

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 118

The People's Reformation

How religious upheaval birthed social revolution

Second in a four-part series
on the Reformation





REFORMING QUEEN Anne Boleyn (near left) shared Tyndale's banned book *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528) with Henry VIII. She supposedly handed this small Bible containing her husband's portrait (far left) to one of her maids of honor on the scaffold.

CHECKING IT TWICE As Zwingli and other clergy translated the Bible (below) into the Swiss vernacular, he read the proof sheets to his wife every night.



Did you know?

HERE ARE SOME OF THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE OF THE "PEOPLE'S REFORMATION"

THE ZWINGLI YOU NEVER KNEW

As a youth Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531), leader of the Swiss Reformation, learned violin, harp, flute, dulcimer, hunting horn, and lute. He amused children from his congregation by playing the lute for them, and enemies called him "that evangelical lute-player and fifer." Yet he opposed instrumental music in worship (as well as choral music and chanting) and presided over breaking up the great organ in his church in Zurich. Open to congregational singing, he wrote at least three hymns.

As a chaplain with Swiss mercenary troops in Italy, Zwingli saw 6,000 Swiss youth die in the service of the pope. He worked hard to shift the Swiss economy from mercenary service to agriculture and trade, telling his people, "You are a tool in the hands of God. ... How fortunate you are that he lets you take part in his work."

In 1522 Zwingli married Anna Reinhard (c. 1487–1538), a young widow with three children. After two years of secret marriage, they married publicly three months before their first child was born. Concerned for her husband's safety, Anna warned him not to go out

alone at night and to watch his food carefully for fear of poison. In the end Zwingli died in a battle between Protestant and Catholic cantons, believing he was fighting to preserve the freedom to preach the Gospel. His last words were reportedly: "They can kill the body but not the soul."



BEWITCHED AND BOTHERED? Catholic opponents accused Anabaptists of witchcraft in this woodcut.



LEARNED MAN Above: Zwingli, born in this house in 1484, taught himself Greek and Hebrew to better understand Scripture. He copied and memorized Paul's letters from Erasmus's Greek New Testament.

LASTING LEGACY Right: Tyndale was executed for heresy in 1536, but people kept reusing his work in later translations.



SMALL BUT MIGHTY

Court records of sixteenth-century south and central Germany, Switzerland, and Austria account for only 12,000 Anabaptists, yet they could be found in over 2,000 towns! The term *Anabaptist* means "baptize again" (*anabaptizein* in Greek). Anabaptists did *not* believe their adult baptisms were rebaptisms since they considered infant baptism invalid. Most early Anabaptist leaders died or were executed within two years of the movement's beginning in 1525. In 1529 the Holy Roman Empire declared rebaptism a capital crime. Over 2,000 Anabaptists were martyred from 1525–1600, equaling all other Protestant and Catholic martyrs put together.

CHAINING THE BIBLE DOWN


William Tyndale's (1494–1536) Bible translation was banned in 1530 on the grounds that some of its terminology and notes were doctrinally unacceptable. In 1534 Thomas Cranmer tried with Henry VIII's approval to get 10 bishops to prepare a translation, but they worked so slowly that Cranmer griped they would not be done until the "Day after Doomsday."

In 1538 Thomas Cromwell announced that the church should provide one large English Bible in each church for parishioners to read. This translation, finished in 1539, was called the "Great Bible" and still contained a large portion of Tyndale's translation (in fact, more than 90 percent of Tyndale's wording was still in use in the King James Version nearly 100 years later!) The Great Bible proved so popular that copies were chained to reading desks to prevent their removal from churches.

THE RELUCTANT ARCHBISHOP

When Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556) first heard about his appointment as archbishop of Canterbury, he balked.

Away in Europe, he delayed his return to England for seven weeks, hoping Henry would get impatient and appoint someone else. Before he was a priest, Cranmer had married, but his first wife died in childbirth. After being ordained, he married again and kept the marriage secret for his first 14 years as archbishop because clergy marriage was forbidden until after Henry's death.

Despite being the main author of Anglicanism's famed *Book of Common Prayer*, Cranmer was only a modestly talented student, ranking 32nd in his Cambridge class of 42. 

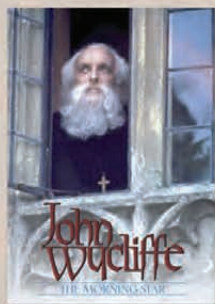
This "Did you know?" incorporates information originally published in CH issues 4, 5, 16, 48, and 100.



A POWERFUL BOOK

Tyndale's 1526 translation (left) was the first mechanically printed New Testament in English. Despite commissioning translations, by 1540 Henry VIII forbade anyone under the rank of gentleman or merchant to read large portions of the Bible, believing the devil was causing a sinister understanding of Scripture to enter people's hearts.

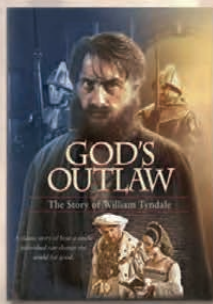
REFORMERS WHO CHANGED THE WORLD



John Wycliffe: The Morning Star

One of the most renowned European philosophers and scholars, John Wycliffe chose to serve the common people, taking enormous risks to share the Scriptures with them. This award-winning film provides valuable insight into conditions in the fourteenth-century pre-Reformation church and shows why Wycliffe is hailed as the "Morning Star of the Reformation." Drama, 75 minutes.

DVD-#4808D, ~~\$19.99~~ SALE! \$14.99



God's Outlaw: The Story of William Tyndale

William Tyndale was pursued by the agents of King Henry VIII, Sir Thomas More, and Cardinal Wolsey. To avoid capture, he escaped to Europe. There he worked to complete the supreme task that obsessed him: providing the Bible in English to his fellow countrymen. Tyndale today is distinguished as the "Father of the English Bible." This award-winning film features a cast led by Roger Rees. Drama, 93 minutes.

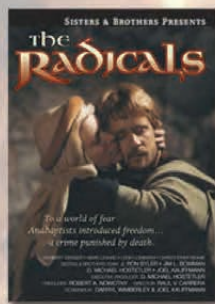
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Martin Luther

This dramatic black-and-white film, made in the 1950s, is a magnificent depiction of Luther and the forces that resulted in his historic reforming efforts. The film traces Luther's life from guilt-burdened monk to his eventual break with the Roman Church. This special 50th-anniversary edition includes "The making of," biographies of the actors, and a full-color tour of Luther sites. Drama, 105 minutes.

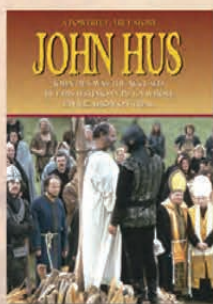
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The Radicals

Discover the humble and courageous origins of the Anabaptist movement and two of its first leaders, Michael and Margaretha Sattler. The world was not ready for their message, and they were not prepared to compromise. This drama will cause viewers to stop and consider how much their faith really means to them. Includes some graphic depiction of historical persecution. Viewer discretion advised. Drama, 99 minutes.

DVD-#4804D, ~~\$19.99~~ SALE! \$14.99



John Hus

One hundred years before Martin Luther, John Hus's relentless pursuit of God's truth planted the seeds for the Reformation. The beloved pastor was condemned as a heretic for his uncompromising belief in the final authority of the Bible. He was burned at the stake in 1415, where he died singing. Drama, 55 minutes.

DVD-#4783D, ~~\$14.99~~ SALE! \$9.99



Reformation Dramas 5-DVD Pack

Includes all five Reformation dramas on this page: *John Wycliffe*, *God's Outlaw*, *Martin Luther*, *The Radicals*, and *John Hus*.

#501689D, ~~\$39.99~~ SALE! \$29.99

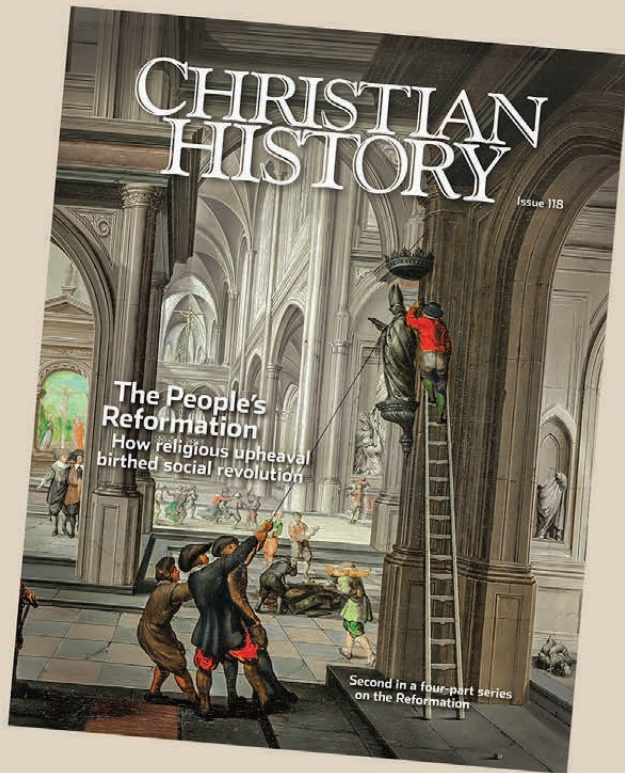
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Letters to the editor

Readers respond to recent issues of *Christian History*

CHRISTIAN HISTORY has meant a lot to me through the years. I am very grateful to God for keeping "the faith" alive to come down to our generation. Thank you for all the great magazines you have so faithfully written to help keep the faith alive and remind us of all that we have. —Goldie Homstad

In issue #115, the Gospel was so clearly and beautifully portrayed that I was brought to tears. —Mark Krauss

MORE BOOKS, PLEASE!

I liked very much your issue on "Seven Literary Sages" [#113]. One addition to your recommended resources, however. The most important book written about C. S. Lewis is missing from your list. It is, I believe, C. S. Lewis: *The Shape of His Faith and Thought*, by Paul L. Holmer. Nothing that I have seen comes close. —Mike Frank

You've hit on an important point, Mike! It's always hard to narrow down our list of Recommended Resources, but for the Seven Sages issue, it was especially challenging. We definitely concur and commend the Holmer book to our readers.

*And speaking of the Recommended Resources page, we had even more of a challenging task with issue 116 on the 25 most important Christian writings. Several readers wrote in with additional suggestions. Please check out George Thomas Kurian and James D. Smith III, *The Encyclopedia of Christian Literature*, as well as the *Christian volumes in the Classics of Western Spirituality* series published by Paulist Press.*

THE CHURCH IS THE PEOPLE

Remember: When referring to the body of Christ, it is the Church. A church is a building for Christian worship. On pages 28 and 29 [of #115], Huldrych Zwingli is mentioned. I look forward to an issue about him and the Reformed Church. —P.W.M.

We follow the Chicago Manual of Style in our capitalization, which dictates a lower-case "church" except in denominational titles (United Methodist Church, Southern Baptist Church, Roman Catholic Church, etc.). Great thought about Zwingli! You will find a lot of him in this issue. Read on!

The latest *Christian History* magazine about the most important Christian books ever written was outstanding. I could not put it down. —Robert Durham



CORRECTING THE CORRECTION

I enjoy the magazine! In response to your correction on page 2 of the magazine, issue 116: William Tyndale was executed neither in England nor in Antwerp, but at Vilvoorde Castle in Vilvoorde, Belgium, just outside of Brussels. He was arrested in Antwerp and lived in Antwerp, but he was taken to Vilvoorde and languished there in prison for months before his execution. The account is best consulted in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*; I'm very pleased that the magazine mentions this Foxe edition in issue 116! I am a scholar of English Reformation literature and culture and teach English literature at James Madison University in Virginia. —Mark Rankin

We apologize that you had to correct our correction! The original error was carried over from issue 34's timeline, and unfortunately our correction came from a source that was itself wrong. We really do try to fact check every detail of every issue.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD (IN GREEK)

In issue 116 on page 45, beside the 15th-c. icon, it is stated: "The apostle John composes Revelation. . . ." But the scroll that John holds in his hands contains the first words in John's gospel. —Donald Clink

Good catch, Donald! Our image source provided this description with the image of John: "St. John the Theologian, Writing his Revelations on an Open Scroll." Obviously in this case, "his Revelations" is actually the Gospel of John, not Revelation.

Editor's note



MY HUSBAND, EDWIN, whose name you'll see a few times in this issue, studied Protestant reformer Martin Bucer in graduate school, so the Reformation tends to surface in unexpected ways in our house.

I may have the only nine-year-old and three-year-old who can repeat correctly the sequence of how Henry VIII disposed of his wives ("divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, lived"). And when I mention Tom Brady, the Patriots' quarterback, Edwin brings up Tom Brady, the author of the 2009 book *German Histories in the Age of Reformations*. (We recommended the book to you in issue 115. You are free to read it while watching the Patriots—or not!)

So it's no surprise that I know a bit more about the Reformation than many people whose diplomas say they are American church historians. Before we began this issue, I could have told you about the printing press transforming the spread of information in the sixteenth century; the saga of Henry's wives; the views of Swiss preacher Huldrych Zwingli on Holy Communion; the persecution of many Anabaptists; and the overnight upheaval in centuries-long traditions of worship.

But I have a new appreciation for those stories in the context of this issue. When we take a step back from those isolated tales, they become part of a larger picture of a society plunged into a great deal of upheaval. Ideas birthed by Luther—and independently of him in other places, including Zwingli's Zurich—did not remain in the rarefied realms of theological debate. They found their way into the hands and minds of the common people in ways that would transform the entire social and cultural landscape.

NEW ROLES AND NEW PROBLEMS

Peasants took new ideas of freedom into the political realm and demanded rights from their overlords. Priests and nuns married (usually each other, because no respectable merchants or bankers wanted their daughters

to marry priests). Churches looked profoundly different when you entered, because the art that had formerly covered their walls had been forcibly, sometimes violently, removed. Worship services sounded different, and people were asked to behave differently in them (listen to the pastor—save the rosary for your private devotions!). New roles in church (pastor's wife) opened up to Protestant women, while others (nun, abbess, virgin) closed down.

Rulers chose one side or the other and expected their people to comply. Afraid of political and social instability, they attacked others who believed differently. Both Protestants and Catholics punished—frequently by death—those on the other sides of debates, and almost everybody tracked down and drowned Anabaptists, who were considered so radical they were deemed dangerous by all. (Yes, death was seen as an appropriate penalty for heresy. You'll find out why on pp. 33–36.)

Scholars call much of this the "Urban Reformation" because it happened in and around great sixteenth-century cities, especially three we focus on here: Basel, Zurich, and Strasbourg. From these centers of learning and commerce, ideas took flight, books rolled off presses, and reformers traveled and preached and taught. Networks of family and social connections built up. Western Europe plunged into turbulence, and 500 years later we are still living with the results.

This is the second issue in our series of four on the Reformation (the first was issue 115 on Luther). We have chosen to call this issue the "People's Reformation." When people get hold of ideas, things happen—sometimes things that no one ever could have expected. ■



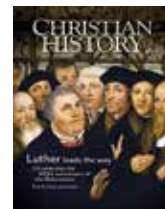
Jennifer Woodruff Tait
Managing editor, *Christian History*

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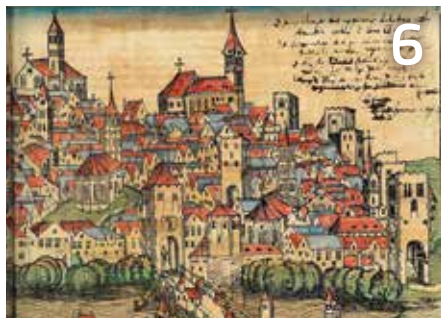
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Have you seen issue 115 on Luther, the first in our series of four on the Reformation?



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When the state advanced the church

REFORMATION IDEAS FLOURISHED—AND CAUSED CONFLICT—IN BUSTLING CITIES

Jim West and Edwin Woodruff Tait

ON THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 1522, the pastor of Zurich's Grossmünster Church, Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531), and some of his friends distributed two smoked sausages at the house of printer Christoph Froschauer. This was scandalous: this Thursday happened to be in Lent and was marked for fasting. Criticized, Zwingli argued that fasting should never be mandatory and even preached a sermon about sausages called "Regarding the Choice and Freedom of Foods."

The story became legendary, and the conflict it provoked was sharp. In the tale of Zwingli and his city—and the other cities where the Reformation took hold—we see how the personal and social, the religious and political, intermingled in those chaotic decades as the Reformation lurched forward.

WE BUILT THIS CITY ON THE REFORMATION

The German-speaking lands in which the Reformation first arose were home to two primary kinds of political organizations: regional territories ruled by princes and "free imperial" city-states ruled by councils and recognizing no authority other than the theoretical authority of the distant emperor. (Both princes and mem-

CITY ON A HILL 16th-c. Basel had a new university, new printing presses, and lots of new Reformation ideas.

bers of city governments were typically referred to as "magistrates.") There were, of course, important cities within the princely territories, and independent city-states often ruled a considerable swath of surrounding territory. This was especially the case in Switzerland, divided into autonomous republics called "cantons," some of which were quite rural.

But the Reformation spread most rapidly through the cities with their wealthy merchants and urban aristocrats, particularly after the crushing of the Peasants' War and the firm identification of the mainstream Reformation with the authority of princes and city magistrates (see "They wanted God to save his own," pp. 19–21).

And in the early years of the Reformation, the most dramatic growth occurred in areas outside "princely" control: the free imperial cities and the Swiss cantons. There the Reformation was driven largely by popular demand for a simpler faith focused on scriptural preaching and moral reform—the "pure Gospel."

ALL EARS Zwingli preached through the Gospel of Matthew from his pulpit at the Grossmünster rather than following the prescribed lessons.

There were considerable connections between these popular movements within the cities and rural peasant uprisings which also claimed the banner of the “pure Gospel.” But whereas those uprisings were disastrous failures, the urban movements were in many cases successful. The “Urban Reformation” was not a violent revolution or a top-down imposition—it was a complex process largely driven from below, but for which the consent of the magistrates was crucial.

This Reformation in the cities built on reform efforts already going on throughout the later Middle Ages. Many cities saw a great demand for preaching, and some clergy held positions devoted purely to preaching (Zwingli was just such a *Leutpriester*, or “people’s priest,” in Zurich), alongside more conventional clergy whose duties focused primarily on celebrating the Mass.

City governments had also striven for years to force clergy to accept citizenship with its rights and responsibilities; the church argued against this because it feared it would bring clergy under the control of city governments. The fact that some of the most influential people in a city, controlling large amounts of wealth and property, were essentially resident aliens with extraterritorial rights rankled most governments.

When the fugitive Martin Bucer (1481–1551) wrote to the city government of Strasbourg in 1523 offering to become a citizen—because, he said, Scripture taught him he should be a loyal citizen of his community—he was offering it victory in a long struggle between civil and religious authorities. (Two decades later, the older Bucer would take a more independent stance, criticizing authorities’ political and military compromises and demanding that pastors have the authority to excommunicate flagrant sinners.)

THE GREAT MONASTERY

The medieval city saw itself as a sacred community, a Christian commonwealth whose members were obligated to love and care for one another by virtue of their baptism. Great humanist reformer Erasmus of Rotterdam argued that cities should be holy communities that fostered the sanctification of their members: “What is a city,” he asked rhetorically, “but a great monastery?”

The Urban Reformation offered a chance to make that vision a reality; hence the great concern with moral reform—ending prostitution, encouraging an earlier age



for marriage to prevent fornication, caring for the poor, and regulating conspicuous consumption (see p. 11).

Perhaps no city typifies that urge for reformation more than Zurich. Zwingli went to Zurich in 1518 from pastorates in Glarus and Einsiedeln and began to spread Reformation ideas. He preached through the Gospel of Matthew and attacked church corruption and specific points of church doctrine and practice such as the veneration of saints and the use of images in churches.

While many welcomed his preaching, conflict also arose, especially after the sausage incident. The city council considered the matter and ruled in support of Zwingli. Over the next several years, Zurich’s worshippers saw traditional festivals and processions laid aside.

Zwingli designed a Communion liturgy in the German language which was celebrated for the first time on Maundy Thursday in 1525. Participants sat around tables; wooden bowls and plates were used for the sacrament; there was no organ music or singing; and the sermon took a central place. Zwingli believed that the bread and wine of Communion were figures or representations of Christ’s body and that receiving them helped transform the church into the body of Christ in the world.

Zwingli also saw himself and other ministers of the Gospel as analogous to the Old Testament prophets, since the key function of a prophet is to proclaim God’s Word. When Zurich clergy held intense Bible study sessions culminating in messages for the common people, their Bible study was referred to as “prophesying.” Zwingli saw his job as telling the city magistrates what



STRASBOURG The city was called “Argentina” in Latin from its Roman name, Argentoratum.

Strasbourg

LOCATION: Major city of the Alsace region in France, near the German border and the Rhine

POPULATION IN 16TH C.: between 20,000 and 25,000

HOME TO: Reformers Martin Bucer, Katharina Schütz Zell, and Caspar Schwenckfeld; printer Johannes Gutenberg; humanists Johann Geiler von Kaysersberg and Michael Servetus

FORM OF GOVERNMENT: Free city

BECAME PROTESTANT: 1523

Zurich

LOCATION: In northern Switzerland, near the north end of Lake Zurich

POPULATION IN 16TH C.: between 50,000 and 70,000

HOME TO: Reformers Huldrych Zwingli, Heinrich Bullinger, Conrad Grebel, and Felix Manz; scientist Conrad Gessner; last imperial abbess of the Zurich Abbey Katharina von Zimmern

FORM OF GOVERNMENT: Free city; had joined Swiss Confederacy in 1351

BECAME PROTESTANT: between 1519 and 1525

Basel

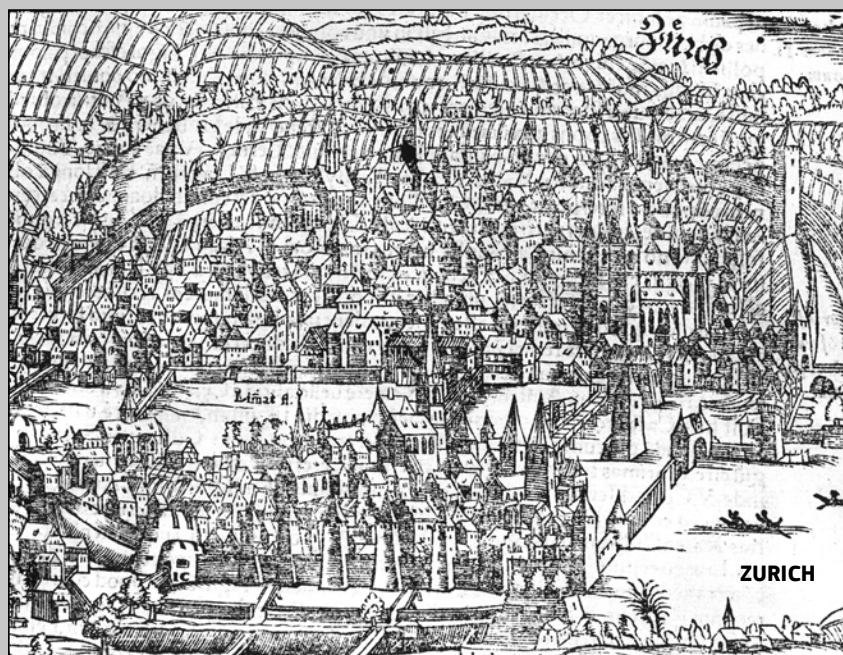
LOCATION: On the Rhine River in northwest Switzerland, near Swiss borders with France and Germany

POPULATION IN 16TH C.: between 10,000 and 30,000

HOME TO: Reformers Desiderius Erasmus, John Calvin, Johannes Oecolampadius, Hans Denck, Andreas von Karlstadt, and John Foxe; printers Johannes Froben and Adam Petri; painter Hans Holbein; University of Basel (founded 1460)

FORM OF GOVERNMENT: Free city; had joined Swiss Confederacy in 1501

BECAME PROTESTANT: 1529





GO AHEAD AND PREACH Left: The canons of the Grossmünster appointed Zwingli as people's priest in 1519, unaware of the revolution he was about to spark.

AND KEEP PREACHING Above: At the Second Zurich Disputation (1523), the council told Zwingli "to continue to preach the holy gospel as heretofore."

God's Word required of them, without wielding political power in his own right.

Partially for this reason, the reforms in Zurich were not fast enough for some of Zwingli's more radical followers, who saw no reason to "wait" for the city council to act or indeed to give the council any authority in deciding how and when to implement religious reforms.

These "Anabaptists" baptized as adults (rebaptized, their opponents argued) those baptized in infancy. They fought Zwingli tooth and nail to persuade him to abandon his attachment to the city council and its authority. They firmly believed that the power of God and the Spirit of God would work only through believers and not through officials (see "A fire that spread," pp. 28–32).

AGAINST THOSE INFILTRATING PREACHERS

Zwingli countered in his *Commentary on True and False Religion* that God indeed uses public officials to ensure that his will is carried out. He remarked, "We read in Rom. 16:23: 'Erastus the treasurer of the city saluteth you.' If a man is treasurer, is he not a person in authority . . . not even a treasurer, be he a person in authority or not, can administer this office without there being a person in authority who has made him treasurer." Zwingli won the argument, and the Anabaptists were expelled from the city. Worse, some were executed by drowning.

The modern notion called the "separation of church and state" simply did not exist in the sixteenth century, and, where it did arise (as among the Anabaptists), it was quickly crushed. Zwingli, Luther, Calvin, and their friends and allies were all referred to as "magisterial reformers" because they

depended upon the magistrates to enforce their religious reforms. They believed that God authorized the magistrate to maintain justice and punish the wicked, which included oversight of external matters pertaining to the church.

Luther wrote in his little treatise titled *Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers*, addressed to government officials:

I have learned, my dear lord and friend, how the Anabaptists are seeking to infiltrate also in your vicinity and to infect our people with their poison. . . . You have discharged your office in a proper and praiseworthy manner against these emissaries of the devil. . . . [I] also ask and advise all other magistrates, cities, and princes to be on the alert against these infiltrators, so that we do our duty.

And Zwingli argued in his *Commentary on True and False Religion* that he had observed "the saintliness and faith of large numbers of believers who have yet so administered magisterial offices as to glorify God by general peace and righteousness," as well as the "viciousness of bad men who pretend to be Christians but are not truly such," and that he believed "that no man is even capable of administering a magistracy properly unless he is a Christian."

He added, "How, pray, does the state differ from the church? I mean in regard to the external habits and associations of life; for as far as the heart is concerned, I am well aware that the only church of Christ is that which trusts in Christ."



Zwingli rejected the sharp distinction Luther made between law and Gospel: all of Scripture is divine law and is binding on believers. This is why he had no tolerance for images in worship: they contradict God's law and thus leave no room for pragmatism or compromise.

On his side Luther saw Zwingli as a fanatic with dangerous sacramental and political views (see "Allies or enemies?," pp. 15–17). Though Zwingli's version of social change was more conservative than the Anabaptists or the peasant rebels, Luther still thought it an inappropriate mingling of law and Gospel that called on Christians to use coercive force *as Christians* rather than simply as obedient subjects (or charitable wielders) of worldly authority.

In the end Zwingli followed his conscience and became a chaplain to the troops of Zurich, losing his life at the hands of his Catholic foes. Luther quipped, "Those who live by the sword, die by the sword."

For Luther violence on behalf of the state, maintaining order and crushing rebellion, was legitimate and authorized by God. But attempts to change society by force in the name of the Gospel were blasphemous and under God's curse.

NO LAUGHING, SWEARING, OR PLAYING DICE

In Zurich under Zwingli and the strict hand of his successor, Bullinger, rules for public behavior were tightened up and church attendance became mandatory. In 1525 the Zurich council instituted a marriage court that could rule on issues of marriage, divorce,

YOU LOAD 16 TONS Left: Workmen extract metal in Münster. Reformation ideas appealed to many working-class people.

AND WHAT DO YOU GET? Above: Zwingli's treatise *Who Is the Source of Sedition?* (1524) argued that tithes should support the poor, not line wealthy pockets.

and related moral (or immoral) behavior. *The Zurich Church Ordinances* of 1520–1675 contain 400 specific bits of legislation passed by the Zurich City Council over a century and a half beginning in Zwingli's day. Every aspect of life was regulated with the aim of producing citizens who were not only Christian in name but in deed and lifestyle.

These regulations prohibited swearing and playing cards and dice, condemned being absent from church without a proper reason, regulated what kind of clothes should be worn, required the baptism of newborn children (the rule that the Anabaptists ran afoul of), controlled the sorts of gravestones that could be erected in the cemetery, regulated begging and beggars, controlled what kind of weapons people could carry, and finally specified whether one was allowed to laugh during the sermon (one was not).

While Zwingli oversaw the reform of Zurich, the steady hand of Johannes Oecolampadius (1482–1531) guided reform in Basel. Born in Germany but now residing in Switzerland (see "A motley, fiery crew," pp. 43–48), Oecolampadius became cathedral preacher

Not only what was believed, but what was done

Protestants and Catholics during the Reformation and the years after pursued all kinds of reform vigorously: in doctrine, worship, and morals. They saw reform of personal conduct as just another part of the needed reform of the Christian faith. Girolamo Savonarola, Martin Luther, Desiderius Erasmus, Katharina Schütz Zell, Marguerite de Navarre—these leading preachers, writers, and rulers cast their morality net very wide. Clergy and laity, church and society, men and women, child and adult, family and individual were all on the judgment seat.

With the closing of many of the convents and monasteries, Europe and (eventually) the New World witnessed a profound change in thinking on the nature of work and the understanding of marriage. The societal unease this caused added to an already-increasing concern people had about witchcraft. Those seeking to purify the morals of society were forced to confront what they saw as a growing plague, and they did not hesitate to employ executions as a means to purge the body politic.

MAGIC, BELL-RINGING, AND PROFIT

What kind of sins came in for censure? A century after the Reformation, John Bunyan, English author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, recorded his conversion to the Christian faith in his 1666 autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. There he confessed to bear-baiting, bell-ringing, dancing, and playing games on Sunday. Also common at this time were astrology, necromancy, and other forms of esoteric magical practice, not to mention drunkenness, adultery, and heresy. One of the most common sins associated with the clergy was simony: the selling or buying of church-related offices or, more generally, the making of profit off of sacred things.

Moral reform was not just the work of lone individuals; it was taken seriously enough that some banded together in an effort to fight immorality. In France, for instance, groups like the Holy League, started by a nobleman named Henry, Duke of Guise,



ADVICE IN VICE A madam assists a prostitute in soliciting a client in 16th-c. Geneva.

worked to stamp out what they saw as the heresy of Protestantism (specifically the presence of Calvinists) within the country—on the grounds that this was a moral ill and made France liable to the judgment of God.

This purifying work also included governments and churches, who labored together to stamp out vice. French reformer John Calvin worked to reform the faith and morals of his adopted home, Geneva, by founding a quasi-governmental body called the Consistory. Made up of both Christian ministers and political officials, the Consistory's job was to police the morals of the city.

Everything from slander to financial improprieties and murder fell under its jurisdiction. The Consistory met each Thursday to hear cases. Like the Spanish Inquisition, the Consistory was governed by rules that allowed those falsely accused to extricate themselves from the charges brought against them.—Jon Balserak, senior lecturer in early modern religion, University of Bristol. Much more on Calvin and Geneva coming in issue 120!—The Editors



in Basel in 1515. He also served as an assistant and Hebrew consultant to Erasmus as the latter translated his Greek New Testament. Among his youthful actions in Basel, he preached a sermon in 1518 against the custom of telling humorous stories in Easter sermons!

After a brief and unsuccessful stint as a monk, Oecolampadius went back to Basel in 1522 as both priest at St. Martin's Church and professor at the University of Basel. There his lectures on Isaiah argued for reform.

He prevailed with the city council in 1523 and 1524 in a series of public disputations, though the news of the Peasants' War and the council's general fear of the radical pace of the Anabaptists made it slow to act. But in 1528 Oecolampadius, Zwingli, Bucer, and other reformers participated in a disputation at Bern which led that city to adopt the Reformed faith in the form of 10 theses, including these:

The Church of Christ makes no laws and commandments without the Word of God. Hence human traditions are no more binding on us than as far as they are founded in the Word of God. . . . The mass as now in use . . . is contrary to the Scripture, a blasphemy against the most holy sacrifice, passion, and death of Christ, and on account of its abuses an abomination before God. The worship of images is contrary to Scripture. Therefore images should be abolished when they are set up as objects of adoration.

NEW DAY, NEW LITURGY

The example of Bern took root in Basel. The council in 1529 abolished the Mass, issued an order of liturgy and church discipline, and elected Oecolampadius head of the church in Basel. The new liturgy was moderate,



HE WHO LIVES BY THE SWORD? *Left:* Zwingli works on yet another treatise in Zurich's central library in 1526. In 1885 the Swiss government erected a memorial to him in the city he had transformed (*above*).

retaining morning and evening prayer and the observance of some church festivals, including those honoring Mary and some saints. It showed Oecolampadius's willingness to retain those aspects of Catholic practice most acceptable to the people and least offensive to Reformed theology; he understood that some things are worth fighting for and some things are not.

While the city suffered some upheaval as reform took root, in the end the populace was agreeable. In 1534 under Oecolampadius's successor, they adopted a confession similar to the one developed at Bern; it was read every Maundy Thursday, and subscription was required to it at ordination services until the late nineteenth century!

Strasbourg too fared well thanks to the conciliatory spirit of Martin Bucer (1491–1551), who repeatedly put forth stalwart, though unfortunately failed, attempts to bring differing reformers to unity (see "A motley, fiery crew," pp. 43–48).

Bucer arrived in Strasbourg in 1523 already convinced of the truth of the Reformation, released

BRING DOWN THE IMAGES Protestors pull down a cross in Zurich.

from his monastic vows, excommunicated, and married to a former nun. He was protected by reformer Matthew Zell (1477–1548) and his wife Katharina Schütz Zell (c. 1497–1562). Matthew Zell had influence with the city council and took Bucer as his unofficial chaplain. Bucer became a citizen of the city and pastor of St. Aurelia's Church.

Unrest erupted in 1524 when Conrad Treger, a local Augustinian prior, called Bucer, Zell, and others heretics; Protestant rioters broke into monasteries and destroyed images. The council supported Bucer and arrested Treger, who eventually left the city; reforms in worship followed, based in part on Bucer's writings in his book *Basis and Cause* that attacked vestments, altars, and Roman ritual.

At first the city council allowed Bucer's reforms into the parish churches while continuing Masses at the city's cathedral and college churches. But in 1529 the council suspended the Mass altogether and replaced it with two Sunday preaching services in every church in town. It followed this up with a 1530 decree directing that images and side altars should be removed from churches.

Bucer introduced "special wardens" into each congregation to supervise what people did as well as what they believed. Concerned by an influx of refugees, many of whom were Anabaptists, he and his wardens soon asked the city council to take complete control of the church. The council delayed, but the events of the Münster Rebellion, when radical Anabaptists seized power in the town of Münster (see "A fire that spread," pp. 28–32), finally pushed it to act out of fear of similar events occurring in Strasbourg.

BISHOP BUCER

In 1534 the council accepted articles on church doctrine and a confession drawn up by Bucer as the official standards of worship and doctrine in Strasbourg. Anabaptists had to subscribe or leave. Many people recognized Bucer's authoritative status; in a letter to a friend in 1535, reformer Wolfgang Capito (1478–1541) wrote against the possibility of Bucer leaving for another post: "Bucer is the bishop of our church, a status which we should not rashly change." (Little did Capito know that Bucer would one day also marry his widow, Wibrandis Rosenblatt, who had already been married to Oecolampadius as well; see "Bride of the Reformation," p. 49).

In the magisterial Reformation, good order was the goal, because without good order, without moral



rectitude, the Gospel would fall on weed-choked ground, and that the reformers could not endure—not in any of their cities. But Bucer and other urban reformers eventually became disillusioned with the failure of their communities to be the holy commonwealths that they envisioned.

In October 1531 five Catholic Swiss cantons, upset by a Protestant food blockade, declared war on Zurich. Zwingli joined the battle as chaplain to the troops, supposedly bidding farewell to his wife with the statement "The hour is come that separates us. Let it be so. The Lord wills." She responded, "We shall see each other again if the Lord will. His will be done. And what will you bring back when you come?" He replied, "Blessing after dark night."

But the troops from Zurich were overwhelmed and underprepared; in the ensuing battle, 500 out of 3,500 men, including Zwingli, died at the hands of a nearly 7,000-member Catholic army. Oecolampadius died later that same year, though not in battle. Bucer escaped an early death, but fled the power of Emperor Charles V and took refuge in England, where he once again began to imagine what the "kingdom of Christ" would look like, this time on a larger scale.

The fullest embodiment of the goals of the urban reformers would be Calvin's Geneva, which, in turn, spread its version of the holy community around Europe and to the New World. When John Winthrop proclaimed to the first settlers in Massachusetts that they would be a "city on a hill," he was not just quoting a biblical passage. He was invoking hopes and dreams that went back to the earliest years of the Reformation and beyond them to Erasmus's hope for a city that would be "nothing other than a great monastery." ■

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"THY PURPOSE FULFILL" Zwingli wrote about nearly dying, "Nothing can be too severe for me. I am thy vessel, for you to make whole or break to pieces."

The life and thought of Zwingli

Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531) was born on New Year's Day, seven weeks after Luther. His family lived in Wildhaus, Switzerland, where his father was a farmer and a magistrate. After preparatory school in Basel and Bern, he attended the universities of Vienna and Basel. There teachers, including Thomas Wyttenbach (1472–1526), later a Swiss reformer, introduced him to humanist studies and scholastic theology.

Zwingli's earliest work, a patriotic poem, attacked mercenary military service. Experience of war as a chaplain in 1513 and 1515 intensified his attacks and provoked opposition in Glarus, where he had been a priest since 1506. The books he bought and read there show his love of Greek and Roman antiquity.

In 1515 or 1516, he met Erasmus, who pointed him to Christian antiquity—Scripture and the church fathers—in a new way. Zwingli bought editions of works by the fathers and learned the Greek New Testament by heart. He moved to Einsiedeln, a center of Marian devotion, and two years later to Zurich.

PREACHING TO THEIR NEEDS

Zwingli became a reformer sometime between 1516 and 1522, probably independently of Luther. On January 1, 1519, he began to preach through Matthew rather than on the assigned passage for the day; he

then moved on to other biblical books related to the people's needs rather than the lectionary schedule. He later spoke of various influences moving him toward reform: Paul, John, Augustine's writings on John, his teacher Wyttenbach's rejection of indulgences, and a poem by Erasmus showing Christ alone as mediator. His near-death experience with the plague in August 1519 may also have contributed.

In 1520 the city council in Zurich resolved that preaching be measured by the Scriptures; in 1522 Zwingli broke the Lenten fast and appealed that clergy be allowed to marry (he had already secretly married Anna Reinhard, so this was no academic question). In January 1523 the council summoned the First Disputation to see whose teaching would prevail on disputed issues. Zwingli defended his teaching as scriptural in the form of 67 theses and was vindicated. The council's support of the Reformation was vital.

The Second Zurich Disputation in October 1523 declared church images and the Mass unscriptural. In 1524 statues and images were removed (see *Tearing down the images*, p. 25), and in 1525 the Lord's Supper replaced the Mass. A Latin

school called the "Prophecy" was founded to re-educate and retrain clergy (and some laypeople) through translation, exposition, and preaching of the Bible.

Some in Zurich were more radical than Zwingli on social issues, government, the church, and baptism. Called Anabaptists, they suffered exile or death by drowning (see *"A fire that spread,"* pp. 28–32). Luther differed on the Eucharist with both groups, leading to prolonged controversy. At the Marburg Colloquy, Luther refused fellowship with Swiss reformers because he believed in the bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist and Zwingli did not (see *"Allies and enemies,"* pp. 15–17).

Zwingli's theology focused strongly on God's majesty. He emphasized providence and election and drew sharp distinctions between creator and created, Christ's divinity and Christ's humanity, signs and things signified. He contrasted faith in the creator with faith in created things (including works and sacraments), affirmed the unity of Scripture, supported the role of government in church affairs, and developed the doctrine of baptism as God's covenant with us. Today his spiritual descendants are found in Reformed churches worldwide. —*W. P. Stephens, author of Zwingli: An Introduction to His Thought; Theology of Huldrych Zwingli; and The Holy Spirit in the Thought of Martin Bucer.*



Allies or enemies?

THE REFORMERS SOON DIVIDED OVER CRUCIAL ISSUES;
LUTHER HIMSELF WAS ONE REASON WHY

Robert D. Linder

FROM OUR VANTAGE point 500 years later, Protestant reformers may all look the same: men and women fighting in one accord to birth a new church. But nothing could be further from the truth. In addition to his papal opponents, Martin Luther soon began to believe that his fellow reformers threatened true renewal of the church. Labeling them “false brethren” and “fanatics,” he fought like a tiger to preserve doctrine he believed God had revealed to him.

IN, WITH, AND UNDER

The sharpest clash came over the meaning of the Eucharist. Swiss reformer Huldrych Zwingli interpreted Christ’s statement “This is my body” to mean “This represents my body.” He believed Christ was present in the sacrament “according to his divine nature.” Luther, however, insisted these words be taken literally: Christ explicitly promised he would be present in this sacrament, and the body and blood of Christ are really

“DISPUTING CHRIST” In this cartoon Luther, Calvin, and Menno Simons “divide Christ” by disputing his teaching in front of John the Baptist.

present “in, with, and under” the bread and wine and received truly by communicants. Luther believed that Zwingli’s understanding of the Lord’s Supper led to his followers’ rapid, even violent, changes in worship practices.

Behind this Sacramentarian Controversy, as people called it, lay the Karlstadt affair. Andreas Karlstadt (1486–1541), Luther’s senior in both age and tenure as a professor at the University of Wittenberg, had promoted Luther to the doctorate in 1512 and later collaborated with Luther and Philipp Melancthon in reforming the university’s curriculum (see “A motley, fiery crew,” pp. 43–48). Luther, however, soon overshadowed Karlstadt as a reformer. In 1522 he returned from seclusion in Wartburg Castle to find Karlstadt



Martinus Luther
Johannes Jonas
Philippus Melancthon
Andreas Osiander
Stephanus Agricola
Johannes Brenz
Thomas Oecolampadius
Huldrych Zwingli
Martinus Bucer
Caspar Hedwig

pushing radical reform. Karlstadt left town under pressure and resigned his academic and ecclesiastical appointments.

On August 22, 1524, after a heated exchange at the Black Bear Tavern, Luther tossed a guilder (a common coin) at Karlstadt as a sign of open feud, daring him to publish his works on the Lord's Supper. Karlstadt accepted the challenge, even after authorities expelled him from his pulpit for disturbing the peace. A pamphlet war between the two men followed.

Karlstadt anticipated many Anabaptist ideas (see "A fire that spread," pp. 28–32): he rejected infant baptism, stressed the need for an adult conversion experience, declared the equality of laity and clergy, embraced congregational church polity, and viewed the Lord's Supper as a memorial. During those years the visionary "Zwickau Prophets" also appeared, and revolutionary Thomas Müntzer (1489–1525) stirred up insurgent peasants in their war against landlords (see "They wanted God to save his own," pp. 19–21).

Luther began to regard Karlstadt and all those who held radical views as threats to orderly reform of the church. In the end Müntzer was hunted down and executed, the Zwickau Prophets were driven from Wittenberg, Anabaptists began to be persecuted and killed, and the authorities hounded Karlstadt from place to place. And in Luther's mind, the relatively mainstream Zwingli represented more of the same.

In November 1524 Luther read a copy of a letter in which Zwingli said he admired Karlstadt's boldness on the subject of the Eucharist and agreed with him that the bread and wine are symbols. Lutheran reformers soon responded, and the battle was joined. In later

ALL TOGETHER NOW Left: Artists may have liked to picture the reformers as united against the pope, and they may have all signed their name to the Marburg Confession (above), but in reality their divisions were many.

years Luther would call both Zwingli and Karlstadt willful liars, "sect leaders," and "novices in the sacred Scriptures."

"THIS IS MY BODY!"

All these verbal missiles concerned German lay leaders of Protestantism, especially Prince Philip of Hesse (1504–1567). He invited the leaders of the German and Swiss factions to meet in the beautiful city of Marburg to resolve their differences, so Protestants could present a united front against Catholics and against possible military action by Emperor Charles V.

On October 1, 1529, most of the principal reformers of Germany and Switzerland met—Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Bucer, and Oecolampadius. Agreement was reached on 14 of 15 points. But on the final question, the real bodily presence of Christ in the sacrament, the colloquy foundered.

When Zwingli put forth his interpretation, Luther emphatically quoted from the Vulgate (the Latin Bible): "*Hoc est corpus meum!*" (This is my body!). He wrote the words with chalk on the table-top and refused to accept any deviation. Oecolampadius's countertext "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing" (John 6:63) made no impression on Luther, who declared in exasperation: "Again and again the body of Christ is eaten, for he himself commands us so. If he ordered me to eat dung, I would do it, since I would altogether know that it would be to my salvation." Later he snapped to Bucer, in words intended

TRULY RECEIVING CHRIST A Lutheran pastor offers the Eucharist to a communicant.

also for Zwingli: "It is evident that we do not have the same spirit."

In the end both sides denied that Communion is, as they understood the Mass to be, a sacrifice. They also agreed communicants should receive both bread and wine. On the question of the Real Presence, they agreed to disagree, but proclaimed the sacrament as a divine gift of grace with a "spiritual benefit."

Each theologian present signed the Confession. But soon after, each side asserted the other had yielded on the essential points. Luther insisted that no political alliance was possible without complete doctrinal agreement, and Melancthon opposed any further concessions to the Zwinglians because it might prejudice discussions with the Catholics. So the German reformation led by Luther and the Swiss reformation led by Zwingli went their separate ways.

Luther asserted, "One side in this controversy belongs to the Devil and is God's enemy"; he accused his opponents of allowing human reason to intrude on the plain words of Scripture. On the other side, Zwingli resented Luther's condescending tone. He felt the Wittenberg reformer had treated him "like an ass." Thirteen years after Marburg, Luther was still complaining about Zwingli's "Swiss dialect" and his (Luther thought) pompous insistence on speaking Greek at every opportunity. He declared, "Zwingli and Erasmus are nothing but wormy nuts that taste like crap in one's mouth!"

MAKING FRIENDS AND INFLUENCING PEOPLE?

In contrast with Luther's growing estrangement from the Swiss reformation, his relationship with English reformers remained warm (see "The accidental revolution," pp. 39–42). He admired Robert Barnes (c. 1495–1540), burned at the stake and fondly called by Luther "St. Robert"; Bishop Hugh Latimer (c. 1487–1555), later a celebrated victim of Queen Mary's persecution; William Tyndale, whose theological works often roughly translated or paraphrased Luther's writings; and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer.

But Anabaptists were a different story. Luther, like many other leaders of reform, lumped all radicals into one category. He routinely denounced the unsystematic Karlstadt, the mentally disturbed Müntzer, and the fanatic Melchior Hoffman, lumping them all with the peaceful followers of Menno Simons (1496–1561). He wrote: "The Anabaptists have written nothing against me because they have no learned men nor any eminent men. They are only a seditious mob."

In the beginning of the Reformation, Luther disapproved of Zwingli's persecution of Zurich Anabaptists. However the appearance of many radicals and the



Peasants' War alarmed him. By 1531 he supported death for blasphemy, under which he included "false teaching," thereby condemning the Anabaptists' rejection of the Apostles' Creed and their refusal to participate in war or serve as magistrates.

In 1536 Melancthon drafted a memorandum on the treatment of Anabaptists which distinguished peaceful from revolutionary Anabaptists and demanded death for both. Luther signed the memo, although late in life he returned to his earlier belief that banishment or imprisonment was sufficient penalty for their crimes.

With few exceptions Luther's reforming opponents did not repay in the same coin. They attacked his arguments, complained bitterly about his style, and accused him of violating Christian charity. But they still said they wished only to correct him where he had erred, not to reject his teaching entirely.

Melancthon, who took an occasional rebuke from Luther himself, remained true to his leader. He delivered his funeral oration in 1546, saying, "Some by no means evil-minded persons have complained that Luther displayed too much severity. I will not deny this. But I answer in the language of Erasmus, 'Because of the magnitude of the disorders, God gave this age a violent physician.'" ❏

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They wanted God to save his own

HAD LUTHER ARGUED ONLY FOR SPIRITUAL CHANGES? GERMAN PEASANTS DIDN'T THINK SO

Edwin Woodruff Tait

THE EXPLOSIVE IDEAS of Martin Luther landed in a world already tense with conflict and rife with agendas of social and religious reform. Centuries-long tension between wealthy landowners and the peasants who made up the bulk of the population exploded in a series of massive revolts in 1524 and 1525 all over southern and central Germany and parts of Switzerland. The conflict would leave serious scars on Luther's reputation as hundreds of thousands of people organized into local "bands" or armies in opposition to the landowners.

UPWARDLY MOBILE LUTHER

The term "peasant" (*Bauer* in German) referred not only to farmers but to miners and craftsmen as well. Luther himself came from a "peasant" family, although his father was a successful entrepreneur who owned a

REBELLION CRUSHED "Little Jack" Rohrbach, a leader of the peasant rebels, was executed in 1525.

factory and married the daughter of a lawyer from the city. Luther's kind of social mobility was by no means unheard of in the sixteenth century. Serfdom, which had tied the peasants to their land in the earlier Middle Ages, was disappearing, and a money-based economy slowly emerging.

In the fourteenth century, the Black Death had decimated Europe's population, killing as many as 200 million people. This led to shortages in labor and a resulting improvement in the lot of peasant workers (though, given the high mortality rate, one historian quipped that the fifteenth century was the "golden age of the bacteria," not of the worker). But by 1500 the population had

THE SHOE IS ON THE OTHER FOOT Earlier peasant revolts used a peasant shoe (*Bundschuh*), seen here on the ground next to the rebel, as the symbol on their banners.

climbed to preplague levels. Combined with the influx of gold and silver from the New World, the rise in population led to increased prices. For landowners, who often received payment in kind and whose income was fixed by custom, this created a huge problem, as their expenses were going up while their incomes were not.

As less successful people lost their lands and positions, those at the very top of the social hierarchy gobbled up more and more land. These highly privileged elites, with a growing hunger for luxury goods as status symbols and often with massive debts to banking companies, had every incentive to squeeze their tenants financially.

In the early sixteenth century, traditional peasant rights disappeared in one region after another. Grazing land, once available for all members of the community, was taken by the lord as his own property to be used for large-scale commercial farming. Peasants were denied traditional rights to fish and hunt, and rents went up steeply.

From 1490 on peasants revolted against these newly unfavorable conditions in what were called the *Bundschuh* revolts, named for the peasant shoe that the rebels used as a symbol. Rebels argued that the nobility's land-grab did not just violate traditional rights and customs, but contradicted divine justice.

This notion of "godly justice" or "godly law" was based on the widely accepted medieval concept of "natural law." According to Thomas Aquinas, natural law is an eternal expression of God's mind—the absolute standard by which all human laws should be measured. Any law that contradicts natural law is no law at all. "Godly law," as invoked by the rebels, is natural law "weaponized." Desperate men who raised armies and issued demands took it out of the academy and into the lanes and hedges of early modern Germany.

FIGHTING FOR THE PURE GOSPEL

The rebellions of 1524–25, larger and better organized, also now had a new ideological framework for the appeal to godly law: the concept of the "pure Gospel" taught by Luther and other reformers who claimed that when the true sense of Scripture was believed and understood, it would radically transform the face of Christian Europe. This key Gospel message was the revelation that divine *Gerechtigkeit*, "righteousness" or "justice," is a free gift received by faith.

As this message spread across Germany through pamphlets written in the vernacular, it became a message not only of religious but also of social and political reform. Chafing under oppression by both religious

Der Bundtschu
Diß biechlein sagt von dem bö
sen fürnemen der Bundtschuh/woye es sich
angefengt geendet vnd aus kumen ist.



and political elites, rural and urban commoners eagerly read Luther's three radical treatises of 1520.

The first, Luther's *Letter to the German Nobility*, called on the aristocracy to take up the mantle of reform, blaming church and society's problems on oppressive and unbiblical behavior of popes and Catholic clergy. His treatise on the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* argued that the sacraments had been corrupted from their true intention and abused to serve the power and interests of the clergy. And most powerfully, his treatise on the *Freedom of a Christian* declared that a true Christian is a "free lord," "subject to none," and at the same time the servant of all through love.

Luther proclaimed that faith in Christ frees the believer from human rules that claim to bind the conscience. A Christian is no longer to do right out of fear of punishment but rather out of spontaneous love for the neighbor. His message affirmed the dignity of the humblest Christian in the humblest of callings, who by acting out of love could serve as Christ to others.

The peasants were listening.

The 12 *Articles* adopted in March 1525 by rebels in the region of Swabia (one of the areas where the revolt was strongest) explained that the rebellion was not about overthrowing authority but rather about establishing legitimate authority on the basis of the Word of God:

The peasants demand that this Gospel be taught them as a guide in life, and they ought not to be called disobedient or disorderly. Whether God



grants the peasants (earnestly wishing to live according to His word) their requests or no, who shall find fault with the will of the Most High? . . . Did he not hear the children of Israel when they called upon Him and saved them out of the hands of Pharaoh? Can He not save His own today? Yes, He will save them and that speedily.

“CHRIST HAS REDEEMED US ALL”

The *Articles* protested against excessive forced labor demands and the restriction of traditional rights to hunt, fish, and cut wood, but they also called for rural communities to have the right to appoint and support their own pastors, rather than sending money to ecclesiastical lords who cared little for the welfare of the people over whom they exercised authority.

The most pointed articles protested against the institution of serfdom, once again growing in the German lands after centuries of slow decline:

Christ has delivered and redeemed us all, without exception, by the shedding of His precious blood, the lowly as well as the great. . . . It is consistent with Scripture that we should be free and wish to be so. Not that we would wish to be absolutely free and under no authority. God does not teach us that we should lead a disorderly life in the lusts of the flesh, but that we should love the Lord

SCORCHED-EARTH POLICY Known as the “Scourge of the Peasants,” Georg III Truchsess von Waldburg-Zeil defeated, tortured, and executed thousands of rebels.

our God and our neighbor. . . . We are thus ready to yield obedience according to God’s law to our elected and regular authorities in all proper things becoming to a Christian. We, therefore, take it for granted that you will release us from serfdom as true Christians, unless it should be shown us from the Gospel that we are serfs.

Luther found the *Articles* moderate in purely secular terms, but as a religious text utterly mistaken, even blasphemous. For him the Gospel could never serve as the basis for political demands: the freedom brought by Christ is an *inner* freedom. The believer is freed from sin, death, the devil, and even the law’s coercive commandments, but the “justice” given to believers by Christ had nothing to do with hunting and fishing rights.

That did not mean that the Gospel has no implications for social relationships. It implied that the believer should give up all claims to his or her own rights and interests, humbly serving the neighbor in love.

Luther accused the peasants of having entirely missed this part of his teaching, but the *Articles* made clear that the authors envisioned a society in which this kind of loving service to the neighbor formed the basis for law and all social relations. From the standpoint of the revolutionaries, Luther’s view of “love of neighbor” amounted to an endorsement of the unjust status quo keeping the peasants bound in serfdom.

Other reformers, such as radical priest Thomas Müntzer, became a voice for the peasants’ concerns. Initially an admirer of Luther, who had recommended Müntzer to pastoral positions, by 1523 Müntzer had become deeply disillusioned with the Wittenberg model of reform. In 1524, after Luther had called Müntzer a “satan” and urged the German princes to shut him down, he published an attack on Luther. The title says it all: *A Highly Provoked Defense and Answer to the Spiritless, Soft-living Flesh at Wittenberg who Has Most Lamentably Befouled Pitiably Christianity in a Perverted Way by His Theft of Holy Scripture*.

Where Luther left coercive force to the lawful rulers and saw the job of the church as proclaiming the healing gospel of God’s forgiveness, Müntzer believed that the true Gospel includes proclaiming God’s law written on the heart through the power of the Spirit.

Müntzer argued that the real dichotomy is not between law and Gospel but between those who are guided by the Spirit and those who are not. He saw Luther’s doctrine of justification by faith as a way of letting false Christians off the hook. The power of the sword, according to Müntzer, was given not just to princes but to the whole Christian community. Those who have the Spirit and truly seek to follow God’s law

Wider die Nordischen vnd Reubischen Rotten der Bavaren.



Psalm. vij.
Seyne ruck werden in selbs treffen/
Vnd seyn mitzwill/ wirdt vber in auffgeen:
1525:
Martinus Luther, Wittenberg,

are the true church with both the right and the duty to punish the wicked and establish God's true justice.

HEADED FOR DESTRUCTION

Müntzer expressed all this in a famous sermon before Elector John of Saxony (Luther's patron and protector) and other powerful German nobles in July 1524. Preaching from Daniel 2, Müntzer proclaimed the coming of God's kingdom, the "stone cut from a mountain without hands" destined to destroy all merely human kingdoms and fill the world.

The princes had a choice: they could submit to the Holy Spirit and be agents of God's kingdom, punishing the wicked (oppressive upper classes, whether clerical or lay) and establishing God's true justice—or they could cling to worldly authority and be swept away themselves. When the revolution broke out a few months later, Müntzer enthusiastically supported it and led a band of 300 men to the disastrous battle of Frankenhausen in May 1525, where the revolt was finally crushed (as was Müntzer).

Meanwhile in April 1525, one peasant army called the "Bright Band," led by "Little Jack" Rohrbach, captured the castle of Weinsberg and killed its lord by making him run a gauntlet of pikes (long spears). Rohrbach was subsequently deposed by his own forces and replaced with a more trustworthy commander.

But for Luther, who was getting all his news from sources hostile to the peasants, the killing of one noble prisoner on the part of the rebels was a noteworthy atrocity, while the massacre of entire bands of peasants was standard procedure. As the rebel armies, made up




FOLLOW ORDERS Above: Mounted cavalry attacks peasant foot soldiers.

AND GIVE BACK THAT GOOSE Left: Luther's treatise calling the peasants a "robbing, murdering horde" commanded the nobles to "knock down, strangle, and stab" the rebels ruthlessly.

solely of poorly trained infantry, were trounced in battle after battle, the death toll mounted to around 100,000.

Among the dead at Frankenhausen was Müntzer, who had promised to "catch all the bullets in his coat," but instead fled the carnage and was captured and executed. But the dream of a revolution to establish God's kingdom did not die with him. Radical Christian visionaries, to whom the name "Anabaptist" soon applied (see "A fire that spread," pp. 28–32) continued to predict that the end was near and that Christ was establishing a new kingdom of justice and equality.

Whether Luther liked it or not, godly law had been weaponized, and centuries would hear the echoing message in political as well as religious realms: "Can He not save His own today? Yes, He will save them and that speedily." 

Edwin Woodruff Tait is contributing editor at Christian History.



Preachers and printers

A HOT-OFF-THE-PRESS TECHNOLOGY PUSHED THE REFORMATION FORWARD

Armin Siedlecki and Perry Brown

WITHOUT PRINTING, would there have been a Protestant Reformation? Only a century earlier, both John Wycliffe and John Hus spawned movements of intense spiritual fervor and wrote prolifically. But the absence of adequate printing technology limited the distribution of their works. Wycliffe was condemned, Hus burned at the stake, and history casts both as mere harbingers of the main event. John Foxe wrote of the change printing had wrought in his famed *Book of Martyrs*: "Although through might [the pope] stopped the mouth of John Huss, God hath appointed the Press to preach, whose voice the Pope is never able to stop with all the puissance of his triple crown."

Johannes Gutenberg pioneered printing with movable type in Mainz, Germany, in the mid-fifteenth

HARD AT WORK As the modern-day equivalent of a publisher, printer, and bookstore all in one, printers had tremendous power over what was or wasn't published.

century. Within a few decades, the new technology spread throughout all of Europe; virtually all major cities in Italy, Germany, France, Spain, and England had presses. Suddenly there were many more books in the world, and each book took less time to produce.

Scholar Elizabeth Eisenstein wrote: "A man born in 1453, the year of the fall of Constantinople, could look back from his fiftieth year on a lifetime in which about 8,000,000 books had been printed, more perhaps than all the scribes of Europe had produced since Constantine founded his city in A.D. 330." A single working press might produce 3,600 pages a day, whereas a monk might have copied four or five.

It took early printers themselves several decades to come to terms with the press's full potential for speed and new design; the earliest printed books imitated their manuscript counterparts. But by the time of the Reformation, printing was a fully developed business enterprise with established conventions. Luther, who would later use the printing press with great success, was initially surprised at its effectiveness; within two weeks of the posting of his 95 *Theses*, they were printed without his permission and distributed throughout Germany. Within a month they flooded Europe. Six months later Luther explained to Pope Leo X, "It is a mystery to me how my theses . . . spread to so many places. They were meant exclusively for our academic circle here."

Between March 1517 and the summer of 1520, 30 of Luther's pamphlets ran through a total of 370 editions: 400,000 of his pamphlets alone flooded Germany. From 1517 to 1523, publications in Germany increased sevenfold. Half of these writings were by Luther.

WORK FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

What did a sixteenth-century print shop, the seat of all this ferment, look like? A typical print run for a book ranged from 1,000 to 2,500. The operation of a printing press required typesetting, typesetting, inking, and pressing; the finished pages were hung up to dry before being folded and sometimes sewn together. The trade of the bookbinder was separate from the printer; all books were sold as "paperbacks" ready for binding at the purchaser's discretion.

Printers' families usually got in on the act, and printers employed workmen and apprentices who lived with the family, receiving room and board in exchange for their labor. Sixteenth-century Parisian printer Charlotte Guillard (d. 1557) managed a book shop and four or five other presses, paying and feeding 12–25 workers plus domestic staff and an accountant. Printing was termed a "free" enterprise in most cities with no requirement for membership in a guild (an



16TH-C. INTERNET Above: The printing press revolutionized communication every bit as much as computers would 400 years later.

THE WORD OF GOD Left: Erasmus's famous New Testament rolled off of Johannes Froben's printing press in 1516.

association of craftsmen that controlled the practice of a certain craft in a given area). However, many printers still joined guilds.

Printers sold books directly from their print shops, via travel (booksellers crisscrossed Europe) or, not always successfully, at book fairs. (Zürich publisher Christoph Froschauer took 2,000 copies of one work to a book fair in Frankfurt in 1534 and came home having sold only half of them.) A small quarto pamphlet cost the equivalent of a chicken, and a large folio book about a day's wage for a laborer.

About two dozen centers of European printing existed in the early Reformation days. The city of Basel established itself as one early on (see p. 7). Centrally located between Germany, France, and Switzerland, and just north of the Alps with relatively easy access to Italy, it was a prime location for commerce—politically stable and exempt from imperial jurisdiction by the Holy Roman Empire. Basel fostered an environment of free economic and intellectual development that attracted many skilled trade workers and capable scholars.

FROM PRINTERS TO REFORMERS TO KINGS

In Basel printers worked with reformers—and printing families worked together. Johannes Froben (1460–1527) owned the leading printing press in Basel; he came from Franconia, Germany, where he had learned the craft of printing in Nuremberg. In 1500 he married Gertrud Lachner, daughter of a bookseller. Froben quickly

established himself as a high-quality printer of books in Latin, Greek, and even Hebrew.

Froben was also a close friend of humanist Erasmus, who had settled (for the moment) in Basel and whose books he published. Froben rushed to press Erasmus's groundbreaking critical edition of the New Testament in Greek. He occasionally collaborated with another Franconian, Johann Petri (c. 1497–1550), and with his nephew Adam Petri (1454–1527), who had followed his uncle to Basel.

The Petri press was arguably the second most important press in Basel. Adam Petri was one of the first printers there to collaborate with illustrators, including Hans Holbein (c. 1497–1543), whose fame spread as he painted portraits of everyone from Erasmus to Thomas More to Henry VIII and several of Henry's wives.

Petri also helped advance the Reformation. Largely a religious printer, he printed over 80 editions of Luther's works. He industriously issued an edition of Luther's German translation of the New Testament in December of 1522, only a few months after its initial publication in Wittenberg. Perhaps even more ambitious was his attempted collection of Luther's major works. On the title page of the first volume of a projected two-volume edition he wrote, "The second volume, God willing, should be issued after these better parts." It never was.

Catholic theologian Johann Cochlaeus complained in 1521, "Nearly all printers are secret Lutherans; they do not print anything for us without pay and nothing reliable unless we stand beside



FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD Left: Adam Petri helped spread the Reformation in Basel by reprinting Luther's Bible.

WORDS FOR THE WISE Below: Erasmus was well published in the 16th c.: here are his *Adages* (1508) printed in Venice.



woman who did not even bother to conceal her gender. The world was indeed changing rapidly.

One of the most prolific female printers of the sixteenth century, Magdalena Kirschenmann, helped advance the Lutheran Reformation in Tübingen. She got into printing, like Kunigunde, after the death of her husband, Ulrich Morhart (c. 1490–1554). Through his first wife, Barbara, Morhart attained citizenship rights in Strasbourg and began printing there. In Tübingen he married his second wife, Katharina Zorn, who died only two years later. With Zorn's dowry he financed his second press, the first permanent press in the city of Tübingen.

As the only press in a university town, Morhart published many academic titles—which did not generate much income, although they did guarantee

steady business. But in 1534 Duke Ulrich introduced Lutheranism, and his son Christoph instituted it as the state church, calling reformer Johannes Brenz (1499–1570) as one of his chief advisors.

Ulrich Morhart printed a catechism by Brenz in 1551 and also printed the first church order of the Duchy of Württemberg in 1553. Sources differ on whether Magdalena Kirschenmann was Morhart's third or fourth wife, but she was certainly his *last* wife. After Ulrich's death she printed a collection of statements by Martin Luther, treatises and commentaries by Brenz, and other Lutheran sermons and tracts.

In his 1521 letter, Cochlaeus complained that Reformation ideas were “so propagated and widely spread by the book printers that even tailors and shoemakers, indeed women and other simple idiots, who had accepted this new Lutheran gospel . . . read it eagerly, as if it were a fountain of all truth.” Luther put a more positive spin on it: printing was “God’s highest and extremest act of grace, whereby the business of the Gospel is driven forward.” Certainly the Reformation would not have been the same without it. **■**

Armin Siedlecki is head of cataloging at Pitts Theology Library, Emory University. Perry Brown is a programmer at Truth for Life and formerly worked for the American Tract Society. This article is adapted from a talk given to the American Theological Library Association in 2014 and from “Preaching from the Print Shop” in CH 34.

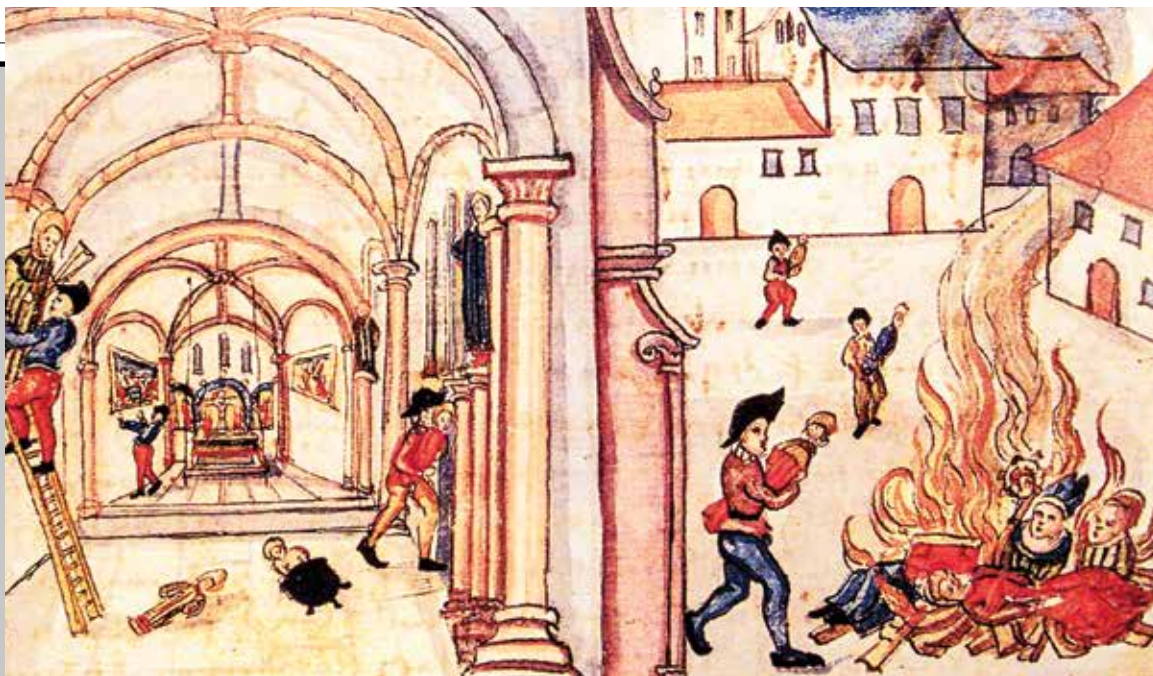
them and look over their shoulders.” But not all printers worked well with Lutherans. Hans Hergot (d. 1527), who operated a press in the city of Nuremberg, was for Luther the epitome of a corrupt and untrustworthy printer. Luther referred to him as *Hergetlein* (“that little Hergot”), particularly funny since Herr Gott—literally “Lord God”—is the designation for God in German Bibles.

Hergot had a reputation of publishing pirated editions; he also had close sympathies with Thomas Müntzer and radical Anabaptists (see “A fire that spread,” pp. 28–32). In 1527 his press published a utopian tract, *Of the new way of Christian life*, which advocated a classless society and ran afoul of the political authorities. At the command of Duke Georg of Saxony, he was arrested and tried in the city of Leipzig, where he was executed.

A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE SHOP

Short life expectancy in the sixteenth century made it commonplace to remarry quickly. Hergot's widow, Kunigunde (d. 1547), soon married rival printer Georg Wachter. In such situations it was usual for the two printing presses to merge and continue operations under the name of the male printer. But Kunigunde continued to publish under the name Hergot until 1539, keeping the business alive against many odds, rehabilitating it, and turning it into a respectable outfit.

The courageousness of this move cannot be overstated; a printing press with a bad reputation, whose owner had been executed for political reasons, marked for failure and bankruptcy, was now being run by a



Tearing down the images

“I approached the task of destroying images by first tearing them out of the heart through God’s Word and making them worthless and despised.” So declared Martin Luther about the use of images in church in one of his early books titled *Against the Heavenly Prophets*.

Around the same time, Huldrych Zwingli wrote a letter to a friend named Urbanus opining, “Let us not be prematurely troubled as to the abolition of the mass or the casting out of the images, but let us labor to restore to their Creator the hearts that are given over to this world. The mass has fallen already; the images will, I think, disappear of their own motion. For we shall banish in vain one or the other unless public piety ratify the decree.”

Unfortunately not everyone felt the same way, and trouble brewed in Switzerland. One night in 1523 shoemaker Klaus Hottinger (d. 1524) collected a group of friends. They went out into a village near Zurich where a rather large crucifix was erected in the town square and destroyed it, pulling it down and disposing of its parts in a fire. This act caused a serious scandal, and the perpetrators were hauled before the judges and condemned for their unwise behavior.

DESTROYING THE IDOLS

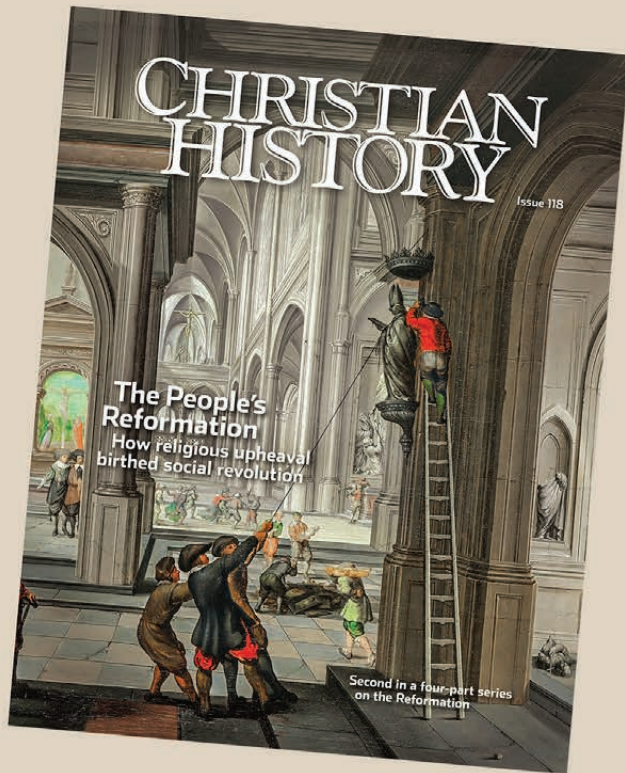
But the floodgates were opened. Throughout the Canton of Zurich in the early 1520s, a series of raids on churches resulted in the destruction of countless works of art. Walls were whitewashed, images were removed and destroyed, and violent acts were perpetrated against priceless works of art, or as their destroyers preferred to call them, “godless idols.”

BRING OUT THE STATUES A painting depicts rioters stripping images from a church in Zurich in 1524.

Zwingli above all craved order and proper behavior, and he eventually won the day, but not until the damage had been largely done. Authorities were able to calm the crowds; the remainder of the churches were purged of images, paintings, and decorations without violence. Patrons who had donated art reclaimed it, and those works that were not destroyed were sold and the proceeds used for the relief of the poor, as Zwingli repeatedly urged: “Human reason says: ‘Set up images to honor God and the saints.’ Religion cries out against that: ‘No. No. Bestow upon the poor that which you wish to use to honor God.’”

For Luther and Zwingli (and later Calvin), art as art was a gift of God. Art misused in the construction of idols was a distortion of that good gift and a sin.

Zwingli believed that the commandment against the making of images made any religious art used in worship into an idol. In *Answer to Valentin Compar*, he wrote, “The believers, or those who are trusting, go to God alone; but the unbelievers go to the created.” And he remarked to Emperor Charles V in a confession delivered to the emperor in Augsburg, “Images . . . which are misused for worship, . . . [are] diametrically opposed to the Word of God. But those which do not serve for worship and in whose cases there exists no danger of future worship, I am so far from condemning that I acknowledge both painting and statuary as God’s gifts.”—Jim West



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The century that changed the world

—c. 1440: Printing press invented

—1480: Andreas von Karlstadt is born.

—1483: Martin Luther is born.

—1484: Huldrych Zwingli is born.

—c. 1485: Balthasar Hubmaier is born.

—1489: Thomas Cranmer is born.

—1491: Henry VIII, Martin Bucer born.

—1492: Columbus makes first voyage to the Americas.

—1494: William Tyndale is born.

—1496: Menno Simons is born.

—1497: Philipp Melancthon is born.

—1499: Swiss gain independence; Peter Martyr Vermigli is born.

—c. 1500: Hans Denck is born.

—1509: John Calvin is born.

—1509: Henry VIII of England assumes throne at 18, marries Catherine of Aragon.

—1513: Leo X becomes Pope; John Knox is born.

—1516: Johann Froben of Basel prints Erasmus's Greek New Testament.



—1517: Luther writes *95 Theses*; printers spread copies throughout Germany.

—1519: Eck debates Karlstadt and Luther at Leipzig; Zwingli begins New Testament sermons; Swiss reformation starts.

—1520: Luther writes *To the Christian Nobility, On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *The Freedom of a Christian*.

—1521: Leo X titles Henry VIII "Defender of the Faith" for attacking Luther's views of the sacraments; Hadrian VI becomes pope; Luther is excommunicated at Diet of Worms.

—1521: Religious unrest begins in Wittenberg; private Masses are abolished, Karlstadt serves Communion to the laity in both elements, religious statues are destroyed.

—1522: Spaniards complete circumnavigation of globe.

—1522: Zwingli argues his first Reformation debates; Adam Petri prints Luther's New Testament.

—1523: Clement VII becomes pope; first two Reformation martyrs are burned at the stake in Belgium.

—1524: Luther debates Karlstadt on the Lord's Supper.



—1524-1525: Peasants' War fought in Germany.

—1525: Anabaptist movement begins in Zurich; spreads to Germany.

—1526: Reformation spreads to Sweden and Denmark.

—1527: Luther writes against Zwingli on the Lord's Supper; printer Hans Hergot is executed.

—1527: First Protestant university (Marburg) is founded.

—1529: Luther attends Marburg Colloquy with Zwingli, but they reach no agreement on the Lord's Supper; name *Protestant* first used.

—1530: Melancthon presents *Augsburg Confession*, a statement of Lutheran beliefs.

—1531: Schmalkaldic League, a body of German Protestant groups, forms in self-defense against Charles V.

—1531: Zwingli dies in battle at Kappel.

Key Events in Issue 118 Other Religious Developments

Church & State World Events

—1532: Diet of Regensburg and Peace of Nuremberg guarantee religious toleration in face of Turkish threat.

—1533: Thomas Cromwell declares Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine null and void; Henry marries Anne Boleyn.

—1534: Henry VIII declares himself supreme head of Church of England; Paul III becomes pope.

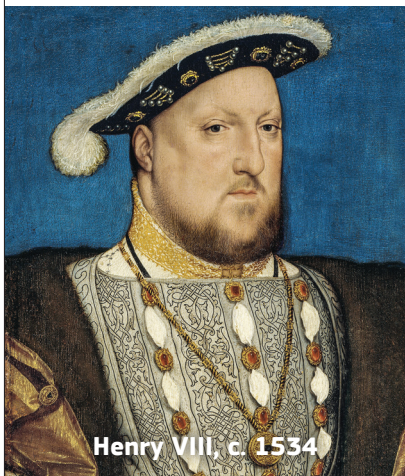
—1535: Anabaptist uprising at Münster put down and Anabaptists executed; Thomas More beheaded for opposing Henry VIII.

—1536: First edition of Calvin's *Institutes* published.

—1536: William Tyndale is burned at the stake; Henry VIII begins to dissolve the monasteries; Anne Boleyn is executed; Henry marries Jane Seymour, who dies in 1537 after giving birth to the future Edward VI.

—1538: Geneva expels Calvin.

—1539: Frankfurt Truce is declared between Charles V and the Schmalkaldic League.



Henry VIII, c. 1534



Thomas Cromwell, c. 1532

—1540: Society of Jesus (Jesuits) is formed; Henry VIII marries Anne of Cleves; marriage is unconsummated, and after divorcing her he marries Catherine Howard; Philip of Hesse enters bigamous marriage with consent of Luther; conferences fail to reconcile Protestants and Catholics.

—1540: Calvin returns to Geneva

—1541: At Conference of Regensburg, Melancthon and Bucer reach agreement with Catholics on most doctrines, but Luther and Rome reject their work; Karlstadt dies.

—1542: Catherine Howard is executed.

—1542: Paul III establishes the Inquisition.

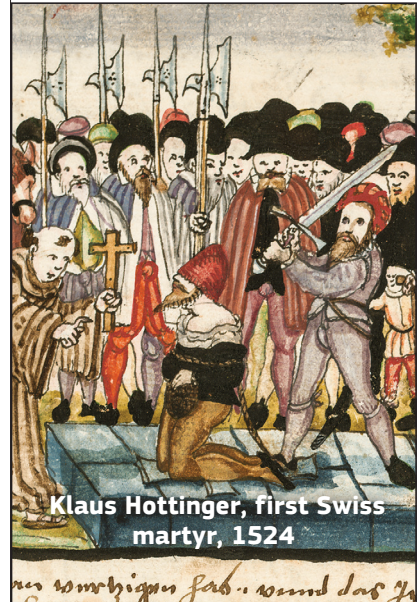
—1543: Copernicus writes that the earth revolves around the sun; Henry VIII marries Catherine Parr, who will outlive him.

—1545: Council of Trent, for reform of the Catholic Church, opens.

—1546: Luther dies.

—1546-1547: Schmalkaldic War fought between Protestant and Catholic territories in Germany.

—1547: Henry VIII's Protestant son, Edward VI, succeeds him.



Klaus Hottinger, first Swiss martyr, 1524

—1548: Augsburg Interim makes some concessions to Protestants in Germany, but many Catholic and Protestant leaders refuse to accept it.

—1549: First edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* is published.

—1549: John Knox is released from French imprisonment.

—1553: Edward VI's Catholic half-sister, Mary, succeeds him.

—1554: Knox travels to Geneva and meets Calvin.

—1555: Peace of Augsburg allows German rulers to determine religion of their regions; Mary burns Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, and Thomas Cranmer at the stake.

—1558: Mary's Protestant half-sister, Elizabeth, succeeds her.

—1560: Scottish Parliament abolishes Catholicism in Scotland in the "Reformation of 1560."



A fire that spread

ANABAPTIST BEGINNINGS

Walter Klaassen and John Oyer

"ANABAPTIST" WAS A DIRTY NAME in sixteenth-century Christian Europe; it was deemed a dangerous movement, a call for violent destruction of Europe's religious and social institutions.

The name simply means, in Greek, "one who baptizes again," but this tiny group aroused opposition from all sides. Rulers and theologians, whether Protestant or Catholic, regarded early Anabaptist success with a mixture of fear and anxiety. They were thought to be political revolutionaries bent on destroying the unity of the faith. Some even argued that they were a special spawn of Satan, who had always found pious-acting adherents throughout the centuries.

AN ILLEGAL BIBLE STUDY

What, besides adult baptism, was behind the movement that flowed from Huldrych Zwingli's teaching in Zurich? And were Anabaptists as dangerous as the world seemed to think?

GOD'S POWER, MAN'S GUNPOWDER Amsterdam city officials filled Dutch Anabaptist Anneken Hendriks's mouth with gunpowder before burning her at the stake.

Darkness had already fallen on January 21, 1525, when, one by one, a half-dozen men could be seen furtively entering a house in Zurich near the Grossmünster (Zurich's most prominent church) in violation of a law passed earlier that same day by the City Council prohibiting their assembly. The occasion for this meeting behind closed shutters: Bible study and prayer.

Group meetings for Bible study were well known in Zurich. Scholars and other interested people had met frequently since 1520, often with Zwingli himself in attendance. But on this particular occasion, Zwingli was not invited. Major disagreements had arisen regarding the role of the City Council in the progress of reform in Zurich.

Zwingli was committed to letting the council set the pace of reform. Since he was convinced that the council

was a Christian council, this position harmonized with his insistence that only Christians could make changes in the church.

But the council dragged its feet based on economic and political considerations. Conrad Grebel (c. 1498–1526), Felix Manz (c. 1498–1527), and others believed that neither prudence nor fear should prevent obedience to Christ.

Moreover Grebel and Manz concluded from their study of the New Testament that the name “Christian” could be applied only to those who truly follow Jesus and not indiscriminately to all who are baptized. Finally, they denied that the government (even if Christian) should have authority to decide the pace of reform.

Zwingli did not share these views. Grebel, Manz, and several others began to meet by themselves to study the Bible further. Two Zurich priests from the Bible study group, Wilhelm Reublin and Johannes Brötli, had already begun to preach against infant baptism in 1524 in the villages of Witikon and Zollikon outside Zurich. This was too much for Zwingli. He and the council agreed that the group was now a threat to the unity and peace of Zurich. The council ordered them to conform to the law of baptism and forbade them to meet together.

The men who gathered in Manz’s house that winter night were aware of the seriousness of what they were doing. But they became more and more convinced that they had no choice but to obey God who had led them to their new and dangerous understanding. And then—if the account in the sixteenth-century *Hutterian Chronicle* is accurate—they felt suddenly compelled to give concrete form to their obedience. Amid prayer and the certainty of persecution, they baptized one another and in the same moment commissioned each other to build Christ’s church on earth.

This action made them missionaries. In the days following, they baptized others, especially some farmers from the nearby village of Zollikon. They continued to meet for Bible study and prayer and also to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. Persecution followed immediately. Many were arrested and put in prison. After harassment for three or four months by imprisonment and the threat of exile, this first “free” church disintegrated.

But the leaders had been busy elsewhere. Grebel preached and baptized in Schaffhausen and St. Gall; George Blaurock (1491–1529), a former monk, went to

AN EARLY DEATH Early Anabaptist leader Felix Manz was executed in Zurich by drowning at the age of 29 for the crime of rebaptism.



the Grisons and the Austrian Tyrol. In May 1525 Eboli Bolt became the first Anabaptist martyr, burned at the stake for his faith in the town of Lachen in the Swiss canton of Schwyz. A year later Grebel died of the plague away from home, and in January 1527 Manz was publicly executed.

NEW AND STRANGE WORDS

By that time, two years after the formation of the first congregation, the movement had spread for hundreds of miles. Peasants and townsfolk displayed an openness to the Anabaptists early on and did so without much inquiry as to their reputed heretical views.

All Europe was awash in fresh religious fervor. Though many people were disturbed by drastic changes in religious practices that they thought could harm the faith of simple, transparent, and steadfast Christians, many others believed the freshly opened Bible led to novel ways of understanding and living out its message.

A peasant carting his onions to market; a furrier plying his craft in north German towns; a housewife or nun to whom some new word about Christ or the saints raised questions about religious practice; a weaver or a shearer joining with fellow cloth makers in a Lowlands town; a schoolteacher whose natural theological curiosity pressed him to re-examine both Scripture and the Latin fathers—all of these and many more found themselves open to the new and strange words of itinerant Anabaptist missionaries. They spoke plainly to the common people and moved on to other



HIGH AND DRY Far left: After the leaders of the Münster rebellion were chained to stakes, tortured, and killed, their remains were hung in cages as a warning to others. The cages remain today (near left).

towns and villages after only a few days of instructing new converts.

Peasants bitterly resented restrictions on hunting and fishing and the enforced payment of tithes to a church that they considered corrupt. Townsfolk were caught in economic cycles with downturns that no one understood. They all resented the wealth and privileges of their local clergy and especially of monasteries near at hand.

To such people an Anabaptist gospel of simple discipleship and shared goods so that none were needy appeared to be deeply and properly Christian—the way God would have his people live. Of course a few upper-class people also found the Anabaptist truth convincing.

By May 1526 an Anabaptist assembly was held in Augsburg under the leadership of the highly gifted Hans Denck (1495–1527). Denck had been expelled from Nuremberg in January 1525 for holding to ideas critical of the Lutheran teaching in that city. A restless fugitive from then until his death, Denck exercised a moderating influence on the Anabaptist movement in south Germany with his emphasis on love as the sum of all virtues and his reticence in judging others. He baptized Hans Hut (1490–1527) in the summer of 1526, and Hut became one of the most zealous and successful of all Anabaptist missionaries,

founding churches all over Austria. His method was to preach, baptize converts, then immediately appoint other missionaries to be sent out. Although many of these “apostles” were executed, the movement still spread rapidly.

Hut’s activities prompted the rise of communal Anabaptism in Moravia. In 1528 a group of Anabaptists decided to combine their resources for a common life of work, discipleship, and worship. Their most important early leader was Jacob Hutter (1500–1536), who for seven years worked to rescue them from the terror of Hapsburg persecution in the Tyrol (part of modern Austria) and move them to the safety of Moravia. He was burned at the

stake in Innsbruck in 1536. The Hutterite communities he founded thrived under relative toleration in Moravia and sent successive waves of missionaries to many parts of Europe.

NOT QUITE THE END TIMES

Meanwhile Lutheran preacher Melchior Hoffman (1495–1543) went to Strasbourg in 1529, where he met Anabaptists for the first time and quickly became one himself. He took his new views northward to the Netherlands and north Germany. Like Hans Hut he was a fiery preacher and baptized many converts. Numerous groups of “Melchiorites” emerged in the fertile spiritual soil of the Netherlands.

Hoffman had a special interest in the future events of the Second Coming and the millennium and fastened on Strasbourg as the New Jerusalem. He returned there and, in 1533, cheerfully went to prison because he believed that his imprisonment would set in motion the last events of human history. Instead he died in prison 10 years later.

In his place others took over leadership, and in their hands Hoffman’s speculations turned into dark tragedy. The movement had already produced its share of odd followers. In St. Gall, because the Gospel said that we must become as little children to enter the kingdom of God, some people literally behaved like children, playing with toys and babbling like babies. In Thuringia one Anabaptist claimed to be the Son of God. But it was in Münster where Anabaptists turned to violence and oppression.

The city of Münster in Westphalia had first become Lutheran but by early 1533 was Anabaptist-leaning.

In August 1533, 25 Anabaptists were questioned in Sörga and then expelled: Do you attend our preaching, and if not why not? May a Christian tolerate temporal government? Do you pay war taxes? Will you defend the fatherland in case of military invasion? Was the recent Peasants’ War of God or not? May a Christian in financial need take the goods of another Christian? May a Christian own private property? Why do you hold community of goods with others? (None did, although those in Münster would.) May the government rightfully require the payment of tithes and taxes? —John Oyer

Anabaptists from Amsterdam went there and announced that Münster, not Strasbourg, was the New Jerusalem. Jan Matthys (d. 1534) and Jan van Leiden (1509–1536), both unstable extremists, gained control. Hoffman had urged his followers to wait peaceably for God's kingdom, but Matthys and Leiden taught that force would bring in the kingdom. They forced people to receive baptism and join the movement or leave the city. They also banned all books except the Bible.

These developments alarmed the prince-bishop who ruled over Münster, and he besieged the city. But before it was sealed off, thousands of Anabaptists from the Netherlands made a hopeful exodus to Münster in expectation of Christ's triumphant return. Instead they found Jan van Leiden crowned as King David, ruling with an iron hand and instituting polygamy (he had 16 wives, one of whom, Elisabeth Wandscherer, he executed in the market square on June 12, 1535). On June 25, 1535, the city fell, its inhabitants slaughtered and no apocalypse in sight.

Now persecutors had what they believed to be iron-clad evidence that Anabaptists, with all their insistence on nonviolence, were basically no less violent than anyone else. The authorities were convinced that persecution was the only way of containing this potential violence. They called the Anabaptists by many derogatory names:

- *Schwarmer* (fanatics who upset social convention)
- *Winkelprediger* ("corner-preachers" who conducted illegal religious enterprises in secret hideaways)
- *Rottengeister* (factionalists playing upon the grievances of the lower classes)
- *Donatists* (after the fifth-century group who considered themselves a spiritual elite)
- *Aufriührer* (revolutionaries promoting civil disobedience and revolt under the guise of preaching and practicing religious piety).

BURNING AND DROWNING

It became increasingly dangerous even to listen to an Anabaptist missionary after some feudal lords began to obey the 1529 imperial mandate decreeing death to Anabaptists. Broadside (essentially, early newspapers) broadcast the juicy details of events in Münster, and the larger movement suffered disgrace; even those who had declared nonviolence to be biblical some 10 years before Münster found themselves discredited.

Feudal lords, judges, bailiffs with responsibility for social order, and city magistrates all found the Anabaptists troubling. Their existence displayed a religious pluralism that no one in the sixteenth



DOWN ON THE FARM A peaceful Hutterite family stands outside their home.

century was willing to accept. People thought that political chaos and even revolution were the only possible results of religious differences within a political body. And religiously earnest rulers felt a divine call to propagate the true faith *among*, and to regulate the moral behavior *of*, their subjects.

A few princes and magistrates—for example Philip of Hesse, Ulrich of Württemberg, and the Strasbourg Council—could not bring themselves to exercise the death penalty for religious offenses by Anabaptists. As Philip once declared, to do so would mean that one would need to kill all Jews and Catholics also. Some (in Moravia, for instance) felt that they could afford to harbor and protect Anabaptists, and reaped the benefits of their artisan and agricultural skills in return.

But most rulers would not tolerate them. Many feared a reappearance of 1525's peasant unrest and revolution (see "They wanted God to save his own," pp. 18–21) and exiled them or had them executed. Catholic magistrates opted for the traditional burning at the stake (with a small bag of gunpowder tied around the victim's neck to ensure an early death, as a humanitarian gesture), while Protestant magistrates chose drowning and beheading.

Catholic writers generally viewed Anabaptists as a wilder perversion of Protestantism and blamed Luther for the entire lot; a few reform-minded Catholics found some kinship of spirit with Anabaptists even while rejecting them as schismatic.



Only a few of the Protestant reformers demonstrated much sympathy for the Anabaptists' religious views, among them Wolfgang Capito and Martin Bucer of Strasbourg. Katherine Schütz Zell, the dynamic, influential wife of Matthew Zell, Strasbourg's cathedral preacher, offered Anabaptists protection. But by 1526 in Zurich, 1528 in south and central Germany, and 1532 in the Lowlands, reformers' attitudes hardened.

A WAY OF PEACE

Other reformers singled out the issue of baptism as decisive, even though to Anabaptists themselves it was only one issue among many in establishing a community of "real Christians." To the Lutheran reformers, the denial of baptism to infants put their salvation in jeopardy. Zwinglians and Calvinists who denied the sacramental power of baptism still believed that the rejection of infant baptism excluded the child from the nurture and fellowship of God's people.

By the 1550s there were formidable lists of Anabaptist "errors," but most derived from accusations of blasphemy in baptism and sedition in nonswearing of oaths. Most reformers decided, sometimes after several years of soul-searching, that Anabaptists had to be killed for the good of society and the benefit of religious truth, though Luther never

THE MAN WHO SPREAD PEACE Menno Simons's congregations were scattered from Amsterdam to Danzig and from Cologne to the North Sea.

quite agreed. They were often pressed to come to this conclusion by rulers.

Lost in all the fear was the fact that Anabaptists, just as much as their opponents, saw the events at Münster as a terrible perversion of the Gospel and resolutely turned away from them. The most important person in the consolidation of nonviolent Anabaptism was former priest Menno Simons (1496–1561).

Simons worked tirelessly for a church order that preserved love of neighbor and the integrity of a church composed only of those who had consciously decided to follow Jesus. He continued his work for 25 years, most of that time with an imperial price on his head, and died in 1561. Seventeen years later his followers in the Netherlands were granted toleration.

His contemporary Pilgram Marpeck (d. 1556), a civil engineer, picked up the work laid down by Denck and Hut, who had both perished in 1527. Marpeck became the acknowledged leader of a group of Anabaptist fellowships in Alsace, Württemberg, and Moravia. Passionately devoted to the unity of the church, he was especially distressed that there was a division between south German Anabaptists and the Swiss Brethren, followers of Conrad Grebel.

Marpeck objected to legalistic use of the ban (exclusion from Communion or church membership) and hasty judgments about the failings of others. In contrast to the Netherlands, toleration did not come to south Germany, Switzerland, and Moravia for several more centuries. The movement practically disappeared in south Germany and was completely eradicated in Austria. It survived in Switzerland in small enclaves, but always under restrictions.

Even while the Anabaptist movement was persecuted by fire, water, and blood, it did not compromise its commitment to living by new rules even in the midst of the terrible power of the old. Four centuries ago Anabaptists knew and lived and died by their hope in the Resurrection, somehow certain that their faithfulness would be taken up into God's great peace plan for mankind. Today they can be found all over the world under the names Mennonite, Brethren, and Amish—names now associated with peace. ■

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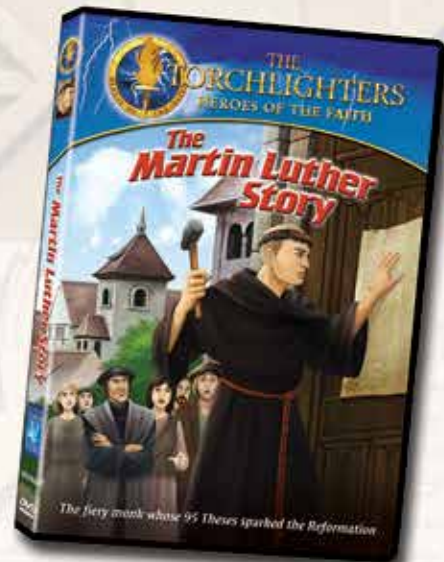
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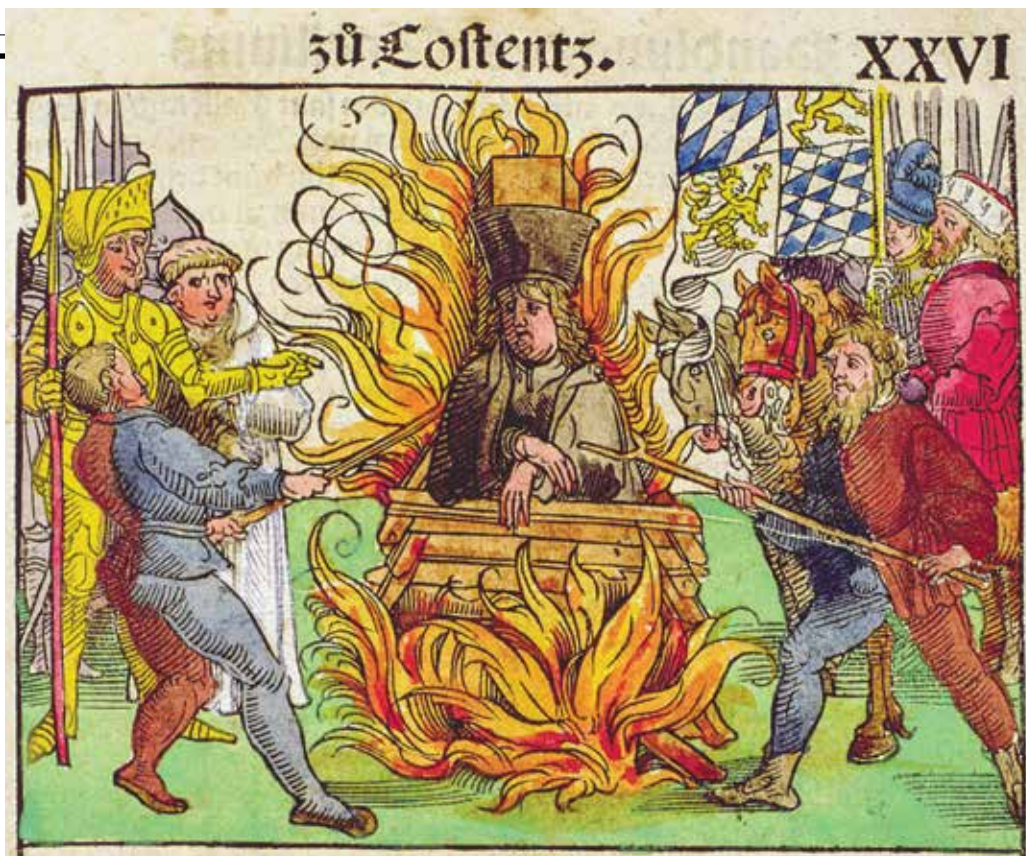
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People who steal the soul

WHY DID EVERYBODY BURN HERETICS IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY?

David C. Fink

WHEN MARTIN LUTHER accepted safe conduct from Emperor Charles V to defend his writings before the Imperial Diet at Worms, he knew full well that events might take a lethal turn. After Luther's excommunication the previous year, the deck was stacked against him; the papal ambassador heading up the opposition to Luther at the diet was already fulminating against the "heretic who brought up Jan Hus from hell."

This was an ominous comparison. Hus had also been granted a safe conduct to the Council of Konstanz a century earlier by Sigismund of Hungary, but Sigismund's bishops soon convinced him that an oath made to a heretic was not binding, and he burned the Bohemian reformer rather than honor the safe conduct.

Whether or not Luther ever actually uttered "Here I stand" at the Reichstag in 1521, the spectacle of an embattled theologian refusing to back down before the assembled princes and prelates of the Holy Roman Empire is rightly seen as one of the most compelling events in Christian history. But why were those princes and prelates calling him to account?

A BAD END The troops of Sigismund of Hungary burn Jan Hus after Sigismund refused to honor a safe conduct pledge.

Why were they willing to kill for the sake of religious uniformity? And why was heresy a capital offense?

A STUBBORN ERROR OF THE WILL

According to St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) in his *Summa Theologiae*, heresy was "a species of infidelity in men who, having professed the faith of Christ, corrupt its dogmas." Each part of this definition requires explanation. First, heresy was not merely ignorance or confusion—not simply an error of the intellect, but of the will. A heretic was someone who stubbornly and pertinaciously clung to error, even after having received pastoral correction.

Second, heresy was by definition an in-house dispute among baptized Christians; Jews, Muslims, and other non-Christians were not subject to Christian spiritual jurisdiction. As one expert in canon law remarked, "[Jews] are not members of the Christian church, and their faith is not our business."



Third, heresy involved the public subversion of the church's settled teachings. Doubts or misgivings one might hold in the quiet of one's mind might well jeopardize one's personal salvation, but God alone was the judge in such matters. The wheels of church discipline only turned when such doubts, misgivings, or outright contradictions were publicly advanced in defiance of the church's authority.

Church and state saw a heretic, in effect, as a person who elevated his or her own private judgment above that of the one institution that God had appointed by God for transmitting and preserving the only truth that could save humanity from eternal damnation. This helps to explain why heresy was so terrifying.

Unlike a common thief stealing temporal goods of finite value, a heretic could steal eternal goods of infinite value, as Catholic writer Antoine Du Val (1520–1600) wrote: "If it is right that thieves, murderers, and robbers are punished, is it not with greater reason that one ought to punish heretics, who steal the soul and the understanding from those they deceive?"

Moreover the church felt that heresy was like a disease, liable to spread if left unchecked. Innocent III

DEFENDING THE FAITH This 16th-c. image identifies faith as a fortress "besieged by unbelievers and heretics, defended by the pope, bishops, monks, clerics, and theologians."

(1161–1216), the medieval pope who perhaps did more than anyone else to establish the church's role in rooting it out, argued that heresy was "like a cancer . . . creeping imperceptibly wider in secret."

Nor was this view limited to popes or inquisitors. Writing in defense of Geneva's decision to execute anti-Trinitarian heretic Michael Servetus in 1553, John Calvin argued that it was necessary to punish heretics because "they infect souls with the poison of depraved dogma." It was far kinder, he felt, to excise the diseased member than to let the patient (Christendom) die from the contagion.

SYMPATHY WITH THE HERETIC

Capital punishment was usually viewed as the remedy of last resort, when all other means of reclaiming the wayward soul had been exhausted. Church authorities recognized that a repentant heretic who confessed his or her errors was a far more powerful testimony to the true faith than a defiant one who might inspire sympathy.

Also, the task of trying and convicting heretics often fell on the shoulders of local magistrates who felt unqualified for the job or were even sympathetic to their accused neighbors. The case of one early Anabaptist martyr, Augustine Würzelburger, from a small southern German village, illustrates this. After word of an Anabaptist group prompted an investigation, city magistrates questioned Würzelburger. Respectful, though undaunted, he confessed that he had indeed rebaptized a number of his friends and family members, urging them to avoid attending Mass and rest their faith on the Scriptures alone.

The City Council had no choice but to report this to the dukes of Bavaria, who promptly ordered burning at the stake. The council's reply, in a letter dated June 5, 1528, is a poignant indication of just how little the city fathers relished their task:

We are grieved indeed by Würzelburger's error, since he has no other fault than this concerning rebaptism and the faith. We cannot understand why we are to sentence him to death. We wanted to make him desist from his opinion and error...

The dukes' reply has not survived, but its content can be inferred from the fact that Würzelburger was executed on October 10. The council's minutes record that it "had mercifully ruled that he was to be executed by beheading."



IS HE DEAD YET? Queen Mary had the bones of reformer Martin Bucer (see p. 43) disinterred and burned with great fanfare and procession.

executions for heresy in this period. This probably represents a disparity in opportunity rather than in willingness to kill: because Catholicism was established, Catholic countries already had judicial infrastructure in place to detect, try, and convict. By the time Protestantism had become established in Europe, the notion that executing heretics could protect a unified religious culture was considerably weaker.

DON'T CHALLENGE THE KING

In the Holy Roman Empire, Protestantism secured its position through the principle that the ruler of the territory determined its religion. What this meant in practice was toleration for competing versions of Christian faith. Princes and city councils wished to maintain religious orthodoxy within their domains, but when neighboring cities or territories gave their allegiances to opposing beliefs, it became impractical to prosecute every instance of theological deviance. It was often far less trouble to encourage religious dissidents to emigrate, or to work out a grudging toleration.

In other parts of Western Europe, however, toleration emerged more slowly. In England and France, concentration of political power in the hands of the monarch meant challenges to the established religion were viewed as challenges to the authority of the king. Beginning with evangelical humanist Louis de Berquin, burned at the stake in April 1529, the Parlement of Paris continued executing suspected Protestants at an accelerating pace until France became engulfed in religious warfare beginning in 1562. Only with the Edict of Nantes in 1598 did French Protestants—Huguenots—finally gain legal recognition. Even this was not permanent. Louis XIV revoked the edict 87 years later, sending a wave of Protestant artisans, scholars, and merchants into exile throughout Western Europe.

In England all the Tudor monarchs showed themselves quite willing to inflict ghastly penalties on dissidents. Beginning in 1401 the crown took a hard line against home-grown heresy, executing several hundred “Lollards” in the years leading up to the Reformation. Henry VIII was granted the title of “Defender of the Faith” in 1521, in part for his writings against Luther.

Yet when the pope proved uncooperative in solving Henry’s marital difficulties, the king nationalized the English church in 1534, leaving those who had formerly defended the old religious order in a precarious position. No one felt the sting of the rapidly changing

From the early 1520s to the 1650s, around 5,000 men and women were executed for heresy or religious treason. This figure, of course, excludes many deaths resulting from nonjudicial murder, mob violence, and religious warfare. Approximately 4,100 Protestants and Anabaptists were executed for heresy in Europe between 1523 and 1574; an additional 280 executions followed between 1575 and 1600. Five hundred Catholics were executed for treason in England between 1535 and 1680, and 140 priests in the Low Countries between 1567 and 1574.

It is important to see these statistics in the wider context of an early-modern criminal justice system heavily dependent on capital punishment. In the sixteenth century, there were scores of capital crimes: treason, murder, theft, counterfeiting, witchcraft, and sexual crimes (rape, incest, bigamy, sodomy, sex with a nun, etc.). Between 600 and 1,200 people were executed every year in England throughout the Tudor era, and only a tiny fraction of these cases involved charges of heresy.

Catholic authorities, primarily in France and the Low Countries, carried out around 90 percent of the

Heresy executions in Europe, 1525–1564

COUNTRY	1525–1539	1540–1554	1555–1559	1560–1564
German Empire	680	30	8	10
Switzerland	48	22	5	5
Low Countries	600	320	160	225
France	50	280	80	12
England and Scotland	32	20	300	0
Spain and Portugal	5	8	35	100
Italy and Sicily	0	12	15	5

Source: William Monter, *Judging the French Reformation: Heresy Trials by Sixteenth-Century Parlements* (1999), 44.



political landscape as dramatically as Henry's trusted adviser and confidant, Sir Thomas More, lord chancellor and a vigorous prosecutor of heresy.

BURNING MORE IN SEVEN SCORE

More expressed his fears in 1532 that the government was not adequately suppressing Protestant views seeping in from the Continent: "There should have been more burned by a great many than there have been within this seven year last passed; the lack whereof I fear me will make more burned within this seven year next coming than else should have needed to have been burned in seven score." Three years later, however, More's allegiance to papal supremacy cost him his life.

After More's death Henry's government continued its campaign, burning about half a dozen English "Lutherans" and 20 Dutch Anabaptists over the course of the next decade. Following Henry's declaration of royal supremacy, over 200 Catholic loyalists were executed for opposing the king's dignity. In Protestant England heresy had been redefined as treason.

Only two heretics (an English Anabaptist and a Dutch Arian) were burned during the reign of Edward VI, though the government mandated church reforms designed to move the country in a decisively Protestant



FIRE AND FEAR Above: Reformation-era punishments for heresy followed the pattern of medieval ones. Here Dominic De Guzman burns Albigenian books in the 13th c.

FOES OF THE REALM Left: Soldiers disemboweled this Catholic dissident during Elizabeth's reign.

direction. This was dramatically reversed when the sickly Edward died in 1553 and his militantly Catholic sister became Queen Mary I. The traditional view, originating in the wildly successful martyr accounts of John Foxe, was that Mary was a reactionary fanatic, bent on imposing her faith upon an unwilling populace by dint of brute force. Her bloodthirsty slaughter of 300 Protestants in six years was viewed as barbaric, even by the standards of the day.

Few today would defend Mary's policies on their own terms, but historians have recently argued that Mary's campaign to suppress Protestantism had wider popular support than believed and was largely effective in stemming the spread of Protestantism in England—it might well have returned England to the Catholic fold, had Mary lived to see her plans through. Moreover the contrast between "Bloody Mary" and "Good Queen Bess" may be overdrawn. Eamon Duffy pointed out that "Elizabeth I burned no Catholics, but she strangled, disemboweled and dismembered more than 200" in her 45-year reign. Unlike her half-sister, Elizabeth had no John Foxe to publish her brutality to a horrified domestic readership.

As the sixteenth century wore on, prosecutions for heresy continued to dwindle. But as national churches with authority tightly intertwined with that of the state replaced the authority of a single, transnational church, treason replaced heresy. And the results were often no less bloody. ■

David C. Fink is assistant professor of the history of Christianity and Christian theology at Furman University.



“I will cling to the rope God has thrown me in Jesus Christ, even when my numb hands can no longer feel it.”

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The accidental revolution

THE ENGLISH REFORMATION BEGAN WITH A KING BUT TOOK HOLD AMONG A PEOPLE

Melinda S. Zook

BY 1530 in England, King Henry VIII (1491–1547) began to put aside the people and beliefs he had formerly trusted. His queen, Catherine of Aragon (1485–1536), was his first target, now in her forties and unable to produce the son he so desperately wanted to secure his dynasty; Henry banished her from court.

Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (1473–1530), his chancellor, a powerful prince of the church on whose shoulders the king had once placed all political and diplomatic affairs, was dismissed from public office and charged with treason. Wolsey would surely have lost his head, if he had not died while awaiting trial.

In their places the ambitious Boleyn family and the wily jack-of-all-trades Thomas Cromwell (1485–1540) rose in the king's favor. Along with them came new ideas flooding in from the continent that offered a solution to the king's dynastic dilemma. And more.

A KING IN DESPERATE TIMES

Desperate times called for desperate measures, and at the heart of Henry VIII's distress was his desire for a son. Not just any male child; he had one son already, Henry FitzRoy. But as a bastard, FitzRoy was barred from succeeding to the throne. What the king needed was a legitimate male heir. Catherine had given him a

STEPPING ON THE POPE In this allegorical painting, Henry VIII hands over power to his son Edward VI while simultaneously rejecting the pope and approving an image of iconoclasm.

daughter, Mary. But there was little history of female rule in England; the specter of the long and bloody dynastic conflict of the fifteenth century known as the Wars of the Roses frightened Henry.

He also believed that his marriage to Catherine, his brother's widow, was a sin based on Leviticus 20:21. At the time of Henry's marriage to Catherine, his father had secured a papal dispensation circumventing Leviticus; but the king now wondered if popes had such godly authority. Finally, Henry VIII was in love. Of course amorous adventures were nothing new for him, but Anne Boleyn (1507–1536) wanted to be queen just as much as Henry wanted a legitimate male heir.

Reformation ideas became more appealing to the king as his frustration with Rome grew. He had been seeking an annulment from Catherine since 1527, but his timing was poor. Pope Clement VII was under the thumb of Catherine's powerful nephew, Holy Roman emperor and king of Spain, Charles V. Clement sought to appease the English king without offending the



emperor. At one point an ecclesiastical court was established in England to hear the case for annulment, but nothing came of it.

The pope offered imaginative solutions. Catherine could take the veil as a nun; she refused. Henry could enter into a bigamous marriage with Anne, or marry his daughter Mary to Henry FitzRoy. But those options offered new problems—bigamy and incest—and Henry doubted the English people would accept or consider legitimate any heir produced under such circumstances.

The king appointed his friend Sir Thomas More (1478–1535) as chancellor following Wolsey's fall. But More opposed the annulment and vigilantly prosecuted those spreading what he saw as heretical ideas. Clearly Henry needed new men willing to annul his first marriage, marry him to Anne, and legitimize the revolution by breaking England's ties to Rome.

One-time soldier, merchant, and lawyer turned politician Thomas Cromwell was one such a man; Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), humanist-inspired priest who had taken a wife, was another. (Cranmer's wife, Margaret, was the niece of Lutheran reformer Andreas Osiander.)

QUEEN, BUT NOT FOR LONG

In 1532 Henry appointed Cranmer to the highest ecclesiastical office in England, archbishop of Canterbury. Cranmer welcomed the growing reform agenda and was more than willing to do the king's bidding. Anne Boleyn's pregnancy made matters urgent; Cranmer formally annulled the king's marriage to Catherine and celebrated his marriage to Anne. He placed the crown on Anne's head himself, making her the new queen of England.

Meanwhile Cromwell worked to sever ties with Rome by stage-managing the "Reformation Parliament" of the early 1530s. He fed flames of anticlericalism and asserted the king's absolute supremacy. He orchestrated debates, controlled elections to fill the



MY CHURCH, MY BIBLE Above: Henry VIII authorized the "Great Bible" as England's first official English translation; this is his personal copy.

THAT'S WHY IT'S DOWNTON ABBEY Left: Some church property like this abbey in Yorkshire was left in ruins after the king confiscated church holdings; wealthy families bought the rest.

seats of members of Parliament who had resigned, and bullied his opponents—and the king richly rewarded him for his services. Henry and Cromwell were also well aware of the value of propaganda; throughout the 1530s Cromwell ordered the dissemination of tracts and sermons attacking the papacy and exalting obedience to the king. By 1534 Cromwell had engineered a complete break with Rome. Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy declaring Henry VIII and his successors supreme heads of the Church of England.

Henry's new church was fairly conservative: outwardly very Catholic in appearance and initially more Catholic than Protestant in doctrine, as the king rejected the central Lutheran tenet of justification by faith and held fast to the dogma of transubstantiation.

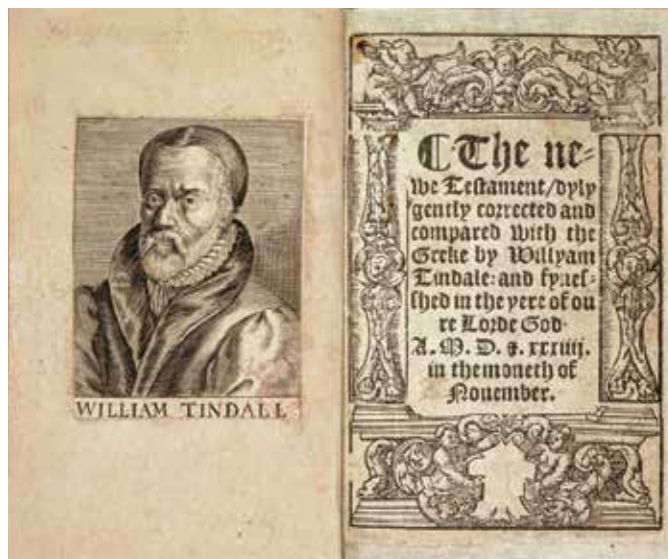
But those Henry had put in place around him wished to carry the revolution further. They began by assailing the cult of the saints, the veneration of images, Masses for the dead, and popular devotional practices such as pilgrimages—the kind memorialized in the popular *Canterbury Tales*, written more than a century earlier.

These changes transformed every English parish, but the most dramatic impact was the dissolution of



MY CHURCH, MY WAY Left: John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* pictures Henry ruling over Pope Clement and collecting the church's wealth, assisted by Cranmer and Cromwell.

"GENTLY CORRECTED" Below: In Tyndale's translation terms like "church", "priest", "do penance," and "charity" were expressed in the language of Protestant reform as "congregation," "senior," "repent," and "love."



the monasteries. The Crown needed money; confiscation of these religious institutions allowed the king access to the great wealth of the church in England. Between 1536 and 1541, 900 communities of religious sisters and brothers were dissolved. Many former monks and nuns returned to the villages of their birth and married, became laborers and domestic servants, or learned a trade. Some men became clergy in the new church or clerks or scribes for the wealthy. Some fled to Catholic countries. And some joined the ranks of restless drifters.

KING OF ENGLAND, PRINCE OF HUMANISTS

These events led common folk and clergy, particularly in the conservative counties of northern England, to challenge the king's revolution. But any defiance was firmly squashed. Henry had the support of wealthy aristocrats and gentry who quickly bought up monastic lands and houses and became even more invested in the Reformation's success.

But their support went beyond the acquisition of real estate. Many educated men and women and wealthy townsfolk sympathized with Protestant leaders on the continent. Like the king himself, they were educated in the ideals of Renaissance humanism, which placed a premium on critical inquiry. Under such intense scrutiny, the Catholic Church rarely came out smelling like a rose. William Tyndale (1494–1536), More, and Henry himself all received keenly the critical ideas of Erasmus, the "prince of the humanists."

More was a lawyer and politician. He was also deeply spiritual, occasionally practicing ascetic exercises such as self-flagellation. Yet he had a wry sense of humor and a love of life, and he was an affectionate father who provided his daughters with a thoroughly humanist education. He was also one of Erasmus's

dearest friends. They met in England and became life-long correspondents; when Erasmus was in England, he had his own room at More's house. Erasmus's most famous work, *Praise of Folly* (1511), was inspired by More and dedicated to him.

Praise of Folly humorously lambastes incessant and destructive warfare perpetuated by Europe's princes, money-grubbing merchants who overcharged their customers, and unscrupulous lawyers who fed off their clients like lice. But Erasmus saved his harshest criticism for the Catholic Church—especially its theologians, monks, and popes, whom he saw as forgetting the message of the Gospels and crucifying Christ afresh by their scandalous lives.

Erasmus's satiric critique of the church was friendly fire, though. He wanted it reformed from within, not pulled asunder by the likes of Luther and other Protestant leaders. More agreed. He too composed a famous work of social criticism and satire, *Utopia* (1516). And he too remained faithful to Rome, though it cost him his life.

More resigned his chancellorship in 1532; the king's desire for an annulment and breaking ties with Rome made his position untenable. In 1535 he was charged with treason for his unwillingness to take the Oath of Supremacy acknowledging Henry's sovereignty over the church in England. As he was beheaded on July 6, More reportedly described himself as, "the king's good servant, but God's first."

Others used the humanist critique of Catholicism as a stepping stone toward Protestantism. Oxford scholar



Tyndale was influenced by the work of Erasmus (particularly his translation of the New Testament) and was also impressed by Lutheran challenges to Catholic theology. In 1523 Tyndale sought to translate the Bible into English but was denied permission to do so in England.

THE TRAVELING BIBLE TRANSLATOR

Tyndale went to Europe, traveling through the Low Countries and northwest Germany—all in the full throes of the Reformation. Evangelical zeal infused his translation, the first in over 150 years. Copies of it were already circulating in England by 1527, well before Henry's break with Rome, creating a popular surge for reform among educated men and women. Its language was accessible and powerful; Tyndale laid the basis for all subsequent English translations and crafted familiar phrases such as "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

But Tyndale refused to sanction the king's desire for an annulment, not out of any love for Catholicism but rather on scriptural grounds. Henry had him tracked down, tried for heresy, and executed just outside Brussels in 1536: strangled to death at the stake and his body burned. Ironically the English Bible the king and Cromwell ordered in 1538 to be bought and displayed by every parish in England was based on Tyndale's translation.

The English Reformation was full of violent ends. Henry had Anne Boleyn beheaded by sword in 1536 on trumped-up charges of witchcraft and adultery. Her real crime was her failure to produce a son. Ironically she did give him a healthy daughter, the future Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603), often considered the greatest monarch in English history. Thomas Cromwell met his demise in 1540 for arranging the king's marriage to his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves; Henry found her



THE CATHOLIC SISTER *Left:* Mary briefly returned England to Rome, but also strengthened Protestantism in England by burning 285 men and women at the stake.

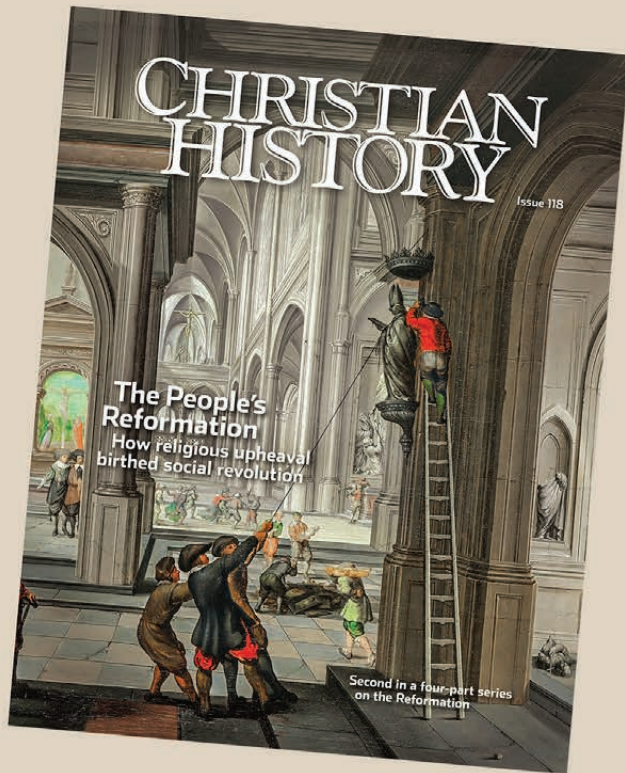
AND THE PROTESTANT ONE *Above:* Elizabeth created an independent church, neither thoroughly reformed nor Catholic.

unappealing and never consummated the marriage. And while Thomas Cranmer survived Henry's reign and the short reign of his son by Jane Seymour, Edward VI (1537–1553), he was burned at the stake in 1556 by Henry's Catholic daughter, Mary (1515–1568).

The new Church of England survived. Even by the end of Henry's reign, Protestantism was taking hold among the people, especially among the youth who enjoyed smashing images and repudiating old practices to which their parents often clung in secret.

Under Edward, the church lurched forward in the direction of Protestantism in ritual and doctrine. Mary, his half-sister, persecuted reformers, endowing the English reformation with a history of suffering that gave it incredible appeal and power. Under Elizabeth the Church of England strove to find a *via media* ("middle way") between Catholicism and a more thorough-going Puritanism. To this day Anglicanism, as it has come to be called, has maintained this third position. 📖

Melinda S. Zook is professor of history at Purdue University and author of Radical Whigs and Conspiratorial Politics in Late Stuart England and Protestantism, Politics and Women in Britain, 1660–1714.



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A motley, fiery crew

SOMETIMES DIFFICULT, ALWAYS COMMITTED, THESE MEN ADVANCED THE REFORMATION IN GERMANY, SWITZERLAND, AND ENGLAND

David C. Steinmetz and Edwin Woodruff Tait

MARTIN BUCER (1491–1551)

Next to Luther and Melancthon, Bucer was the most important leader of Protestantism in Germany, and in his own time one of the most influential religious figures on the continent. He was instrumental in bringing Luther and Zwingli together for their fateful confrontation at Marburg, a leader in colloquies between Protestants and Roman Catholics, and generally spoke for moderate Protestants in Europe, who sought ecumenical solutions in a time of confessional conflict.

Though his father was only a poor cobbler, Bucer received an excellent education and at 15 entered a Dominican cloister. In 1518 Bucer was captivated by Luther's thought and sprang to his defense though a member of indulgence-seller Tetzel's order. His ecclesiastical superiors took a dim view of his new enthusiasm; Bucer left the Dominicans and became a parish priest in Landstuhl (where he married a former nun, Elisabeth Silbereisen). Then he moved to Weissenburg, where, caught in a sticky political

CITY OF LEARNING Basel was home to a thriving university, busy book printers, and reformers Hans Denck, Johannes Oecolampadius, and Andreas von Karlstadt.

situation, he had to slip out under cover of darkness. Finally landing in Strasbourg, he swiftly moved to the leadership of the reform movement, serving as a pastor from 1524 to 1540.

Bucer's writings abound with rich descriptions of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church. He wrote a new liturgy for worship a year before Luther composed the German Mass, issued three catechisms, introduced the office of lay presbyter, reinstituted confirmation to further more rigorous Christian education, persuaded the town council to abolish the Mass, and helped establish a preparatory school and seminary. Unable to implement a vigorous program of overall discipline for the well-being of the church, in desperation he suggested organizing groups of people willing to submit to strict discipline on a voluntary basis.

"TRUE AND FALSE APOSTLES" Below: This Albrecht Durer woodcut shows wealthy Catholic clergy opposed to simple peasants armed with the Bible.



In 1548 Charles V issued the Augsburg Interim, a document favorable to Catholic teachings and practices. Though it permitted Protestant ministers to marry and allowed Communion in bread and wine, Bucer found it unacceptable. When Thomas Cranmer invited him to England, he readily accepted. There he lectured at the University of Cambridge, assisted Cranmer in revising the *Book of Common Prayer*, and as a present for King Edward VI composed his most famous treatise, *De Regno Christi*. The king was delighted, and the University of Cambridge awarded Bucer a doctorate. But he soon became seriously ill and died, buried far from home.

HANS DENCK (c. 1500–1527)

Hans Denck, by training a humanist and by occupation a schoolmaster, studied at the University of Basel under Oecolampadius (see below) and also took a job as proofreader and editor in a printing firm. After his graduation in 1519, he wandered throughout south Germany: when Oecolampadius nominated him to be principal of a Nuremberg school in 1523, it seemed a godsend to be able to settle down. Alas, it was not to be. Caught in religious crossfire, he soon had to resign, banished from the city forever in 1525.

By June of that year, he could be found in the home of an Anabaptist in St. Gall, but was soon on the move again to Augsburg. There he met Balthasar Hubmaier (see below) who persuaded him that the Anabaptist understanding of believer's baptism was the correct view. Denck taught this view to Hans Hut (c. 1490–1527), who would go on to found the Hutterites; but he himself eventually fled (pursued by various groundless rumors) to Strasbourg. He was there barely long enough to debate Bucer and Anabaptist Michael Sattler before it was on to Worms, Basel, Zurich, back to Augsburg, and finally back to Basel in 1527, where Oecolampadius forced him to recant his views as a condition of remaining. He did so, in a modest document



SMALL GROUP FOUNDER Bucer promoted small groups within the state church as a partial answer to Anabaptist groups formed outside it. He inspired the later Pietists, ancestors of modern evangelicalism.

that represented no important change in his positions, promptly contracted the plague, and died.

For Luther, the Word always came from outside, through preaching and sacraments. For Denck, this tied God down to external means and implied that God does not want everyone to be saved, since not everyone has access to preaching and sacraments. Denck believed that the Word of God is an inner voice calling men and women to obedience: while millions of people have not read the Bible and cannot hear the proclamation of the Gospel, everyone has heard the voice of God speaking within. The Gospel is the summons to imitate Christ, Denck thought, and authentic faith is obedience to that summons, wherever it takes you. It took him many places indeed.

BALTHASAR HUBMAIER (c. 1485–1528)

Preacher and martyr Hubmaier studied as a young man with Johannes Eck, later Luther's famed opponent. Eck thought highly of him and arranged for Hubmaier to follow him to the University of Ingolstadt. But he resigned his post in 1516 to become a preacher in Regensburg. There he became involved in a controversy with the Jews, led a movement agitating for their expulsion, destroyed their synagogue, and erected in its place a chapel dedicated to Mary. Claiming that miracles had occurred in the new shrine, he submitted a list of 54 to the city council. Eventually they made him leave town.



CONTROVERSIAL THINKER Above: At a 1523 Zurich disputation, Balthasar Hubmaier first publicly opposed medieval Catholic views of the Eucharist and condemned the veneration of images.

TRAVELING PREACHER Left: In books like this one, Hans Denck taught his doctrine of the inner Word, a direct reversal of Martin Luther's position.

In 1523 he publicly took sides with Zwingli but was soon convinced by the arguments of Conrad Grebel and the early Anabaptists. On April 15, 1525, he submitted to rebaptism, and on Easter Sunday, April 16, 1525, he baptized 300 adults in the parish church at Waldshut, using water from a milk pail rather than the baptismal font.

Hubmaier was in general sympathy with the Peasants' War, and the Austrian government regarded him as one of the leaders of the rebellion, though he was less concerned with peasant rights than with the freedom of Waldshut to remain Protestant. He escaped the government's clutches in 1525 and fled to Moravia, but the Austrians came after him.

Moravian nobility would have resisted extradition on charges of heresy but did not want to risk their lives to protect someone charged with treason. Hubmaier was returned to Vienna, where he was tortured and burned at the stake on March 10, 1528. Three days after his execution, the same authorities who condemned Hubmaier drowned his wife in the Danube.

ANDREAS VON KARLSTADT (1480–1541)

Karlstadt, Luther's onetime colleague at the University of Wittenberg, rejected infant baptism, but was not really an Anabaptist; he appropriated mystical terminology and ideas from the later Middle Ages but reconciled them with the insights of the Lutheran Reformation. Driven by Luther to study Augustine, he became more of an Augustinian than Luther was. Luther

charged him with being a legalist and obscuring Christian freedom, but he also had a spiritualist streak.

Luther and Karlstadt clashed for the first time at a disputation held in 1516, which led Karlstadt to buy a complete set of Augustine's works and fill in the gaps in his theological education. He soon became Luther's ally in the controversy over indulgences that was sweeping Europe, and he composed 380 theses against Johannes Eck. Eck challenged him to a debate in Leipzig, hoping to draw Luther into the discussion.

The Leipzig Disputation was not a great success for Karlstadt. The cart in which he traveled unceremoniously dumped him on the ground at the city gate; a physician bled him twice (a common sixteenth-century medical treatment), but he was shaken and not in his best form. He tried to support his argument by reading lengthy quotations from the church fathers, which he needed Melancthon's help to locate. Eck, who had a prodigious memory, ridiculed him and succeeded in getting a rule passed against the use of reference books. Generally Eck treated Karlstadt like a sparring partner in a preliminary bout, rather than a serious contender for the title in the main event. Karlstadt returned home to write a vitriolic attack on him, *Against the Dumb Ass and Stupid Little Doctor*. Eck promptly added Karlstadt's name to the papal bull against Luther.



While Luther was in hiding at Wartburg Castle, Karlstadt went to Denmark to establish the Reformation but beat a hasty retreat after only six weeks. His colleagues had scarcely begun to miss him when he reappeared, frustrated and a little out of breath.

In December 1521 Karlstadt announced his intention to marry Anna von Mochau, 25 years his junior. Then on Christmas Day, after having been expressly told not to, he gave both bread and wine to the laity in Communion—celebrating the liturgy in German, dressed as a layman. He began to preach in the same church where Luther ordinarily preached when he was in Wittenberg and demanded the abolition of images and the reform of the poor law.

Luther did not oppose all these changes, though he had a pastoral concern that the faith of the weak not be needlessly damaged by reckless liturgical changes. But he disliked Karlstadt's replacement of old traditions and obligations with new puritanical prohibitions which destroyed the true freedom of the Christian.

Criticized by Luther, Karlstadt put away the academic dress he was entitled to wear as a doctor of theology and law. He donned the simple garment of a peasant, bought a farm, and loaded manure onto a cart along with other peasants. He announced that he would no longer promote students to theological degrees, since Christians are commanded to call no man master. (However, he did not give up his salary.) Thrown out of Saxony after further conflict with Luther (see p. 15), he allied himself for a short time with Melchior Hoffman. In 1529 he tried without success to wangle an invitation to the Marburg Colloquy. His last years were spent in Basel where he taught at the university, fought with the city's clergy, and died of the plague.

JOHANNES OECOLAMPADIUS (1482–1531)

Johannes Hussgen's hunger for learning led him to study at three different universities before finally receiving his doctorate at the advanced age of 36. His Hebrew was so good that he assisted Erasmus in the scholarly notes to his groundbreaking New Testament.



TIRELESS TRANSLATOR Above: While working as a tutor, Tyndale came to the conclusion that he should be the one to bring Scripture to the English people.

REFORMERS' CANDLE Left: Bucer, Vermigli, and Oecolampadius appear here, along with Luther, Melancthon, Wycliffe, Hus, Zwingli, Calvin, Ridley, and Knox, among others keeping the Protestant candle alight.

Later their relationship cooled, but their mutual respect for each other's scholarship remained. Like Melancthon (originally *Schwartzerd*) and others, Hussgen translated his surname (in formal German *Hausschein* or "house lamp") into the Greek *Oecolampadius*, by which he is usually known today.

In 1521, already sympathetic to Luther's teachings, Oecolampadius did an unexpected thing. He became a monk, either in response to inner spiritual conflict or to get more leisure for study. In a matter of months, his "Lutheran" sympathies got him in hot water. He suggested to the monastery that it ought to expel him as a heretic, walked outside, and jumped onto a waiting horse, riding back to Basel and away from the life he had so briefly embraced.

By this time he was 40, with no particular gifts in organization or leadership. A sensitive, rather indecisive scholar respected for his linguistic ability, he was hardly one of the movers and shakers of his generation. Upon his return to Basel, though, he displayed a new energy and confidence. His lectures on Isaiah began the move toward Protestantism in the city, and less than a year after his return he defended Protestant ideas in a public disputation, becoming the leading religious figure in Basel.

DEPENDABLE FRIEND Below: Oecolampadius became Zwingli's "right-hand man" in the Swiss Reformation, similar to the role Melancthon played for Luther.



During the tumultuous 1520s, Oecolampadius worked closely with Zwingli and other reforming humanists such as Capito and Bucer. When Luther and Zwingli met at Marburg in 1528 to resolve their differences, Oecolampadius did much of the scholarly heavy lifting on the Zwinglian side. In one debate with Johannes Eck, Oecolampadius cited the church fathers, and Eck responded by appealing to the superior authority of Scripture—the reverse of the famous debate between Eck and Luther in Leipzig.

Like most of the reformers, Oecolampadius came to believe that his vows of celibacy were invalid and he should practice Christian discipleship in marriage. In 1528 he married Wibrandis Rosenblatt, a pious young widow of Basel—during Lent, at that (see "Bride of the Reformation," p. 49). Only a month after Zwingli was killed in battle, Oecolampadius died of natural causes. His solid scholarship, gentle personality, and attention to nuance contributed to the rich fabric of reformed Protestantism; but in life and death, he never emerged from Zwingli's shadow.

WILLIAM TYNDALE (1494–1536)

Tyndale, from a prosperous merchant family in west-central England, studied at Oxford and Cambridge. At the latter he joined an informal study circle at the White Horse Inn, discussing the new ideas of Erasmus and Luther with many future leaders of the English Reformation: Nicholas Ridley (1500–1555), Thomas Cranmer, and Hugh Latimer (c. 1487–1555).

In 1521 Tyndale returned to his birthplace as a tutor. To a visiting clergyman who claimed Christians could get along better without God's laws than without the pope's, he responded, "If God grant me life, ere many years pass I will see that the boy behind his plow knows more of the Scriptures than thou dost!"

CITY OF REFORM In 16th-c. Zurich you could have called on not only Zwingli but also Vermigli and sometimes Denck (he moved around a lot).

Vernacular translations existed in Europe, but translating the Bible into English was illegal: authorities were concerned laypeople might misinterpret Scripture. The church banned controversial Oxford theologian John Wycliffe's translation in 1408, and Lollards—followers of Wycliffe (1320–1384)—were still being burned at the stake as heretics in Tyndale's day. Furthermore the Wycliffe Bible had been translated from Latin, not Greek and Hebrew, and its archaic language was difficult to understand. A new translation was both desperately needed and exceedingly dangerous.

In 1523 Tyndale went to London to persuade Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall to support his work. Tunstall was a friend of Erasmus, but he ignored Tyndale. After several frustrating years, Tyndale realized that nobody in authority would support him; his translation would have to be done on his own, outside of England. In 1524 he settled in Antwerp, a flourishing commercial center with a vibrant printing industry. Its fatal disadvantage: the Hapsburg family, committed to defending Catholicism and repressing heresy, ruled there.

Tyndale succeeded in publishing a translation of the entire New Testament in Worms in 1526. Bishop Tunstall and Cardinal Wolsey, lord chancellor of England, led the effort to find and burn copies of the subversive translation; English church authorities at one point bought up the entire stock in Antwerp to destroy them. Tyndale used the proceeds to produce a new and corrected edition. The church did not condemn his translation simply because it was in English, but because it clearly reflected the new interpretations



of Scripture identified with Luther (see “An accidental revolution,” pp. 39–42).

Meanwhile Tyndale’s *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528) laid out a radical doctrine of royal supremacy and may have influenced Henry VIII’s developing understanding of his own independent authority. But his *Practice of Prelates* (1530) denounced the efforts being made to annul Henry’s marriage to Catherine of Aragon and counteracted the favorable impression *The Obedience of a Christian Man* had made on the king.

Thomas Cromwell worked to reconcile Henry and Tyndale and bring Tyndale back to England as a pro-government propagandist. But Tyndale stuck to his goal of giving access to the Bible in English for everyone in his homeland. If the king would promise this, Tyndale assured Cromwell, he would return to England, submit to the king, and never write another book of his own. No such promise came.

New chancellor Thomas More soon wrote three long treatises denouncing Tyndale as one of the most pernicious heretics of the day, and new bishop of London John Stokesley may have bribed a young Englishman to make friends with Tyndale and lure him to a place where he could be captured. Hapsburg troops arrested him in May 1535. He continued translating the Old Testament in prison until August 1536, when he was tried as a heretic and found guilty of Protestant beliefs. His translation, in itself, was not on the list of charges. Two months later he was strangled and his body was burned; his dying words supposedly, “Lord, open the king of England’s eyes.”

CONTROVERSIAL CATHOLIC Vermigli suggested that Paul did not mean purgatory by the image of salvation by fire, so angering a viceroy that he was forbidden to preach.


Breaking the English church away from Rome was for Tyndale only a necessary first step to the real passion of his life—putting the life-giving words of the Gospel into the mouths and hearts of every man, woman, and child in England. He embodied in his life and heroic death the Protestant commitment to the absolute authority of God’s Word, living out what Luther wrote: “The body they may kill, God’s truth abideth still, His Kingdom is for ever.”

PETER MARTYR VERMIGLI (1499–1562)

Protestantism penetrated more successfully in northern and western Europe, far away from Roman Catholic strongholds in the south. Yet some southern exiles did shape the northern Reformation, among them learned Italian refugee Peter Martyr Vermigli. As prior of an important monastery in Naples in 1537, Vermigli read the writings of Zwingli, Bucer, and Melancthon for the first time. Catholic reformer Juan de Valdès and his circle of “evangelical Catholics” also influenced him.

His new theological orientation and immersion in the writings of Paul were not universally hailed. Even though the pope lifted a ban on his preaching, it was only a matter of time before his sympathies would become apparent to the Inquisition. In 1542, after a prolonged crisis of conscience, he left Italy. In Strasbourg he served as a popular teacher of Hebrew and the Old Testament; but the Augsburg Interim (see p. 44), which also drove out Bucer, prompted Vermigli to accept the invitation of Cranmer to come to England.

There Oxford University appointed him Regius Professor of Divinity and made him a canon of Christ Church. Swept into controversies raging over the Lord’s Supper, he argued that though Christians do not sacrifice Jesus Christ anew in the Eucharist, they are called upon to sacrifice themselves in the response of faith.

When Queen Mary came to power, Vermigli returned to Zurich, where he provided a home for exiles from Mary’s England. When Elizabeth succeeded her, they returned, but he did not, though he was invited to do so and wrote them regularly. To travel from Zurich to London was an arduous journey for a young man, much less for an old professor of Hebrew. He died on a trip to France, an exile to the last. 

David C. Steinmetz (1936–2015) was Amos Reagan Kearns Distinguished Professor Emeritus of the history of Christianity at Duke Divinity School. All entries except Oecolampadius and Tyndale are adapted from his Reformers in the Wings (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 85–99, 106–113, 123–130, 138–152. Edwin Woodruff Tait is contributing editor at Christian History.

Bride of the Reformation

Basel was a bustling hub of commerce and culture in the early sixteenth century. From all over Europe, students flocked to its university, and writers brought their books to its presses. Military wife Margareta Rosenblatt and her daughter Wibrandis (1504–1564) lived there and moved in university-educated circles, where Wibrandis picked up German, Latin, and a husband, Ludwig Keller, whom she married in 1524 at the age of 20. Two years later Keller was dead.

Wibrandis soon became attracted to the Reformation teachings proclaimed by cathedral preacher Johannes Oecolampadius. When 45-year-old Oecolampadius married the 24-year-old widow in 1528, Erasmus quipped that the preacher had wed an attractive girl as his Lenten penance. In Oecolampadius's own account, Wibrandis was a bit too young, but she was a good Christian, of respectable family but not rich, and had "several years' experience bearing the cross." He wrote: "My wife is what I always wanted. . . . She is not contentious, garrulous, or a gadabout, but looks after the household."

Throughout southern Germany and Switzerland, as a like-minded group of theologians took control of the religious life of some of the region's most important city-states, they and their wives formed a theological and social circle. Elisabeth Bucer, Agnes Capito, and Anna Zwingli all corresponded with Wibrandis.

DEATH AND MARRIAGE AND . . .

Oecolampadius and Agnes Capito both died in November 1531, leaving children and widowed spouses; in the sixteenth century, this situation called for immediate remarriage. Bucer feared that Capito might marry the widow of a martyred Anabaptist leader; he had Anabaptist leanings and was, in Bucer's view, an impulsive sort who needed a practical wife to put up with his eccentricities, provide for his needs, and link him more firmly to the Protestant mainstream. Wibrandis fit the bill. Capito (over 50 at the time) proposed and brought her to Strasbourg. Once again Wibrandis found herself living in a major center of the Reformation.

After the ill-fated Regensburg Colloquy in 1541, plague swept Strasbourg. Four of Bucer's five children died, and the Capitos lost two of theirs plus Wibrandis's



SECOND ACT Wibrandis's last husband, Martin Bucer, called her perfect in every respect except that she did not rebuke him as much as his first wife had.

son Eusebius Oecolampadius. Then Capito and Elisabeth Bucer were stricken. As Martin and Wibrandis stood by Elisabeth's deathbed, she made them promise to marry each other and provide for both families. "We could not answer except by tears," Bucer recalled later.

In March 1542 the 51-year-old Bucer fulfilled Elisabeth's dying wish. He traveled frequently; Wibrandis, in weak health, managed the household, took care of the children (two from Oecolampadius, two from Capito, two from Bucer, and her stepson from Bucer's first marriage), entertained guests, adopted needy children, and gave shelter to students and refugees.

In 1548 Bucer was offered a post as theology professor at Cambridge. Lonely, discouraged, and convinced the failure of German Protestantism was due to sinful Protestants, he lectured to his English students with a dour prophetic insistence. He found English winters bitterly cold, and a special German stove was constructed for him. The food, he complained to Wibrandis, was nothing but meat.

Wibrandis decided that everyone should emigrate. Narrowly escaping a Catholic official who was trying to confiscate her property (she admitted that she might have "said something hot"), she herded the whole family to England, where she nursed Martin through two more difficult winters. In 1551 he died; Wibrandis returned to Strasbourg and then Basel, where she lived for more than 10 years as a respected matriarch until her death (in yet another plague epidemic).

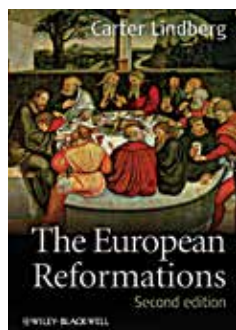
From the heady beginnings in Basel to the stress and bustle of Strasbourg to the wintry gloom of Edwardian England, Wibrandis played a key supporting role in the unfolding Reformation. The men she married were among the most moderate Protestant leaders. They combined learning with reforming fire and, against great odds, struggled to hold the Protestant movement together and make it a genuine renewal of the church. —*Edwin Woodruff Tait. This article is adapted from issue 84.*

Recommended resources

WHERE CAN YOU GO TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE “PEOPLE’S REFORMATION”? HERE ARE SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CH EDITORIAL STAFF AND THIS ISSUE’S AUTHORS.

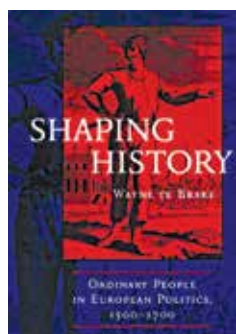
BOOKS

Some basic **introductions to the Urban Reformation** and related history include Steven Ozment, *The Ref-*

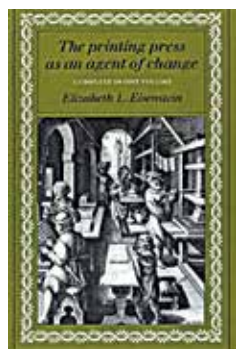


ormation in the Cities (1975) and *The Age of Reform* (1981); Gerald Strauss, *Luther’s House of Learning* (1978); Peter Blickle, Hans-Christoph Rublack, and Winfried Schulze, *Religion, Politics, and Social Protest* (1984); Lyndal Roper, *Holy Household* (1990); Walter Klaassen, *Living at the End of the Ages* (1992); Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (1998); Thomas Brady, *Communities, Politics, and Reformation in Early Modern Europe* (1998); George Hunston Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd ed. (2000); and Peter Blickle, *Communal Reformation* (1992) and *From the Communal Reformation to the Revolution of the Common Man* (1997).

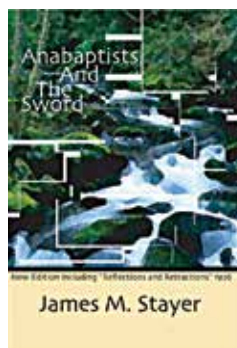
More recent works include Wayne te Brake, *Shaping History* (1998); Bruce Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation* (2002); Scott Hendrix, *Recultivating the Vineyard* (2004); Amy Nelson Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation: Ministers and Their Message in Basel* (2006); Susan Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual* (2007) and *The Reformation of Feeling* (2010); Christopher Close, *The Negotiated Reformation* (2009); and Marjorie Plummer, *From Priest’s Whore to Pastor’s Wife* (2012).



The **Peasants’ War** comes to the fore in Peter Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525* (1984) and Tom Scott, *The German Peasants’ War* (1994), and **iconoclasm** is covered in Carlos Eire, *War Against the Idols* (1984), and Lee Palmer Wandel, *Voracious Idols and Violent Hands* (1999).

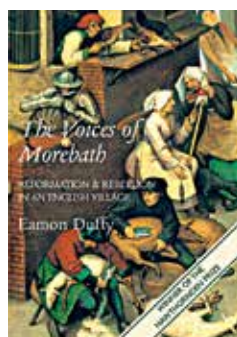


The **printing press** is discussed in James Moran, *Printing Presses* (1975); Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1980) and *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (2005); Axel Erdmann, *My Gracious Silence* (1999); and Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book* (2010).



The **Anabaptist story** is told in Walter Klaassen, *Anabaptism* (1973); Eberhard Arnold, *The Early Anabaptists* (1984); William Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (1995); John Oyer, *They Harry the Good People Out of the Land* (2000) and *Mirror of the Martyrs* (2000); James Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword* (2002); and David Weaver-Zercher, *Martyrs Mirror: A Social History* (2016).

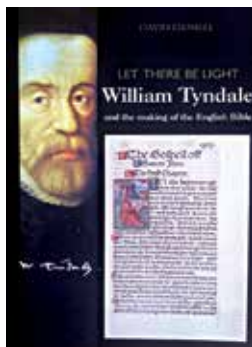
The **English Reformation** features in A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (1991); J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (1991); Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* (1998); Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath* (2003) and *The Stripping of the Altars* (2005); and James Simpson, *Burning to Read* (2010).



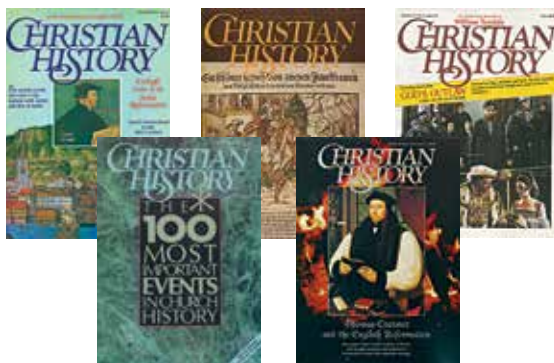
Finally, biographies and other studies of reformers from this issue include

- **Bucer:** Amy Nelson Burnett, *The Yoke of Christ: Martin Bucer and Christian Discipline* (1994); Herman Selderhuis and John Vriend, *Marriage and Divorce in the Thought of Martin Bucer* (1999); D. F. Wright, *Martin Bucer: Reforming Church and Community* (2002); Martin Greschat (translated by Stephen Buckwalter), *Martin Bucer* (2004); and Brian Lugioyo, *Martin Bucer’s Doctrine of Justification* (2010)
- **Capito:** James Kittelson, *Wolfgang Capito* (1997); Erika Rummel and Milton Kooistra, eds., *Reformation Sources: The Letters of Wolfgang Capito and His Fellow Reformers in Alsace and Switzerland* (2007)
- **Denck:** Rufus Jones, *Hans Denck and the Inward Word* (2005)





- **Hubmaier:** H. Wayne Pipkin and John Howard Yoder, eds., *Balthasar Hubmaier* (1989)
- **Karlstadt:** Ronald Sider, ed., *Karlstadt's Battle with Luther* (2001); Amy Nelson Burnett, *Karlstadt and the Origins of the Eucharistic Controversy* (2011)
- **Oecolampadius:** Diane Poythress, *Reformer of Basel: The Life, Thought, and Influence of Johannes Oecolampadius* (2011)
- **Tyndale:** David Daniell, *Let There Be Light* (1994) and *William Tyndale* (2001)
- **Vermigli:** Mariano Di Gangi, *Peter Martyr Vermigli 1499-1562: Renaissance Man, Reformation Master* (1993); and Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi, and Frank James III, eds., *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli* (2009)
- **Zwingli:** G. R. Potter, *Zwingli* (1984); Ulrich Gabler, *Huldrych Zwingli* (1986); W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (1986) and *Zwingli: An Introduction to His Thought* (1994); and Jim West, *The Humor of Huldrych Zwingli* (2007) and *Through the Year with Zwingli and Bullinger* (2015)
- And, discussing many of the reformers above, David Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings* (2001).

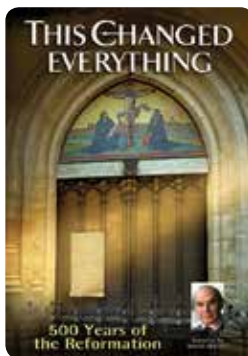


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Read these back issues of *CH* online; some are still available for purchase:

- **4:** *Zwingli*
- **5:** *The Anabaptists*
- **16:** *William Tyndale*
- **28:** *100 Most Important Events in Church History*
- **48:** *Thomas Cranmer and the English Reformation*

VIDEOS FROM VISION VIDEO



Videos about the stories in this issue include *God's Outlaw: The Story of William Tyndale*; *The Radicals*; *Reformation Overview*; and *Zwingli and Calvin*. There are also Torchlighters episodes on Tyndale and Luther and the new original documentary *This Changed Everything: 500 Years of the Reformation*.



WEBSITES

You can read writings of many of this issue's featured people at the [Christian Classics Ethereal Library](#). Good pointers to other primary and secondary resources can be found at the [Modern History Source-](#)



book at Fordham University in the sections called "Early Modern World" and "Reformation Europe." Despite its title the [Post-Reformation Digital Library](#) has many Reformation-era texts available. You can also browse [Foxe's Book of Martyrs](#).

Some selected Anabaptist historical websites include [Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online](#), [Global Anabaptist Wiki](#), [Martyrs Mirror](#), and [Anabaptists.org](#). Read more about Anglican history at [The Anglican Domain](#), [Project Canterbury](#), and [The English Reformation](#) page at the BBC.

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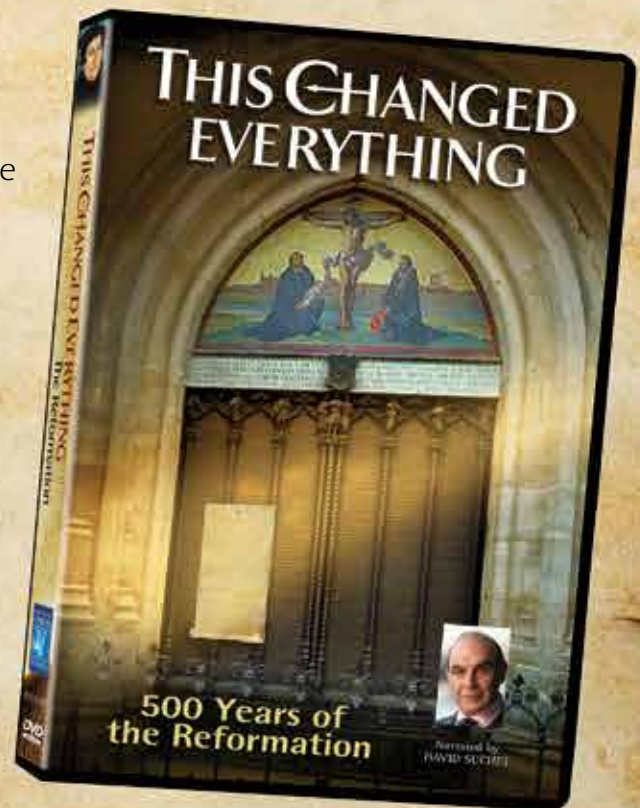
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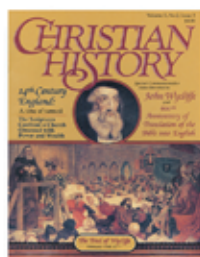
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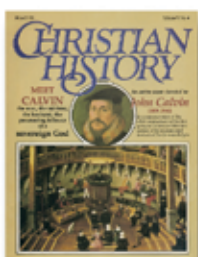
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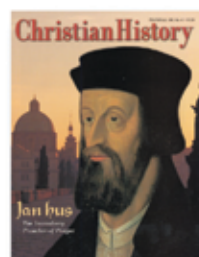
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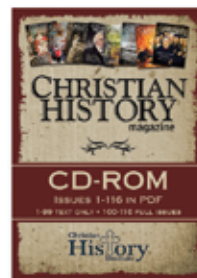
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