as the third man of the Reformation.<sup>71</sup> After Luther and Calvin, he was perhaps the third most important reformer.<sup>72</sup> Zwingli began the Swiss Reformation. While Luther was starting the reformation in Wittenberg, Zwingli was beginning to question certain Catholic teachings and focusing on Scripture. The Swiss reformer became the leader of the Zurich church and implemented many reforms there. More than any other reformer he used academic disputations to implement reform. While partnering with the city council of Zurich, Zwingli introduced many radical reforms in the city church. While he was largely a religious leader he also tried to form an alliance among the Swiss cantons. Zwingli only lived about ten years as a reformer. He died in battle defending Zurich.

While Luther would become the founder of the Lutherans and Calvin would develop the Reformed church, Zwingli did not begin a widespread church. There is no Zwinglian church, although if he had lived longer perhaps there would be. He influenced many others, however, including Calvin. The Swiss Reformation provided the opportunity for John Calvin to preach and write in Geneva. Lee Wandel wrote, “Zwingli’s theology shaped the Reformed tradition fundamentally-in its orientation to politics, its activist ethic, its understanding of the nature of Christ’s ‘presence’ in the

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<sup>71</sup> A biography of Zwingli’s life uses this description. Jean Rilliet, *Zwingli, Third Man of the Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1964).

<sup>72</sup> A persuasive argument could be made for Desiderius Erasmus as the third most influential person in the reformation. Erasmus was likely more influential to the Reformation. However, he was not a reformer like Luther, Calvin, or Zwingli. Erasmus remained committed to the Catholic Church throughout his life.



world, and its sense of itself as working God's will in the world."<sup>73</sup> Zwingli's humanism shaped the Reformation in a manner that complemented Luther's emphasis on justification by faith.

Humanism was popular in the Swiss territories during Zwingli's childhood. He was likely introduced to humanistic thought in his University studies. Zwingli was an independent reformer. He was influenced by people such as Erasmus, Luther, and his university professor, Heinrich Wölflin. However, his reform was largely due to his study of the Scripture, specifically from Erasmus' Greek New Testament. In Zwingli's only meeting with Luther, they agreed on most matters of doctrine except for the mass. The Swiss reformer strongly supported an original understanding of the mass. Rather than the literal bread and blood of Christ, the mass (or what he called the Lord's Supper) was a memorial of Christ's death. Zwingli's theological independence led to a unique Swiss reform that would later be advanced by John Calvin.

### **Zwingli's Life**

Ulrich Zwingli was raised in a wealthy family. He was born on January 1, 1484 in the Swiss canton St. Gall. His father owned a farm in the Toggenburg Valley.<sup>74</sup> The farm provided prosperity for the family. Zwingli began to learn Latin from his uncle at an early age.<sup>75</sup> His uncle was the priest and dean at the school in Wesen.<sup>76</sup> Zwingli was born into an educated family and had ample opportunity to succeed academically.

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<sup>73</sup> Lee Palmer Wandel, "Zwingli, Huldrych," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, vol. 4 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 323.

<sup>74</sup> The region of Toggenburg is known for their goats. A Toggenburg goat is a special breed that produces more milk than the average goat. Zwingli would often refer to farming in his writings.

<sup>75</sup> Wandel, "Zwingli," 320.

Unlike Luther, Calvin or Hubmaier, Zwingli did not have a doctorate.<sup>77</sup>

However, what he lacked in education he compensated for in hard work studying Scripture. Zwingli attended many schools before receiving any degree. The reason that the young scholar attended so many schools is uncertain. He learned Latin from his uncle until 1496. He then attended the school in Bern where he learned from the humanist teacher, Heinrich Wölflin. He studied at Bern from 1496 to 1498. After Bern, Zwingli attended the University of Vienna from 1498 to 1502. Finally, Zwingli received both his bachelor's degree and master's degree from the University of Basel in 1504 and 1506 respectively. While Zwingli never received a doctorate, his academic ability was impressive.

Shortly after receiving his master's degree, Zwingli became the parish priest of Glarus in 1506. Glarus was the smallest of the Swiss cantons. He was the priest there for ten years. Bruce Gordon summarizes the basic responsibilities of a Swiss priest: "The priest was to celebrate the Sunday mass and preach; he baptized children, administered last rites, and buried the dead."<sup>78</sup> In Glarus, Zwingli was also the leader to the mercenary forces. However, by 1515 he began to oppose the use of mercenaries. The next year Zwingli met Erasmus and agreed with his idea that Christianity must be based on Scripture alone. This seems to be the beginning point of Zwingli's personal reformation.

In 1516 Zwingli left Glarus and became the priest in the Einsiedeln canton. His new home was a popular pilgrimage site. Zwingli would only stay there for three years,

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Luther was a Bible professor at Wittenberg, where he earned his doctorate. Calvin had a doctorate in law from Orléans. Balthasar Hubmaier also had a doctorate in theology from the University of Ingolstadt.

<sup>78</sup> Bruce Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation* (New York: Manchester University Press 2002), 27.

but during this time he became more dissatisfied with the Catholic Church. Because of the influence of Erasmus, Zwingli began diligently studying the New Testament. Most of his study was from Erasmus' Greek New Testament, published in 1516. Like his dissatisfaction with the mercenary forces, Zwingli soon began preaching against pilgrimages. Zwingli's humanism and biblical teachings made him popular among the people.

The Great Minster Church in the canton of Zurich was searching for a new priest in 1518. The leaders chose Zwingli to be their next priest. On January 1, 1519 Zwingli began preaching messages from the Gospel of Matthew. His popularity grew in Zurich and he soon distanced himself from the official church and taught from Scripture alone. During this period, Luther's reform was growing in northern Germany. One year after the Diet of Worms, in 1522 Zwingli began preaching against the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>79</sup> By preaching against the Church, Zwingli officially broke from the church and became a part of the Reformation.

Unlike other reformers, Zwingli brought reform by academic debates. Luther used the printing press primarily to bring reform while Calvin used the power of the state. Zwingli on the other hand would debate a specific topic and the city council would come to a verdict. The first disputation occurred in January, 1523. It was an academic debate between Zwingli and the Catholic theologian Johann Faber. Faber, however, refused to debate before the city council. He would have debated Zwingli before a university or a

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<sup>79</sup> The Diet of Worms was where Luther was declared a heretic by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Worms is a town in Germany where the meeting was held. After the Diet, Luther was hidden in the Wartburg Castle for 10 months. Many, if not most, had assumed that he was killed by authorities.

church, but not a city council.<sup>80</sup> Since there was no refutation of Zwingli's teachings, the city council approved of his reform.

After reading the judgment of the council, Faber began objecting to the council's conclusions. He argued that many practices are not found in Scripture yet are useful and beneficial to the church. Zwingli denounced the suggestion that a religious practice could be instituted apart from Scripture. Referring to Matthew 15, Zwingli wrote, "Here we hear that God is our law and teaching, and if it did not come from Him, then He will not have it."<sup>81</sup> Zwingli asserted that all religious traditions must be grounded in the Bible. He demanded that Faber defend the religious practices with Scripture.<sup>82</sup>

The disputation was a success for Zwingli. Wandel notes that "Perhaps Zwingli's biggest victory in this disputation was the town council's formal endorsement of the principle of *sola scriptura* and, along with it, Zwingli's evangelical preaching."<sup>83</sup> The Zurich religious reform was grounded in the belief that all Christian teaching must be based upon Scripture. Zwingli won the support of the city council and was granted the authority to teach and preach from the Scriptures.

Zwingli immediately returned the support he received from the city council. Shortly after the first disputation he wrote, "And to you, my lords of Zurich, the Almighty, Eternal God will no doubt grant power and strength in other matters, since you have defended the truth of God, the Holy Gospel, and supported its preaching in your

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<sup>80</sup> John Howard Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: an historical and theological analysis of the dialogues between Anabaptists and Reformers* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press 2004), 7.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Wandel, "Zwingli," 321.

territory. Have no doubts concerning this. The Almighty God will compensate you in other ways and will reward you. Amen!”<sup>84</sup> Yoder points out that the beginning steps of Zwingli’s reform were judged and approved by the Zurich city council.<sup>85</sup> Zwingli’s praise of the council is a reflection of his respect and fear of the council. While Zwingli’s first argument was successful, he knew that he needed their support for future matters. His close connection to the city council of Zurich continued for the duration of Zwingli’s life.

A second disputation was held just ten months after the first. This proved to be just as successful for Zwingli. The Zurich church rid itself of images and altered the understanding of the Mass. Zwingli taught that religious images had become idols and must be removed. Concerning the Mass, Zwingli wanted to reform the practice more slowly. He desired the church to be unified in its reform. He feared that suddenly altering the Mass would result in schism in the church.<sup>86</sup> The second disputation was also much more popular with nine hundred people attending.<sup>87</sup>

A third disputation was held in 1524. This disputation, however, proved to be the most problematic for Zwingli. Estep notes that the third disputation met for only one reason: to calm the escalating revolt by the Swiss Brethren about baptism.<sup>88</sup> Perhaps because reform was occurring so quickly in Zurich, the Swiss Brethren wanted to alter

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<sup>84</sup> Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation*, 8.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>87</sup> W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 36.

<sup>88</sup> William R. Estep, *Renaissance & Reformation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans 1986), 183.

the church in a more profound way. The group of young radicals was led by Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz. Some parents in Zurich began to refuse to have their children baptized. This resulted in religious chaos in the large canton. A disputation was scheduled for January, 1525 to attempt to resolve the matter. The city council affirmed infant baptism and they ordered that all infants must be baptized.<sup>89</sup>

The final period of Zwingli's life was marked by his attempts to create alliances. Due to increasing opposition from the papal forces, Zwingli and Luther met in October 1529 for the Marburg Colloquy. This is the only time that the two reformers met. Theologically, they agreed on fourteen and a half out of fifteen articles of faith. They partially disagreed on the Eucharist. Luther held that the bread and wine were the real body and blood of Christ. Zwingli believed that the bread and wine were symbols. This disagreement resulted in the two not forming an alliance.

Zwingli also attempted to create an alliance politically among the cantons. The Swiss cantons functioned largely independent of each other.<sup>90</sup> Because of the increasing threat of military opposition, Zwingli attempted to create a military alliance among the regions. He was mildly successful. Constance, Bern, and St. Gall joined together with Zurich in 1527-28. In the next year Basel, Schaffhausen, Biel, and Mühlhausen joined the alliance. Conversely, the alliance created division and distrust from the other cantons. The Catholic forces descended upon Zurich and launched a surprise attack. Zwingli rushed out to meet the army, and on October 11, 1531, the reformer from Zurich was

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<sup>89</sup> Felix Manz was killed on January 5, 1527 because of this law.

<sup>90</sup> This is still the case in Switzerland. The cantons are still largely autonomous.

killed in battle.<sup>91</sup> The Catholic army celebrated the death of the heretic and mutilated his body. Heinrich Bullinger succeeded Zwingli as priest of the Great Minster Church.

### **Doctrine of Baptism**

The doctrine of baptism was a doctrine that Zwingli had not originally thought was necessary to reform. During the Zurich reformation, Zwingli continued the practice of baptizing the children of believers into the church. However, by 1525 a small group in Zurich arose that refused to have their children baptized before faith. The Swiss Brethren became a great disturbance to Zwingli and his reform. Much of Zwingli's theology of baptism was formed (and articulated) because of the dispute in Zurich. While Zwingli was immediately arguing with the Brethren in Zurich, Hubmaier soon began defending the practice of believers' baptism and writing against Zwingli's teachings. Due to the political and religious circumstances in Zurich, Zwingli had to respond and debate Hubmaier concerning the proper candidate of baptism. Zwingli wrote in 1523, "Should anyone wish to discuss with me interest rates, tithes, unbaptized children or confirmation, I declare myself willing to respond."<sup>92</sup> Zwingli would carry on the dialogue concerning baptism for the remainder of his life.

The Zurich reformer continued with the Roman Catholic practice of infant baptism. On the surface, Zwingli's practice was the same as the Catholic method. However, he changed the underlying theology to correspond with reformation principles. For Zwingli, baptism could not have any spiritual effect. He knew that traditionally, the

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<sup>91</sup> Gordon, *Swiss Reformation*, 133.

<sup>92</sup> Article 67, in *Huldrych Zwingli Writings*, H. Wayne Pipkin trans., vol. 1 (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications 1984), 371.

church had come to understand baptism as a means of grace to the individual. He wrote, “I can only conclude that all the doctors have been in error from the time of the apostles. This is a serious and weighty assertion, and I make it with such reluctance that had I not been compelled to do so by contentious spirits I would have preferred to keep silence and simply to teach the truth.”<sup>93</sup> Zwingli rejected all forms of sacramental effects. While the church fathers were wrong, Zwingli felt that his interpretation of baptism was aligned with the apostles. He wrote, “all the doctors have ascribed to the water a power which it does not have and the holy apostles did not teach.”<sup>94</sup> Zwingli argued that while church tradition disagreed with him, Scripture was a witness that he was correct.

Baptism could no longer be considered a true sacrament that imparted special grace upon the individual. Rather, Zwingli viewed baptism as a sign of being in the community of the church. He taught that, “no external thing can make us righteous.”<sup>95</sup> Baptism was only a water sign.<sup>96</sup> Zwingli declares, “For only Jesus Christ and no external thing [sacrament] can take away the sins of us Christians and make us holy.”<sup>97</sup> In Zwingli’s theology, the clergy no longer controlled the grace bestowed upon the believer. The understanding of the sacraments was wrong, but the practice of them was acceptable. According to Zwingli, grace comes not from the priest, but from God.

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<sup>93</sup> Ulrich Zwingli, “Of Baptism,” in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, G. W. Bromiley, ed., trans. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1953), 130.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Ulrich Zwingli, 52 Article, in *Huldrych Zwingli Writings*, H. Wayne Pipkin trans., vol. 1 (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications 1984), 317.

<sup>97</sup> Zwingli, *Of Baptism*, 131.



Like Hubmaier, the baptism of John was important in Zwingli's baptismal theology. However, Zwingli's view on the baptism of John was significantly different. According to Zwingli, Christian baptism began with John the Baptist.<sup>98</sup> John's baptism in the Jordan was an initiation into Christ's kingdom. The baptism of Christ was no different from the baptism of John. Zwingli wrote, "Since, therefore, Christ received the baptism of John and made no change in it either in his own case or that of the Apostles, it is clearly established that baptism had its beginning under John, and that there was no difference between the baptism of John and that of Christ, as far as the nature, effect and purpose are concerned."<sup>99</sup> He affirmed that, "there really is no difference at all as far as the reason and purpose."<sup>100</sup> Jesus affirmed John's baptism by being baptized by the prophet.<sup>101</sup> The baptism of John provided a link between the old covenant and the new covenant, which is important for Zwingli's theology.

Zwingli taught John's baptism the same as the baptism of the apostles. In addition, John's message was the same as the apostles.<sup>102</sup> It seems necessary that if the apostles seamlessly continued John's baptism without any change, then the messages of both John and the apostles must be the same. The pastor from Zurich wrote, "it follows that if their baptisms of teachings were the same, their baptisms of water also were the

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<sup>98</sup> Zwingli, *Of Baptism*, in *Zwingli & Bullinger*, Bromiley, 161. The proper noun "John" is often used in this thesis. In each example "John" is referring to John the Baptist.

<sup>99</sup> Ulrich Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, Samuel Macauley Jackson and Clarence Nevin Heller eds., trans. (1929; repr., Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press 1981), 192.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>102</sup> Zwingli, *Of Baptism*, in *Zwingli & Bullinger*, Bromiley, 166.

same. The character of their teachings is the same.”<sup>103</sup> Zwingli concluded that both the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus demanded a new life.<sup>104</sup> This new life was a result of repentance and the changing of their previous life.

A difficult passage for Zwingli’s interpretation that the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus was the same is Acts 19:1-10. This passage includes the story of Paul baptizing a group of John’s disciples that already had been baptized by John. They had not heard about Jesus or the Holy Spirit. After hearing Paul they were baptized (again) “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” This passage seems to indicate that John’s baptism was not sufficient. Zwingli, however, argued that the word “baptism” means “teaching.”<sup>105</sup> Zwingli understood this passage to not refer to baptism of water, but acceptance of teaching. These disciples “were not adequately instructed in the teaching of John, however far they thought they had progressed therein.”<sup>106</sup> Zwingli also added, “Having, therefore, believed up to this time that they held to the teaching of John correctly, they found, as Paul recited its essentials, that they were still far from the complete teaching.” These disciples, according to Zwingli, did not understand and accept John’s message. Thus, Paul “baptized” (taught) them the correct message concerning Jesus Christ.

The method of baptism was not as important to Zwingli as the teaching of an individual. Infants who were baptized were to be instructed in the faith once they could learn. One job of the priest was to teach the youth.<sup>107</sup> Zwingli views teaching and

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<sup>103</sup> Zwingli, *True and False*, Jackson & Heller, 193.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>107</sup> Zwingli, Article 18, *Writings*, vol. 1, 100.

baptism as independent instructions for Christians. It is permissible for someone to receive the teachings of the faith, but not baptized. Likewise, he may receive baptism without teaching.<sup>108</sup> Zwingli understood the importance of both. In Zurich, all of the youth in the city would gather twice a year for instruction in the faith.<sup>109</sup> Zwingli did not wish to have the youth grow up without the knowledge of their Christian faith. After the children who had received instruction, the leaders confirmed them as believers in the faith.<sup>110</sup> The confirmation would be public and the church recognized the youth as Christian believers.

Perhaps Zwingli's most popular argument in support of baptizing infants is that children are members of the family. He argued that the children of Christian parents "are no less sons of God than the parents, just as in the Old Testament."<sup>111</sup> For the Old Testament Israelites, the children were just as much a part of the community as their parents. Zwingli used the example that infants along with their parents crossed the sea with Moses. On that day, according to Zwingli, "All were baptized unto Moses."<sup>112</sup> He continued argument by pointing out that because infants cannot speak does not mean they are not part of the family. Just as an infant is a member of an earthly family, infants to Christian parents are members of the Christian family. Zwingli points out that in the Old Testament, children and parents are both part of God's chosen people, Israel. Zwingli

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<sup>108</sup> Zwingli, *Of Baptism*, in *Zwingli & Bullinger*, Bromiley, 142.

<sup>109</sup> Zwingli, Article 18, in *Writings*, vol. 1, 101.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>111</sup> Ulrich Zwingli, *Refutation of the Tricks of the Baptists*, in *Ulrich Zwingli: Selected Works*, Samuel Macauley Jackson ed., Henry Preble & George W. Gilmore trans. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1972), 139.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

teaches that, “not only believers then are of the church and people of God, but their children.”<sup>113</sup> The church, according to Zwingli, is not composed of only adult believers, but the entire family.

For a child to be part of God’s people, their parents must be believers. Zwingli assures that the children of believers are members of God’s family. Children could only be baptized if their parents were believers. Zwingli wrote, “we do not allow children to be brought to baptism unless their parents have first been taught.”<sup>114</sup> Zwingli knew that the infants did not have faith so he concluded that children could be baptized through the faith of their parents or godparents.<sup>115</sup> In this manner Zwingli continued the Catholic method of baptism. While those who were baptized to Christian parents were assuredly saved, what about unbaptized infants? While he is not completely sure, Zwingli admits that, “It is more likely that they will be saved than that they should be damned.”<sup>116</sup>

Zwingli in various ways stressed the unity of the old covenant and the new covenant. The two sacraments that Zwingli accepted were replacements of sacraments in the old covenant.<sup>117</sup> The two sacraments of the Old Testament were a sacrificed lamb and circumcision. Both of these were painful and involved the loss of blood. But “Christ transformed the two signs into two more gentle sacraments in which there is no shedding

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>114</sup> Zwingli, *Of Baptism*, in *Zwingli & Bullinger*, Bromiley, 146.

<sup>115</sup> Zwingli, Article 18, in *Writings*, vol. 1, 100.

<sup>116</sup> Zwingli, Article 67, in *Writings*, vol. 1, 372.

<sup>117</sup> Like Luther and Hubmaier, Zwingli accepted the Eucharist (Lord’s Supper, Mass) and Baptism as sacraments.

of blood of physical death.”<sup>118</sup> The death of the lamb was replaced in the New Testament with the Eucharist. The bread and wine became a memorial that offered thanks to God for the shedding of Christ’s blood. Likewise, the Old Testament practice of circumcision was replaced with baptism. This was the initiation of a child into the household of God. The Christian church resides under the covenant of grace. Therefore, both signs, according to Zwingli, were more gentle and friendly.

Zwingli’s religious philosophy closely resembles what is now named “Calvinistic” theology.<sup>119</sup> This outlook understands salvation is based upon God’s election of an individual. Because God has called the individual, they do not have a choice in their religion, they simple are following God’s preordained plan. Zwingli concluded that, “all things are so done and disposed by the providence of God that nothing takes place without His will or command.”<sup>120</sup> Since, according to Zwingli, God chooses whom He wills to have faith, then some children would be destined to be believers. The Zurich theologian recognized that, “God has not bound his own choice or the freedom of his will to any external or sign or deed.”<sup>121</sup> He argued that, “God freely with himself settles upon, prejudices and foreordains . . . whom he will, even before they are born.”<sup>122</sup> He argued that many of John’s disciples did not have faith, but they were baptized nonetheless. For Zwingli, because God has already chosen Christians, the

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<sup>118</sup> Zwingli, *Of Baptism*, in *Zwingli & Bullinger*, Bromiley, 132.

<sup>119</sup> While this designation is covenant, referring to Zwingli’s theology as “Calvinistic” is incorrect because Zwingli preceded John Calvin.

<sup>120</sup> Zwingli, *True and False*, Jackson & Heller, 194.

<sup>121</sup> Zwingli, *Tricks*, 224.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

occasion of baptism is not important. Being baptized as an infant or adult did not change the fact that they had been called by God to salvation. Baptism is an outward sign of this salvation.

Like his counterpart from Waldshut, Zwingli recognized different types of baptism in Scripture. The first type is the outward water immersion. This baptism is what Zwingli writes extensively. The second type of baptism is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Zwingli writes extensively on this baptism. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was only a work of God. Unlike the first type of baptism which is administered by man, the baptism of the Spirit only is given by God. Zwingli described this baptism as, “the baptism of inward teaching, calling and cleaving to God.”<sup>123</sup> Someone can receive the Spirit baptism without being baptized by water.<sup>124</sup> The third kind of baptism, for Zwingli, was baptism as teaching. Zwingli contends that, for example, John’s “baptism” included both the washing of water and his teaching.<sup>125</sup> The fourth and final kind of baptism for Zwingli is the inward faith that produces salvation. This “baptism” is the only baptism that saves individuals.<sup>126</sup> Zwingli understood the types of baptisms were the root of many of the differences between himself and Hubmaier.

The Zurich reformer understood baptism not only theologically, but he also recognized the pastoral importance of the doctrine. Throughout Catholic Europe, parents of a newborn child would bring the child to the church to be baptized. Most of the parents could not read and did not have a full understanding of religious matters.

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<sup>123</sup> Zwingli, *Of Baptism*, in *Zwingli & Bullinger*, Bromiley, 132.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

However, most understood that by baptizing their infant their child would be part of the church and, therefore, would not be condemned. Changing the current understanding among the masses would be a difficult task.<sup>127</sup> However, Zwingli continued to baptize infants in the same manner as the Catholic Church. Zwingli altered the theology to agree with the reformation principle of salvation by faith alone, but to the laity, nothing had changed. The method and the candidate was not changed, therefore was no strong opposition against Zwingli's new understanding, except for the Swiss Brethren and Hubmaier who held to believers' baptism.

Zwingli's doctrine of baptism was primarily formed as a response to the Anabaptist group in Zurich and Hubmaier's writings in defense of believers' baptism. Hence, much of Zwingli's writings are against believers' baptism rather than supporting his own doctrine. Also, it is difficult to gather Zwingli's arguments into one basic theology. Zwingli did not have a single work that contained all of his theological conclusions. One must read his many works to grasp his understanding of a single doctrine.

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<sup>127</sup> When Hubmaier instituted believers' baptism he was met with resistance among the people. He would often administer baptism to infants if the parents insisted. Zwingli, on the other hand, while he altered the meaning and theology behind baptism, he did not change the method and, as a result, did not meet the same opposition that Hubmaier faced.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### HUBMAIER'S RESPONSE TO ZWINGLI'S BAPTISM

Balthasar Hubmaier provided a comprehensive response to Ulrich Zwingli's theology of baptism. The focus of Hubmaier's response relied on the lack of Scripture supporting infant baptism. The Waldshut reformer also cited inconsistencies in Zwingli's hermeneutical principles. He also tried to remedy some of Zwingli's assumptions that Zwingli made concerning Scripture that, according to Hubmaier, were erroneous.

#### Zwingli's Agreement

For a brief time in 1523, Zwingli agreed with Hubmaier that baptizing infants is not based on Scripture and should not be the practice of the evangelical church. Zwingli would later downplay this period of his life.<sup>128</sup> However, his theological opponent would often remind him of his previous view during their written debates.<sup>129</sup> Hubmaier asserted that Zwingli also preached against infant baptism from the pulpit.<sup>130</sup> This conversation took place before baptism became problematic for the church in Zurich. Hubmaier would often remind Zwingli that he had once asserted that infant baptism was not appropriate.

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<sup>128</sup> "For some time I myself was deceived by the error and I thought it better not to baptize children until they came to years of discretion. But I was not so dogmatically of this opinion as to take the course of many today." Zwingli, *Of Baptism*, in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 139.

<sup>129</sup> "I [Hubmaier] conferred with you [Zwingli] personally on the Zurich Graben about the Scriptures concerning baptism. There you said to me, rightly, that one should not baptize children before they have been instructed in the faith. That is the reason why in prior times they were also called catechumens." Hubmaier, *Dialogue with Zwingli's Baptism Book*, in *Hubmaier P&Y*, 194-195.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.



## The use of Scripture

The basis of Hubmaier's argument against infant baptism was that the doctrine was not based on Scripture. There is not any recorded instance of infants being baptized in the Bible. Baptisms were performed only for committed believers. Because of *sola scriptura*, Hubmaier argued that baptism was an invention of the post-New Testament church. For the reforming evangelicals, Scripture alone determined doctrine rather than tradition.

Hubmaier challenged Zwingli to provide a biblical example of young children being baptized. He declared, "If it does not say anywhere in Scripture that one should baptize children, then one should not baptize them, for that is in vain."<sup>131</sup> Because there is no example in Scripture of infant baptism, the practice should cease.

An important philosophy of Hubmaier's theology was that any doctrine that was not based on Scripture was not valid. Matthew 15:13 reads, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up." Hubmaier used this passage as part of his main theology in his *Eighteen Theses Concerning the Christian Life*, which was published in 1524. Hubmaier would often use this passage in Matthew to dismiss Zwingli's argument; since infant baptism is not forbidden, then it is acceptable.<sup>132</sup> Hubmaier strongly affirmed that unless there is a clear teaching from Scripture affirming baptizing infants, it should not be done.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Hubmaier, *Dialogue*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 184.

<sup>132</sup> Zwingli, *Refutation of Baptist Tricks*, Preble & Gilmore, 143.

<sup>133</sup> Hubmaier, *Dialogue*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 184

Hubmaier saw another weakness in Zwingli's argument since infant baptism is not forbidden, then it is acceptable. Since there is not any clear restriction in Scripture concerning baptism, Hubmaier points out that infants are not the only ones who may be baptized. He cleverly asks, "Then I may also baptize my dog and my donkey . . . For it is not prohibited anywhere in explicit words that we do these things."<sup>134</sup> Zwingli, of course, disagreed and argued that baptism is only for people. Hubmaier responded by asking if Turks and Jews should be baptized.<sup>135</sup> Baptism is only for those who believe, Zwingli said. Here the Anabaptist reformer agreed but then informed Zwingli that newborns do not believe and, therefore, should not be baptized.<sup>136</sup> Further, for Hubmaier, religious practices must be grounded in Scripture. Because a religious practice is not forbidden in Scripture does not mean that the practice is acceptable. If the practice were acceptable, then no one can object to the Roman Church's other invented practices that are not founded in Scripture. Zwingli was simply changing the meaning of these invented doctrines.

Zwingli's use of godparents was another practice that Hubmaier opposed. Zwingli taught that infants were baptized through the faith of their parents.<sup>137</sup> This is another example of a religious practice that does not have origins in Scripture, but the Bible does not explicitly reject the practice. Hubmaier notes that doing so is "adding to

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<sup>134</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 136.

<sup>135</sup> Turks were the enemies of the Roman Empire. They would invade and pillage cities. The Turks were considered barbarians and certainly not worthy of baptism. Jews had a place in European societies. However, they were ostracized. Luther, Erasmus, and Hubmaier were anti-Semitic during different periods of their careers. Zwingli appreciated the Jewish people and anticipated seeing some in heaven.

<sup>136</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 136.

<sup>137</sup> Zwingli, *Writings*, Vol. 1, Pipkin, 100.

the Word of God.”<sup>138</sup> Hubmaier argued that the faith of the individual, not the parents, is what saves or condemns them.<sup>139</sup> Parents bring both good fruit and bad fruit into the world. Hubmaier equates godparents with all of the other useless Catholic practices that are not found in Scripture.<sup>140</sup> Those who were to be baptized should be asked, according to Hubmaier, about their faith and they must answer for themselves.<sup>141</sup> A godparent cannot answer in their place. Baptism for Hubmaier was only allowed for those who had committed themselves to Christ by faith.

During the dialogue between Hubmaier and Zwingli, the reformer from Waldshut would frequently inform his counterpart that infant baptism was not real baptism. While Hubmaier himself was baptized as a child, Hubmaier argued that the baptism performed on him as an infant was not real baptism. He asserted, “The bath of the infants which we have hitherto taken for baptism is not a baptism, nor is it worthy of the name baptism. Therefore it is wrongly said that we let ourselves be rebaptized.”<sup>142</sup> Hubmaier’s baptism as an infant was only a washing of water because there was no faith involved. Infant baptism, to Hubmaier, was not biblical baptism, it was only a washing of babies with water.

The most forceful argument given by Zwingli in support of infant baptism may be the connection with circumcision in the Old Testament. Zwingli strongly advocated the connection between the Old Testament practice of circumcision and the New Testament

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<sup>138</sup> Hubmaier, *Dialogue*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 184.

<sup>139</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 141.

<sup>140</sup> Hubmaier, *Dialogue*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 187.

<sup>141</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 134.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

practice of baptism, with John's baptism being the intermediary between them. Hubmaier did not provide a detailed response to Zwingli's most popular argument. He simply responded by stating that nowhere does the Bible teach that baptism replaces circumcision. Zwingli invented this connection and, therefore, Hubmaier did not spend much time refuting it. Hubmaier even accused Zwingli of knowing that there is no connection between the two, "For you well know that circumcision is not a figure of water baptism. You have no Scripture about that."<sup>143</sup> Hubmaier also pointed out that the Old Testament signs and symbols have been abolished, not replaced.<sup>144</sup> Surprisingly, one of the strongest arguments according to Zwingli was met with a mild response by Hubmaier. Yet, the reaction by Hubmaier was not different than most of his objections, that Zwingli's practices are not found in Scripture.

During the beginning of the reform in Zurich, Zwingli debated the Roman Catholic theologian Johann Faber. Zwingli required Faber to provide evidence from Scripture to support his viewpoints.<sup>145</sup> Hubmaier brought up what, to him, was hermeneutically inconsistent by Zwingli. He reminded Zwingli: "Remember what you said against Faber and published in the Article 15, that all truth stands clear in the Word of God."<sup>146</sup> Hubmaier notes that Zwingli required "clear Scriptures from him, and not without reason."<sup>147</sup> While Faber was debating Zwingli he had to provide citations to support every doctrine. Any doctrine not supported by the Bible was rejected by Zwingli

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<sup>143</sup> Hubmaier, *Dialogue*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 180.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>145</sup> See pages 28 and 29.

<sup>146</sup> Hubmaier, *Dialogue*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 180.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

and the town of Zurich. However, concerning infant baptism there is no direct command from God. There especially is no Scripture to support the idea that baptism replaced circumcision. Hubmaier pounced on the inconsistency and did not allow Zwingli to forget that he rejected the doctrines of Faber for the same reasons.

The sequence of baptism in relation to teaching divided the two reformers. Zwingli proposed that baptism and teaching are interchangeable in order. John the Baptist, for instance, baptized and taught interchangeably, according to Zwingli. Zwingli saw John's practice was to baptize all, regardless whether they were taught or not.<sup>148</sup> Hubmaier rejected this idea and pointed out that John only baptized those who accepted his teaching. Hubmaier explicitly stated that "teaching should precede the outward baptism, along with the determination to change one's life by the help of God."<sup>149</sup> Hubmaier observed that John baptized only after he taught the crowds. He proclaimed, "You cannot show me one person in all of Scripture who has been water-baptized without prior teaching. Or show us one with clear Scripture, then we are already overcome."<sup>150</sup> The argument for believers' baptism is hopeless if there is an example from Scripture that shows baptism prior to teaching. Hubmaier contended that both teaching and acceptance must exist prior to baptism.

Hubmaier provided a strong response to the idea that one does not need faith to be baptized. Zwingli emphasized that faith was the work of God. Therefore, whether or not one was baptized before or after the faith was realized did not matter. Also, for Zwingli,

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<sup>148</sup> Zwingli, *True and False*, Jackson, 188.

<sup>149</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 101.

<sup>150</sup> Hubmaier, *Dialogue*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 191.

the faith of the parents or godparents was sufficient. Hubmaier responded, “Christ said: ‘whoever believes himself and is baptized, ect.’ He does not say, for whomever father, mother, or godparents believe. Indeed, a child whose salvation should depend on the faith of his father, mother, or godparents, would often suffer from heartbreak.”<sup>151</sup> Someone who is baptized into the Christian church must be a believer. However, it is clear that infants do not have their own faith. He asked, “Look at what your child knows or what it answers when one asked, ‘Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth? Then it cried or wets its diapers.”<sup>152</sup> If baptism is only for committed believers, as Hubmaier proposed, then infant baptism is meaningless.

### **John’s Baptism**

How to understand the baptism of John in relationship to the New Testament practice of baptism of Christians divided the two reformers significantly. Zwingli taught that John baptized everyone, regardless of age or of their dedication to his teaching.<sup>153</sup> While many believed and were baptized by John, surely those who had been baptized would have brought their children to be baptized.<sup>154</sup> Hubmaier provided an energetic response, instructing that John never baptized infants or anyone who did not accept his teaching. Hubmaier responded to Zwingli’s proposal, “O my Zwingli. How dare you say that John baptized young untaught children, this against the bright and clear text, Matt. 3:6, which clearly points out that those who were baptized by John confessed their

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<sup>151</sup> Hubmaier, *Old and New Teachers*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 246.

<sup>152</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 138

<sup>153</sup> Zwingli, *True and False Religion*, Jackson, 186.

<sup>154</sup> Zwingli, *Of Baptism*, Bromiley, 146.

sins?”<sup>155</sup> Hubmaier pointed out that the baptized had both confessed his sins and repented.<sup>156</sup> He systematically went through seven verses concerning John’s baptism to show that, “you might see even if you were blind as a mole, whether John baptized little children, or whether he baptized only those to whom he first preached, who listened to him, confessed their sins, and who decided henceforth to improve their lives.”<sup>157</sup> Those who were baptized brought forth fruit. The decision to accept John’s baptism resulted in their lives being changed. Someone who is not conscious of his own sin cannot confess it. Hubmaier argued that John did not baptize infants because that would be contrary to the nature of his baptism.

Zwingli found unity between the baptism of John and the New Testament baptism of Christ. To him, there was no difference in the two baptisms.<sup>158</sup> Hubmaier, however, argued that John’s baptism was only for repentance, and its purpose was to point to Christ. The Christian baptism given by the apostles was not the same as John’s baptism.<sup>159</sup> John was the messenger who prepared the way of the Lord.<sup>160</sup> Hubmaier summed up the difference between the baptisms: John’s was based on repentance and confession of sin, while the apostles’ was based on the forgiveness of sin in Jesus Christ.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Hubmaier, *Dialogue*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 202.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>157</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 106.

<sup>158</sup> Zwingli, *True and False Religion*, Jackson, 192.

<sup>159</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 104

<sup>160</sup> Luke 7:27.

<sup>161</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 113.

Another disputed concept of Zwingli's was his view that teaching and baptism had the same meaning in the New Testament. In Acts 19, disciples of John were "rebaptized" by Paul with Christian baptism. While Zwingli concluded that, at least in this passage, baptism did not mean immersion in water, but teaching. So when these disciples were "baptized into John's baptism," they were following John's teaching.<sup>162</sup> Hubmaier appealed to the plain reading of the verse, and said that baptism may not be understood as teaching.<sup>163</sup> The equality of the terms baptism and teaching were invented in Zwingli's mind.<sup>164</sup> Hubmaier concluded that the disciples were rebaptized because their original baptism by John was not sufficient. They had been followers of John, yet not followers of Christ. Once they began following Christ, they were eligible to be baptized into the Christian church.

### **Conclusion**

Hubmaier challenged Zwingli's theology on baptism on almost every point. He at times used humor to show the folly of some of Zwingli's more unusual conclusions. Hubmaier provided simple, logical rebuttals to Zwingli's teachings. He rebutted using a simple understanding of Scripture, while often questioning Zwingli's conclusions. Hubmaier did not fail to point out the inconsistency of Zwingli's hermeneutics that he demanded from Faber. Zwingli only allowed Faber to argue from clear teaching of Scripture. Hubmaier exposed many weaknesses in Zwingli's teaching supporting infant

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<sup>162</sup> Zwingli, *True and False*, Jackson, 194.

<sup>163</sup> Hubmaier, *Baptism of Believers*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 113.

<sup>164</sup> Hubmaier, *Dialogue*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 191.



baptism. Yet Hubmaier did not provide a strong response to Zwingli's argument from Old Testament circumcision. Hubmaier disregarded the argument as mere foolishness. Yet Zwingli's argument became the covenant theologian's prime argument for infant baptism.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ZWINGLI'S RESPONSE TO HUBMAIER'S BAPTISM

The Swiss humanist from Zurich was certainly in a difficult position during the mid 1520's. While he was leading Zurich in religious reformation, a faction arose within the city walls and raced further to reform in a manner with which most leaders were not comfortable. The Swiss Brethren became a popular faction that became most known for their opposition to infant baptism. This group began to refuse to have their own children baptized by the church. They chose rather to wait until their children could choose the Christian faith. Hubmaier was a nearby pastor who supported believers' baptism. When Zwingli began writing and preaching against the practice, Hubmaier openly defended the practice of the zealots in Zurich. Because infant baptism was the normal practice, Zwingli spent much of his time defending the baptism of infants. However, he attempted to refute many of Hubmaier's arguments while attempting to champion his views of baptism.

#### Rebellion

Zwingli primarily viewed the Anabaptist group as a rebellious faction. As shown earlier, Zwingli at one point in his life supported the idea of believers' baptism. But the Anabaptists were not as dangerous theologically as they were politically. Zwingli wrote, "rebaptism is initiated for no other reason than to provide a pretext for rebellious gatherings and insurrection against the authorities."<sup>165</sup> Zwingli was not closed to theological discussion, but he required a proper context for the discussion. The

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<sup>165</sup> Zwingli, "On the Preaching Office," *Writings*, Vol. 2, Pipkin, 151.

Anabaptists rushed to judgment on the doctrine without waiting for the church to decide whether to accept it.<sup>166</sup> Hubmaier allied himself with the Anabaptist group in Zurich. As a result, he became the target of many of Zwingli's attacks. The pastor from Waldshut became a distant part of the rebellion. The debate over baptism was more than a theological fight; it was a battle of rebellion against the political city church. Doctrine must run its course through the church before it could be accepted. Zwingli wrote, "If innovation is desired the bishop or prophet ought first to instruct the church and then leave discussion and authorization to the congregation."<sup>167</sup> The Anabaptists overstepped their bounds and Zwingli was not going to yield to their theological impulses.

### **The use of Scripture**

Hubmaier objected to Zwingli's practice of infant baptism because it lacked a basis in Scripture. Zwingli turned this argument around and pointed out that re-baptism itself is not found in Scripture. Hubmaier's baptism, Zwingli argued, definitely had no biblical basis.<sup>168</sup> Hubmaier boldly asserted that baptism was only for believing Christians. To this Zwingli replied, "Where in Scripture do you read that baptism is given none except to him who can make a confession?"<sup>169</sup> Zwingli could find no Scripture that determined that baptism should only be given to those who provide a confession of faith. Zwingli also added that Hubmaier had "not therefore yet proved the

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<sup>166</sup> Zwingli, "Of Baptism," *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 159.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>168</sup> Zwingli, *Tricks*, 152.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

negative: ‘No one may be baptized but the believer’.”<sup>170</sup> Zwingli argued that the rebaptizers’ practice was without any basis in Scripture.

Hubmaier’s baptism caused division in the church. Baptism is not required for the Christian life. There is no New Testament teaching requiring one to be baptized again as an adult. Therefore, according to Zwingli, adult baptizing caused division among believers. Anything that caused division, according to Zwingli, is of the devil.<sup>171</sup> Hubmaier’s baptism of believers caused division in the church and therefore it could not be of God.

Hubmaier insisted that infants were not baptized in the New Testament, but there is no way to completely assure that infant baptism never happened. Zwingli admitted that there is no record of infant baptism, however, this does not mean that it did not happen. Zwingli wrote, “It cannot be proved that believers’ infants were not baptized by the apostles because this is not written, for there are many things done, both by Christ and by the apostles, which were not committed to writing.”<sup>172</sup> The rebaptizers can only show that there is no record of infants being baptized in the New Testament, but they cannot show that it never occurred. Zwingli uses Mary, Jesus’ mother, as an example of someone for whom there is no record, but who likely was baptized.<sup>173</sup>

Zwingli observed that the book of Acts shows entire “households” to have been baptized into the church. Zwingli used this example to demonstrate that the apostles could have baptized infants:

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>171</sup> Zwingli, “Of Baptism,” *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 152.

<sup>172</sup> Zwingli, *Tricks*, Jackson, 141.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 140.

For if by acts one cannot prove legitimacy, but one must examine what is legitimate, then that Paul baptized infants in the families of Stephanas, Lydia and the jailor, cannot prove infant baptism. For I was not here intending by these examples to confirm as upon a foundation the baptism of infants, but showing how rash and false was your argument when you said that the apostles never baptized [infants], for you have no testimony to this; and then to prove that it was more likely than not that they baptized.”<sup>174</sup>

Zwingli did not cite this as an example of infant baptism. Nevertheless, Hubmaier cannot prove that the apostles in the New Testament did not baptize infants. Infants are members of Stephanas, Lydia, and the jailor’s family. Therefore, if young children were in those families, then the apostles baptized them. These passages do not prove infant baptism, but Zwingli assumed that if an infant were a member of the family, then she would have been baptized.

A common accusation against many of the Anabaptists was that they rejected the Old Testament. While Hubmaier did not dismiss the Old Testament, he did teach that the former Testament’s ceremonies were abolished by Christ.<sup>175</sup> Hubmaier only accepted the teaching of the New Testament for doctrine concerning the church. Zwingli accused Hubmaier of agreeing with other Anabaptists who rejected the Old Testament. The Swiss reformer then provided examples of Jesus and Paul identifying the Old Testament as Scripture.<sup>176</sup> If the Old Testament is accepted by Christ as Scripture, then it should be accepted in the sixteenth century as Scripture. Zwingli unfairly accused Hubmaier of

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>175</sup> Hubmaier, *Dialogue*, in *Hubmaier*, P&Y, 179.

<sup>176</sup> Zwingli, *Tricks*, Jackson, 150.

rejecting the Old Testament.<sup>177</sup> Infant baptism can be argued from the Old Testament but, according to Zwingli, Hubmaier rejected the Old Testament.<sup>178</sup>

For Zwingli, Christians are those whom God has chosen to be His children. In the same way that God “chose” Israel in the Old Testament, God chooses His people in the New Testament era.<sup>179</sup> God chooses nations to be Christian nations; infants who are part of this nation are members of His kingdom. By refusing baptism for the infants, Hubmaier was rejecting those whom God had accepted. Zwingli accused Hubmaier of teaching that salvation is based on the ‘works’ of an individual.<sup>180</sup> Salvation, to Zwingli, consisted of God predestining who will become His children.<sup>181</sup> As a result, baptism does not matter, whether it is given the first week the baby is born or if they are never baptized. Only those chosen by God receive salvation. Since some infants are God’s elect, then no one should deny their opportunity to be baptized. Hubmaier’s notion that only those who have repented and confessed are saved placed the emphasis of salvation on the individual, according to Zwingli. The Zurich reformer rejected this philosophy.

Ulrich Zwingli was fighting many fronts during his time as a reformer in Zurich. He furthered the reform in Zurich at a measured pace. But believers in Zurich grew impatient with what, to them, was a sluggish reform. Zwingli viewed the act of rebaptism as a rebellion against him and the city church. Baptism became the center of

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<sup>177</sup> Hubmaier would often reference the Old Testament in his writings. He certainly did not reject the Old Testament as irrelevant as some Anabaptists did.

<sup>178</sup> Zwingli, *Tricks*, Jackson, 152.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

the controversy between the rebellious group and the official church. Zwingli was forced to respond to the growing sentiment that baptism was only for believers. Throughout many writings, the Swiss reformer showed weaknesses in Hubmaier's teaching of believers' baptism. Hubmaier's arguments were readily adopted in Zurich by the rebellious Anabaptist group. If Zwingli could convincingly show Hubmaier to be wrong about baptism, he would regain unity in Zurich. Zwingli's arguments against Hubmaier were just as much against those within his own city as against the Waldshut theologian.

### **Arrest and Torture**

The final response of Zwingli was to torture and force a recantation by Hubmaier. During the winter between 1525 and 1526 Hubmaier was arrested in Zurich. The Austrian forces had entered Waldshut and their pastor fled for his safety. The once affable Zurich had become oppressive to Hubmaier. Soon after entrance into Zurich, Hubmaier was arrested and tortured by the Zurich officials, with the knowledge and blessing of Zwingli. Hubmaier was arrested only because of his doctrine of baptism.<sup>182</sup> After being tortured, Hubmaier would be imprisoned in Zurich for four months.

During this period of his life Hubmaier was sick and frail. He asked for pity because of his ailing condition.<sup>183</sup> Bergsten notes that at the beginning of his imprisonment he was treated relatively well compared to the Swiss Brethren when they were imprisoned.<sup>184</sup> Hubmaier recanted shortly after the disputation on baptism held on

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<sup>182</sup> Bergsten, *Anabaptist Theologian*, 300.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

December 19<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of his recantation is unknown.<sup>185</sup> As part of his recantation agreement he was to publically acknowledge the errors of baptism. When he reached the pulpit, however, he defended his doctrine of baptism. A witness reported he said, “Oh, what anguish and travail I have suffered this night over the statements which I myself have made. I say here and now, I cannot and I will not recant.”<sup>186</sup> He was quickly arrested, tortured, and imprisoned after the disruption he had created. The city council approved a second torture, and again, Zwingli did not attempt to intervene on Hubmaier’s behalf. Under torture, Hubmaier again recanted of his baptism teachings. In April he was freed and banished for life from the city of Zurich.

### **Conclusion**

The doctrine of baptism was not the major theological issue during the Protestant Reformation. Baptism was not a significant consideration for either Luther or Zwingli when they began their reforms. However, the subject was brought to their attention by radicals who took the reform further than Luther or Zwingli wished.<sup>187</sup> In the case of the Swiss Brethren, their reform brought quick persecution. The doctrine of baptism became the major division between the two groups.

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<sup>185</sup> Yoder believes that Hubmaier recanted in hope of a position as a pastor in the city of Zurich. Bergsten suggests that Hubmaier was only trying to preserve his own life by recanting. It is doubtful that Hubmaier was forced to recant due to his statements before the church of Fraumunster. He said that he made the decision the night before the service to not recant.

<sup>186</sup> Bergsten, *Anabaptist Theologian*, 304.

<sup>187</sup> Luther was forced to deal with the Zwickau Prophets, a rebellious group that began preaching in Wittenberg in 1521. At the time, Luther was at the Wartburg Castle. The next year Luther returned home and drove the radical group out of the city.



## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

The debate between Zwingli and Hubmaier (Covenant vs. Anabaptist) was never resolved during their lives. Both reformers were killed soon after the debate on baptism. The arguments they offered became the standard arguments to defend their respective positions. The Covenant group and the Anabaptists became more emboldened in their theology and practice after the death of their leaders. The Covenant group, supported by the City Council, continued to persecute rebaptizers. The Anabaptists preached their gospel throughout Europe, regardless of persecution. Branches of groups that have descendents from the two groups continue to disagree today. The split that began in the sixteenth century shows no signs of theological reconciling.

Hubmaier became an adopted member of the Anabaptist party after his death. As shown earlier, Hubmaier did not hold some of the fundamental principles of common Anabaptists.<sup>188</sup> His close and friendly association with the Swiss Brethren, along with his strong commitment to believers' baptism, suggested that Hubmaier was a member of their party. Hubmaier was a staunch defender of believers' baptism, which was of primary importance to the Anabaptist groups. The Amish, Mennonites, and Brethren groups are descendants of the early Swiss Brethren. They continue to hold onto the doctrine of baptism for believers only.

The descendents of Zwingli's theology are easier to trace through history. Heinrich Bullinger succeeded Zwingli in the Great Minster (Grossmunster) of Zurich after the Second Battle of Kappel in which Zwingli lost his life. Bullinger's theology was

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<sup>188</sup> See pages 10-11.

very similar to the man he succeeded. Bullinger furthered the covenant theology of baptism. Later, John Calvin would continue the Swiss support of Covenant theology, including infant baptism. The notoriety of Calvin eclipses that of Zwingli and Bullinger. Scholars consider Calvin the father of reformed theology.<sup>189</sup> Presbyterians and Reformed groups are the primary modern descendants of Zwingli's theology of baptism. However, many believe that Calvin is more significant in the formation of covenant theology.

### Summary of their arguments

Table 1. Hubmaier's arguments for believers' baptism.

<b>Argument</b>	<b>Relevant Passage</b>
Faith always precedes baptism	Matt. 28:19; Mark 16: 15-16
John's baptism is different than Christ's	Acts 19: 1-7
John only baptized those who repented	Matt. 3:11
Baptism for church order	Matt. 18:15
Commanded in Scripture	Matt. 28:19; Mark 16: 15-16

Table 2. Zwingli's arguments for infant baptism

<b>Argument</b>	<b>Relevant Passage</b>
Baptism began with John	Matt. 4:17
Children are members of God's family	Old Testament <i>passim</i>
Replacement of circumcision	Colossians 2:11
God elects His people	Rom. 9:11-12
Parents weakness	1 Cor. 8*
Infant baptism likely in 'households'	Acts 16: 15,33; 1 Cor. 1:16

\*alluded to but not specifically cited

### The use of Scripture

Both Zwingli and Hubmaier agreed that the Christian faith must be based on the Bible alone. In their arguments concerning baptism, they both used Scripture extensively

<sup>189</sup> Sam Wellman, *John Calvin: Father of Reformed Theology*, Heroes of the Faith (Ulrichsville, OH: Barbour, 2001).

to argue their viewpoint. However, their understanding of what the Bible meant was significantly different.

The difference between Zwingli and Hubmaier lies in their philosophy of how to understand Scripture. While their commitment to Scripture is clear, they read Scripture in different ways. For the Waldshut pastor, only what the Scriptures clearly instruct may be used for religious practices, such as baptism. Therefore, because there is no instance or teaching of infant baptism in Scripture, it should not be practiced. The Swiss theologian, on the other hand, did not find any reason not to baptize infants in Scripture. There is no command to baptize believers only. The Scriptures provide no defining statement on the practice. Also, some passages allude to the apostles baptizing entire families. How then can anyone disagree with the practice of infant baptism? From Zwingli's perspective, there are no grounds to ban infant baptism.

For Hubmaier, only what is explicitly taught in Scripture may be used to formulate doctrine. All religious practices must be grounded in Scripture. If infants were not baptized in the New Testament, then they cannot be baptized in the current church. The church cannot alter baptism, or any other doctrine, without the express teaching of Scripture. Hubmaier understood that the direct teaching of the Bible on baptism is to baptize only believers. Therefore, baptism cannot be performed on anyone who is not a believer, whether they are an infant, a Turk, or a dog. The same philosophy was used in ridding the church of images. Because images were not taught in Scripture, they should be destroyed and rejected from the Church. Zwingli and Hubmaier both agreed on this. Only what the Bible teaches may be used for Christian beliefs and practices.

The theological framework provided by Zwingli provided more freedom for the church to understand Scripture. There is no example of an infant being baptized in the New Testament. Yet there are passages that could allow for infants to be baptized. Further, since there is no Scripture denying infant baptism, how can Hubmaier argue that it should be forbidden? Zwingli also linked the Old Testament practice of circumcision with baptism. Just as a Jewish child was a member of God's people in the Old Testament, children of Christians are born into God's kingdom. Baptism, for Zwingli, represented the entrance into the Christian community.

### **Observations**

The two reformers use of the early church fathers is surprising. The church fathers primarily promoted paedobaptism. In the previous 1200 years before the sixteenth century, the church primarily baptized infants. While Zwingli continued the practice, he disagreed with the theology of church tradition. Hubmaier disagreed completely with the practice of infant baptism, but he used and cited the church fathers to defend believers' baptism. He dedicated one book to the fathers' use of baptism, and how it supported believers' baptism. While Zwingli agreed with the fathers concerning practice, he completely rejected their theology. On the other hand, Hubmaier was changing the mode of baptism, but attempting to reconcile the theology of the fathers to it.

The influence of the city council on Zwingli's theology of baptism is not completely known. Only two years before 1525 Zwingli agreed that infant baptism was not based upon Scripture. He had agreed, in principle, that baptism should be

administered only to believers. But all theological reform had to be approved through the city council. The unification of church and state likely influenced Zwingli's change of heart concerning baptism. In Waldshut, Hubmaier had the complete support of the city council. Zwingli was not as fortunate in Zurich. If the Zurich council told their pastor to teach infant baptism, would he? If the Swiss Brethren had not caused a rebellion, Zwingli could have supported believers' baptism. Zwingli wrote that Grebel's group should have brought up the issue of baptism to the council and the church and submitted to their authority.<sup>190</sup> Zwingli rebuked the brethren for not approaching the church and submitting themselves to it."

Zwingli was not consistent with his hermeneutical principles of *sola scriptura* that he promoted. In his debate with Faber, Zwingli argued that matters of faith must have its foundation in Scripture. Matters of faith must be biblically prescribed. Just three years later, though, he retreated from a strict understanding of *sola scriptura* to a looser interpretation. On the matter of baptism, he argued that infant baptism should not be rejected because of a lack of prohibition in Scripture. He readily admitted that there is no biblical example of infant baptism. This argument is inconsistent with the reformation principle of *sola scriptura*. He contradicted himself between his debate with Faber and his debate on baptism.

Hubmaier, on the other hand, interpreted Scripture more strictly. Unless there is a clear example and prescription in the Bible, then a religious practice is invalid. Hubmaier objected to the extra-biblical practices of Catholics and the other Reformers. Just as Zwingli objected to Faber's arguments that were not founded in Scripture, Hubmaier

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<sup>190</sup> Zwingli, "Of Baptism," *Zwingli & Bullinger*, 159.

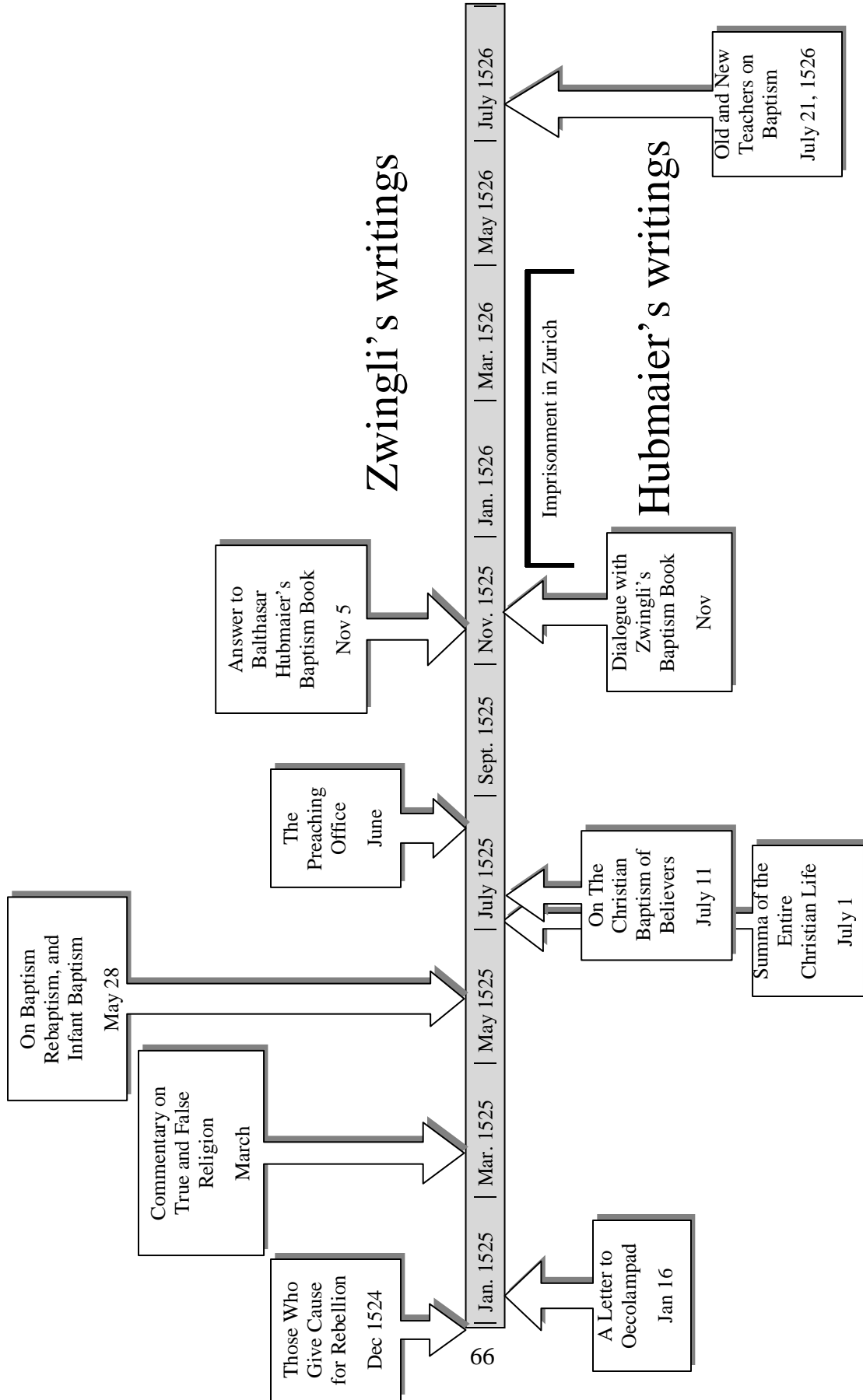
argued against infant baptism, which both reformers agreed is without an example in Scripture. However, Hubmaier's theology also included some practices not found in the Bible, such as infant dedication. But on the doctrine of baptism, he sought only the instruction from Scripture.

The debate on the proper candidate for baptism is still being discussed today. *Understanding Four Views on Baptism* is a book that has been recently published showing the current divide among Protestants concerning baptism.<sup>191</sup> Perhaps when resolution is not possible, understanding the other person's position better is the next best thing. Most agree that baptism is an important practice of Christianity. Understanding how the Christian church understood baptism in the past will help the modern church in its understanding of the current practice.

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<sup>191</sup> John H. Armstrong, ed., *Understanding Four Views on Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2007).

## Appendix – Timeline of Debate



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