

# Renewing the Church

16th Century Church History — Part 2

## 1. Wittenberg Without Luther

- Luther hidden at Wartburg Castle after Diet of Worms (imperial outlaw)
- Colleagues pushed reform faster: images attacked, communion cup given to laity, clergy celibacy abandoned
- December 1521: three preachers arrive claiming direct revelation — oppose infant baptism, predict end of world
- Riots break out; town magistrates beg Luther to return
- Luther returns March 6, 1522 — preaches eight sermons restoring order
  - Faith must be accompanied by love
  - True reform grows from gospel freedom, not legal compulsion
- Key principle: worship glorifies God only when embraced freely, never forced

## 2. Thomas Müntzer and the Peasants' Revolt

- Thomas Müntzer (1488–1525): initially supported Luther, then diverged sharply
- Made the Bible secondary to direct spiritual experience
- Believed the "Spirit-filled" would violently impose a new society — no priests, nobles, princes, or private property

## 3. Ulrich Zwingli and the Swiss Reformation

- Zwingli (1484–1531): Christian humanist, disciple of Erasmus; came to faith in Christ alone ~1514–15
- Appointed preacher at Zurich's Great Cathedral, December 1518
- Preached verse-by-verse through the New Testament; survived plague in 1519
- By 1522: openly broke with Rome, rejecting papal and conciliar authority for Scripture alone
- January 29, 1523 — Public disputation before Zurich city council (67 theses):
  - Salvation by faith in Christ alone
  - Purgatory does not exist
  - Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice
  - Christ alone is head of the church
- Council approved his preaching and required all Zurich clergy to preach from Scripture only
- Key divergence from Luther — the Regulative Principle of Worship:
  - Luther: keep traditional worship unless Scripture forbids it
  - Zwingli: only do what Scripture positively authorizes
- By April 1525: all images, statues, organs, altars, and monasteries removed from Zurich churches
- Founded theological college (1525); trained pastors known as "prophets"
- By 1531: Protestantism in 40% of Switzerland; 60% remained Catholic

## 4. The Lord's Supper Controversy and the Marburg Colloquy

- Point of agreement: both rejected transubstantiation, priestly miracle-power, and adoration of the bread
- Point of division: How is Christ present in the Supper?
  - Luther: Christ's body and blood are objectively present "in, with, and under" the bread and wine
  - Zwingli: "is" means "represents"; Christ's body is in heaven; the Supper is a memorial

- A third view emerged later (Bucer/Calvin): bread and wine are signs of a present reality — Christ spiritually and really present, but not bodily
- Marburg Colloquy, October 1529 — greatest gathering of Reformation theologians
  - Luther wrote "This is my body" in chalk; refused to yield
  - Four days of debate; no agreement reached
  - Luther refused to acknowledge the Swiss as Christians
- Marburg: the official split between Lutheran and Reformed traditions — a split that remains to this day

## 5. Zwingli's Death and Heinrich Bullinger

- Religious wars in Switzerland: Protestants won in 1529; Catholics won decisively at Battle of Kappel (October 1531)
- Zwingli fought as a soldier and was killed — refused to pray to the Virgin Mary
- Peace treaty fixed the religious map of Switzerland permanently
- Heinrich Bullinger (1504–75) succeeded Zwingli at Zurich's Great Cathedral
  - Converted by reading Luther and Melancthon alongside the Bible and Church Fathers
  - Had converted an entire monastery to Protestantism by 1527
- Bullinger held the post for 44 years
- His sermons (the Decades) became the standard textbook for training Anglican clergy after 1559
- Key theological contribution: early development of covenant theology
  - God's covenant with Abraham is the basis of salvation history; Christ is its fulfillment
  - One gracious covenant running through both Testaments — seed of Reformed covenant theology
- Authored the Second Helvetic Confession (1566) — widely used Reformed confessional standard
- Achieved theological unity with Calvin that Zwingli could not reach with Luther

## 6. The Anabaptist Movement

- Lutherans and Reformed shared the medieval ideal of a Christian society upheld by the civil magistrate
- Anabaptists: a third stream — rejected the Christian state entirely; saw the church as an alternative society in a hostile world
- Name "Anabaptist" (re-baptizer) coined by Zwingli — they rejected it, insisting infant baptism was no baptism at all
- Conrad Grebel performed the first documented believer's baptism in January 1525
- Core convictions:
  - Believer's baptism only
  - Strict separation of church and state
  - Regenerate church membership
- Reputation for disorder damaged their credibility (e.g., seizure of Münster, polygamy)
- Not a unified movement — significant variety among sects, some more radical than others
- Persecuted by Catholics and Protestants alike — a troubling irony of the Reformation