

History of the Reformation

Infant Baptism

- Reformation Theology Review
 - Justification by Faith
 - *Sola Scriptura*
 - Lord's Supper
 - Soteriology
 - Baptism
 - OT/NT Interpretation
 - Christian Liberty
 - Church/State Relationships

- Historical Background of Baptism
 - Catholic church
 - Infant Baptism practiced since the time of Augustine
 - Assumed the sacrament actually took away sin
 - “Baptism removes Original Sin, Penance removes Actual Sin”
 - Cyprian and Augustine
 - Concern for salvation of infants led to baptizing the children of believers in 3rd Century
 - Augustine – children condemned in Adam, but saved by Christ in baptism
 - Reformation
 - Luther
 - Moderately altered Catholic understanding
 - Baptism was a sacrament that conveyed Grace to the one baptized
 - Zwingli
 - Baptism was only a sign
 - Did not provide any grace to the believer
 - Luther –
 - Argued that baptism was efficacious
 - Seems to be inconsistent with Justification by Faith
 - “Baptism, which not only signifies such a new life, but also produces, begins, and exercises it”
 - “Baptism . . . delivers us from the jaws of the devil and makes us God's own, suppresses and takes away sin, and then daily strengthens the new man, and is and remains ever efficacious until we pass from this estate of misery to eternal glory”
 - “in infant baptism. We bring the child in the conviction and hope that it believes, and we pray that God may grant it faith; but we do not baptize it upon that, but solely upon the command of God”
 - Great Commission – “confidently and freely baptize everyone” and “leave it to him to be concerned about the faith of those baptized”
 - Luther was not much removed from Augustine

- Swiss Reformation
 - 1523 – Zwingli and Hubmaier initially agree on believers only baptism
 - Soon Zwingli switches positions
 - City Council influence??

- 1525 – 26 – Zwingli and Hubmaier – written debate
 - Passionate, but both sides appeal to scriptures
 - Hubmaier – “If you do not [demonstrate infant baptism from Scripture], the vicar will complain that you have used against him a sword that you now lay aside.”
 - Hubmaier arrested, tortured, and recants, leaving Switzerland to Germany
- Balthazar Hubmaier (1480-1528)
 - Hubmaier - Agree w/ Anabaptists on baptism, separation of Ch/State, free will, no religious persecution
 - Disagreed on believers participating in military and in governmental offices
 - Hubmaier encouraged believers to get involved in civic responsibilities
 - Independent theologian
 - Agreed if scriptural support
 - 2nd Zurich Disputation (Zwingli vs Swiss Brethren)
 - Hubmaier took neither side
 - 1528 – Hubmaier captured by Austrian army, burned at the stake
 - Wife drowned in the river
 - Baptism
 - Mk 16:15-16 provides pattern
 - Proclaim, believe, only then baptize
 - Essential to the proper functioning of the local church
 - No baptism, no church discipline
 - Baptism = pledge to the rule of Christ
 - = full membership in the visible church
 - “the washing of water is not important, but the obeying of the command of Christ”
 - Baptism does not save, but not being baptized is serious disobedience
 - Only “excuse” for not being baptized is lack of opportunity (thief on cross)
 - At the same time, he was concerned w/ spiritual condition of children
 - He would baptize sick infants if parents desired it
 - Compassion for parents “trumped” his theology
 - Professed ignorance because bible is silent
- Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531)
 - Recognized that baptism was purely symbolical, not actually “doing” something
 - Recognizing something (position, etc) not actually accomplishing salvation, renewal, etc
 - “External things cannot accomplish spiritual things” (eg. Forgiveness of sins)
 - Not only children of believing parents, but “godparents” as well
 - 4 types of baptism
 - Water – administered by man
 - Spirit – administered by God – inward teaching, calling
 - Teaching – John’s baptism – water and teaching
 - Inward faith – produces salvation
 - Baptism – taught illiterate parents that child would be part of the church
 - Zwingli – continued Catholic way of baptism
 - Pastoral – too difficult to change minds of populace

- Zwingli's doctrine primarily formed in response to Hubmaier (and Zurich Anabaptist) assertion of believer's baptism
 - Hubmaier – met with resistance because of change of meaning and method
- Zwingli – changed meaning, but not the method – therefore little resistance
 - Infant baptism valid as a Covenant sign
- Hubmaier- argument was that infant baptism was not based on scripture
 - No recorded instances
 - Baptisms only performed for committed believers
 - Therefore – infant baptism was an invention of the post NT church
- Zwingli – scriptures are silent – so why not?
 - Not forbidden
 - Hubmaier – baptism of donkeys or dogs not forbidden either, so why not?
 - Therefore, Rome's invented doctrines (purgatory, merits of saints, etc) are OK since they are not forbidden
- Zwingli – baptism and teaching and making disciples are interchangeable in order
 - John Baptist baptized the taught or taught then baptized
 - Hubmaier – teaching always biblically precedes baptism
- Circumcision/baptism
 - Zwingli needed scripture from which to make “good and necessary inference”
 - Hubmaier – scripture? You know there is no biblical connection
 - Hubmaier did not argue vehemently against Circumcision/Baptism relationship
 - Felt it was obvious that OT ceremonies were abrogated
 - OT signs and symbols abolished, not replaced
 - Therefore it became the bedrock of Covenant Theology
- Zwingli's problem with Anabaptists (Radical Reformers) was more with rebelliousness of spirit that unscriptural doctrine
 - In many ways, Anabaptists were considered “treasonous” and “troublemakers”
 - Their desire for reform caused them to refuse to obey the Zurich City Council
 - Reformers reacted violently to the suggestion that their baptism as an infant was not biblically valid
 - Baptism not required for Christian life
 - Anabaptists are causing division unnecessarily
- Martin Bucer (1491-1551)
 - Strassburg had many Anabaptists, so Bucer debated much on infant baptism
 - Efficacy in baptism depended on one's faith
 - Infants were marked out for “future faith”
 - 1530s –
 - We confess and teach that holy baptism . . . is in the case of adults and of young children truly a baptism of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, whereby those who are baptized have all their sins washed away, are buried into the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, are incorporated into him and put on him for the death of their sins, for a new and godly life and the blessed resurrection, and through him become children and heirs of God
 - Baptism seen as joining one to the church was obscured
 - Question? – How could true faith be recognized in actual believers in the life of the church?
 - Bucer developed another religious practice

- Rite of Confirmation – came about because believer’s baptism lost its New Testament significance
- John Calvin (1509-1564)
 - Baptism joins the infant to the church where he receives the benefit of receiving exhortation by older believers to embrace God and serve him
 - If infants are saved, God must do it sovereignly without faith
 - Uses the circumcision analogy
 - Both circumcision and baptism were seals of the promise and show spiritual regeneration
 - Children are baptized for future repentance and faith
- Menno Simons (1496-1561)
 - Dutch priest turned Anabaptist in 1536
 - Rejected the violence of the Munster Rebellion (1534/35)
 - Baptism reflected his view of the church
 - Luther – the church is an inclusive reality in a Christian society
 - Simons – the church is a disciplined group of individuals who have voluntarily committed their lives to Christ
 - Provided a major influence on later Baptists
 - Transformed “Anabaptists” (rebellious, belligerent, obnoxious) into “Baptists”
 - Dutch Mennonites were pious and peaceful
- Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575)
 - Replaced Zwingli at Zurich after his death – 1531
 - Argued against Anabaptists for four decades
 - Primary point
 - God’s people are God’s people through OT and NT
 - Including children
 - Ceremonies have change, but not God’s covenant with His People
 - Therefore, children were circumcised, they should be baptized
 - 1562 – wrote the 2nd Helvetic Confession
 - Still used today in Reformed churches along with Heidelberg Catechism
 - Lays the foundation for the invention of Covenant Theology
 - Covenant of Grace, Covenant of Redemption, Covenant of Works, etc.
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- Infant Baptism Summary
 - All sides agreed that the New Testament was completely silent on Infant Baptism
 - Hubmaier, and Anabaptists (anti-paedobaptists)
 - “No scriptural command, we should not be doing it”
 - “the biblical paradigm is the Great Commission: Make disciples, baptize them”
 - Mark 16:15-16 – Preach, believe, baptize
 - Baptism is tied to what the church is
 - If no believing membership, no discipline
 - Lutheran
 - Luther – very little change from Catholic operation of baptism
 - Zwingli/Bucer/Calvin/Bullinger
 - Baptism is a symbol, not actually saving
 - Almost complete emphasis on inclusion in the visible church

- Forced to create the circumcision/baptism analogy to make infant baptism at least deduced or inferred from scripture
 - Later to become full blown Covenant Theology
- Introduction of the new rite of Confirmation
 - After a child has been taught, he is given the opportunity to embrace his faith and become a “fully responsible” member of the church
 - Now admitted to the table and the full responsibilities of membership

- Whether infant or adult baptism is favored depends on whether baptism is primarily understood as a sign of faith, a [sign] of forgiveness and transformation, or an initiation into the Christian community (Kirsi Stjerna)