

Ulrich Zwingli and the Swiss Anabaptists: Sola Scriptura and the Reformation of Christian Worship

By Glen J. Clary

Liturgy is shaped by theology. Theological reform is, therefore, the mother which conceives and gives birth to liturgical reform. It is only natural, then, that the Protestant Reformation was fundamentally a reformation of Christian worship. Indeed, the chief concern of the Protestants was to reform the church's worship according to Scripture. In this article, we will examine Zwingli's doctrine of *sola Scriptura* as it was applied to the reformation of Christian worship in the city of Zürich. We will demonstrate that Zwingli and his radical followers had two different understandings as to how the Bible functions as the authority for liturgical reform. Both were committed to the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, but

they used different criteria to satisfy their concern for biblical warrant.

SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

When Ulrich Zwingli began his ministry at the Grossmünster in Zürich on January 1, 1519, he announced that, with God's help, he intended to preach "the entire Gospel of Matthew, one passage after another, rather than following the usual lectionary of chopped up Sunday Gospels."¹ Throughout that year, day after day, Zwingli preached Matthew as a *lectio continua*. His sermons were electrifying, "and the excitement of revival and reform came upon the city."² And so it was that the Reformation was conceived in Zürich by this simple liturgical reform. It was Zwingli's preaching that "gave birth to the Reformation, maintained it, and carried it through to a successful conclusion" (Locher, 1).

At first, Zwingli's reformation "was really nothing but a simple change from prescribed passages to a *lectio continua*," but under his leadership, other reforms in the worship of the church soon followed (Ibid., 27). The Mass, the Baptismal rite, the liturgical calendar and the daily office were all reshaped according to the Word. Relics and images were removed from the churches. Altars were replaced with tables. Priestly vestments were discarded. The whole liturgy of the church was gradually and thoroughly overhauled. It was reformed according to Scripture. Every liturgical practice had to be tested by the touchstone of Scripture, the only infallible standard for worship.³

To be sure, the Reformers did not ignore liturgical tradition, but liturgical tradition alone could hardly serve as its own norm.⁴ It could not justify itself. *Lex orandi, lex credendi* may be one of the favorite mottoes of the modern liturgical renewal movement, but the Protestants had an altogether different motto, *sola Scriptura*.⁵

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1. As reported by Heinrich Bullinger, cited in Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1975) 195; cf. Gottfried W. Locher, *Zwingli's Thought: New Perspectives* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981) 5–6.

2. Bard Thompson, "Reformed Liturgies in Translation Part 1: Ulrich Zwingli" in *Bulletin of the Theological Seminary of the Evangelical and Reformed Church XXVII*, 4 (October 1956): 1; hereafter Thompson, "Reformed Liturgies."

3. On the reformation of worship in Zürich, see Locher, *Zwingli's Thought*, 1–30; Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961) 141–156 (hereafter Thompson, *Liturgies*); and Thompson, "Reformed Liturgies," 1–21. One may also consult George R. Potter, *Zwingli* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

4. Cf. Hughes Oliphant Old, *Themes and Variations for a Christian Doxology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992) 13; hereafter Old, *Themes*.

5. See Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, Vol. 7 (Grand Rapids:

Scripture alone is the supreme liturgical norm. It is the final arbiter in all matters of faith and worship, and any liturgical practice that cannot be justified biblically is merely of human origin.

With regard to liturgical tradition, the Reformers “were quite happy to speak of the Fathers of the ancient church as *testes veritatis*, ‘witnesses to the truth’” (Old, *Themes*, 14). As a matter of fact, Protestant liturgy relies heavily on patristic tradition. Hughes Oliphant Old explains,

The Reformers were willing to accept the tradition of the ancient Church in that it was a *witness* to the commandments of God and the practice of Christ and the Apostles. That is, they accepted the argument from tradition as it might be advanced by a Tertullian or an Irenaeus. What they objected to was not tradition but “man-made tradition.” To tradition which handed down the usage of Christ and the Apostles, they had no objection (*Patristic Roots*, 24).⁶

When Zwingli studied at the University of Basel from 1502–1506, he drank deeply from the well of Christian humanism, and he became friends with Basel’s leading humanist publishers: Johannes Amerbach and Johann Froben.⁷ It was Froben who published the first edition of Erasmus’s Greek New Testament in 1516. The Basel publishers realized that they could make a fortune by publishing the works of the Church Fathers, which, up to that time, mostly existed in hand-written manuscripts. With Erasmus, the prince of the Christian humanists, presiding over this literary project, Basel published the complete works of one Father after another.

In 1517, Froben published five volumes of the homilies of John Chrysostom and sent them to Zwingli (Ibid., 46). Volume One contained eighty-nine *lectio continua* sermons on the Gospel of Matthew. As we have already noted, Zwingli began his ministry in Zürich by preaching through the Gospel of Matthew. Clearly, he was following the lead of John Chrysostom (*Patristic Roots*, 195–197). Therefore, from the very beginning, patristic tradition had a strong influence on Protestant liturgy. For the Reformers, *sola Scriptura* was the supreme and only infallible authority, but patristic tradition, as a witness to that infallible authority, was an important secondary authority, under the Word. Therefore, the Protestants sought to reform the church’s worship, first and foremost, according to Scripture and, secondly, according to the custom of the ancient church.⁸

Zwingli and his followers in Zürich were all committed to the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, but over time it became

apparent that they did not all have the same understanding of that doctrine, particularly as it applies to the reformation of worship. His more radically-minded followers eventually came to believe that Zwingli compromised the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* on certain issues, especially the issue of infant baptism, which will be examined below.⁹

THE LENTEN FAST

Zwingli’s doctrine of *sola Scriptura* led to an important event on March 5 (Ash Wednesday) of 1522.¹⁰ The event took place in the home of Zürich’s distinguished publisher, Christopher Froschauer, a firm supporter of Zwingli’s reform. Zwingli and some of his evangelical colleagues were present, “together with some of the more radical advocates of the Reformation.”¹¹ In a defiant breach of the Lenten fast, Froschauer served a

Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010) 45, 271, 302. The formula *lex orandi, lex credendi* is often interpreted to mean “the law of prayer governs the law of belief.” However, this interpretation of the ancient formula is questionable. For a modern Roman Catholic perspective, see Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo Publishing, 1984). There are several helpful essays on *lex orandi, lex credendi* in *Ecumenical Theology in Worship, Doctrine and Life* edited by David S. Cunningham, et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

6. On the relationship between Scripture and tradition as it was understood in the sixteenth century, see John R. Franke, “Scripture, Tradition and Authority: Reconstructing the Evangelical Conception of Sola Scriptura,” in *Evangelicals and Scripture: Tradition, Authority and Hermeneutics*, ed. Vincent Bacote, et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004) 192–210; Sinclair Ferguson, “Scripture and Tradition,” in *Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1995); Heiko Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986) 280–285.

7. Christian humanism advocated “a very literary approach to theology which studies the Scriptures and the writings of the ancient Christian Fathers in their literary context. The motto of Christian humanism was *ad fontes*, ‘back to the sources.’ It was in this Christian humanism that Zwingli was educated.” Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002) 44.

8. Hence, Calvin entitled his Genevan Psalter of 1542 “The Form of Church Prayers and Hymns with the Manner of Administering the Sacraments and Consecrating Marriage According to the Custom of the Ancient Church” (emphasis added).

9. On the issue of infant baptism in the Reformation debates, see Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992) 77–144; hereafter Old, *Shaping*.

10. The event is known as the Ash Wednesday fast violation; some historians point to this event as “the beginning of the actual Reformation in Zürich;” see Leland Harder, *The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism: The Grebel Letters and Related Documents* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1985) 166.

11. Leo Jud, Heinrich Uttinger and Jörg Binder were present, as well as Hans Ockenfuss, Claus Hottinger, Heinrich Aberli, and Bartlime Pur; see Harder, *Sources*, 166.

small portion of fried sausages to his guests. Although Zwingli himself did not partake, he defended the action of Froschauer when the latter was called to task by the City Council. In fact, on the third Sunday of Lent (March 23), he preached “a sermon defending his parishioners for their breach of the Lenten fast” (Ibid., 178).

That week the Zürich Council debated the matter and adopted a compromise resolution that the New Testament provides no basis for prohibiting meat during Lent, but that the fasting ordinance should be obeyed for the sake of the public peace until it has been properly repealed (Idem).

Zwingli’s sermon was expanded into a treatise and published by Froschauer on April 16, 1522 under the title “Concerning Choice and Liberty Respecting Food.”¹² This was Zwingli’s first publication defending the Reformation. While recognizing that this issue was merely a matter of indifference (*adiaphoron*), Zwingli argues that according to the New Testament, “no food of any kind is forbidden to man at any time,” and no human authority has the right to forbid what God allows (Jackson, *Latin*, 104, 110).¹³ Zwingli reasons,

If one could not and should not add to the Old Testament [Deuteronomy 4:2], how much less to the New... If he is to be cursed who preaches beyond what Paul preached, and if Paul nowhere preached the choice of food, then he who dares command this must be worthy of a curse.... [church officers] have not only no power to command such things, but if they command them, they sin greatly; for whoever is in office and does more than he is commanded, is liable to punishment (Ibid., 111–112).

Zwingli’s whole treatise is built on the principle of *sola Scriptura*. His conclusion is that there is no biblical

12. For an English translation, see *The Latin Works and the Correspondence of Huldreich Zwingli, together with Selections from his German Works*, Vol. 1, 1510–1522, ed. Samuel M. Jackson (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912) 70–112; hereafter Jackson, *Latin*. In September of 1522, Froschauer published another of Zwingli’s sermons that had been expanded into a treatise, “Of the Clarity and Certainty or Power of the Word of God.” This treatise clearly sets forth Zwingli’s doctrine of Scripture. For an English translation, see *Zwingli and Bullinger*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Library of Christian Classics, Vol. 24 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953) 49–95.

13. For Zwingli, *adiaphora* (or “things indifferent”) are things neither expressly commanded nor forbidden in Scripture.

14. Zwingli’s account of this event is contained in a letter to Erasmus Fabricius; see Jackson, *Latin*, 113–129.

warrant for a mandatory Lenten fast, and it is, therefore, unlawful.

It was the Lenten disturbance that brought the first intervention of Hugo von Hohenlandberg, the diocesan bishop of Constance, who had jurisdiction over Zürich. The bishop sent a delegation of three officials with a letter admonishing the clergy and councilors in Zürich not to depart from the old Catholic order (Harder, 168, 178).¹⁴ Zwingli replied to the bishop in his “once-for-all defense,” the *Archeteles* (August 23, 1522)—so entitled because he hoped it would be “the beginning and the end” of the struggle with the bishop (Ibid., 179, 181). This lengthy treatise is Zwingli’s “first major piece of Reformation writing” (Ibid., 180). It gives us a clear picture of his understanding of *sola Scriptura* and its application to Christian worship.

Using the principle of *sola Scriptura*, Zwingli explains to the bishop the liturgical reforms that have been implemented at Zürich. The question that Jesus asked the Jews concerning the baptism of John (namely, “Where did it come from—from God or from men?”) is the question that Zwingli asks of every liturgical practice (Jackson, *Latin*, 203). He tests everything by the touchstone of Scripture to see if it reflects the same color, and if it fails the test, he rejects it:

Those who model their teachings upon the pattern of the Scriptures cannot be said to teach according to the whims of their own feelings, but [this can be said of] those who go to work without resting on the authority of the sacred writings, contrary to Paul’s directions to Timothy [2 Timothy 3:14–17].... Those who give assent unto flesh and blood [that is, the doctrines of men], regulate their teachings according to their own sweet will; those who give assent unto the Spirit of God sweetly breathing from the Holy Scriptures and ever freshly blooming, regulate their teaching according to the thought and purpose of God.... [Those who] refer all things to His purpose, and examine all things by the standard of His thought, do not set up a new standard, but go back to the old, old one, as Jeremiah also urges [Jeremiah 6:16] ... (Ibid., 269–270).

As the only infallible authority, the Scriptures must be above the councils of the church, for if the councils contradict each other, there is no other way of deciding which council is true than by the Holy Scriptures (Ibid., 260). The traditions of the ancient church shall be held in reverence if they “savor of the teaching of the Gospel and the Apostles,” but the farther they are removed from the Scriptures, “the less we accept them” (Ibid.,

256). All liturgical rites, ceremonies and traditions that cannot be justified biblically must be abolished, as inventions of men, who have no right to add to the Scriptures. Moreover, removing these “ceremonials” will not weaken the church:

What harm ... is going to happen to us if the whole rubbish-heap of ceremonials be cleared away, since God declares that he is worshipped in vain by these things? [Matthew 15:9] The sayings of the Lord are pure sayings, silver tried by fire and cleansed from earth, aye seven times cleansed. Are we, therefore, to mix dross with silver again? [Christ himself bitterly rebukes] the scribes and Pharisees for putting God's commands in the background and teaching their own traditions [Matthew 15:3]. He also cries out that they sin, saying, “Ye sin, knowing not the Scriptures,” though they knew their own traditions. And he calls them to the study of the Scriptures, saying, “Search the Scriptures” [John 5:39], and meaning evidently to turn them away from their own devices and fabrications (Ibid., 219–221).

Thus, for Zwingli, the Ash Wednesday fast violation of 1522 and the resultant intervention of the bishop of Constance was an opportunity for him to defend the Reformation in Zürich on the grounds of *sola Scriptura*.

A DECISIVE VICTORY

With the intervention of the bishop, Zwingli sensed that the time was ripe to officially seek the support and alliance of the City Council for his reforms, so he appealed to the magistrates “for permission to hold a public disputation at which they would sit as judges and award the victory to the side presenting the best arguments” (Harder, 196).

The City Council took up the idea and were perhaps flattered by the position they would take in this debate. They issued the invitation to the people of the canton and city of Zürich and to the bishops of Constance and of the adjoining dioceses. Zwingli prepared 67 articles as a program for the debate, and looked forward with great eagerness to the time set, which was the 29th of January 1523.¹⁵

And so it was that the First Public Disputation was held in Zürich. “On that eventful day six-hundred persons—priests and laymen of the canton of Zürich” assembled in the Town Hall for the debate (Jackson, *Selected Works*, 40). The bishop of Constance sent a delegation

of distinguished men, including the vicar general of the diocese of Constance, John Faber:

The result of the debate was the enthusiastic approval of Zwingli's teachings, and an order from the authorities not only to continue their presentation, but enjoining such teaching upon all the priests of the canton. Thus this debate ... is of great historical interest as marking the official beginning of the Reformation in German Switzerland (Ibid., 41).

The bishop's deputies insisted that they were not there to debate Zwingli but were willing to do so before competent judges such as might be found at the universities of Paris, Cologne, Louvain or Lyons. Faber asserted,

But if there is a desire to dispute and oppose good old customs, the ways and usages of the past, then in such case I say that I shall not undertake to dispute anything here at Zürich. For, as I think, such matters are to be settled by a general Christian assembly of all nations, or by a council of bishops and other scholars as are found at universities... (Ibid., 50–51).

Zwingli responded to this by saying that “we have here infallible and unprejudiced judges,” namely the Holy Scriptures, “which can neither lie nor deceive. These, we have present in Hebrew, Greek and Latin,” and they are fair and just judges (Ibid., 56–57).¹⁶

When Faber boasted that by using Scripture, he had convinced an evangelical priest (namely, Urban Weiss of Fislisbach)¹⁷ of the practice of praying to the saints as mediators, Zwingli seized the opportunity to debate this issue. He challenged the vicar to show him where in Scripture this practice was taught (Ibid., 63).

Now since my Lord Vicar announces and publicly boasts of how he convinced the imprisoned priest at Constance, the clergyman of Fislisbach, by means of the divine Scriptures, of the fact that one should pray to

15. *Selected Works of Huldreich Zwingli*, ed. Samuel M. Jackson (Philadelphia: University Press, 1901) 40; hereafter Jackson, *Selected Works*. The Sixty-Seven Articles can be found in *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Centuries in English Translation: Volume I, 1523–1552*, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008) 1–8. The city council's invitation is recorded in Samuel M. Jackson, *Huldreich Zwingli: The Reformer of German Switzerland* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903) 180–181.

16. Because of his ignorance of Hebrew and Greek, Faber was a bit intimidated by this assertion; see Ibid., 66.

17. Weiss was arrested in November of 1522 and imprisoned at Constance, where he was tortured until he recanted.

the dear saints and the mother of God ... I beg of him for the sake of God and of Christian love to show me the place and location, also the words of the Scriptures, where it is written that one should pray to the saints as mediators ... then we will have it found and read, so that we may see whether it is the meaning of Scripture that the saints are to be prayed to as mediators (Idem).

Faber gave a long reply, recounting the whole history of the practice in the Christian Church, but he failed to produce one single passage of Scripture. So again, Zwingli challenged him, saying,

Sir Vicar, there is no further need of such smooth and round-about words. I desire that you tell me only with what portion of Scripture you convinced the priest imprisoned at Constance.... I beg you for the sake of Christian love, do this with plain, unadulterated, divine Scripture, as you boast to have done.... There is no need of long speeches. Upon Fathers and councils, one no longer depends, unless they prove their case by the Scriptures (Ibid., 67).

Again, Faber answered but failed to provide a single proof-text, so both Leo Jud (people's priest at St. Peter's in Zürich) and Zwingli challenged him again. Jud dismissed Faber's argument from tradition:

[M]any ordinances of man have been retained from long habit in the churches, and have intermingled with the Gospel, so that the clergy frequently have preached and commanded their keeping equally with the Gospel: yet I now declare that I shall not obey such human ordinances, but shall present and teach from love the joyful and pure Gospel, and whatever I can really prove from the Scriptures, regardless of human ordinance or old traditions.... Therefore, I also pray to hear and to know from him [Faber] where it is written in the aforementioned biblical books concerning the invocation and intercession of the saints (Ibid., 81).

Unable to give a single text to support the practice, Faber gave up debating, closed his mouth and quietly

18. Faber includes the Lenten fast in this oral tradition. Moreover, he says, "It is a harmful error not to admit anything unless it be expressly described in the Scriptures." The Sadducees "also denied the resurrection because it was not expressed in the Scriptures" (Ibid., 98). Unfortunately, we have no record of Zwingli's response to this statement, but he could have easily pointed out that Jesus said to the Sadducees, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures" and then proved the resurrection from the Scriptures, "Have you not read, etc.?" (Matthew 22:29–32).

sat down. At that point, another representative of the bishop (namely, Dr. Martin from Tübingen) stood up and began to argue that "what has been decreed and resolved by the holy councils and fathers" must be obeyed just like the Gospel, for "the Church assembled in council in the name of the Holy Ghost cannot err" (Ibid., 83). Zwingli countered this by denying the infallibility of the councils, which not only may err but have even contradicted each other.

But when [Martin] says what has been decreed by councils and fathers is to be obeyed like the Gospels, I [Zwingli] say what is as true as the Gospels and in accordance with the divine Spirit, one is bound to obey, but not what is decreed in accordance with human reason (Ibid., 84).

After regaining his confidence, Faber again joined the debate and asserted that customs like fasting, confession and reading Mass are done for the praise and honor of God, and therefore, "it seems very strange and unjust ... to despise and reject them as though wrong" (Harder, 199). In response, Zwingli cites Matthew 15:1–9 to show that "God does not desire our decree and doctrine when they do not originate with Him;" indeed, God "despises them, and says we serve Him in vain" by them. The Apostle Paul, likewise, teaches, "Let no man beguile you by human wisdom and deceit, in accordance with the doctrine or decree of men, in accordance with the doctrines of this world, and not those of Christ [Colossians 2:8]" (Jackson, *Selected Works*, 96). Zwingli concludes, "God the Lord cares more for obedience to his Word ... than for all our sacrifices and self-made ecclesiastical practices..." (Harder, 199).

Faber, then, argued for a two-source theory of revelation; that is, revelation comes to us both from Scripture and from tradition handed down by the apostles. The apostles not only instructed by means of written letters, but they gave instructions orally, "presenting them as traditions which were not decreed by the Gospel" (Jackson, *Selected Works*, 99).¹⁸ He cites 2 Thessalonians 2:15 to prove this: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions, which you have been taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us." This is proof, says Faber, that Paul "taught and instructed that which formerly had not been written" (Idem).

To this, Zwingli responded by asserting that the content of the oral instruction (or tradition) of the apostles is identical to Scripture.

I say, Paul did not speak, teach, write or instruct in anything except what the Lord had ordered him. For he testifies everywhere, and also proves it to be true, to have written or preached naught except the Gospel of Christ, which God had promised before in the Scriptures of His Son through the prophets. And the traditions do not disagree with the Scriptures, so that when the apostles wrote one thing another was opposed to it (Ibid., 100).

The dispute went on to address other important issues including the sacrifice of the Mass, the corporal presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper and the authority of councils to define orthodoxy. What is important to note here is that the overarching principle behind all Zwingli's arguments is clearly *sola Scriptura*.

At the end of the day, Zwingli had won a decisive victory. His position became "the new law of the city" (Dennison, 2). The burgomaster, the Small Council and the Great Council of Zürich decided in his favor and declared,

Zwingli should continue and keep on as before to proclaim the holy gospel and the pure holy Scripture with the Holy Spirit according to his ability, as long and as often as he will until something better is made known to him. Moreover, all their people's priests, curates, and preachers in their city and regions and districts shall undertake and preach nothing but what can be proved by the holy gospel and the pure divine Scriptures (Harder, 198).

It is this event, therefore, the First Public Disputation on January 29, 1523, that marks the official beginning of the Magisterial Reformation in Zürich.¹⁹

BIBLICAL WARRANT

If at the beginning of 1523, we see the conception of the Magisterial Reformation in Zürich, nine months later, we discover that there were twins in the womb. By the end of the year, the Radical Reformation was born.

Once the City Council had openly declared itself in favor of the Reformation, the way was cleared for the evangelical preachers to introduce more liturgical reforms. On August 10, 1523, the sacrament of baptism was administered for the first time in the German language in the Grossmünster.²⁰ Less than three weeks later, Zwingli published *De Canone Missae Epichiresis* (Essay on the Canon of the Mass), which contained his first proposals for the revision of the Mass, which were rather conservative and cautious (Harder, 226).²¹

He wanted to introduce liturgical reforms slowly for the sake of the uneducated and the weaker brethren.

Zwingli's more radically-minded followers, however, were quick to criticize him for moving so slowly out of forbearance for the weak (Harder, 227). Conrad Grebel (who was destined to become the leader of the Radicals)²² was especially troubled by this "false forbearance," as he considered it.²³ In response to this criticism, Zwingli published *De Canone Missae Libelli Apologia* (Defense of the Booklet of the Mass Canon) on October 9, 1523. This *Defense* is primarily aimed at Grebel and his circle of friends.²⁴ The *Defense* gives us the earliest evidence of tension between Zwingli and the Brethren. The twins were struggling in the womb. The *Defense* also demonstrates that while both groups were committed to the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, they did not have the same understanding as to how that doctrine applies to Christian worship. To be more precise, they did not have the same criterion for establishing biblical warrant. On the one hand, the Brethren insisted that whatever is not commanded in Scripture by way of precept or example is forbidden. On the other hand,

19. Although the designation "Magisterial Reformation" is questionable, it is, nevertheless, a helpful designation in the case of Zürich, for it distinguishes the reform activity of Zwingli and his colleagues (which was supported by the magistrates) from the reform activity of the Zürich Radicals, which had no magisterial support. We do not use the designation to mean that the magistrates were *leading* the Reformation or to signify that the *main* concern of the Radicals was to establish free churches, independent of the state.

20. This German baptismal rite was Leo Jud's translation of the Latin rite; see Old, *Shaping*, 40–45. In May of 1525, this rite was replaced by a more thoroughly evangelical rite, *The Form of Baptism*; "Here follows the form of Baptism now in use in Zürich; and all additions not grounded in the Word of God have been excluded," Thompson, "Reformed Liturgies," 20. Cf. Old, *Shaping*, 62–66.

21. For an analysis of *De Canone*, see Thompson, *Liturgies*, 141–146; and Thompson, "Reformed Liturgies," 4–10. Zwingli "kept the first part of the Mass intact, except to simplify the lectionary, remove the Propers for saints' days, and to insist that the lessons and sermon must be given in the vernacular. Otherwise, Latin continued to rule the liturgy, which was still enhanced by the traditional vestments, ceremonies, and music," Thompson, *Liturgies*, 141. Zwingli's main concern was to show that the Mass was not a sacrifice (*offerimus*) but a commemoration (*commemoramus*) of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ.

22. The Zürich Radicals preferred to be called the Brethren. At this early date, it would be anachronistic to call them Anabaptists, since they did not begin re-baptizing until January 21, 1525.

23. Zwingli called Grebel the ringleader (*coryphaeus*) of the Radicals. Johann Kessler called him the arch-Anabaptist. For biographical information on Grebel, see Harold S. Bender, *Conrad Grebel: The Founder of the Swiss Brethren* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1950).

24. J. F. Gerhard Goeters, "Die Vorgeschichte des Täufern in Zürich," *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie der Reformation*, eds. Luise Abramowski and J. F. Gerhard Goeters (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969) 260.

Zwingli—while initially granting their principle—ends up rejecting it in favor of a much broader criterion of biblical warrant.

In his *Defense*, Zwingli first addresses the issue of priestly vestments. The Brethren have convinced him that because the Mass vestments are connected to the doctrine of eucharistic sacrifice, they should be discarded (Harder, 228).

Secondly, he addresses the use of Latin singing (or chanting).²⁵ The Brethren “fear that the permitted chants, namely, the *Introit*, the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* and the rest may, like some sort of obstacle, impede the birth of a pure Christianity, and eventually furnish prey for ceremony” (Ibid., 228). Zwingli yields to their argument and states that as soon as possible, this practice ought to be discontinued. We “must put up for awhile with these lovely nightingales who cannot keep from singing, so long as they sing only heavenly things, until we can overcome all things by the Word of God” (Idem). What needs to be borne in mind here is that Zwingli is referring to liturgical singing as it was developed in the medieval church and not to congregational singing as it was practiced in some Reformed churches like Strasbourg or Constance.²⁶ In fact, in his lectures on the Psalms, Zwingli says, “If the hymn of praise on Sunday is sung clearly and for all to understand, it is good and praiseworthy” (Locher, 61).

Finally, Zwingli addresses the Radicals’ criticism of his four Latin prayers before the Lord’s Supper. The Radicals insisted that only the Lord’s Prayer could be used in the Communion rite and that it was unlawful for Zwingli to add additional prayers. Zwingli writes, “They proffer as the basis for their judgment that Christ employed no prefatory prayers, and that whatever God himself has not taught by word or deed is sinful”

25. The Latin term *cantiones* can either be translated chants or songs as also the German *Gesang*; see Harder, *Sources*, 657. “The *Gesang* that Zwingli was describing could be translated ‘liturgical singing’ or ‘chanting’ to signify the priestly *Gesang* in distinction to the congregational *Gesang* that Reformers like Carlstadt were promoting,” Ibid., 662.

26. In recent Zwinglian scholarship, it is widely recognized that “in his total abolition of church singing the (highly musical) Reformer was really striking only at Latin chanting,” Locher, *Zwingli’s Thought*, 61; this is evident in the Second Zürich Disputation; see Harder, *Sources*, 246. “The old assertion ‘Zwingli was against church singing’ holds good no longer.... Zwingli’s polemic is concerned exclusively with the medieval Latin choral and priestly chanting and not with the hymns of evangelical congregations or choirs. Zwingli freely allowed vernacular psalm or choral singing. In addition, he even seems to have striven for lively, antiphonal, unison recitative,” Locher, *Zwingli’s Thought*, 61–62. Cf. Charles Garside, *Zwingli and the Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966) 7–75.

(Harder, 229). Here is a clear statement of the Radicals’ principle of biblical warrant. One does not find this principle explicitly stated in any of Zwingli’s previous writings. The *Defense* makes it clear that Zwingli attributes this principle to the Radicals, even if the Radicals themselves later claim to have learned it from Zwingli.

While Zwingli yielded to the Radicals with regard to the Mass vestments and Latin chants, he would not yield to them in the matter of prayer. Scripture does not give us a prescribed liturgy, and therefore, he reasons, we are not “bound to this or that order by any command of Christ” (Ibid., 231). What is most important to note here is that Zwingli does concede to their principle that whatever is not commanded in Scripture by precept or example is unlawful. “Now I readily grant,” he says, “that whatever God has not taught by word or deed is a sin. For as he alone is good, so good cannot proceed from any but him” (Ibid., 230). However, Zwingli goes on to argue that their principle does not forbid the use of his prayers in the Communion service.

I ask, what have I said in any of these four prayers which is contrary to the holy words? I should like one iota to be shown which has not been taken from the celestial treasury, though in other words, so that everything may be both more simple and more obvious. But they counter: Granted that you have said nothing alien to the Word of God, yet in this place nothing in addition to the Lord’s Prayer should be said.... To these remarks I reply as follows: I desire to learn from you where God has taught that we should say no prayer but the Lord’s Prayer (Idem).

In this last remark, Zwingli challenges the Brethren to show him where Scripture teaches that we may only use the Lord’s Prayer in the Communion rite. He reasons that if Scripture does not teach this, then we are free to use other prayers. The irony of all this, Zwingli observes, is that the Brethren (who are concerned that we add nothing to Scripture) are themselves unintentionally adding to Scripture by forbidding something that Scripture does not forbid.

The *Defense* demonstrates that while Zwingli does yield to the Brethren on certain points, he does not concede to all their arguments. And although he agrees with their criterion of biblical warrant in the *Defense*, he does not follow it consistently. In fact, he ends up rejecting it and embracing a much broader principle, as we will see in the disputes on infant baptism.

In 1524, the Swiss Brethren were influenced by a series of tracts written by another Radical reformer

named Thomas Müntzer (Harder, 283).²⁷ These tracts concerning topics such as baptism and the Mass were written at a time “when Müntzer was still expressing himself generally in a moderate way.”²⁸ The Brethren were impressed with Müntzer’s reformation and wanted to reach out to him for assistance in dealing with their situation in Zürich, so on September 5, 1524, Grebel wrote two brief letters to Müntzer. These are known as the Programmatic Letters.²⁹ For the most part, Grebel agrees with Müntzer’s liturgical reforms, but there are some areas of disagreement.³⁰ One of his major concerns is that Müntzer allows singing in worship. Grebel writes,

We ... entreat and admonish you as a brother ... to seek earnestly to preach only the divine Word, and unafraid, to set up and defend only divine rites, to esteem as right and good only what is found in crystal-clear Scripture, to reject, hate, and curse all proposals, words, rites, and opinions of all men, even your own. We understand and have noted that you have ... begun to use German hymnody. That cannot be right, when we find no teaching in the New Testament about singing, and no example of singing.... [S]ince singing in the Latin tongue arose without divine teaching and apostolic precedent and practice, and neither resulted in good nor brought edification, it will much less edify in German, but will result in an outward make-believe faith.... Paul quite explicitly forbids singing in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, when he teaches that they shall teach and admonish one another with psalms and spiritual songs, and if anyone wishes to sing, he shall sing and give thanks in his heart....³¹ [T]hat which is not taught by clear instruction and example we shall regard as forbidden to us—just as if it stood written, Do not do this; do not sing.... [A] person is not to do what seems right to him; it is the Word which we are to follow, with no additions... (Wenger, 17–21).

The Programmatic Letters were signed by seven of the Brethren; they express the views, therefore, not of Grebel alone but of the whole group.³² What we wish to point out here is the clear statement of their principle of biblical warrant, namely, whatever is not commanded in Scripture is thereby forbidden. “That which is not taught by clear instruction” or example we regard as forbidden, just as if it stood written, “Thou shalt not do this.” The Programmatic Letters apply this principle not only to singing but to other liturgical practices as well, including infant baptism.

[We have concluded] that infant baptism [of which there are no examples in Scripture] is a senseless, blasphemous abomination, contrary to all Scripture.... [And we] hope that you [Müntzer] are not acting against the eternal Word, wisdom, and commandment of God—according to which only believers are to be baptized—by baptizing a single child. If you or Carlstadt do not write sufficiently against infant baptism, and all that is associated with it, how and why one is to baptize, etc., I, Conrad Grebel, will try my hand at it (Wenger, 33).³³

Thus, the Programmatic Letters of Grebel confirm the previous conclusion that we drew from Zwingli’s *Defense*, namely that the principle that whatever is not commanded in Scripture is thereby forbidden was employed by the Radicals to satisfy their concern for biblical warrant. These letters also provide early evidence that this principle was used against the practice of infant baptism.

THE BREAKING POINT

On October 26, 1523, the City Council convened a Second Public Disputation to consider further liturgical reforms, namely, the use of images in worship and the Mass.³⁴ Invitations to be represented were sent out to the bishops of Constance, Basel and Chur and to each

27. For biographical information on Müntzer, see Gordon Rupp, *Patterns of the Reformation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969).

28. John Allen Moore, *Anabaptist Portraits* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984) 31.

29. See John C. Wenger, *Conrad Grebel’s Programmatic Letters of 1524* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1970). See also Harder, *Sources*, 284.

30. On Müntzer’s liturgical ideas, see Rupp, *Patterns*, 305.

31. It should be noted here that in his *Defense*, Zwingli concedes (albeit somewhat reluctantly) to this interpretation of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 that singing *in your heart* means not audibly. “Indeed, I am not unaware that the words of Paul in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 concerning psalmody and singing in our hearts afford no help to those who defend their swan song by them. For he says ‘in our hearts,’ not ‘our voices.’ Psalmody and the praises of God are, then, to be managed in such a way that our minds may sing to God,” Harder, *Sources*, 229.

32. The letters were signed, “Conrad Grebel, Andrew Castelberg, Felix Mantz, Henry Aberly, John Panicellus (Broetli), John Ockenfuss, John Huiuff your countryman of Hall, your brethren, and seven new young ‘Müntzers’ against Luther,” Wenger, *Programmatic Letters*, 43.

33. In 1524, the Brethren were influenced by another Radical reformer named Andreas Bodenstein von Carlstadt. “They read his writings and considered him one of ‘the purest proclaimers and preachers of the purest Word of God,’” Harder, *Sources*, 533.

34. Two events provided the occasion for the Second Zürich Disputation: (1) Zwingli’s proposals for the revision of the Mass and (2) an iconoclastic riot that broke out in September of 1523. On September 1, Leo Jud denounced the liturgical use of images in a sermon at St. Peter’s. This incited some of the Radicals to take action; they began

canton, but all of the bishops declined the invitation, and the only cantons represented were Schaffhausen and St. Gall. Zwingli was assisted in this debate by some of his more radically-minded followers, including Conrad Grebel and Simon Stumpf.³⁵ Another important participant was Dr. Balthasar Hübmaier, who had been pastor at Waldshut since 1521.³⁶ On the first day, the debate centered on the use of images. The City Council resolved “to remove them wherever it could be done without disturbance or wounding tender consciences” (Jackson, *Huldreich Zwingli*, 204). Days two and three were given over to the subject of the Mass.³⁷ During the debate regarding the Mass, Zwingli made an important decision that greatly offended the Radicals. We already noted the rising tension between Zwingli and the Radicals in the *Defense*. At the Second Disputation, that tension reached a breaking point. Indeed, one might say that if the First Disputation marks the official beginning of the Magisterial Reformation in Zürich, the Second Disputation marks the official beginning of the Radical Reformation.

The decisive moment occurred on day two of the Disputation. After Zwingli and his followers strongly denounced the Mass as an abomination before God, Conrad Grebel asked him to give some instructions as to how the priests might proceed to reform the Mass. To which, Zwingli replied, “My Lords will decide whatever regulations are to be adopted in the future in regard to the Mass” (Bender, 98). In other words, the City

to unlawfully remove and destroy images. Several iconoclasts were arrested, and the City Council decided to have a public disputation to officially address the matter. See Harder, *Sources*, 232–233; and Thompson, “Reformed Liturgies,” 5. See also Raget Christoffel, *Zwingli: The Rise of the Reformation in Switzerland*, translated by John Cochran (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1858) 125–151.

35. Stumpf was the pastor at Höngg near Zürich.

36. It is incorrect to classify Hübmaier as one of the followers of Zwingli, but he was closely associated with them. Hübmaier was the most able defender of Anabaptism; see Jackson, *Latin*, 15; and Jackson, *Selected Works*, 138. John H. Yoder observes that he was “the only trained theologian and the most prolific author among the first leaders of the Swiss-South German Anabaptist movement;” see Yoder, “Balthasar Hübmaier and the Beginnings of Swiss Anabaptism,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* XXXIII:1, 1959, 5. For biographical information on Hübmaier, see Moore, *Portraits*, 165; and Henry C. Vedder, *Balthasar Hübmaier: The Leader of the Anabaptists* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1905). For a recent analysis of Hübmaier’s baptismal theology, see Kirk R. MacGregor, *A Central European Synthesis of Radical and Magisterial Reform: The Sacramental Theology of Balthasar Hübmaier* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006).

37. Zwingli preached a sermon in the morning on day three that was later expanded into a treatise and published under the title “The Shepherd” on March 26, 1524.

Council would decide what steps to take in reforming the liturgy. Grebel and his friends were scandalized by this answer. Simon Stumpf exclaimed,

Maſter Ulrich! You do not have the right to place the decision of this matter in the hands of my lords, for the decision has already been made, the Spirit of God decides. If my lords adopt and decide on some other course that would be againſt the decision of God, I will ask Chriſt for His Spirit, and I will preach and act againſt it (Idem).

Zwingli, then, tried to explain that the Council “was not to decide whether the Mass was scriptural or not, but only what procedure should be used in doing away with the Mass” (Idem). He was not leaving it up to the Council to determine the truth of the matter but only the implementation of that truth (Moore, 27). The Council will decide “the most appropriate way of this to be done without an uproar” (Harder 242). Zwingli also deferred to the Council’s judgment concerning the tempo of this reform; in other words, it would decide the pace at which these changes in the liturgy would be implemented. The Radicals insisted that “doctrine be practiced consistently and not remain theory only until such a time when state authorities should be moved to act on it” (Moore, 29). Zwingli urged them to be patient since these things cannot be abolished all at once. They must be put away and abolished at the proper time so that no uproar or other disunity arises among the believers. The churches must first be instructed before these changes can be implemented.

Therefore [says Zwingli], faithful, elect, dear brethren in Chriſt Jeſus, I urge you for God’s ſake to take the Word of God in hand and preſent and preach it to your pariſhioners with the utmoſt clarity that they may learn from it what the Maſſ is, and alſo that one may well have a Maſſ without the veſtments. If the people are thus built up, theſe things can be aboliſhed without tumult (Harder, 246).

This event was the breaking point between Zwingli and the Radicals. In Grebel’s mind, Zwingli placed the government of the church in the hands of the civil magistrates; consequently, “the Scripture was not to have its rightful and supreme place” (Bender, 99). It is from Zwingli’s fateful decision at the Second Zürich Disputation that “two major roads branch off in church history. One road led by way of Zwingli into the state church, while the other road led by way of Grebel and the Swiss Brethren into

the free church” (Idem).³⁸ By the end of 1523, the relationship between the Grebel circle and Zwingli was completely severed.³⁹ In December of that year, Grebel wrote, “Whoever thinks, believes, or declares that Zwingli acts according to the duty of a shepherd thinks, believes, and declares wickedly” (Harder, 276).⁴⁰

INFANT BAPTISM

In the Spring of 1524, Wilhelm Reublin (pastor at Wytikon, five miles southeast of Zürich) began to preach against infant baptism, “following which a number of young parents decided not to present their babies for baptism on Easter Sunday” (Harder, 562). Reublin was arrested on August 11 and interrogated by the three Zürich pastors: Zwingli, Jud and Engelhart.⁴¹ This incident brought the issue of infant baptism before the City Council, and the Brethren seized the opportunity to request a disputation on the subject. Granting their request, two private disputations were held on December 6 and 13, 1524.⁴² The Brethren denounced infant baptism as “the chief abomination proceeding from an evil demon and the Roman pontiff” (Ibid., 300).⁴³ Infant baptism must be abolished because it has no biblical warrant.⁴⁴ “Nowhere do we read that the apostles baptized children with water. Consequently, in the absence of a specific Word and example, they should not be baptized” (Harder, 308).

To this, Zwingli responded that we do have a specific Word by means of an analogy between baptism and circumcision.⁴⁵

Circumcision was the sign of a faith that was already there [according to Romans 4:11]. But it was always performed eight days after birth on infants who would only many years later come to faith. Baptism then took the place of circumcision [Colossians 2:11]. It follows then that baptism, like circumcision, should be performed also on those who will not come to faith until later.... Consequently, the circumcision of Christ is ... administered to infants on the authority of God’s Word, not the pope’s, just like earlier the circumcision of Abraham (Ibid., 306).⁴⁶

Secondly, Zwingli argued that if one is looking for examples of infant baptism in Scripture, then one should consider the household baptisms recorded in the New Testament. “Paul baptized the household of Stephanas (1 Corinthians 1:[16]) and also the jailer with his whole family (Acts 16:[33]); in both of these instances there were, more likely than not, some children” (Harder, 308).

As we noted earlier, in the *Defense* (October 9, 1523), Zwingli accepted the Radicals’ principle of biblical warrant, but he did not follow it consistently. Likewise, in the first private disputations with the Brethren on baptism, there is no indication that he rejected their principle. To the contrary, when they demanded a specific command or a biblical example, Zwingli tried to satisfy their demand by using the analogy of circumcision and household baptism. The Brethren were unconvinced. Shortly after the disputations, Felix Mantz wrote, in a letter of protest to the City Council,

They [Zwingli, Jud and Engelhart] know full well ... that Christ did not teach infant baptism and that the apostles did not practice it, but that, in accord with the true meaning of baptism, only those should be baptized

38. Zwingli’s decision is “the watershed between those units that become ‘state churches’ and those that would be ‘free churches,’” Moore, *Portraits*, 28–29.

39. By promising to observe an evangelical Communion service on Christmas Day of 1523 (with or without the Council’s approval), Zwingli may have temporarily appeased the Brethren, but they were disillusioned when he changed his mind at the last minute and failed to keep his promise. See Harder, *Sources*, 271–274, 671.

40. *Qui Zinlium ex officio pastoris agree putat, credit vel dicit, impie putat, credit et dicit*, Potter, Zwingli, 178.

41. Heinrich Engelhart was pastor at the Fraumünster in Zürich.

42. These private disputations were held before four members of the Small Council. The dissenters were represented by several Brethren including Conrad Grebel, Felix Mantz and Ludwig Hätzer. Zwingli left us a detailed report of the private disputations in a letter that he wrote (December 16, 1524) to Franz Lambert, Martin Bucer and Wolfgang Capito, Reformers at Strasbourg. Carlstadt had recently visited Strasbourg and had caused quite a stir by distributing pamphlets on baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

43. “If one baptizes infants,” says Zwingli, “they cry out that there is no greater abomination, atrocity, or sin in Christendom than baptizing infants. And they daily bring forth more silly arguments than Africa produces strange beasts,” Ibid., 316–317.

44. Many arguments, which deserve close examination, were presented on both sides of the debate, but for our purposes, we will focus on those arguments that involve the Radicals’ principle of biblical warrant. For an analysis of the debates on baptism, see MacGregor, *Hübmaier*; Old, *Shaping*; Harder, *Sources*; Bromiley, *Zwingli and Bullinger*, and Jackson, *Selected Works*.

45. Zwingli refers to this argument as “the analogy of circumcision.” In his treatise “On Baptism, Rebaptism and Infant Baptism” (examined below), he clarifies that it is not really an analogy because in the New Testament, baptism is precisely what circumcision is in the Old. In other words, baptism is the New Testament form of circumcision.

46. Zwingli’s doctrine that circumcision was a sign of faith will be significantly modified later in his treatise “On Baptism, Rebaptism and Infant Baptism,” where he correctly observes that circumcision was not a sign for the confirmation of faith but rather a covenant sign to confirm the promise of God. Likewise, baptism is a covenant sign confirming the promise of the Gospel and not the faith of the recipient. See Bromiley, *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 138.

who reform, take on a new life, lay aside sins, are buried with Christ, and rise with him from baptism in newness of life.... [Christ] commanded to baptize those who had been taught; the apostles baptized none except those who had been taught of Christ, and nobody was baptized without external evidence and certain testimony or desire. And whoever says or teaches otherwise does something which he cannot prove with Scripture; for I should like to hear anyone who, out of true clear Scripture can prove to me that John [the Baptist], Christ [or] the apostles baptized children or taught that they should be baptized (Ibid., 312–314).

Before the end of 1524, Zwingli published a treatise entitled “Those Who Give Cause for Rebellion” in which he attacks the Brethren and other “rebels.” This is his first writing against the Radicals. In this treatise, we discover that Zwingli’s defense of infant baptism has been somewhat modified. For the first time, he questions the Radicals’ criterion for biblical warrant. In the first place, Zwingli admits that infant baptism is not explicitly commanded in Scripture but neither is it explicitly forbidden.

[T]hose who refuse to baptize [infants] have no clear prohibition against baptizing [them]. On the other hand, those who baptize them have no clear word commanding that they be baptized. I say this simply to grant this point to the obstinate so that the two spears will be of equal length, lest they bring up Matthew 15, “They worship me in vain, etc.” and “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted, etc.” (Ibid., 319).⁴⁷

Therefore, Zwingli concludes, “we do not find in the New Testament that infant baptism is either commanded or forbidden” (Ibid., 319). What is one to do, therefore, when no clear and plain word is found in the New Testament? One must look to the Old Testament for instruction.

When tension arises in these things [namely, outward matters with no explicit instruction in the New Testament], according to Christ’s teaching, we are set over

47. The Brethren frequently appealed to Matthew 15:1–13 as a proof-text to establish their criterion of biblical warrant. As we saw earlier, Zwingli had effectively used this text to argue against the mandatory Lenten fast. In addition to Matthew 15:1–13, both Zwingli and the Brethren appealed to other similar texts including Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32, Matthew 19:17, Romans 14:23 and Colossians 2:8, 23. E.g. see Hübmaier’s use of these texts in Harder, *Sources*, 241.

48. Zwingli often sums up his argument with these or similar words; see Ibid., 320.

Moses and the prophets, lest he rebuke us with the Sadducees, “You err because you do not understand the Scriptures,” Matthew 22[:29].... For example, marriage is an eternal necessary usage. But as to the way it is to be entered into, we have no statement in the New Testament. So in Leviticus 18[:6–8] we find a criterion, to wit, that it should be done with the consent of the father and mother [etc.] (Ibid., 318–319).

In like manner, since there is no command or prohibition concerning infant baptism in the New Testament, “We must therefore see whether there is anything in the Old Testament about it. We find nothing on baptism, but we do on the practice followed in the place of baptism, namely, circumcision” (Ibid., 319). Here, Zwingli essentially repeats the argument made at the private disputations and concludes “as circumcision was given to infants in the Old Testament and baptism has come to take the place of circumcision, the children of Christians should also be baptized” (Ibid., 319–320). This is the grounds of infant baptism. For Zwingli, this is sufficient biblical warrant to justify the practice. Zwingli’s argument can be summed up briefly: since children of Christians are children of God, we cannot deny them the sign of the children of God, namely, baptism.⁴⁸

The Brethren did not accept this argument. Zwingli has admitted that there is no clear word in the New Testament commanding the practice, so unless he can produce an example of infant baptism in the New Testament (which—for them—would be sufficient warrant to justify the practice), it is forbidden, just as if it stood written, “Thou shalt not baptize infants.” Zwingli responds,

[B]y raising the objection that the apostles did not baptize infants, and therefore they should not be baptized, they prove nothing; else I could also argue: the apostles baptized no one in Calcutta, hence nobody in Calcutta should be baptized.... Besides, it is better to assume that the apostles baptized infants of believers than not, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1: “I also baptized the household of Stephanas.” And in Acts 16: “When Lydia was baptized with her household, etc.” And soon after this: “He was baptized that very hour, he and all his household.” It is more likely than not that in such households there were children (Ibid., 319–320).

The controversy over infant baptism raged on into the new year. The recalcitrant Radicals continued to voice their dissent by disrupting services of worship, publicly denouncing infant baptism as an abomination and

persuading parents not to present their children for baptism. The City Council decided to hold a public disputation on baptism to settle the controversy, so on January 17, 1525, Zwingli and his colleagues gathered at the Town Hall before the Council to defend infant baptism against the dissenters, who were represented by Grebel, Mantz and Reublin. At the end of the day, the Council sided with Zwingli and mandated that

[A]ll children shall be baptized as soon as they are born. And all those who have hitherto left their children unbaptized shall have them baptized within the next eight days. And anyone who refuses to do this shall, with wife and child and possessions, leave our lord's city, jurisdiction, and domain, and never return... (Ibid., 336).⁴⁹

Furthermore, the Council ordered the Brethren to stop their conventicles and desist from "disputing and agitating;" in other words, "they were to discontinue the whole movement" (Bender, 136).⁵⁰

On the evening of January 21, 1525, fifteen Brethren gathered in the home of Felix Mantz to determine whether to submit to the Council's decree or "to obey God rather than men."⁵¹ Deeply troubled by the Council's decision and afraid for their lives, they cried out to the Lord for mercy and strength. Then, one of the Brethren, a priest named George Blaurock, asked Grebel "for God's sake to baptize him; and this he did. After that, he baptized the others also" (Harder, 342).⁵² This fateful event marks the birth of the Anabaptist Church; from then on, the Brethren would be known as the Anabaptists.⁵³ The movement spread quickly to the surrounding villages, especially to Zollikon, south of Zürich. Within a week, nearly thirty Anabaptists were arrested and imprisoned. Grebel fled Zürich and began holding missionary campaigns at Schaffhausen and St. Gallen.

In an effort to suppress the movement, Zwingli published a major treatise on May 27, 1525 entitled "On Baptism, Rebaptism and Infant Baptism."⁵⁴ This treatise started a literary warfare between Zwingli and Hübmaier, the most able defender of the Anabaptists.⁵⁵ As we noted above, by the end of 1524, Zwingli had started to question the Anabaptists' principle of biblical warrant. Here, we find him repudiating it.⁵⁶ At the beginning of the treatise, Zwingli notes that the Anabaptists frequently appeal to the Scripture "You shall neither add to my Word nor take away from it" (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32) in order to make the argument that "Since God did not say that infants should be baptized, infants should never be baptized" (Ibid., 366).⁵⁷ To this, says

Zwingli, "one can give them two answers which they cannot refute."

The first one is: Does it say anywhere that infants should never be baptized? No. And so they are adding to the Word, not we.... They should ... show where it is written that infants should not be baptized. Otherwise, they are adding to the Word.... The second answer is: It does no good to say in reference to things which should be forbidden, "Add nothing to my Word," but only to the things that should be considered sin; for they must show

49. The result of the January 17th disputation was "in fact almost the annihilation of the Grebel group;" Fritz Blanke, *Brothers in Christ: The History of the Oldest Anabaptist Congregation, Zollikon, near Zürich, Switzerland* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1961) 60.

50. The conventicles began as "Bible schools" in private homes among the supporters of Zwingli, but when the Radicals became disenchanted with the Zwinglian Reformation, they began using their meetings to promote their own ideas.

51. The exact location of this meeting is unknown, but the evidence suggests the home of Felix Mantz; see Harder, *Sources*, 708, 739; cf. Bender, *Conrad Grebel*, 264.

52. It is unclear whether Grebel or Blaurock baptized the others.

53. It should be noted that since the Brethren did not accept infant baptism as true Christian baptism, they did not consider this act a re-baptism. Hence, they rejected the title Anabaptists (re-baptizers). Anabaptism was used pejoratively, as was Catabaptism. For the meaning of these terms, see Harder, *Sources*, 756–757.

54. The treatise has four parts: (1) Dedication, (2) On Baptism, (3) On Rebaptism and (4) On Infant Baptism. An English translation of Part 1 and Part 3 may be found in Harder, *Sources*, 363–74; Part 2 is in Bromiley, *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 129–175. Unfortunately, Part 4 has not been translated into English.

55. Ironically, in a personal conversation on May 1, 1523, Zwingli agreed with Hübmaier that infants should not be baptized; see Harder, *Sources*, 697; Bromiley, *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 139; Bender, *Conrad Grebel*, 126–127. On February 2, 1525, Hübmaier published his first work on baptism ("Public Entreaty to All Believers"), which issued the following challenge, "Whoever wills, let him demonstrate that one should baptize infants, and let him do this with German, plain, clear, and unambiguous Scriptures relating only to baptism [contra Zwingli's circumcision analogy] without any addition. On the other hand, [I pledge] to prove that baptism of infants is a work without any foundation in the divine Word." MacGregor, *Hübmaier*, 121. On July 7, 1525, Hübmaier published a rebuttal of Zwingli's treatise. On November 7, 1525, Zwingli published his reply, "A True, Thorough Reply to Dr. Balthasar's Book on Baptism." Hübmaier's response came out the following year, "A Discussion by Dr. Balthasar Hübmaier of Friedberg Concerning the Booklet on Baptism by Master Ulrich Zwingli of Zürich."

56. In his careful analysis of the source documents, Leland Harder came to the same conclusion; "In the time between the two doctrinal disputes of 1523, Zwingli had himself affirmed [the] hermeneutical principle [of the Anabaptists] which he now repudiates [in his treatise 'On Baptism, Rebaptism and Infant Baptism']:" Harder, *Sources*, 720, fn 17.

57. As we saw earlier, Zwingli used this same biblical text to argue against the Lenten fast.

a prohibiting law. “For where there is no law, there is also no transgression,” Romans 4[:15]. Now if infant baptism is not forbidden with a law, it is not sin (Idem).⁵⁸

In less than two months after the publication of Zwingli’s treatise, Hübmaier published a rebuttal under the title “Concerning the Christian Baptism of Believers” (July 7, 1525); this is regarded as his most significant writing and the best defense of believer’s baptism in the Reformation era. Hübmaier challenges Zwingli’s rejection of the Anabaptists’ principle. In an imaginary dialogue with Zwingli, he writes,

You say: There is no clear word in Scripture that a child should not be baptized.... There is not the word there, “Do not baptize small children”—so, you say, they can be baptized. To which I say: Then I can baptize my dog and donkey ... mumble prayers and vigils for the dead, name wooden gods St. Peter and St. Paul ... bless palm branches, plants, salt, oil, and water—and sell the Mass as a sacrifice. Nowhere in Scripture is it forbidden, in so many words, that we should not do these things!... You say: “Baptizing donkeys is forbidden, for Christ commanded that people be baptized.” Well, shall we baptize Jews and Turks? You say: “Only believing people should be baptized.” Answer: So why do you then baptize infants? (Moore, 199).⁵⁹

Hübmaier goes on to argue that Christ did not say, “Every planting which my Father has forbidden has been rooted out” but rather “Every planting which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted out” (Ibid., 201). Therefore, the burden of proof is not on the

58. Cf. Ibid., 370–371. It should be noted here that Zwingli is not arguing that infant baptism is lawful because it is not forbidden in Scripture. He does not affirm the so-called normative principle of worship, namely, that whatever is not forbidden is allowed. Rather, he is simply turning the Anabaptists’ argument against them. In other words, they argued that since infant baptism is not commanded in Scripture, then one is adding to the Word of God by practicing it. Zwingli simply reverses this argument by saying that since infant baptism is not forbidden in Scripture, one is adding to the Word of God by forbidding it. His point is that their chief argument against infant baptism is self-defeating.

59. In our opinion, Hübmaier has misunderstood Zwingli’s point that infant baptism is not forbidden in Scripture. First, this point should be seen as an attempt to demonstrate the self-defeating nature of the Anabaptists’ argument (as explained in footnote 58). Secondly, Zwingli uses this point as a minor premise in a logical syllogism, which may be stated as follows: (1) circumcision and baptism are equivalent signs; (2) circumcision was given to infants; (3) infants are not prohibited from receiving baptism; (4) therefore, infants should be baptized.

60. Cf. Christoffel, *Zwingli*, 255.

Anabaptists to show that infant baptism is forbidden but on Zwingli to show that it is commanded. Zwingli “must show clearly in Scripture the planting of infant baptism, otherwise this planting must be uprooted” (Idem).

In October of 1525, several of the Anabaptist leaders (including Grebel, Mantz and Blaurock) were arrested and imprisoned at Grüningen. The Zürich Council decided to hold another public disputation on baptism in November of 1525. Hübmaier was invited, and everyone expected him to attend, but he was prevented because of the occupation of Waldshut by the forces of the Austrian government (Harder, 432). Heinrich Bullinger (who left us a detailed eyewitness account of the disputation) informs us that when the crowd grew too large for the Town Hall, the meeting was moved to the Grossmünster, where rails were set up “in the nave, plus chairs and two tables, one for the presidents and preachers, and the other for the Anabaptists. The latter could speak as long and as much [as they wanted] without any cloture. [And] the conference continued the whole day for three days in succession, November 6, 7, and 8” (Ibid., 434).⁶⁰

The Anabaptists repeated their assertion that there is no biblical warrant for infant baptism because “Children are nowhere in Scripture commanded to be baptized, nor is it anywhere said that Christ or the apostles baptized children.” It is a man-made tradition that “ought to be done away with as an abuse, as other papistical abuses have been done away with” (Christoffel, 269–270). To this Zwingli responded as before,

But it is nowhere commanded in Scripture that the inhabitants of Calcutta should be baptized, nor do we find that Christ or the apostles baptized any one in Calcutta, and yet we baptize now in Calcutta, and do rightly therein.... Farther, it is nowhere said in Scripture that women were present at the Supper of Christ; nor have we an express command of Christ to admit them to the Eucharist, and yet we allow women to partake of the Lord’s Supper, and are right in so doing.... Therefore let no man thus judge: Christ has not baptized children, therefore we ought not to baptize them. In respect of outward things, many things are not expressly mentioned in the Word of God which yet with God we do (Ibid., 270).

At this point, the Anabaptists claim that Zwingli himself had previously used the principle that whatever is not commanded in Scripture is thereby forbidden to justify his own liturgical reforms, such as his rejection

of the Lenten fast and the sacrifice of the Mass. The Anabaptists exclaim,

You have ever defended yourself against the Papiſts with the aſſeveration, what is not founded in God’s Word holds not, and now you ſay: “There are many things not in the Word of God, which yet with God may be done.” Where is now that word of power with which you vanquiſhed the Suffragan Biſhop Faber and all the monks? (Idem).⁶¹

As we noted earlier in our examination of the *Defense*, Zwingli attributed this principle to the Anabaptiſts. Here, the Anabaptiſts claim to have learned it from him.⁶² In our examination of the ſource documents, it ſeems more likely that the Anabaptiſts learned the principle from Tertullian.⁶³ Grebel, the ringleader of the Anabaptiſts, was highly influenced by Tertullian. Even in his Chriſtian humaniſt years, Grebel had a great affinity for the Father of Latin theology.⁶⁴ When Johann Froben, the leading publisher of Baſel, printed the Beatus Rhenanus edition of the works of Tertullian in 1521, Grebel was one of the fiſt to ſtudy it.⁶⁵

In *De Corona*, which Tertullian wrote around the year 211, we find the ſtory of a certain Chriſtian ſoldier, who reſuſed to wear the laurel crown on the acceſſion of the emperor Severus.⁶⁶ This led to his imprisonment. Some Chriſtians argued that he was making a big deal out of nothing, a mere matter of dreſs. “After all,” they reaſoned, “we are not forbidden in Scripture from wearing a crown.” Tertullian wrote *De Corona* in defense of the ſoldier’s actions. In this work, he deals with the argument that whatever is not forbidden in Scripture is permiſſible.

To be ſure, it is very eaſy to aſk: “Where in Scripture are we forbidden to wear a crown?” But, can you ſhow me a text that ſays we ſhould be crowned? If people try to ſay that we may be crowned becauſe the Scriptures do not forbid it, then they leave themſelves open to the retort that we may not be crowned becauſe Scripture does not preſcribe it. But “Whatever is not forbidden is, without queſtion, allowed.” Rather do I ſay: “Whatever is not ſpecifically permitted is forbidden” (Sider, 120).⁶⁷

Clearly, the Anabaptiſts are using Tertullian’s principle. When they claim that Zwingli previously employed the ſame principle, he emphatically denies ever using it in reference to external matters for which we have no expreſs command or prohibition, ſuch as infant baptiſm (Chriſtoffel, 270). The real queſtion is whether biblical

warrant can be eſtabliſhed in any other way than by an expreſs command or clear example. Zwingli concludes that there is another way.

Although [infant baptiſm] is not deſcribed or ſtated in expreſs words, yet it is from various intimations in the Word of God to be concluded that [infants] alſo, with the general multitude who were baptiſed, received baptiſm (Ibid., 274).⁶⁸

61. The Anabaptiſts refer here to the Fiſt Public Diſputation (January 29, 1523). Cf. Harder, *Sources*, 485.

62. In our opinion, one may indeed find intimations of this principle in ſome of Zwingli’s earlier writings, but he never explicitly ſtates the principle until the *Defense*. Intimations may be found in Zwingli’s uſe of Deuteronomy 4:2, Matthew 15:1–9 and Colossians 2:8 (cited above) and in the following ſayings from the Second Zürich Diſputation (October 26–28, 1523): “For everything that God has not taught and that comes from men is never good,” and “all that is planted and added without being inſtituted by Chriſt is a true abuſe,” Harder, *Sources*, 239, 246, cf. 270.

63. In a private converſation, Dr. Hughes Oliphant Old pointed me to a paſſage in Tertullian’s *De Corona* that appears to be the root of the Anabaptiſts’ principle. He ſuggeſted literary dependence between the Programmatic Letters and *De Corona*; that is, Grebel was citing Tertullian.

64. On Grebel’s Chriſtian humaniſm, ſee Bender, *Conrad Grebel*, 65. 65. See Harder, *Sources*, 154, 160–162. On the importance of the works of Tertullian for the Reformation, ſee John F. D’Amico, “Beatus Rhenanus, Tertullian, and the Reformation,” *Archive for Reformation History* 71 (1980), 37–63.

66. We have confirmed that the Rhenanus edition of Tertullian included *De Corona*, ſo Grebel was certainly familiar with the work. For an English translation of *De Corona*, ſee *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903) 93–103; cf. *Chriſtian and Pagan in the Roman Empire: The Witness of Tertullian*, ed. Robert Dick Sider (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Preſs, 2001).

67. Theſe two oppoſing principles—whatever is not forbidden is allowed (on the one hand) and whatever is not commanded is forbidden (on the other)—reappear in the ſixteenth century debates on worſhip. The former is typically referred to as the normative principle. We have choſen to call the latter the Anabaptiſt principle becauſe in the Reformation era, the Anabaptiſts were its chief proponents. In our opinion, Zwingli does not follow either principle. His argument that “infant baptiſm is not forbidden in Scripture” ſhould not be interpreted as an application of the normative principle. Rather, it needs to be underſtood in the context of his larger argument that baptiſm is the New Teſtament form of circumciſion. In other words, he reaſons that baptiſm (like circumciſion) ſhould be given to the children of believers unleſs it is ſpecifically forbidden. Since the New Teſtament does not forbid it, then we muſt neceſſarily conclude that the fiſt Chriſtians baptiſed their children, as they formerly circumciſed them. Therefore, Zwingli is not using this argument as an application of the normative principle; inſtead, he is using it as a minor premiſe of a logical ſyllogiſm (as explained in footnote 59). Cf. Zwingli’s arguments in Jackson, *Selected Works*, 248.

68. Beſides circumciſion, Zwingli points to many other intimations of infant baptiſm in Scripture, ſome drawn from the Old Teſtament

The Anabaptists had no category for establishing biblical warrant from “intimations in the Word of God.” They insisted on an express command or clear example. For Zwingli, even though infant baptism may not be expressly set down in Scripture, yet “by good and necessary consequence,” it may be deduced from Scripture.⁶⁹ If the children of the Jews in the Old Testament were numbered among the people of God and given the sign of the covenant, it necessarily follows that this applies to the children of Christians as well.

[I]n consequence of the circumcision in which [the first Christians] formerly walked ... they [could not] have [had] any other view than that they should now baptize their children as they formerly circumcised them (Christoffel, 276).

On July 31, 1527, Zwingli published his longest and final treatise on infant baptism under the title “Refutation of the Tricks of the Catabaptists.”⁷⁰ Here, we find the fullest expression of Zwingli’s covenant theology and his most impassioned refutation of Anabaptism.⁷¹ Zwingli argues that the covenant that God has established with us is the same covenant that God entered into with Israel. There is only one covenant, one church, one people of God, in all ages of redemptive history. It is one and the same covenant, which “God had with the human race from the foundation of the world” (Jackson, *Selected Works*, 233). It is “the same mercy of God promised to the world through his Son” that “saved Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses [and] David,” as well as “Peter, Paul, Ananias,” etc. (Ibid., 229). If it is one and the same covenant, then the children of Christians are equal with the children of the Jews and are, therefore, “of the Church and people of God” (Ibid., 236). Thus, he establishes the grounds of infant baptism as follows:

The children of Christians are no less sons of God than the parents, just as in the Old Testament. Hence, since

(such as Israel’s baptism in the cloud and in the sea) and some from the New Testament (such as Jesus blessing the children); see Christoffel, *Zwingli*, 272–278; cf. Harder, *Sources*, 475–505; and Jackson, *Selected Works*, 123–258.

69. This language is taken from the Westminster Confession of Faith 1.6.

70. On the meaning of Catabaptists, see footnote 53. For an introduction and English translation, see Harder, *Sources*, 475–505, and Jackson, *Selected Works*, 123–258.

71. Part 3 of the treatise presents Zwingli’s clearest statement of his doctrine of baptism, which he develops in the context of covenant theology and election. It is well worth a thorough examination; see Jackson, *Selected Works*, 219–258.

72. Cf. Jackson, *Selected Works*, 140–141.

they are sons of God, who will forbid their baptism? Circumcision among the ancients ... was the same as baptism with us. As that was given to infants, so ought baptism to be administered to infants (Ibid., 139).

Zwingli also makes it clear that he never used the New Testament household baptisms as the grounds of infant baptism (Ibid., 131, 138). Rather, his mention of them came about in the following way.

I was giving you [Anabaptists] many warnings not to argue unskillfully like this: “We do not read that the apostles baptized the infants of believers; therefore, they ought not to be baptized.” First, because of the absurdity, because we might just as well argue, “The apostles are nowhere said to have been baptized, therefore they were not baptized.” And when you replied, “It is more likely they were baptized long before they baptized others,” then I replied ... that it was more likely than not that the apostles baptized believers’ infants ... [as in the case of Stephanas, Lydia and the Philippian jailor] (Harder, 481–482).

For Zwingli, it is an unskillful and absurd argument to say that since there is no clear example of infant baptism in Scripture, it is therefore forbidden. This argument is absurd because “a fact cannot prove a non-fact.” Zwingli explains,

Everywhere we read that [the apostles] baptized, but we cannot prove by that fact that they did not baptize those whom Scripture does not assert were baptized by them. For otherwise it would follow that the divine virgin mother was not baptized, for Scripture does not relate her baptism. Therefore we want to say: A fact cannot prove a non-fact. We read that Christ was at Jerusalem, Capernaum, and Nazareth. It does not follow that he was not at Hebron because Scripture does not say so. We read that Christ taught at Nazareth, therefore he did not teach at Bethlehem, for we do not read that he taught there.... So our reasoning here is: It cannot be proved that believers’ infants were not baptized by the apostles because this is not written, for there are many things done by both Christ and the apostles which were not committed to writing (Ibid., 482–483).⁷²

Furthermore, Zwingli says that it is not only foolish but impious to argue that because something is done, it is therefore lawful, or because something is not done, it is therefore unlawful (Jackson, *Selected Works*, 141). One simply cannot argue “from the fact to the right.”

A fact does not presuppose a command, nor does a non-fact presuppose a prohibition (Ibid., 142). Therefore, Zwingli says,

[E]ven if it were down in plain words somewhere that “the apostles did not baptize infants,” it would still not follow that they are not to be baptized. The inquiry would have to be made whether they simply omitted the performance or whether it was not right to baptize (Harder, 483).

One cannot derive a law simply from the deeds of the apostles “unless it is clear that they acted legitimately.” By deeds alone, “one cannot prove legitimacy” (Idem).⁷³ Moreover, it is illogical to reason that a negative follows from an affirmative as in the argument that “because the apostles baptized adults and believers, therefore infants are not to be baptized” (Idem). Again Zwingli reasons,

The writings of the Apostles testify that they who heard and believed were baptized, but it does not at all follow that children were consequently not baptized by them. For it may at the same time be true that the apostles baptized believers, and the apostles baptized children.... You are mistaken therefore, O Catabaptists, when you make an indefinite proposition exclusive. An exclusive is either, no one ought to be baptized except he who first believes, or infants ought not to be baptized. But from: The Apostles baptized believers, it does not follow. For “The Apostles baptized believers,” and “No one may be baptized unless he first believes” are not equivalent. So also with: “The Apostles are not said to have baptized infants, therefore these were not baptized by them and may not be by us.” For it may be that they baptized ... infants ... but the fact was not recorded, or that they did not baptize them, and still these... may be rightly baptized (Jackson, *Selected Works*, 164).

In light of Zwingli’s argument that one cannot reason from fact to law, and therefore, one cannot prove the legitimacy or illegitimacy of infant baptism from apostolic example or lack thereof, it is a bit surprising that Zwingli spends so much time at the end of his treatise demonstrating that the apostles did, in fact, baptize infants. He seeks to demonstrate this with numerous biblical arguments using both Old and New Testaments, but he also points to the church Fathers as *testes veritatis* “witnesses to the truth.” He cites Origen and Augustine, who claim that the church received from the apostles “the tradition of giving baptism even to infants” (Ibid.,

251). Zwingli makes it clear that he does not attribute to the Fathers the same authority as Scripture, but he points to the antiquity of this liturgical tradition—which according to Origen and Augustine was handed down from Christ and the apostles—as a *witness to* the truth of Scripture, the only infallible rule for faith and worship.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRIPTURE

The reform of worship in the city of Zürich at the beginning of the Protestant Reformation demonstrates “how the Reformers understood the Bible as being the authority for liturgical reform” (Old, *Shaping*, 119). The worship of the Christian Church must be in accordance with Scripture. Every liturgical practice must be tested by the touchstone of Scripture to see whether it is of God or man. As the only infallible authority, Scripture is the final arbiter in matters of worship; it is the supreme liturgical norm. Patristic tradition is recognized as an important secondary authority but only as it is a witness to the truth of Scripture and the customs of the Apostolic Church, for liturgical tradition cannot serve as its own norm. It must have biblical warrant. Zwingli and his evangelical colleagues successfully defended the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* against the Romish authorities and won the city of Zürich to the Reformation.

At the same time that he was fighting with the adherents to the old Catholic faith, Zwingli found himself struggling with some of his own followers, whose radical zeal for a pure church could not tolerate his forbearance for the weaker brethren nor his willingness to allow the City Council to set the pace of the reformation and chart the course of its implementation. Both the Zwinglians and the Anabaptists were firmly committed to the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, but their lengthy dispute on infant baptism revealed a fundamental difference between the two groups concerning the application of that doctrine to Christian worship. Both groups demanded biblical warrant to justify liturgical practices, but their criteria for establishing biblical warrant were not the same.

On the one hand, the Anabaptists insisted that whatever is not commanded in Scripture by precept or example is forbidden. Zwingli, on the other hand, had a

73. Zwingli points out here that this argument can be turned on him as follows: even if there were children in the households of Stephanas, Lydia, etc., it would be illogical (according to Zwingli) to derive the right of infant baptism from these examples. Zwingli admits this, but it proves nothing because he never based his arguments on these household baptisms; see Harder, *Sources*, 483–484.

broader criterion of biblical warrant. In addition to specific commands and approved examples, Zwingli also made room for biblical intimations and inferences, deductions by good and necessary consequence and sophisticated theological analysis in his search for biblical warrant (Idem). Thus – for Zwingli – even if infant baptism is not specifically commanded or clearly practiced in the New Testament (as the Anabaptists argued), it is nevertheless thoroughly consistent with the teaching of Scripture. It is in accordance with Scripture. And therefore, it is lawfully practiced.

In the seventeenth century, these two different approaches to establishing biblical warrant find expression in two confessional standards: The Westminster Confession of Faith and The Baptist Confession of Faith (1689). The Westminster Confession states,

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added,

whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men (1.6).

The Baptist Confession significantly revises this paragraph to read,

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men (1.6).

Like Zwingli, The Westminster Confession recognizes that deductions by good and necessary consequence are a legitimate means of establishing biblical warrant. Like the Swiss Anabaptists, The Baptist Confession only allows for what is expressly set down in Scripture or is necessarily contained in it. Both confessions affirm the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* and insist that worship must be “according to Scripture,” but like Zwingli and the Anabaptists, they have different understandings of what that means. ■

In Brief: The Regulative Principle: Presbyterian Rule of Worship

What we now refer to as the *Regulative Principle of Worship* was clearly articulated from the beginning of the Reformation. “I know how difficult it is to persuade the world that God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by his word” (John Calvin, “On the Necessity of Reforming the Church,” *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, ed. Henry Beveridge and Jules Bonnet [Edinburgh: 1844 ; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983] 1.128–129). “All wretchedness, honoring, or service invented by the brain of man in the religion of God, without his own express commandment, is Idolatrie” (John Knox, “A Vindication of the Doctrine that the Sacrifice of the Mass is Idolatry,” *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing [Edinburgh: Printed for the Bannatyne Club, 1854; repr. NY: AMS Press, 1966] 3.34). “Nothing ought to be added to public worship concerning which God has given no command” (John à Lasco, in *The Reformation of the Church*, ed. Iain H. Murray [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965], 62). Presbyterians have since then briefly summed up the principle's effect. “Not to Command is to Forbid” (Samuel Rutherford, *The Divine Right of Church Government and Excommunication* (London, 1646) 96). “Whatever is not commanded is forbidden” (John B. Adger, “A Denial of Divine Right for Organs in Public Worship,” *Southern Presbyterian Review*, 20.1 (January 1869) 85).

This principle would be championed during the development and rise of Puritanism in England and at the Second Reformation in Scotland. One Scot, George Gillespie, writing in a work that provided the intellectual firepower to overturn

the prelatial innovations which had come into the church with the Articles of Perth (1618), defines it this way: “The church is forbidden to add anything to the commandments of God which he has given unto us, concerning his worship and service (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6); therefore she may not lawfully prescribe anything in the works of divine worship, if it be not a mere circumstance belonging to that kind of things which were not determinable by Scripture” (George Gillespie, *A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies* [1637; Naphthali Press, 1993] 288).

The principle became codified at the assembly Gillespie later attended, which produced the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647). “But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture” (Confession of Faith, 21.1).

The Princeton professor, Dr. Samuel Miller, unpacks the full understanding of the principle in a succinct statement when he writes that since the Scriptures are the “only infallible rule of faith and practice, no rite or ceremony ought to have a place in the public worship of God, which is not warranted in Scripture, either by direct precept or example, or by good and sufficient inference” (Samuel Miller, *Presbyterianism the Truly Primitive and Apostolical Constitution of the Church of Christ*, “The Worship of the Presbyterian Church” (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1835) 64–65). This is the principle of worship defended by Presbyterians who hold to the Westminster Standards and Reformation principles.

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