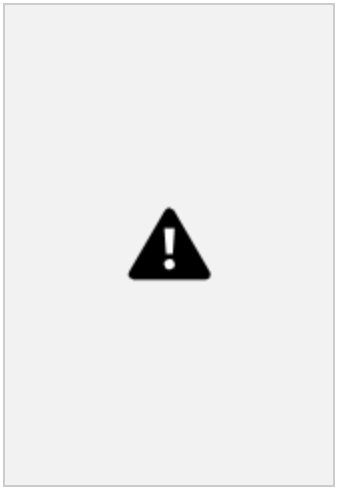
Anabaptist History (Day 5) Erasmus, Luther and The Radical Reformation:



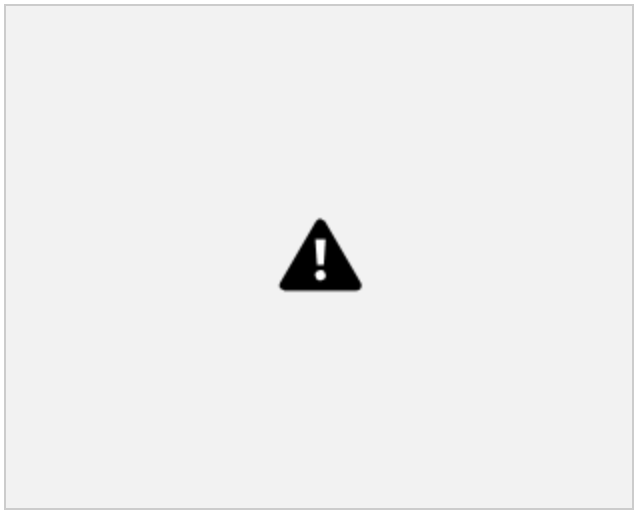
Beguines and Beghards

Beghards (also called Beguards) and Beguines (or Beguins) were Roman Catholic lay religious communities active in the 13th and 14th centuries, living in a loose semi monastic community but without formal vows. They were influenced by Albigensian teachings and the Waldensians. The Beghards were the men, the Beguines the women of these free organizations.

Ludwig Keller (A historian from the late 1800's) supposed that the beguinages were identical with the almshouses of the Waldenses, who erected similar "houses of God" beside their churches where persons not belonging to their brotherhood were given a living. In this way the Waldenses did an enormous amount of social service. Very early the name "Beghard" was applied to the "apostles" they sent out, who founded these almshouses and were the spiritual advisers of the poor. It is a known fact that where the Waldenses were most numerous, there were more beguinages; and that the occupations most frequently found among the Waldenses were also the occupations of the beguinages. In the records of the inquisition in Toulouse, 1306-1323, it is at once evident that the heresies confessed by the Waldenses coincided to a surprising degree with those charged against the Beguines.

Brethren of the Common Life

The Brethren of the Common Life was a religious brotherhood founded in Holland about the middle of the 14th century. Their purpose was to counteract the secularized life of the church by creating and promoting a truly pious Christian life shut away from worldly life, but actively engaged in earnest work for their fellow men, especially in education. They lived in community houses, men and women in separate buildings. They were not bound by a vow; anyone could leave the community life at will. Obedience, celibacy, and poverty, the three fundamental monastic rules, were also practiced by them, but without a vow. Voluntary renunciation of private possessions and community of goods were based on the example of the early Christian church, and the pledge to work was based on Bible passages like 1Thessalonians 4:11, "Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands."



What distinguished them from the monastic orders, which had at that time degenerated, was their genuine piety, their repudiation of the monastic vow, and their opposition to begging. In other respects life in their houses was regulated with monastic strictness. The spirit of love, shown in humility, obedience, community life, and chastity, was to permeate and govern all the inmates. The day from three in the morning until nine at night was divided between work and spiritual exercise.

The tasks of the Brethren varied. All kinds of handicraft, gardening, agriculture, and fishing were carried on. The educated clergy occupied themselves chiefly with copying books, making a great contribution of lasting value along this line. Even today there are in public and private libraries, especially in Holland, an uncommonly large number of manuscripts which originated in these communities.

In the center of mutual edification were the public meetings. These were devotional addresses, which were occasionally interrupted by questions and answers or alternated with longer conversations. The special meetings were of two kinds. One

was intended for the common people, and took place on Sundays and holidays, when the doors of their houses were opened to the public; the other was meant only for members and was held daily in connection with the common noon and evening meals.

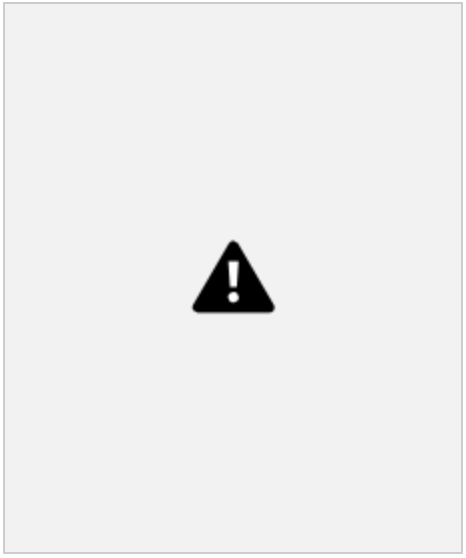
The significance of the Brotherhood of the Common Life in pre-Reformation times was profound. Their genuinely pious, serious way of life as well as in their instruction and their preaching were exceedingly fraught with blessing. Their collations attracted many. Although their influence in the transformation of the educational system was less inclusive and sweeping than has sometimes been assumed, it was nevertheless of lasting effect; on the whole it may be asserted that in many respects it prepared the way for the Reformation. When the Reformation came into the country the task of the brotherhood was fulfilled; its houses were gradually dissolved; it ceased to exist. (Mennonite Encyclopedia)

Interesting quote from Capito's Journal:

- "Hubmaier scowled at Groote or the tongue or both. 'Who is qualified to read the Bible except he who is trained to do so? That's why the Church has forbidden Bibles in the common tongue. If Groote had lived in Spain or Austria or any Hapsburg lands,' Hubmaier said, ;he might have paid dearly for his audacity.'

- 'Or if he had lived in a time other than the Great Schism,' Zell said, and then he laughed. 'With a Pope in Rome and one in Avignon, both Popes had bigger worries than what some Dutchman was teaching the poor.'
- The young monk spoke. 'My novice master says that the most important thing in religion is to have a friendly relationship with Christ. To this end, he prays directly, almost casually, at all times and seasons. But proscribed rites and customs he often neglects, proclaiming them empty if the heart of the worshiper be not engaged.'

- Fabri nodded. 'That's the heart of the Devotio Moderna. True spirituality is within us, not in religious customs, for did not Jesus say, 'The kingdom of heaven is within you?' In the inmost depths of our hearts, we may hear the voice of God.

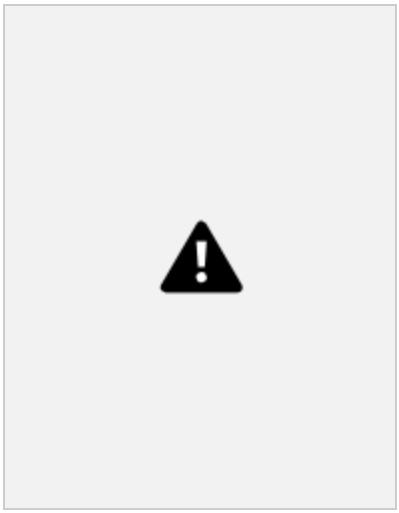


- “Groote also said that devout women who serve God in the privacy of their homes, without taking monastic vows, are just as religious as nuns in their convents. To love God and worship him is religion–not the taking of special vows. If one’s goal is to live a religious life, then his life becomes religious in God’s opinion and according to the judgment of conscience. It all comes down to two things: Love God and love man.”

- “What!” said Hubmaier. “Shall we despise vows, confession, sacraments, and fifteen hundred years of Church doctrine?”

- “They even took in lepers,” Michael said, “and had them bathe in special herb water and gave them clean beds.”

- "Someone in a nearby rowdy crew began to play a fidel, and Fabri changed to his orator’s voice. “Groote took plague after visiting the infected and died when he had little over forty years. But his followers carried on his work.”
- "That night, the rain stopped, and, walking with the others, I fell back for a while. My shadow blackened the reflection of the lamps in the Bächle and the pools of water in the street. How much of my life I spent in religious activity. Was I not a priest? Would I not soon have a Doctorate in theology? Did I not speak constantly of the Church and her laws?
- "But did that compare to educating orphans or bathing lepers? Perhaps, I thought, what the Church needs–what I need is less religion and more Christ."



Desiderius Erasmus

Mike Atnip, David Bercot, Wikipedia

Desiderius Erasmus was born on October 27, 1466 at Rotterdam; he was the second illegitimate son of a priest and a widow. He was educated by the **Brethren of the Common Life** who emphasized personal reform through Christian inwardness, though Erasmus later complained that they suppressed natural gifts by blows, reprimands, and severity.

In his "Oration on Peace and Discord" Erasmus argued that going to war for temporal possessions is both wicked and foolish, and he suggested that a divided society is like a disease in the body that endangers the whole structure. No one, much less a Christian, can maintain one's dignity while fighting. Holland was being torn apart by strife between the two noble families

Erasmus disliked monastic life, and seeking greater intellectual stimulation in 1492 he was ordained a priest and became secretary to a leading bishop. He was given leave to attend the University of Paris for four years where he taught himself Greek and studied classics. However, just as the monastic rituals did not fulfill his deep spiritual longings, neither did the scholastic theology. Erasmus did not complete a degree in theology.

Erasmus tutored some Englishmen in Latin in 1499, and one of them invited him to England for a year. There he met the humanists John Colet and Thomas More, **and he began to study the early Fathers of the Church for a more real and alive theology.**

In the 1515 edition he wrote a long discourse on why war is sweet only to those who have not tried it (to the inexperienced). Erasmus believed that war should be avoided by every possible way because nothing is more wicked, disastrous, destructive, loathsome, and unworthy of humans. Erasmus noted that princes,

lawyers, and theologians support war so much that it has become accepted and respectable, and people are astonished when someone disapproves such crimes. He wondered how creatures made for peace can rush so madly into mutual slaughter. More than any other animal, humans are made for friendship because they depend on mutual aid and loving kindness. Only humans shed tears or laugh, can use speech and reason, and delight in serving all in devotion to God. Once again he described the tragedy and miseries caused by war, which spreads like a contagious disease to other countries. Its poisoned darts and hellish contraptions must be products of the infernal regions.

In 1516 Erasmus published his new translation of The New Testament in Latin and also the Education of a Christian Prince. This latter work is in sharp contrast to the amorality of Machiavelli's Prince, which was being written at this time. Erasmus advised current monarchs to maintain peace through justice, limit taxes to luxuries, and convert monasteries into schools.

Erasmus encouraged all men and women to read the Gospels and the writings of Paul, and his New Testament encouraged religious reform and paved the way for Luther, who burst on the scene with his Theses in 1517. Erasmus supported many of Luther's reforms, but he was always wary of fanaticism and intolerance. He never really took sides between Luther and the Pope, although in 1524 he challenged Luther's theology by defending the freedom of the will. He cringed at peasants' rebellions and religious wars. These ideas and others are expressed in **a work called Against War**, which Erasmus wrote to persuade Pope Julius II not to make war on Venice

Erasmus refuted the six major arguments that had been used to rationalize a "just war" by Christian nations. Even if war was sanctioned by the Old Testament, Jews were not Christians, and Jesus ordered Peter to put up his sword. The use of both temporal and spiritual swords to war on heretics and infidels likewise was unjustifiable. The word of Christ himself has more authority than that of the theologians, even of Thomas Aquinas. The traditional view that Christians can war against infidels like the Turks is hypocritical to the teachings of Christ and is hardly the way to convert anybody.

On baptism and communion, the Trinity, and freedom of the will Erasmus offered so much that was in accord with Anabaptist teaching, that he was suspected not only of promoting their cause, but even of being one of them

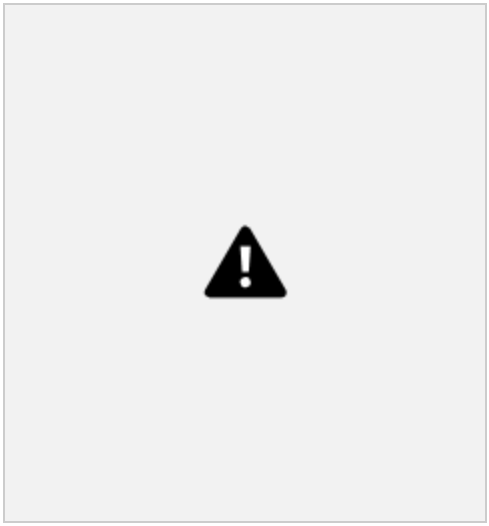
In designating the Bible as the sole source of Christian truth, in **promoting the use of the Bible in the vernacular, in stressing that "Christianity is essentially a life of discipleship of Christ," he expressed common Anabaptist demands.**

A fine devotional book of the educated world," in which he promoted a Christianity interpreted by the Sermon on the Mount, was read in Anabaptist circles, especially after it was available in a Dutch translation (about 1550).

The extent of Erasmus' influence on Hans Denck is still to be investigated. Some personal contact while they were both living in Basel can be assumed. Denck was one of the most liberal . Eventually he leaned towards universalism.

Erasmus' (War Is Sweet to Those Who Have Not Experienced It) of 1525 and other pamphlets in which he showed the evils and the misery of war and satirized those who glorified warfare may also have influenced the Anabaptists and Mennonites to strengthen their peace principles.
He did however say of the Anabaptist once in a letter to a friend:

- "The Anabaptists have flooded the Low Countries just as the frogs and locusts flooded Egypt, a mad generation, doomed to die. They slipped in under the appearance of piety, but their end will be public robbery. And what is like a miracle, although they teach absurdities, not to say impossibilities, and although they spread unlovely things, the populace is attracted as if by a fateful mood or rather the impulse of an evil spirit in this sect."



Martin Luther

Mike Atnip, David Bercot, Wikipedia

Born in Germany in 1483 at a time when ¼ of the children in his day was dead by the age of 5. The church was the most constant thing that they had.

Grew up in the tiny town of Mansfield. He was an alter boy and involved in his church. His home life was very hard and he had a very demanding father that he felt that he could never please. He says that "he whipped me so hard one day that I ran away" once his mother whipped him so hard for stealing a piece of fruit that the blood flowed.

His father wanted him to be a lawyer. He agreed and followed his father's plans for his future. At 18 years old he left home in 1501and entered the University of Erfurt. Erfurt was a town small in business but big in church life. It was considered the Rome of Thuringia. There at school he became a musician and greatly enjoyed a true sense of comradery with his fellow scholars at the university. He did well in school. Luther earned his bachelor and He received his master's degree in 1505. He only needed to now complete his law studies and his career as a lawyer would have been set.

However in that year, the town of Erfurt was struck by the plague. Three of his close friends died. The plague was seen as a curse of God. To him this was a wake up call. It made him more introspective.

Then on July 2, 1505, while returning to the university on horseback after a trip home he was caught in a thunderstorm and a lightning bolt struck near him. He was terrified of death and divine judgment, and so he cried out, "Help! Saint Anna, I will become a monk!" He came to view his cry for help as a vow he could never break. He left law school, sold his books, and entered a closed Augustinian friary in Erfurt on July 17, 1505. This broke his fathers heart. He said that his father acted insane or as a fool. This order of course was no cushy monastery it was the Augustinian of strict observance. They would have camel hair shirts sleep without blankets and even whip themselves. Later even went past their regulation and would sleep out in the snow almost to the point that he would freeze to death. On a few occasions his fellow monks drug him back into the monastery to save his life.

Later he said "If anyone could have gained heaven as a monk, then I would indeed have been among them." Luther described this period of his life as one of deep spiritual despair. He said, "I lost touch with Christ the Savior and Comforter, and made of him the jailor and hangman of my poor soul." He went on like this for 5 years.

In 1510 he took a pilgrimage on foot to Rome. It took him two months to get there on foot. At first he said that he was very impressed. This was quite a historic time to come to Rome. St Peters basilica was being built and while he was there Michelangelo was painting the ceiling of the Sistine chapel and Raphael was painting his murals the interior walls.



But then he began to look deeper and the pomp and ceremony wore off. He commented that everyone was all so cynical. He started preaching once before his Mass and someone spoke out, “Get on with it”. He paid his pilgrimage money and was ably to enter the crypt that contained over 45 thousands graves of the saints. After all of this he asked “can this bring me closer to God.” He emotionally collapsed and knew that he must find another way. Nevertheless, he went back and threw himself into the Monastic work and a time of repeated confessions for thoughts and sins. He said that he hated God during this time.

In 1511 he was sent to was sent to Wittenberg. Johann von Staupitz, his superior, concluded that Luther needed more work to distract him from excessive introspection and ordered him to pursue an academic career. Luther protested greatly and gave 15 reasons why he could not do it which most drastically included that it would kill him. To that Staupitz replied ‘that’s okay God has use for intelligent men in Heaven as well.”

It was perfect for him. Pouring himself now into his students instead of himself, he began to study the original languages, Greek, Hebrew. In these studies it hit him as a Revolution. You must simply receive. **“I felt myself to be “born again,”** and entering into the gaits of heaven.



Seven years after his trip to Rome Julius the 2nd had died and after him Leo

X took his place. He was a very carnal man and indulged himself in things that shouldn't even be mentioned. In two years the Papal reserves were drained and they even had to stop building the Basilica fro lack of funds.

Leo needed to do something to get more money. So he put took the old practice of selling indulgences in over drive. He hired a marketing genius named Johann Tetzel. He invented jingles to sell his indulgences like his famous: **"As soon as a coin in the coffer rings --the soul from purgatory springs."** The easy salvation attracted the people of Wittenberg. As Tetzel came In people left Luther's preaching and he didn't like that. So on October 31 1517 he grabbed some paper and a quill and wrote down on some paper 95 reasons against this practice and nailed them on door of the Castle Church door. Actually this was a university town and this door was frequently used like a bulletin board for debating. However, this time someone took the letter copied it at a printing press and then Luther's 95 thesis "went viral." Now the stage was set for one of the biggest show down in history.



Rome was not happy. After a few attempts with letters, the Pope eventually calls for the burning of Luther's books. Luther did not back down. The pope eventually sent a cardinal to interrogate him. Luther only became obstinate. He told the pope "You would do better I you would to have sent a donkey to play a harp."

Expectably, the Pope at last sent out his Papal excommunication. Luther turned to the printing press. In a crafty political move he wrote a booklet- not to the theologians- but to the kings and princes of Germany. The name of his tracts was: **"To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation."** Saying things like "our German money is flying across the alps." Luther worked to excite the German people against the tyranny of Rome. The German nobility had been frustrated for years but now they had spiritual reasons to revolt. The masses were also excited by Luther's sharp words to the authority. Luther said strong things like: "We must now attack not with words but with steel." He argued that Germany has a right –even a duty to rebel in this way.

From this appeal to the nobility, Fredrick the wise of Saxony liked Luther and took him into his castle and protected him. In 1520 the very new, young , "king of the Holy Roman Empire" Charles the V paid Fredrick a visit to discus the teachings of this controversial Luther. Fredrick was able to talk the young prince to allow Luther a

hearing. Charles agreed to have it at his castle in Worms.

Before Luther left his excommunication arrived from Rome and he tossed it into a bond fire. As Luther trekked across Germany, on his way to Worms the common people were already making a hero out of him. When he came through his old town of Erfurt the people threw a big party. Passing through Frankfurt they publishers gave him lots of presents. When he came into Worms he said that he faced a great multitude of people. A priest even ran up and touched him as if he was a saint. One man wrote the pope and told him that 9 out of 10 people are shouting, "Long live Martin Luther." And unfortunately the other 1 out of the 10 is shouting death to the pope!" Once inside of all the Lords and prince there he knew Fredrick the wise.

The ambassador for the pope brought in the accusations and in each one demanded that he recant. Luther never recanted. He replied to their demands with words such as : **"'Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason -- I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other -- my conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen."** At the end of his long defense **"Here I stand I can do no other. God help me, Amen."** He thought for sure that he would be turned over to the authorities in Rome but Fredrick the Wise refused to go along with the verdict. Fredrick then hid Luther in an out of the way old castle (Wartburg) in, Germany for years.

In this castle Luther went into a depression. And even said that he finally fought against Satan. They say that when you go there they show you the ink that Satan said that he threw against Satan. To put his mind to work it was there that he wrote the German Bible.

Finally in 1522 he felt safe to leave the castle and come back to Wittenberg. However when he got there he discovered that the peasants were taking this reformation further then he wanted to go. Wittenberg was the first city that the peasants revolted. They felt that Luther was on their side but instead he turned completely against them and called for a slaughter, and a slaughter he got, Over 100,000 peasants were killed in the next few years. After the peasants were subdued Luther came against the Jews and the Anabaptists.

Quotes from Luther:

Concerning the Anabaptists

The Anabaptists set up a ministry and congregation of their own, which is also contrary to the command of God. From all this it becomes clear that the secular authorities are bound . . . to inflict corporal punishment on the offenders. . . . Also when it is a case of only upholding some spiritual tenet, such as infant baptism, original sin, and unnecessary separation, then . . . we conclude that . . . the stubborn

sectarians **must be *put to death*.**"

Preface to Hebrews:

My opinion is that it is an epistle of many pieces put together and it does not deal with any one subject in an orderly way. However that may be, it is a marvelously fine epistle. ...Therefore, we should not be hindered, even though wood, straw or hay be mixed in with them, but accept this fine teaching with all honor, though, to be sure, we cannot put it on the same level with the apostolic epistles.

Preface to James:

I consider that it is not the writing of any apostle. My reasons are as follows: First: Flatly against St. Paul and all the rest of Scripture, it ascribes righteousness to works, and says that Abraham was justified by his works, in that he offered his son, Isaac...Second: Its purpose is to teach Christians, but in all this long teaching, it does not once mention the Passion, the Resurrection, or the Spirit of Christ... All the genuine sacred books agree in this, that all of them preach Christ and deal with Him. That is the true test, by which to judge all books... But this James does nothing more than drive to the law and its works. And he mixes the two up in such a disorderly fashion that it seems to me he must have been some good, pious man, who took some sayings of the apostles, disciples and threw them thus on paper.

Luther Against the Peasants:

Any man against whom it can be proved that he is a maker of sedition is outside the law of God and the Empire, so that the first who can slay him is doing right and well. For if a man is an open rebel, every man is his judge and executioner. Therefore let everyone who can: smite, slay, and stabsecretly or openly. Remember that nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful, or devilish than a rebel.

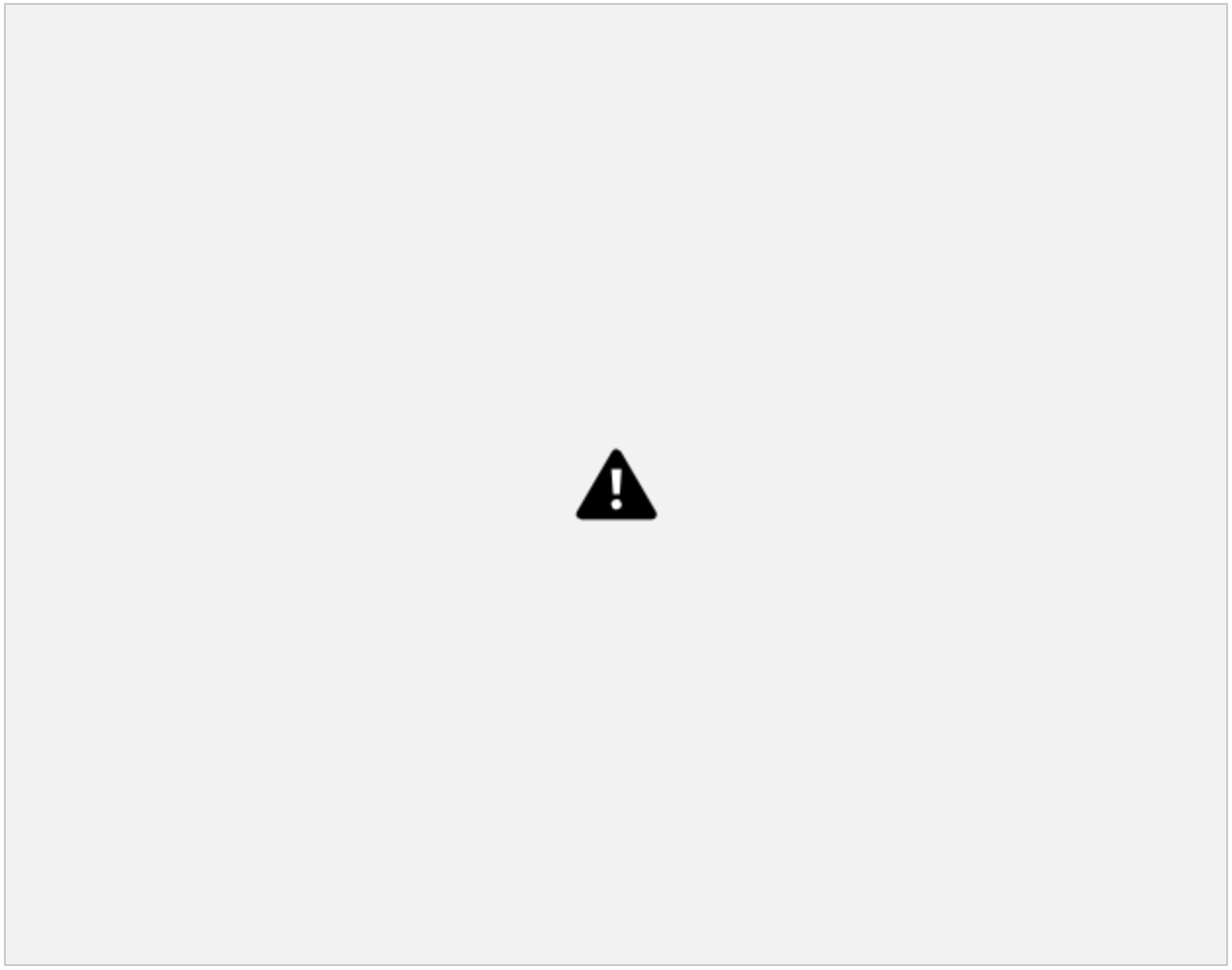
A prince and lord must remember in this case that he is God's minister, that he sins greatly against God if he does *not* punish and protect. If he can punish and does noteven though the punishment consists in the taking of life and the shedding of bloodthen he is guilty of all the murder and all the evil which these fellows commit. Here, then, there is no time for sleeping; no place for patience or mercy. It is the time of the sword, not the day of grace.

The rulers have a good conscience and a just cause. Therefore, they can say to God with all assurance of heart, "These peasants have deserved death many times over. Therefore, I will punish and smite as long as my heart beats."

Thus it may be that one who is killed fighting on the ruler's side may be a true martyr in the eyes of God. Strange times, these, when a prince can win heaven with bloodshed, better than other men with prayer! Therefore, dear lords, stab, smite, slay, whomever you can. If you die in doing it, well for you! A more blessed death can never be yours.

Luther Quotes against holiness!

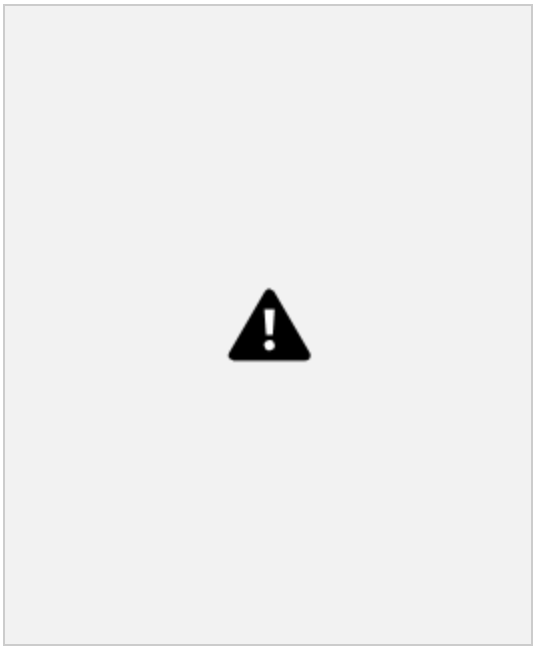
If you are a preacher of mercy, do not preach an imaginary but the true mercy. If the mercy is true, you must therefore bear the true, not an imaginary sin. God does not save those who are only imaginary sinners. Be a sinner, and **let your sins be strong**, but let your trust in Christ be stronger, and rejoice in Christ who is the victor over sin, death, and the world. We will commit sins while we are here, for this life is not a place where justice resides. We, however, says Peter (2. Peter 3:13) are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth where justice will reign. **It suffices** that through God's glory we have **recognized** the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world**. No sin can separate us from Him, even if we were to kill or commit adultery thousands of times each day.** Do you think such an exalted Lamb paid merely a small price with a meager sacrifice for our sins? Pray hard for you are quite a sinner." (A Letter From Luther to Melanchthon, Letter 99, 1 August 1521).



The Radical Reformation

Thomas Müntzer

From Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online



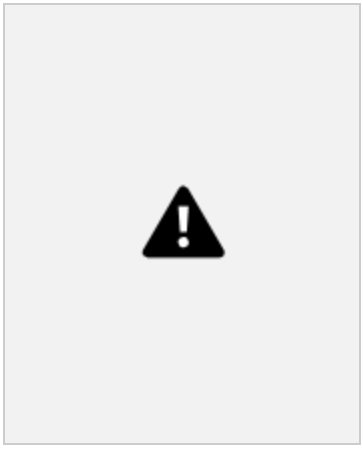
Thomas Müntzer was born in Stollberg in the Harz Mountains ca. 1488-1489. He received a good academic education which familiarized him with the Bible and the mystics, and with Plato and St. Augustine and the classic Christian writers, which were required in higher education at that time. He had a brilliant and dynamic mind. In 1513 he became a Catholic priest, was soon promoted as provost of a monastery, and in 1519 he became father-confessor of a nunnery. It was about that time he also became acquainted with Martin Luther. In 1520 he was a priest in Zwickau (Saxony), where he met, the “Inspirationist” or the Zwickau Prophets who proclaimed that the Bible is secondary to the direct revelation of God given to His chosen servants. Müntzer felt akin to this viewpoint and began to develop his own doctrine of the "spirit."

Next Müntzer was in Prague (until February 1522), where he drew up the "Prague Manifesto" in four different versions, two in German, one in Czech, and one in Latin. This Manifesto was the real program for his further life. He wanted to start a "new church," the church of the spirit. He called it the "spirit of the fear of God." The German and Czech versions of the Manifesto appealed to the plain people; the Latin version, much milder, addressed itself to the scholars, the humanistically educated readers. The Manifesto is a visionary document, but like all of Müntzer's later writings is confused and without clear-cut orientation. Certainly its program was not Scriptural in any concrete sense. Müntzer had little success in Bohemia, the old land of John Hus, and as he left it he began a period of restless wandering. He passed through Wittenberg during Luther's absence at the Wartburg and lodged in the home of Karlstadt, who was sympathetic to some of his ideas but unwilling to go all the way with him.

The two princes of Saxony, Duke Johann and Prince Elector Frederick the Wise, were embarrassed by Müntzer and did not know what to do, being themselves in favor of the

Lutheran reforms. Therefore as they passed through Allstedt they invited Müntzer to preach for them and explain his theology. On July 13, 1524 he preached in the castle in the presence of the princes his famous **"Sermon on Daniel."** In it he claimed that the authorities were given the sword to eradicate the ungodly, but insisted that if they did not do their duty the sword would be taken away from them (Daniel 7) and given to the people; "for the ungodly have no right to live except as the elect grant it to them." Obviously the princes were now even more confused than before and asked Luther for advice. No persecution was considered for the moment, as Luther still advised lenience.

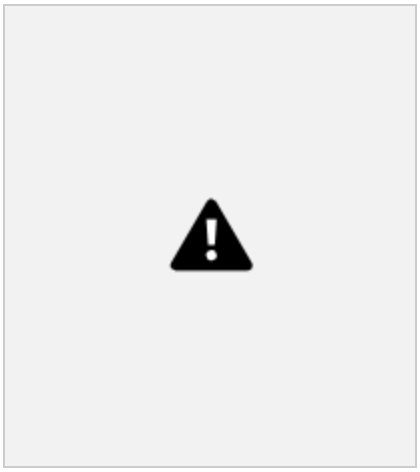
But unrest in Allstaedt prompted Müntzer to flee at night over the city walls. On August 15, 1524 he arrived in Mühlhausen, Thuringia, and soon became a preacher in a church there. This city was to become his real misfortune, for there he met another preacher, with even greater revolutionary ideals. Soon the Mühlhausen city council was overthrown and things looked almost like events ten years later in Münster. But after two months, early in October 1524, Müntzer had to flee again. This time he turned south, stopping in Nürnberg, where he met Hans Denck, the rector of the School at St. Sebald's. Müntzer's fiery mysticism might have impressed Hans Hut. In Nürnberg Müntzer also had two new tracts printed which attacked Protestant doctrine and Martin Luther.



In February 1525 Müntzer was back in Mühlhausen, to which his rebel friend had returned by the end of December 1524. At this point Müntzer placed upon the rebellious peasants his last hope and chance of carrying out his apocalyptic program. Between February and May of this year he may rightly be called the preacher of the peasants, encouraging them mainly during the last three weeks to violent action—expecting at any moment the great crisis of mankind. On May 15, the tragic battle at Frankenhausen was fought followed by the senseless massacre, which ended the Peasants' War in Thuringia. Müntzer, who tried to hide, was caught, imprisoned, and soon tortured to make him yield a full confession of all his misdeeds. He recanted, accepted the Mass according

to Catholic rites, and wrote a farewell letter to his followers in Mühlhausen, which is a complete turnabout from his former position. On May 27, 1525 he was beheaded. His symbol and heraldic sign had always been "a red cross and a naked sword."

German Peasants' War



1524–1526

Early Anabaptism intersected with the commoners' movement of 1525 in many instances, although deficient source materials prevent us from knowing the extent of the connection of the two movements. Early Anabaptist preachers of 1525, Hans Krüsi in the rural environs of St. Gall, **Johannes Brötli and Wilhelm Reublin in Hallau, and Balthasar Hubmaier in** Waldshut, were involved, as Anabaptists, with the rebels. It is probable that Hubmaier authored or edited two Black Forest peasant programs, the "Letter of Articles" and the "Draft of a Constitution." Major Anabaptist leaders in south and central Germany, Hans Hut and Melchior Rinck, not only were themselves involved in the uprising before becoming Anabaptists but turned to fellow rebels to make their first Anabaptist converts. Hans Hut assigned the rebellion of 1525 apocalyptic significance as the starting point of the three-and-a-half year period immediately preceding the second coming of Christ.

Life in Switzerland in the 1500s

Households existed within a community structure, either rural or urban. Communities were organized by the secular and ecclesiastical lords. Rural lords established conditions of labor and land usage. The village church was both a spiritual and social center, a focal point for holidays and celebrations. Communities expressed their social solidarity by ceremonial activities in which all members of the village participated. In rural villages, priests led residents in annual perambulations of the lands. In towns, ceremonial processions were more formal and reflected the greater social stratification of urban life. Weddings were significant ceremonies for the entire community.

Marriages bound families—and often wealth—together. They marked the admission of a new household to the community. Because property and community approval were involved, weddings were public affairs. Other festivals were associated with the passage of stages of the agricultural cycle. Festivals released community members from labor and presented opportunities to resolve community squabbles. Festivals also offered the chance for the social hierarchy of the community to be placed on public display.