

REFORMATION 500 WEEK 7: ZWINGLI

Before we see what happened to Martin Luther after his famous “here I stand” speech at the Diet of Worms in 1521, it is important to understand that his efforts to reform the catholic church were not isolated.

Ulrich Zwingli was born in a small Swiss village in January 1484, less than two months after Luther. “Later, Zwingli would declare that, even before having heard of Luther’s teachings, he had come to similar conclusions through his study of the Bible. Thus, Zwingli’s reformation was a not a direct result of Luther’s; rather, it was a parallel movement that soon established links with its counterpart in Germany” (Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, p.60).

Zwingli’s experience differed greatly from that of Luther. “Luther descended from the peasantry...while Zwingli was the son of a magistrate” (Schaff, 8:34). Zwingli “never lived as a monk in a convent. He did not have Luther’s deep consciousness of sin, and he knew nothing of Luther’s fearful spiritual struggle to gain salvation. Luther emerged out of the darkness of medievalism and had been educated in scholastic theology... Zwingli received his education under the influence of the Renaissance” (Kuiper, *Church in History*, 187-188).

When Erasmus (the great renaissance humanist) published his Greek NT in 1516, “Zwingli made a copy of it which he carried with him in order to memorize as much of it as possible” (Gonzalez, 57).

“Zwingli was made a priest of an abbey to which many went on pilgrimage. He soon drew attention to himself by preaching against the notion that exercises such as pilgrimages could avail for salvation, and declaring that he found nothing in the NT in support of such practices. His fame grew to the point that in 1518 he was transferred to Zurich” (ibid, 59). He also became a chaplain in the army of Zurich.

“In 1518 Zwingli attacked indulgences [on one occasion he convinced the government to expel from Zurich a seller of indulgences]. The stand Luther took at the Leipzig debate and his burning of the papal bull inspired Zwingli to make a systematic attack on the Roman Church. Images were removed from the church buildings in Zurich. The mass abolished. Altars, relics, and processions were discarded” (Kuiper, 188). Zwingli’s enemies spread the word that his teachings were the same as those of the German heretic Martin Luther.

“Zurich was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the bishop of Constance, who expressed concern over what was taking place in Zurich. In 1522, when Zwingli preached against the laws of fasting and abstinence, and some of his parishioners gathered to eat sausages during Lent,” the bishop of Constance “accused the preacher before the Council of Government.” The Council called “for a debate between Zwingli and a representative of the bishop.” No one could refute Zwingli’s Scriptural defense; therefore, “he was free to continue his preaching. This decision marked Zurich’s final break with the bishopric of Constance, and therefore with Rome” (Gonzalez, 60-61).

“One German Lutheran realized that, if Luther and Zwingli united their movements, their chances for survival would increase. So he asked them to meet in the German city of Marburg” (*Church History Made Easy*, 110).

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REFORMATION 500 WEEK 7: HEIDELBERG CATECHISM, QUESTIONS 20-23

Question 20: Are all men, then, saved by Christ as they have perished in Adam? **No, only those who by true faith are engrafted into Him and receive all His benefits.**

Although Adam represented and acted on behalf of all mankind, Christ represented and acted on behalf of those who believe in Him and thereby receive the salvation He earned for them. “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36).

Question 21: What is true faith? **True faith is not only a sure knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also a hearty trust, which the Holy Spirit works in me by the Gospel, that not only to others, but to me also, forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ’s merits.**

Faith by definition is to rely upon the word of another. When a jury reaches a verdict, they are relying upon the testimony of faithful witnesses. Faith in God is to rely upon God’s Word (the Bible). True (saving) faith is to be convinced by the Holy Spirit that God’s Word is truth (John 17:17; 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16); and, especially, to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation (John 5:24). Since He *merited* (*earned*) salvation for me, I embrace Him with a believing heart and seek nothing more besides Him.

Question 22: What, then, is necessary for a Christian to believe? **All that is promised us in the Gospel, which the articles of our Catholic, undoubted Christian faith teach us in summary.**

In order to truly believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and not be deceived by those who preach “another Jesus” (2 Cor 11:4), we need to believe specifically what the Bible says about who Jesus is and what He has done to save His people from their sins. These key doctrines of the gospel are summarized in the articles [statements] of Apostles’ Creed (not written by the apostles but based on their teaching in the New Testament). This Creed is called *catholic*, meaning *universal*, because it contains the *universal beliefs* of all Christians. They are *undoubted* (not doubted) by true believers.

Question 23: What are these articles? **I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Begotten Son, our Lord: who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

The next 35 Questions and Answers (24-58) explain the biblical basis of these articles.

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