Baptism – Zwingli

In the following passage there are a number of quotations from Zwingli placed together to give the flavour of his teaching on baptism. Try to identify three ways in which this departs from the official line of the Catholic Church of his day.

> Although I know, as the Fathers show, that infants have been baptised occasionally from the earliest times, still it was not such a universal a custom as it is now. The common practice was as soon as they arrived at the age of reason to form them into classes for instruction in the Word of Salvation (hence they were called catechumens, i.e., persons under instruction). And after a firm faith had been implanted in their hearts and they had confessed the same with their mouth, then they were baptised.
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> I could wish that this custom of giving instruction were revived today, since the children are baptised so young their religious instruction might begin as soon as they come to sufficient understanding. Otherwise they suffer a great and ruinous disadvantage if they are not as well religiously instructed after baptism as the children of the ancients were before baptism, as sermons to them still preserved prove.
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> They are wrong who think that sacraments have any cleansing power. This was a vain invention – the idea that when a man is wet with water something happens to him. It is frivolous to suggest sacraments can remit sins. Water baptism cannot contribute in any way to the washing away of sin. Baptism is an initiatory sign or badge initiating us to a lifelong mortification of the flesh and engaging us like a soldier at their enlistment.

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