

The Protestant Reformation

Part 3: Zwingli and the Radical Reformation

In the early reformation the major doctrines were those of sin, salvation and Biblical authority. Later, what remained to be dealt with was the ordering of church life. That was dealt with in Zurich by Ulrich Zwingli, the Radical Reformation, and the rise of the Anabaptist.

- Ulrich Zwingli born 2 months after Martin Luther.
- Parish priest at 22
- Something alienated him from the church, just as Martin Luther.
- He began searching and reading himself, just as Martin Luther. Through this he led himself to Christ.
- Zwingli was a different type of reformer. He was a scholar and became reformed not quite so dramatically as Luther, but slowly from the inside out through Bible study.
- He became the priest of Einsiedeln in 1516. He became a tourist attraction in that he taught solely from the Bible.
- He was promoted to become the leading priest of Zurich at the Church of Great Minster. He announced he would begin teaching the book of Matthew verse by verse. He became the greatest preacher of the Reformation.
- In 1519, he lived through the Black Death. When he emerged from it, he was a man with a purpose.

- Many of the radical reformers felt that his pace was too slow in changing the church life of the Catholic Church. But Zwingli felt it came from the inside through scripture rather than the outside through hammers and fire.
- In 1522, he published 67 theses saying that Christ ruled the Church through his Word and not the Pope. The Bible was the master of the house. He also denied transubstantiation. Communion officially became a memorial instead of Christ dying every Sunday.
- In 1523, Zurich came to a debate between Zwingli and his opposition.
- Zwingli won hands down.
- School for preachers
- In 1531, the Zurich Bible came out - the Bible in Swiss.
- Yet, Zurich was part of the Swiss Confederation. The Catholics of Switzerland felt that Zurich's Protestantism would invoke war on all of the Swiss cantons. To pre-empt a revolt a Swiss Catholic army marched on Zurich to re-convert it to Catholicism. Zwingli was killed.

Sadly, one of the emergent ideas from Zurich was the Radical Reformation. The bizarre replaced the corrupt.

- Andreas Carlstadt
- The Zwickan Prophets

- Thomas Muntzer
- Jan Mathys of Haarlem
- James Van Leiden
- John of Batenburg
- “Sausage-gate” and the Anabaptist
- Manz, Grebel, and Blaurock
- The Anabaptist Confession at Schleitheim
- Menno Simons and the “Mennonites” The problem was that life was more important than theology. If it was not reasonable, it was denied.

The radicals fell in 3 categories:

1. Anabaptist
2. Spiritualists
3. Rationalists

The question we must deal with in response to the Radical Reformation is, is it better for Christianity to have individual freedom that makes error and cultic Christianity a possibility? Or, is it better to have a singular Pope and a final voice to put contrary ideas to the stake? One can become bizarre, the other corrupt. Which would you choose - Reformation freedom or Catholic absolutism?