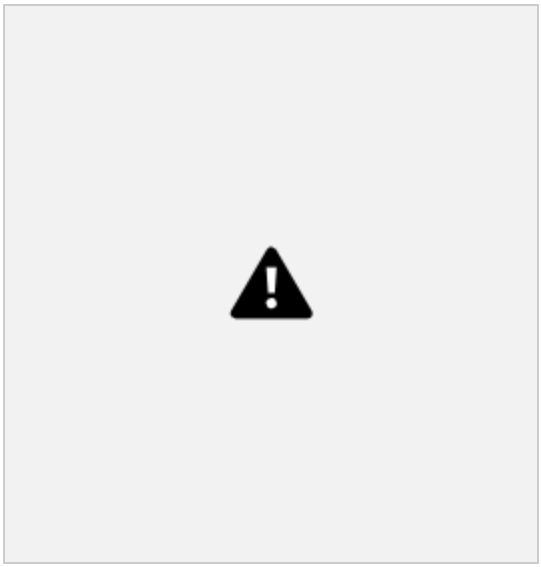
Anabaptist History (Day 6) Zwingli and Conrad Grebel



Born high in the mountains 40 miles outside of Zurich Zwingli was born on New years day 1484. He had 7 brothers and 6 sisters. As a child he learned to play 6 instruments. Zwingli was born of common stock, but his parents were able to afford to send him to the finest universities in Switzerland.

A good student he enrolled in the University of Vienna in the winter semester of 1498 but was expelled, according to the university's records. He re-enrolled in the summer semester of 1500; his activities in 1499 are unknown Zwingli continued his studies in Vienna until 1502, after which he transferred to the University of Basel where he received the Master of Arts degree in 1506.

In 1515 at his first parish he witnessed the slaughter of 6000 Swiss mercenaries. He thought the practice of selling out troops as mercenaries was wicked. He cried that we were selling "blood for God." However, a lot of people made money out of this so he was released form this post. His life style also may have had something to do with it.

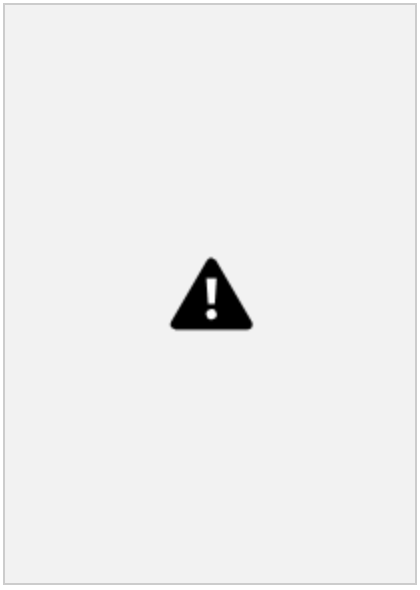
He exchanged scholarly letters with a circle of Swiss humanists and began to study the writings of Erasmus. Zwingli took the opportunity to meet him while Erasmus was in Basel between August 1514 and May 1516. Zwingli's turn to relative pacifism and his focus on preaching can be traced to the influence of Erasmus. In 1516 Erasmus' Greek New Testament came out and he was in love. HE said "nothing but

God will prevent me from acquiring Greek, not for the sake of fame, but for the sake of the scriptures." He hand copied the epistles of Paul and carried them with him everywhere he went.

Entered in Zurich

On 1 January 1519, Zwingli gave his first sermon in Zurich. Deviating from the prevalent practice of basing a sermon on the Gospel lesson of a particular Sunday, he began to read through the Gospel of Matthew giving his interpretation during the sermon, known as the method of lectio continua. This is the beginning of expository preaching. He continued to read and interpret the book on subsequent Sundays until he reached the end and then proceeded in the same manner with the Acts of the Apostles, the New Testament epistles, and finally a few years later the Old Testament. His motives for doing this are not clear, but in his sermons he used exhortation to achieve moral and ecclesiastical improvement which were goals comparable with Erasmian reform. Sometime after 1520, Zwingli's theological model began to evolve into an idiosyncratic form that was neither Erasmian nor Lutheran.

The Plague



In August 1519, Zurich was struck by an outbreak of the plague during which at least one in four persons died. All of those who could afford it left the city, but Zwingli remained and continued his pastoral duties. In September, he caught the disease and nearly died. He described his preparation for death in a poem:

> Thy purpose fulfill:
> nothing can be too severe for me.
> I am thy vessel,
> for you to make whole or break to pieces.

Since, if you take hence
my spirit from this earth,
you do it so that it will not grow evil,
and will not mar
the pious lives of others.

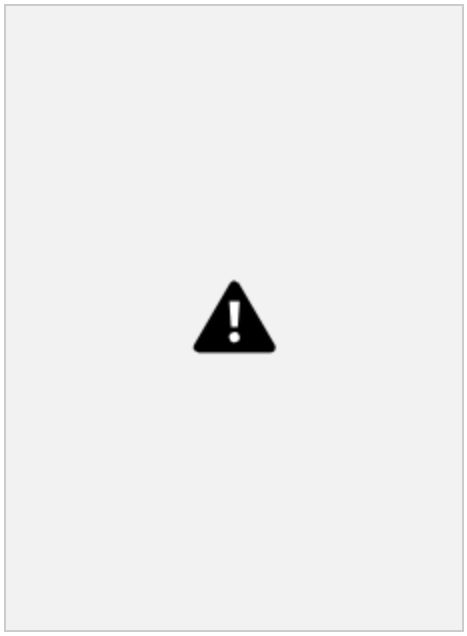
But he pulled out of it and lived.

By 1521 he had good progress with the reformation in Zurich and he was starting to make plans to start a Bible college. He had started gathering young men around him who wanted to study with him. By November of 1521 a young vagabond by the name of Conrad Grebel joined is group. In this group Zwingli praised pacificism and the early Churstian community of goods. HE stated that unbaptized children were not dammed and that infant baptism has no scriptural support.

The Sausage… The first public controversy regarding Zwingli's preaching broke out during the season of Lent in 1522. On the first fasting Sunday, 9 March, Zwingli and about a dozen other participants consciously transgressed the fasting rule by cutting and distributing two smoked sausages This happen in Christoph Froschauer's workshop. Zwingli defended this act in a sermon, which was published on 16 April, under the title (Regarding the Choice and Freedom of Foods).

Where do we get our sources about Conrad Grebel?

Fortunately, 69 letters written by Grebel (as well as three written to him) have been preserved. They were written between September 1517 and July 1525, two to Ulrich Zwingli, one to Thomas Müntzer, one to a co-worker named Andreas Castelberger of Zürich, **56 to Grebel's close friend, former teacher, and brother-in-law, Dr. Joachim von Watt, the reformer of the Swiss city of St. Gall, commonly known as Vadian.**



Most of these letters, however, were written during Grebel's student years at Vienna and Paris, and throw practically no light on the important phase of his life as Anabaptist leader.

Some of the quotes reveal a troubled, struggling young man.

Grebel's Education

Conrad Grebel probably grew up in the castle at Grüningen, a few miles east of Zürich, where his father was magistrate during Conrad's boyhood days. His education must have begun in the Latin School of the Grossmünster church in Zürich, known as the Carolina because it was supposed to have been founded by Charlemagne. Here he received the typical Latin training of the time, quite in the old-fashioned scholastic spirit.

His university career began in October 1514, when he went for the winter semester at the University of Basel, The newer humanism was just beginning to come in. Glarean the outstanding Swiss humanist of the younger school, had just come to Basel and established a bursa, or boarding academy.

Since all the students of the philosophical faculty were required to live in one of the numerous bursae, Grebel joined Glarean's bursa. Fortunately, Glarean was an excellent teacher, and under his tutelage the young Grebel was introduced for the first time into the world of humanist learning and living. Basel was barely beginning to come into its glory as a humanist center. Erasmus had come two months before, in August 1514, to remain through the winter.

It was in this latter group that Conrad Grebel moved during the first semester of study, probably scarcely aware of the significance of his environment. Before he could enter

fully into this new life, his father transferred him to the University of Vienna, where he had secured a four-year stipend for him from the Emperor Maximilian. This troubled Conrad that his father was taking money from France. His father reasoned to his son that he was not "officially: a citizen of Zurich when he was a way to college so then it would be ok. Besides lots of the elite were doing it with their children. (son of Zurich 30)

A constant stream of young Swiss students, particularly from Zürich and eastern Switzerland, had been flowing to Vienna for the preceding five years, partly under the influence of Ulrich Zwingli, who had himself studied there in 1501. The center of the Swiss student group in Vienna was Vadian, a famous Swiss humanist professor from the city of St. Gall, who took it upon himself to become the friend and patron of the Swiss boys.

When Conrad Grebel carne to Vienna to enroll as a student in the summer of 1515, to remain for three years until June 1518, he naturally became a part of the Swiss group gathered around Vadian. Indeed, he soon became an intimate friend and protégé of the great professor. The warmth and intimacy of this friendship is eloquently attested by the 56 extant letters written by Grebel to his "dearest teacher and most faithful friend." Vadian encouraged and promoted the young student in every possible way, recognizing in him outstanding gifts and a splendid personality well qualified for future leadership. He seems to have counted him as the most promising of the Swiss students. Out of this friendship came good fortune for Vadian, for it brought him in the summer of 1519 Conrad's younger sister Martha as wife.

From a letter:

- "Sometimes, Vadian—soon to be my brother-in-law-. I hope—I have a feeling of doom or tragedy. I don't expect to live out a normal life. But when in with you, or the girls, or reading the glorious classics I am happy. I'll miss you in Paris"

Prominent family

Conrad Grebel was born about 1498 as the second of six children to Junker Jakob Grebel and his wife Dorothea Fries. For a century and a half the Grebel family had been one of the leading families of the city of Zürich, one of the small number of wealthy patrician families of the lesser landed nobility who had for years directed the political, economic, and military affairs of the city. The family had always had one or more members in the city council and usually furnished the guild-master for one of the aristocratic merchant guilds. Grebels had frequently served as magistrates, and for two generations before the Reformation no important political event took place in Zürich in which a Grebel did not have part. The most influential of all the Grebels was Jakob Grebel, Conrad's father, a wealthy iron merchant, who reached the peak of a

successful career in politics in the first years of the Reformation. From 1499 to 1512 he served a double term as magistrate (Vogt) of the territory of Grüningen, and from that time on served as a representative of the canton of Zürich at practically all of the meetings of the Swiss Confederacy. His brother Jacob died leaving which would have potentially left everything to him.

When Vadian suddenly left Vienna in June 1518, partly because of the plague which was raging and partly because he had decided to exchange a professorship in Vienna for the life of a physician and scholar in his native St. Gall, Grebel went with him. However, he remained in Zürich but a short time, for his father had secured a royal scholarship from the king of France for his son—one of the two which were being granted annually by Francis I to each Swiss canton— and in September he set out for Paris on what was intended to be the climax of a successful scholastic career. There he spent two further years, certainly in study, although the rather inadequate matriculation records of the university do not contain his name. He went to Paris with high hopes, being particularly happy again to join the bursa conducted by his former Basel teacher, Glarean, for the latter had conducted a bursa for Swiss students in Paris since 1517.

But the high hopes with which Grebel came to Paris were not to be fulfilled. After three months he became involved in a serious quarrel with Glarean and left him, not to return until an entire year had passed. On new years day 1519 Conrad Grebel moved out of the dorm and Glarean forbids his to even come to any lectures. This same day Zwingli gives his first sermon in the Grossmunster. On this day he makes the shocking announcement that he will not be using the Lectern but will be reading through the entire New Testament, starting with the book of Matthew.
And in July 1519 a severe plague broke out in Paris which drove Grebel and his friends away from the city for six months. His troubles were further increased when he became involved in several student brawls.

He also suffered somewhat from illness due to his loose living, and finally his father, becoming incensed at reports he had received, cut him off from funds. He wrote that he felt that the sicknesses that he had was contracted by his sinful life style. But he asked Vadian to keep that to himself.

Even Vadian threatened to break off his friendship and practically ceased writing. Under the blows of fate and circumstance Grebel lost heart and returned home to Zürich, his high hopes disappointed, without having completed his studies or secured any kind of degree. It was the
end of his student days. He determined to seek a reconciliation with his parents and Vadian, and hoped for some career in his home city, although his self-confidence had been badly shaken and his inner life was full of conflict. He signed one of his letters "Conrad Grebel of Zurich, a poor little miserable friend of yours."

At the university he learned Latin, Greek, and probably Hebrew, learned to write Latin well, to appreciate the great classic writers and scholars, but failed to acquire any new

religious concerns or attitudes. He did not become a pagan, for he retained his traditional faith in the church and her dogmas, but neither did he become an Erasmian reformer.

Waiting to go home he needed the money. He wasted to go to the wedding of his sister and Vadian, but the money never came.

3 weeks after he returns to Zurich the town is buzzing with the fact news that the pope wanted Swiss soldiers to fight the French in Northern Italy and for them to burn all of Luther's books. The Zurich council refuses to comply. His father had made plans for Conrad to go to Pisa to study but he net a girl and that changed his plans, probably due to his affection for a girl. Her name was Barbara. Apparently she was beautiful but not of noble birth. He loved her but he was scared to death to tell his family. It is 1521 and he is now 23 years old.

At odds with his father, he finally decided to leave home to seek a career as a proofreader in Basel. But this project likewise did not succeed, and after two months in the printing establishment (August and September 1521) he returned to Zürich, hoping to break down the bitter opposition of his parents to his proposed marriage with a girl below his social status. Failing in this, he suddenly went through with the marriage in February 1522, during one of the frequent absences of his father from home. The break with his family was complete, and was only partially restored by the mediation of one of the city pastors, an associate of Zwingli. This was the same year that Karlstadt made his first Reformation changes in Wittenberg.

1522 Change!

The year 1522 marked an epoch for Conrad Grebel which was to lead to a transformation of his entire life. **Unfortunately, there is a hiatus in his correspondence for nine months during this vital period, but from the middle of the year 1522 it is evident that Grebel was a changed man.**

Now he was deeply interested in the progress of the evangelical cause in Zürich; he became an ardent partisan of Zwingli and his reform program. The spirit and atmosphere as well as the content of his further correspondence are so radically different from what they were before that we must believe that a genuine conversion and renewal of life took place during the spring of 1522. The explanation is not far to seek. **Grebel was won by the powerful Gospel preaching of Ulrich Zwingli**, as many other citizens of Zürich were.

He did not know it…..but he had only four more years to live. Henceforth until his untimely death in the summer of 1526 he was suddenly a new man. He showed a laser sharp purpose direction, and leadership. In the forefront of those who were bringing in the new era, first for a year and a half as an enthusiastic supporter of Zwingli, and then for over two years as the founder of the new Anabaptist

movement.

During these months of 1522 a very close friendship developed between Zwingli and Grebel. Zwingli apparently planned to have Grebel appointed to the university or the theological school, which he expected to establish. Conrad published a poem in one of Zwingli's new books. He and Barbara soon had their first child, A boy they named Theophil meaning "lover of God". He continued to study the bible. And he Began to feel the aches of a genuine calling. But he strived to no the Bible even more. HE did not feel that he knew it well enough.

Writing to Vadian he said:

> "Id take in those blasphemers myself, if I only knew the Scriptures better. Oh my dear Vadian, if only you knew what a burning passion I feel to attack this kind of wolves, to the point that I don't even hold my life dear if I could get a chance to condemn these men publically! I wish everybody would pray for me, that I would be able to get into this work and mean in earnest. I wont say more about it, because a wagonloads of words would not be adequate to express how strongly I feel. Sometime I'll prove that Im serious about this by doing something about it.
> The entire church in St. Gallen, which belongs to Christ. Good bye, Vadian

evangelically. Still living at home Conrad grows very concerned about his mother:

> "She's ungodly toward me, and to my wife she's downright rabid. I actually fear for her salvation unless she puts on Christ and becomes a new creature born again by the divine Spirit. And now the time is drawing close when most people eat the body of Christ unworthily, if they haven't forgiven the trespasses of others in a brotherly spirit." O Christ, send Vadian or someone like him to teach her from your truth to give up such ungodliness, and to teach me patience."

The Roman prelates are still complaining about the reformation in Zurich so the council decides to have a hearing. However, they say that only the Bible will be able to be used I the debate to prove your point.

The first January Debate (Disputation) -- authority of the State.

On Jan 29, 1523, the debate begins. Zwingli had penned 67 thesis against Rome and challenges anyone to prove him wrong. In getting into points of theology the bishop makes an interesting reply. He said that this type of an issue can only be decided by the Church in council not by a city council. Zwingli scorns this position and he says to the audience that should read the bible I ether Latin or German. Village pastor cries out that he does not have enough money to buy a Bible. Conrad leaves with Zwingli the self proclaimed winners. But…. A year later this point would come to a head for Conrad.

Conrad and Barbara have their next son “Joshua because it means “Jehweh is deliverance”. And the Greek form is Jesus. At this time Leo Jud, pastor of St. Peter preaches a powerful sermon and starts to tear down the images in the Church.

The close relationship between Grebel and Zwingli was maintained until the second Zürich disputation of October 1523. In this period the views of the two men must have agreed in all essential respects. For instance, in the matter of tithes, one of the burning issues of the hour, Grebel indicated agreement with Zwingli. During this time he also formed a fast friendship with Felix Manz, young Zürich student just returned from Paris, who had joined the ranks of the Zwinglians, and who was to become in January 1527 the first Anabaptist martyr in Zürich.



The Second Debate October 1523

Beginning, however, with the October 1523 disputation, a cleavage arose between Zwingli and Grebel, which gradually grew wider during the ensuing months, until in the fall of 1524 it led to a complete break.

800 People attended. After the bands of iconoclast were tearing pictures off the wall and making their own reforms. The city council wanted to call a council to decide what changes would be made.
After proving that the Mass was a wicked teaching he went on to say that the city council would decide if they are going to stop doing it. The fateful words were spoken by Zwingli **“The council will discern how the mass should be properly observed.”**

The young bible students didn’t like this answer. They protested and surprisingly Zwingli even agrees with them. But…. the council did not go with Zwingli’s reforms and Zwingli compromised.

Zwingli feeling the tension with the young radicals published papers against them. However on the other side Zwingli started to feel that the Reform was being stopped by the city council so he proclaimed:

That a change would be made by Christmas 1523 or he would “stand condemned as lying by the Word of God.”