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The Reformers' View of Scripture

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The Reformers' View of Scripture

Cover Page Footnote

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY Research Paper: The Reformers' View of Scripture
Submitted to Dr. Martin Eugene Sheldon in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of
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Introduction

The Roman Catholic Church prevailed in religious dominion, forcing membership which led to the rise of supercessionism, and the persecution of those not associated with the “Christian Church.” The Reformers Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Huldrych Zwingli considering these events developed doctrine regarding Scripture contrary to the general belief of their day. Therefore, understanding what the general belief of the time was is necessary in understanding how the reformers altered their personal views as well as those of the people. At this time, the church held to a deteriorated version of Scripture and there was a need for reform. The beliefs held by the church included sacraments, non-biblical doctrine, infant baptism, open communion, merit based grace or justification by works, repentance, intercessory prayer to saints, and single male priests who were elected and governed. Because of the church’s abused position, the reformers in response to their exploitation opted for a reformed view of doctrine, adopting a view that held more to the New Testament church than the heresy they faced.

Luther, Calvin and Zwingli all shared common views which enabled the reformation. The priesthood of all Christians, justification by faith alone, and ultimate authority of Scripture were the core message behind the reformers’ theology. However, while sharing common beliefs and enemies, their own personal influences and education separated them from one another as they developed their own personalized style of theology. Investigating the reformers differing views on Soteriology, ecclesiology, infant baptism, election, church service, the Eucharist and their personal understanding of the Solae, their individual concepts of Scripture shall be seen. Though their core beliefs were similar, it is through these differences that the personalized views of the reformers were established.

The purpose of this study is to understand through historical theology, biblical exegesis, and historical reflection the beliefs of Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli regarding Scripture. The reformers fought against the church's deteriorating views of doctrine, through developing their own personal view of Scripture and expounding on theological doctrine. Through an examination of the reformers theology concerning Scripture compared to Roman doctrine and their fellow reformers, both their differences and similarities, one will discern the reforming thought that brought about change.

Doctrine Reformed

In the era of the reformers the Roman Catholic Church imposed its doctrine on everyone. The doctrine they decreed at the time was deteriorated and served as a means of amassing wealth rather than glorifying God. The practices established by the Roman Church were generally accepted by all, and those who bore witness to the lack thereof scriptural support began to reform the doctrine of Christianity. The protestant reformers Martin Luther, John Calvin and Huldrych Zwingli taught Scripture solely based from Scripture alone (*Sola Scriptura*), while arguing against the teachings of the Roman Church as interpreters of the Bible.¹ In Catholic doctrine there are three essential elements to constitute a sacrament: a visible sign, an invisible sign and divine institution.² All Catholic sacraments convey sanctifying grace, making the individual just and holy.³ The Reformers espoused that the Sacraments were merely “exhortation designed to excite faith” (Luther), “tokens of truthfulness of the divine promises” (Calvin), or “sings of Christian profession by which the faithful testify that they belong to the Church of Jesus Christ”

¹ Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 277.

² Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1988), 1018.

³ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1018.

(Zwingli).⁴ The Council of Trent condemned the Reformers stating the sacraments were a means to grace for those that do not place an obstacle to that grace.⁵

Indulgences

Indulgences were then as it is today, the practice of the doctrine of satisfaction. This practice entails the paying for one's loved one to leave purgatory, a place created for the sole purpose of amassing wealth. Preaching doctrine of indulgences is derived from the minds of man without support of Scripture, "who say that as soon as the money clinks into the money chest, the soul flies out of purgatory."⁶ According to Timothy J. Wengert, "At the heart of the Ninety-five Theses stands his limiting of papal authority regarding indulgences so that true contrition (the work of the law) is no longer impaired by such "cheap grace," bought for a price.⁷ Zwingli cautioned not to confuse indulgences with the practices of Christ, for these men seek not the glory of God, but an increasing wealth.⁸

Baptism

Infant baptism was developed by Augustine, arguing that original sin was needing to be cleansed from infants that entered the world in sin.⁹ Luther explains baptism to be subjected in direct relation to Jesus' words (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16); declaring that baptism is of divine

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Martin Luther, *The Best from all His Works*, Stephen Rost, ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 18.

⁷ Timothy J. Wengert, "Luther in Context: With Illustrations," *The Journal of Theology Dialog* 55, no. 1 (June 2017): 123 (accessed August 5, 2017).

⁸ Huldrych Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, Samuel M. Jackson, ed. (Durham: The Labyrinth Press, 1981), 177-178.

⁹ Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976), 119.

origin, necessary for salvation, and not the invention of man.¹⁰ Calvin's view of baptism held that it was a sign of initiation through which the baptized are received into the society of the church, in order that the union of Christ would reckon the baptized among God's children.¹¹ Zwingli agrees that baptism is an outward sign of acceptance; however, believes the conversion requires action on part of the believer by repentance and changing their life entirely (Matt. 3:11).¹²

Eucharist

Ignatius conceived the Eucharist as a sacrament, by participation of the bread and wine, a person is partaking in divine person of Jesus which overwhelms the penalties of death from sin.¹³ Luther had rejected many of the Catholic Church's teachings on doctrines such as the Lord's Supper but he held the phrase of Christ "This is my body" to be taken literally.¹⁴ Zwingli's doctrine of the Lord's Supper is his interpretation of John 6:56 and included a compelling memorial meal reminding believers of Christ's sacrifice and the eschatology of the His second coming.¹⁵ Luther, conversely interpreted the passage, with the ideology of light literal adaption of Roman Catholicism forming his consubstantiation view.¹⁶ Calvin, wasn't satisfied with the

¹⁰ Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert J. Fisher (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1959), 81.

¹¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 4, John T. McNeill, ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1303.

¹² Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, 186.

¹³ Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1999), 48.

¹⁴ Wayne Grundem, *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 994.

¹⁵ Roger E. Olson, *God in Dispute: "Conservations" among Great Christian Thinkers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 149.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

interpretations but feared that the Bible may have been overtly interpreted and opted for more of a Zwinglian perspective of a mystery due to “Christ’s body is localized in heaven and is not ubiquitous.”¹⁷ Zwingli and Calvin differed greatly from Luther’s teaching “which stated that the bread contained Christ’s body” and the Roman Catholic teaching “which said that the bread became Christ’s body.”¹⁸ Zwingli and Calvin held the bread and wine were a symbolic visible sign of the body and blood of Christ.¹⁹

Predestination

Mathijs Lamberigts stated, “Augustine’s intention in writing his works was to establish in the preaching of predestination an impenetrable bulwark for the defense of God’s grace against the meritorious deeds proposed by Pelagius followers.”²⁰ Luther and Zwingli both concurred that predestination was necessary as the fundamental aspect of justification by grace, which they argued was indeed scriptural.²¹ Luther believed the doctrine was the result of understanding himself being incapable of overcoming personal sin, finding it necessary to declare that salvation is God’s work alone and has nothing to do on part of personal work.²² For Zwingli, “the main argument in favor of predestination was that, since God is both omnipotent and omniscient, God knows and determines all things beforehand.”²³ The heresy Augustine was combating through

¹⁷ Olson, *God in Dispute*, 149-150.

¹⁸ Grundem, *Systematic theology*, 995.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Mathijs Lamberigts, “Predestination,” in *Augustine Through the Ages, An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 678.

²¹ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Reformation to the Present Day*, vol. 2 (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 63.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

his concept of predestination was the Pelagian thought of justification by works, though denying predestination the Roman Church inevitably adopted this Pelagian view. Pelagianism targeted free will arguing works as a means of earning salvation. Robert Kolb detailed, “Medieval Christians believed that God’s grace aided—some believed that it initiated— human performance, but righteousness before God finally depended on what sinners did to fulfil God’s commands.”²⁴ The merit system followed providing security for the Roman doctrine of indulgences, two doctrines still held by the modern Roman Catholic Church.

Luther held to a doctrine reflective of his Augustinian cleric past, promoting that the law was a means of preservation, summons of repentance, and a guide for the church.²⁵ The preservation doctrine of the law is not found in Scripture, Romans 13:1-7 describes an opposite rationale.²⁶ Likewise, the summons of repentance may have been derived from Romans 3:20, though it was never used in this interpretation as well as Paul’s use of guide in Luther’s context of the law is contrary to the legal sense.²⁷ Unfortunately Calvin followed in Luther’s tradition, with the ideology, “while the man in Christ is not under the law as a means of salvation, he remains under it as a rule of life,” this is clearly contrary to Romans 6:4.²⁸

Martin Luther

Martin Luther was a monk in the Catholic Church and during his time there he found many issues, thus he composed his Ninety-Five Theses to show where the church was not

²⁴ Robert Kolb, “Nowhere More Present and Active Than in The Holy Letters: Luther’s Understanding of God’s Presence in Scripture,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 49, no. 1 (May 2015): 4. (Accessed August 4, 2017).

²⁵ F. F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977), 191.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

following the Bible. Roland Bainton states, “Luther’s Theses differed from the ordinary propositions for debate because they were forged in anger.”²⁹ These Theses were derived from three main points consisting of an objection to the avowed object of the expenditure, a denial of the powers of the pope over purgatory, and a consideration of the welfare of the sinner.³⁰ The first main point was Luther’s issue with all revenues collected throughout Christendom were collected in the basilica and given the name of “the common treasure of Christendom.”³¹

The second main point was that through indulgences the pope was believed to have the power to save sinners from purgatory. Luther contested the effectiveness of the “indulgences” granted by the pope in his Ninety-Five Theses including the entire system from which it originated.³² Luther states in Theses Forty-Seven that, “Christians are to be taught that the buying of indulgences is a matter of free choice, not commanded,” and then states in Forty-Nine, “Christians are to be taught that papal indulgences are useful only if they do not out their trust in them, but very harmful if they lose their fear of God because of them.”³³ Luther is showing that the commanded purchase of indulgences has a devastating effect on Christians and their view of God and that one’s salvation can be bought with a price regardless of the sins they commit.³⁴ But the Theses also contain a concerted attack on the indulgence preachers, because they mislead the

²⁹ Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 60.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

³² Stephen Rost, ed. *Martin Luther: The Best from All His Works* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), 15-26.

³³ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁴ Martin Luther, *Conversations With Luther*, ed. Preserved Smith, (New Canaan, CT: Keats Publishing, 1979), 146-148.

people and cause them to trust not God's mercy (thesis Sixty-Two, "the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God") but indulgences and the preachers' false claims about them."³⁵

This also carries over to the third main point giving that neither the saints nor the pope have the ability to wage the outcome of the sinner.³⁶ Luther states, "When a man believes himself to be utterly lost, light breaks. Peace comes in the word of Christ through faith. He who does not have this is lost even though he be absolved million times by the pope, and he who does have it may not wish to be released from purgatory, for true contrition seeks penalty."³⁷ Travis Dumsday states, "In the Reformation purgatory is of course a flashpoint, with Luther and Calvin and other reformers rejecting it on multiple grounds. Among these are its *prima facie* inconsistency with the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone (which was viewed as being in tension with the supposed need for postmortem penance), and its connection with the abuses involved in the sale of indulgences."³⁸

Baptism

Martin Luther discussed that the foundation of baptism and all that is related to this subject is stated in Jesus Christ words in Matthew 28:19 and also in Mark 16:16 which are God's commandments and ordinance.³⁹ Luther states "You should not doubt, then, that Baptism is of divine origin, not something devised or invented by man."⁴⁰ This is not something that humans can play with, but an institution solemnly and specifically commanded by God where one must

³⁵ Wengert, "Luther in Context," 123.

³⁶ Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 61.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁸ Travis Dumsday, "Purgatory," *Philosophy Compass* 9, no. 10 (October 2014): 734 (accessed August 4, 2017).

³⁹ Luther, *The Large Catechism*, 81.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

be baptized in order to be saved.⁴¹ Luther then affirms his statement, “From the word it derives its nature as a sacrament, as St. Augustine taught, ‘*Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum,*’ meaning that when the Word is added to the element or natural substance, it becomes a sacrament, that is, a holy divine thing and sign.”⁴²

The Sacrament of Eucharist

Luther describes the Sacrament of the Alter as, “the true body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ in and under the bread and wine which Christians are commanded by Christ’s word to eat and drink.”⁴³ The eucharistic sacrament is one which Christians should not be coerced or compelled to partake in as instituting a slaughter of souls, but for those who willingly abstain for long periods of time are no longer considered to be Christians.⁴⁴ This was commanded by Christ in Matthew 26:26-28 to eat and drink in remembrance of him. Luther declares that, “Christ means to say ‘I institute a Passover or Supper for you, which you shall enjoy not just on this one evening of the year, but frequently, whenever and wherever you will, according to everyone’s opportunity and need, being bound to no special place or time,’ (although the pope afterward perverted it and turned it back into a Jewish feast).”⁴⁵

The path of Luther was that of a tormented soul, who finally found solace within the biblical message of justification by faith.⁴⁶ “This one and firm rock, which we call the doctrine of justification,” insisted Luther, “is the chief article of the whole Christian doctrine, which

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Luther, *Large Catechism*, 81.

⁴³ Ibid., 91.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁶ Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 62.

comprehends the understanding of all godliness.”⁴⁷ For the Lutheran tradition, the doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is the material principle upon which all other teachings rest.⁴⁸ Luther points out in his writing that “if the Scriptures are quoted ‘against Christ, then we should ‘urge Christ against Scripture.’”⁴⁹

John Calvin

John Calvin espoused that God had abundant grace to sinful believers under the New Covenant for those that had sought forgiveness from their sins.⁵⁰ The Holy Spirit binds us to Christ through faith.⁵¹ Faith is the foundational work of the Holy Spirit, which involves knowledge; true doctrine was obscured by the scholastic notion of implicit faith of the Roman doctrine’s pious ignorance.⁵² True faith looks to Jesus Christ as “he calls himself ‘the light of the world;’ (John 8:12), and elsewhere, ‘the way, the truth, and the life:’ for no one comes to the Father , who is ‘the fountain of life’ (Psa. 36:9), except through him (John 14:6) because he alone knows the Father, and afterward the believers to whom he wishes to reveal him (Luke 10:22).”⁵³ Faith consists of knowledge of Jesus Christ and God and not reverence for the church and the absurdity of ignorance tempered by humility.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Herbert Bouman, "The Doctrine of Justification in the Lutheran Confessions," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 26 no. 11 (November 1955), 801. (Accessed August 4, 2017).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 801-802.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁵⁰ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 4, 1036-1037.

⁵¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 3, John T. McNeill, ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 537.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 541-545.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 545.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Calvin scathingly presented the Roman doctrine of pious ignorance of merit-based system of salvation stemming from the doctrine of satisfaction.⁵⁵ John wrote, “the blood of Christ cleanses us from sin” (1 John 1:7)), yet indulgences under the doctrine of satisfaction “makes the blood of martyrs the cleansing for sins.”⁵⁶ Calvin concurred with Martin Luther, that indulgences and the doctrine of purgatory are contrary to Scripture stating, “the Lord does not allow man’s effrontery so to break in upon the secret places of judgment; and he sternly forbade that man, to the neglect of the Word, should inquire after truth from the dead (Deut. 18:11).⁵⁷

The Elect

Calvin championed Augustine’s ideology of the elect claiming that the use of Romans 8: 14-30; John 6:44, 6:45,17; 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5 bear witness to the elect being called into communion with God by faith that is the work of election, but one’s election was not dependent on faith.⁵⁸ If one seeks salvation, life, the immortality of the Heavenly Kingdom, and God’s mercy then one must seek Christ, upon Him alone does God’s Spirit rest (Matt.3:17).⁵⁹ Christ assured the elect himself with his testimony through the preaching of the gospel that he had been given to the elect from the Father (Rom. 8:32).⁶⁰ Christ secured protection and perseverance of the elect since God cares for the elect’s salvation, therefore the response of the elect must be to

⁵⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. 3, 670.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 671-672.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 676.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 964-967.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 970.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 971.

embrace Christ.⁶¹ Calvin cautioned Paul's warning of overassurance of election, yet Calvin believed that the believer that truly believed in Christ could never fall away (1 Cor. 10:12).⁶²

The Mass

Calvin rejected the Roman doctrine's sacrifice of the mass on the basis that it blasphemed Christ but denying the infinite priesthood of Christ; because no priest or vicar could ever replace him.⁶³ The Roman doctrine holds to Hebrews 7:23 and Genesis 14:18 yet Jesus "the immortal God, is the sole and eternal Priest" (Heb. 7:17-19).⁶⁴ The eternal priest instituted a sacrament and not a sacrifice. The sacrifice of the mass is a form of payment to God by a participant for merit in the doctrine of satisfaction.⁶⁵ In contrast the sacrament of communion is a promise that by the death of Jesus Christ one is not merely restore to new life, but is continually revived, for all parts of the salvation formula are fulfilled.⁶⁶

In 1549 Calvin was asked to respond to the twenty-six articles of Charles V in his *Interim adulteron-germanum, cui adiect est: Vera chritianae pactificationis et Ecclesiae reformandae ratio* in which Calvin claimed that there were irreconcilable differences between the Catholics and the Protestants.⁶⁷ The differences included doctrines of justification of faith, the service of God, intercession of the angels and saints, sacraments, and confession of guilt and penance.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. 3, 971-972.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 972.

⁶³ Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. 4, 1430.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1431.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1435.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Wulfert De Greef, *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, Donald K. McKim, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 48.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Calvin established that penance is not a sacrament, “you will therefore speak most aptly if you call baptism the sacrament of penance, since it has been given to those who are intent of repentance as a confirmation of grace and a seal of assurance.”⁶⁹

For Calvin *Soli Deo gloria*, ‘glory to God alone’ is the principal foundation, “under whose aegis he undertakes his entire reform program.”⁷⁰ Calvin cautioned that the glory of God can never be deceived, “we must value God’s glory more than our life, indeed I say more than the salvation of our souls, that we would perish rather than see His name diminished in the least.”⁷¹ Charles Partee claimed Calvin’s glory of God ideology “requires affirmation of God’s irresistible love, irresistible faith, irresistible justification, and irresistible sanctification.”⁷²

Huldrych Zwingli

Huldrych Zwingli, the Swiss reformer, shared similar views of Scripture with his fellow reformers; however, there were differences derived from Zwingli’s personal influences. Zwingli, like Erasmus a major inspiration in his life held to a humanist view, which encouraged Zwingli to study Scripture with it being the primary source of Christian faith.⁷³ Erasmus taught him to look beyond grammatical structure suggesting significance is found within simplistic notion; the Bible’s core is the declaration of Christ, cautioning Zwingli in self-control.⁷⁴ The teachings of Erasmus and his humanist view influenced his position on Scripture, and though he agreed with

⁶⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. 4, 1464.

⁷⁰ Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, Dave Foxgrover and Wade Provo, eds. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 188-189.

⁷¹ John Calvin, *Writings on Pastoral Piety*, Elsie Anne McKee, ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 169.

⁷² Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 216.

⁷³ Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 62-63.

⁷⁴ Ulrich Gabler, *Huldrych Zwingli: His Life and Work*, Ruth C. L. Gritsch, trans. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 39.

Calvin and Luther on several aspects there were positions contrary to their views. Zwingli embraced a Protestant stance that all doctrine must be examined according to Scripture. He denounced clerical celibacy, papal authority, good works for salvation, intercession of the saints, penance, and purgatory all the while advocating for salvation by grace alone, and Scripture being the main authority over the traditions of the church.⁷⁵ The Roman Catholic Church imposed that only those of papal authority; priests, bishops, and popes should interpret Scripture to prevent misinterpretation and apostasy to arise. The focus of the church transformed from its concentration on the administration of sacraments to a place of encountering God. Zwingli placed Scripture at the forefront of church tradition teaching God's word is not select verses, but a whole written record.⁷⁶

Intercession

The intercession of saints is an ancient practice of fourth century Christians, whom believed that saints and martyrs, even after death, had a "power of intercession at the throne of God and were considered his special friends."⁷⁷ Zwingli on the intercession of saints asserts that Scripture suggests no one aside from Jesus Christ may act as mediator (John 6:45), the intercession of saints is a decree by the authority of the church alone.⁷⁸ Zwingli holds the doctrine of purgatory as a symbol of flame, a custom long since held, and yet can nowhere be

⁷⁵ John D. Woodbridge and Frank A. James III, *Church History: From Pre-Reformation to the Present Day*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 153.

⁷⁶ Peter Opitz, "The Authority of Scripture in the Early Zurich Reformation (1522-1540)." *Journal of Reformed Theology* 5, no. 3 (2011): 296-309. (Accessed August 5, 2017).

⁷⁷ Paul Schrodt, "Saints," in *Augustine Through the Ages, An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 747.

⁷⁸ Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, 268-269.

affirmed from within God's Word.⁷⁹ Zwingli wrote, "They bid you give gold, for by this especially is the flame weakened if the man who receives the gold devoutly celebrates mass, prays, and sings psalms; and at the same time he holds out his hand for the gold."⁸⁰ Purgatory in Zwingli's eyes is the means in which the Roman Church pushed their method of indulgences, both of which are deceitful (as they are without scriptural support) and vain for "they seek not the honor of God, but mountains of gold."⁸¹

Elect

Unlike Calvin's view of the elect, Zwingli views the elect as those who are predestined or foreordained by the Providence of God.⁸² For Zwingli freewill is directly correlated with the will of God, "For 'in him we live, and move, and have our being,' etc. [Acts 17:28]."⁸³ W. P. Stephens reflected, "He criticized those who regarded Gentiles or the unbaptized children of Christians as damned, arguing that Christ did not say, 'He who is not baptized will not be saved' (Mark 16:16)."⁸⁴ Zwingli was arguing against the current belief instilled through the church, that the salvation of one is called into question if they were not baptized. This belief is why infant baptism was generally accepted by the public. Whereas Zwingli argued that Jesus Himself rejected works of merit and church traditions when He said: "In vain do they worship me, teaching the doctrines and precepts of men" (Matt. 15:9).⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, 284.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 284-285.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 177-178.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 272.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁸⁴ W. P. Stephens, *Zwingli: An Introduction to his Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 50.

⁸⁵ Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, 33.

Within a “vision of heaven,” Zwingli claims to have seen patriarchs, prophets, apostles, predecessors to the throne, and non-Christians such as Hercules and Theseus.⁸⁶ The problem with this vision and ideology, is that individuals who are not seeking God following pagan beliefs will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Rom. 10:9). Stephens explained, “In his concern to insist that election is entirely of God and has nothing to do with our works, Zwingli stressed that election comes from God’s will rather than from his wisdom, although for Zwingli God’s attributes cannot be separated.”⁸⁷ Zwingli was addressing the merit based salvation system of the Roman Church, but did so without his usual logical basis for establishment. Zwingli assumes in his opposition to works of merit that man himself is capable of nothing, God is the determining factor in everything (Rom. 9:16).⁸⁸ This emotional focus leads to a Zwinglian doctrine of elect that dangerously resembles modern universalism, for it denounces the acceptance of Christ as the sole means for salvation. Zwingli expressed, “We know that the potter has the power to make of the same clay one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor [cf. Rom. 9:21]; and why shall we say to our Lord and God, ‘Why didst thou make me after this fashion?’”⁸⁹ This conditioning factor calls freewill into question, for Zwingli argues that every decision in life is ultimately up to God and His preordained plan.

Conclusion

The reformers based their “reformed” theology around their interpretation of Scripture, for it is in Scripture that the Christian faith is defined and explained. The Roman Catholic Church’s abused position allowed them to funnel what the populace knew regarding Scripture,

⁸⁶ Stephens, *Zwingli*, 51.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

⁸⁸ Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, 8.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 274.

thus when their very own monk (Luther) argued against their own teachings a fire was sparked. Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli all concurring that the basis of faith, and the doctrine within should be found in Scripture, for without scriptural support a belief would therefore be non-biblical and against the teachings of Christ. This position on Scripture provided the reformers with the understanding that the issues of non-biblical doctrine indulgences, baptism, merit, repentance, sacraments, communion, repentance, intercessory prayer to saints, priests resemble heresy rather than doctrine of Christianity. These views some derived from Scripture others the whims of man, are countered by the reformers, as they provided scriptural reasoning why there is an issue and what needed to be changed or abandoned altogether.

The rationale of the reformers' thoughts that did not coincide with one another were grounded in the influencing factors of their lives. Luther a devout monk attempting to right wrongs of the church, still held to Roman doctrine, for he argued that those that did not coincide with Scripture needed to be changed. Zwingli educated by Erasmus and holding on the principles of a humanist, developed a "logical" view of Christianity, where ever a doctrine was not logically coherent with Scripture then it should be rejected. This rationale lead to Zwingli's belief that all elected by God could enter His kingdom; based on God's mercy alone (Rom. 9:16), Jesus's words in Matthew 15:9, and illustrating God as the potter who makes all men either honorable or dishonorable (Rom. 9:21).⁹⁰ Whereas Calvin's view of the elect was influenced by Augustine, which was further supported through his rigorous study of Scripture. Calvin like Luther held to many Roman doctrines, though both broke from the church their theology and doctrine were still influenced by their Catholic past. The rifts in similarities are largely based within their personal understanding of Scripture, thus establishing three unique variations of doctrine from the perception of three individual's view of Scripture.

⁹⁰ Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*, 8-274.

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