

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.”



(Day 7) The Birth of the Anabaptists

The first January Debate (Disputation) On Jan 29, 1523 authority of the State.

The Second Debate October 1523

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

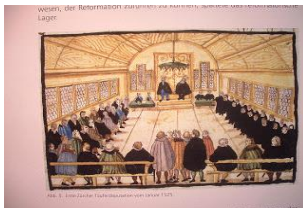
Well.... Christmas came...and no change. It was being to be said around town that actually the majority of the council does not support the changes of the Reformation. Zwingli stills try to work with the council.

The rift widens...



- Zwingli begins to accuse them from the pulpit with strong words: "Satan going about as angels of light,"
- Grebel responded by condemning Zwingli and his assistants as false shepherds not true to the divine calling and the divine Word.

What is the major dividing point between the new Protestant church and the new Anabaptists?"

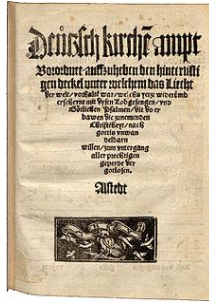


Harold S Bender argues that the primary issue was how the church makes decisions of faith. Should this come from the state or the church?

Bender writes:

- **“Here then was the issue:** should the civil state continue to dictate the faith and life, and worship of the church, or should the pastors and laity themselves carry through the necessary reform in church life according to their God-given convictions?
- ...Fundamentally, the issue was whether the new evangelical movement was to eventuate in a state church under civil control as before, or in a new type of free voluntary organization. Both [Luther](#) and [Zwingli](#), as well as the other reformers, faced this fundamental issue, and decided to continue the medieval state church with a predominant control by the civil state in the life and faith of the church. Perhaps it was a wise and statesmanlike decision, but in terms of absolute principle and plain Scripture teaching it was indefensible.

Writing the different Reformation Leaders:



Those who held to Grebel's position and joined him in the break with Zwingli—a small company of not more than 15 men—did not rush into precipitate action. They met frequently for fellowship and Bible study, Grebel and Manz expounding the Scripture from the Greek and Hebrew text. They meditated, prayed, and waited. But while they waited they sought to find allies outside of Zürich. In this seeking Grebel took the lead. In the summer of 1524 he wrote to [Andreas Karlstadt](#), who apparently had broken with [Luther](#) on somewhat similar grounds as Grebel had with Zwingli

Meanwhile Grebel had heard of another Lutheran preacher who had apparently had a break with [Luther](#)—[Thomas Müntzer](#) of Altstedt in [Saxony](#). Here might be a possible ally. He secured two of Müntzer's booklets, in which he found much that was good, and some that was bad. But on the whole Müntzer seemed promising. So in September 1524 he wrote to Müntzer in the name of his little group, encouraging him to continue in his opposition to Luther, but warning him of several false steps he was making.

Conrad Grebel rebuked Thomas Müntzer for his unbiblical view of using the sword. This shows that nonresistance was part of Anabaptism from the very beginning.

Before the letter was sent off, a Zürich friend returned from Saxony with the information that Müntzer was apparently ready to use violence to promote his program, and on the other hand seemed to be unwilling to dispense altogether with the ancient forms of worship of the church which had no basis in Scripture. So Grebel added an appendix to his letter, chiding Müntzer and expressing concern lest Müntzer should turn out to be a disappointment to those who were dissatisfied with Zwingli and Luther and wanted a true reformation and reconstruction of the church according to the Scripture alone, doing away with all mere customs and traditions of men. Grebel's fears were only too well founded; Müntzer, too, proved to be a broken reed. However, even the hoped-for contact with Müntzer was never established, for Grebel's letter never reached Müntzer,

Over a month goes by without any word from his old friend Vadian. Grebel begins to fear that his old friend is drawing back. He writes:

“They make a plan but not from God, Hope is put in the help and strength of Pharoh, but it will become confusion and a disgrace. He goes on telling of his frustrations with the council.”

Grebel sent Vadian a strong letter where he admits his own weakness but also exhorts Vadian not to compromise:

“Materialism Achieving financial advantage brings us, at best, a temporary happiness in this world, and it can often disguise the naked force which supports it. It is impossible to reconcile the love of money with God’s truth.”



Then Conrad Grebel writes the profound statement:

“I believe the Word of God without a complicated interpretation, and out of this belief I speak. Mat God give you the mercy to submit to His Word without reservation, and obey it. Otherwise, things probably don’t stand as well with us as we might hope. The way is narrow.”

He signs the letter... “Conrad, a nobody, no longer Grebelian.”

***Conrad Grebel’s third baby is born**

January 5, 1525 baby Rachel is born. 5 days later he will be in a debate with the city council over infant baptism.

Building up to the debate, a few days later one of the Radicals Hottingers interrupt a sermon on the topic of infant baptism at one of the Zurich hospitals. Wilhelm Reublin, a village preacher in Wytikon preached a sermon against infant baptism.

The next day Grebel attends a sermon where Zwingli begins to preach politics. HE rallies the people in such a way that the congregation breaks into applause. Conrad writes to Vadian to tell him the latest and to inform that on Tuesday the debate will be conducted. He also tells him that little Rachael is now 8 days old and will be baptized in the “**Rominish bath.**” Conrad was not the only one a few other parents in Zurich did not have their children baptized.



The Baptism Disputation on January 17, 1525.

Harold S Bender says, “The final break came over the question of [infant baptism](#), although this was in reality merely a reflection of the major issue, which was that of the character of the church. The issue was whether the church was to be a universal organization including the entire population by birth and infant baptism as heretofore, or whether it was to be an organization composed of adult believers only who were prepared to assume the full obligations of discipleship.”

The first refusals to baptize infants occurred in the spring of 1524 in the parish of [Wilhelm Reublin](#), and were not due to Grebel's influence. However, Grebel certainly sympathized with the objectors and without doubt supported them.

In comes George Blaurock...

The notes for the meeting are kept and it explains the people who were there. Interestingly it mentions a newcomer to the radicals described simply as “the one in the blue coat.” And that he is unacceptably “wild” in his manner.



So the decision was made to hold a public debate on 17 January 1525, to be followed by a decree of the council on the matter. The story of the debate and its outcome is familiar history. As leader of the dissenting group, Grebel played a major part, assisted by Felix Manz and [George Blaurock](#).

The outcome was two severe council [mandates](#) of 18 and 21 January 1525, ordering a complete cessation of activity by Grebel and Manz and their associates, forbidding the Bible study meetings of the group, and ordering immediate baptism of all unbaptized infants on pain of exile from the canton.



No sooner was the issue raised than the answer was given. The Grebel group would not compromise under any circumstance, for their consciences were bound by the Word of God as much as Luther's was at Worms. They felt that they had taken a Scriptural position which had not been refuted from the Word of God by Zwingli and the city council. The Word of God was to be trampled underfoot by the brutal power of the state. Already on the next day after the first mandate Zwingli knew the outcome, for he wrote to Vadian on 19 January, "**Grebel persists in his stand.**"

The Start

January 21, 1525.

What do you do now?

The dramatic events of the unforgettable gathering have been preserved in The Large Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren.

- “And it came to pass that they were together until anxiety came upon them, yes, they were so pressed in their hearts. Thereupon they began to bow their knees to the Most High God in heaven and called upon him as the Informer of Hearts, and they prayed that he would give to them his divine will and that he would show his mercy unto them. For flesh and blood and human forwardness did not drive them, since they well knew what they would have to suffer on account of it.”
- “After the prayer, George of the House of Jacob stood up and besought Conrad Grebel for God's sake to baptize him with the true Christian baptism upon his faith and

knowledge. And when he knelt down with such a request and desire, Conrad baptized him, since at that time there was no ordained minister to perform such work.”



What do you do now?

The story of the Anabaptist movement from this point on is familiar. The little group that had met on the evening of 21 January 1525 went out from their meeting with a sense of divine mission and endowment upon them. Fearing neither Zwingli nor the council, they went from house to house and into the towns and villages of the countryside teaching and preaching and urging men and women everywhere to join them in their new fellowship. The response was remarkable. In spite of repeated arrests and fines and imprisonments, the movement grew. Apparently it was not to be stopped.

To the Mission field....

The very next day the new radicals head over to the next town called Zollikon.

Conrad begins to preach to them. He reads them the city mandate against the “re-baptizers.” They start baptizing offering them daily communion and calls it a “meal of brotherhood.”

But after just a few days Conrad goes out as an apostle. He left his new wife and his three little children. While he is away, only 9 days after the first rebaptisms in Zurich a mass arrest happens in Zollikon and many are taken to prison in Zurich including George Blaurock and Felix Mantz.



Early Missions Continue...

Leaving the work in Zürich to less known coworkers, he set out on a mission to surrounding cities to win pastors and leaders to his cause. Several weeks in February 1525 were spent in [Schaffhausen](#) where it appeared for a time as though he might win [Sebastian Hofmeister](#), the city pastor.

A revival hits this town and many are converted and baptized. A young zealous preacher named [Wolfgang Ulimann](#) responded and he asked Conrad to baptize him by immersion in the Rhine river (in January!) with nothing on! Forced to leave the city, he returned to Zürich for a secret visit. Then followed a call to St. Gall about Easter time, where one of his associates, [Wolfgang Ulimann](#), whom he had baptized in the Rhine near Schaffhausen in February, was having remarkable success, and where he also perhaps hoped to find at least toleration at the hands of Vadian. Meanwhile the new converts back in Zollikon recanted from their recanting and started to study the Bible again.

George Blaurock was released from prison because he was not a citizen and banished. Felix Mantz miraculously escaped. They both got busy at work preaching again!

April 1525 Mission to St Gall!

A powerful move of God broke out in St Gall. So many people respond that he begins to preach openly and the whole town starts to make changes. By Psalm Sunday they no longer have the images process down the lane into the Church. Instead followed Conrad Grebel to a dramatic gorge on the Satter River nearby to be baptized “into the Kingdom of God”. He remembered that Zwingli said that people were not ready for the whole Gospel.... He sees proof that by grace they were! 500 were baptized.

And in a week 300 more of Balhasar Hubmaier congregation was baptized by Wilhelm Reublin!

Conrad left St Gall and left **Eberli Bolt** in his place. Conrad’s old friend invited Bolt to dinner and kindly tells him that he has to leave town. At the same time Ulimann starts preaching outside the city gate and a crowd forms.

Conrad Sneaks Back Home

Conrad secretly meets with the newly escaped Felix Manz. Feeling the pressure and the danger of being in Zurich Conrad makes plans that he must leave again. His young wife however, can take no more. A “Son of Zurich” puts it :

“As she sees him preparing to leave after dark on Sunday evening, she threatens to report Felix to the authorities. Conrad steel feels that he must go. Tearing himself away from he urgent pleas, he starts for the door. In desperation she dashes out another and burst into Jacob Grebel’s quarters, crying that Conrad is leaving again.”

At this point it seems that his wife left the movement and went back to the reformed church.

Betrayal!

Now on the run Conrad Grebel finds out that his old friend Vadian turned the people of St. Gall against him and even wrote a book against the “Baptizers.” He also hears the terrible news of what Thomas Muntzer did and how 5000 of the peasants were killed at the by Phillip of Hesse. **Soon after Eberli Bolt who was banished from St Gall was capture by the Catholics and Burned at the stake. (The first Anabaptist Martyr)**

Conrad writes a rebuking letter to Vadian

- **The letter ends “The teaching of the Lord has been given for this this purpose of being put into practice.**
- **Conrad did not know but this would be his final letter to Vadian. His letters were now complete.**

By Pentecost Soldiers had come in to St Gall and they demanded that Zwingli’s book on baptism be read publically. Someone in the crowd shouts out “Let us here Conrad Grebel’s explanation too!” They had a city council and as expected Anabaptism was outlawed.

Conrad Grebel Keeps Preaching!

By July, 1525 Conrad headed Gruningen to the town that he grew up from age 2-13. He goes early Sunday morning to the city Church and begins to preach. A large crowd shows up. Eventually the parish minister shows up and a dispute of infant baptism begins. (pg 126)

After a successful mission there he returned to the neighborhood of Zürich and spent most of the summer preaching with considerable success in the territory of [Grünigen](#) (just east of Zürich), working much with the village pastors.

Back in Prison!

In October 1525 Conrad Grebel he was taken captive together with Felix Manz and George Blaurock and put in prison in Zürich on an indeterminate sentence. (Read the details of the capture on page 130 of Son of Zurich)

Felix Manz was captured earlier on the far East side of Switzerland in a city called Chur. A very interesting letter surrounding that arrest states:

The letter which the magistrate of Chur sent to the Zürich council on July 13, 1525: "For a long time we have had among us one who calls himself Felix Manz. The same has created much trouble and discord among our people by **baptizing old people and corner preaching**, to such an extent that we ordered him to leave the city. After this he returned and did as before, disregarding the public proclamation in the church forbidding adult baptism on penalty of death, loss of honor and loss of property. Therefore we arrested him and held him a few days. But because he is an obstinate and recalcitrant person we released him from prison and because he is one of yours we have sent him to you, with the friendly request that you look after him and keep him in your territory, so that we may be rid of him and our people remain quiet, and that in case of his return, we are not compelled to take severe measures against him." (Global Anabaptists Mennonite Encyclopedia)

Escape from Prison!

By God's grace the entire group escaped in March 1526, after six months' imprisonment. But the lifelong imprisonment lasted only 14 days, for on 21 March 1526, all the prisoners escaped by means of a rope through an unlocked window. Grebel, Manz, and Blaurock at first were unwilling to take advantage of the opportunity but finally let themselves be persuaded. The drawbridge happened to be down; so they all got over the moat without any trouble. Two of the prisoners, William Exel of Wallis and Fridli Abyberg of Schwyz, elected to remain in the city and were caught again; through them the whole story of the escape became known and was entered upon the records. It is interesting to note their report that when the fleeing prisoners discussed whither they might go, some of them humorously suggested, "Let us go to the red Indians across the sea."

Preaching Activity Resumed Immediately:

Whither the prisoners actually fled is not known in detail. Fourteen days after the escape Manz baptized a woman at Embrach, which lies north of Zürich in the county of Kyburg. In June 1526, Blaurock and Manz appeared in [Grüningen](#) according to an official report from that district. Grebel, however, was not with them. On 12 October 1526, [Felix Manz](#), together with [Jakob Schupfelberg](#) of Grüningen, was captured in St. Gall, but apparently released again, for on 3 December 1526, Manz and Blaurock were arrested together in Grüningen. After a month's imprisonment in Zürich, Manz, as is well known, was executed by drowning on 5 January 1527 as the first martyr of the Anabaptists in Zürich.

During the winter in prison, Grebel evidently succeeded in preparing a brief defense of the position of the group on baptism in reply to the arguments advanced by Zwingli. He had tried during the summer before to accomplish this and to find a printer, but was frustrated in his intentions. It seems that after his escape from prison he succeeded in finding a printer and circulating a small number of the booklets. No copy is extant, but Zwingli attempted to refute the booklet in detail in 1527.

Sunday of October 1525



Conrad Grebel, and Felix Manz head out to hold an open-air meeting in town of [Grüningen](#). However, earlier that same day George Blaurock took over another church in the town of Hinwil and was once again arrested.

Tragically, as the soldiers were marching George Blaurock to prison they heard about the open air meeting that Manz and Grebel were intending on having. The soldiers quickly gathered reinforcement and arrested Conrad Grebel and both were put in prison in [Grüningen](#). (Felix Manz slipped away in the confusion, but was arrested 2 weeks later.)

Another debate in Zurich on Infant Baptism November 6-8

(Michael Sattler was in the audience watching the debate.)

Grebel, Manz, Blaurock sentenced to prison for life.

Miraculous Escape Two Weeks Later:

One night after they were given their cold ration of bread and water they noticed that a window is open. One of the men gave the idea of escape. At first Grebel, Manz, Blaurock say that they will just stay there and die but when one begins to gather wood and make a way to the window, they all join in with the escape. The rope that was used to bring them in is still there and so they use that to climb their way down. Standing there at the bottom in a dry moat one of them asks "now what!" Someone actually jokes that they should go to the "red Indians across the ocean."

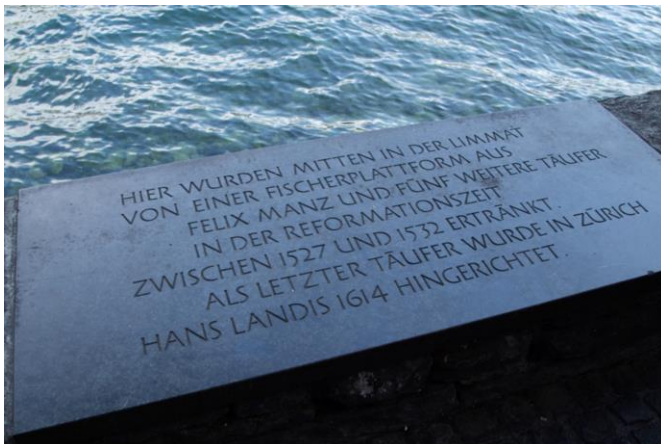
They cross the drawbridge that is straggly in the down position and knocked on the gate. By miracle the watchman is a brother to one of the captives. He takes some of the Anabaptists in but apparently his wife screamed and they were arrested again. but suddenly the constable checked into the—Conrad, Manz and Blaurock knew better and in the commotion they slipped away into the murky night. Zurich would never see Conrad again.

Death of Conrad Grebel:

Worn and weary, in ill health from the long imprisonment and the hardships he had been compelled to undergo, Grebel sought to find a safer field of labor and possibly the rest and quiet which he so sorely needed by going to the region of Maienfeld in the canton of [Grisons](#), where his oldest sister had been living for some time. There is no record of his movements or activities in this region, except for the brief statement in from a manuscript that shortly after his arrival in Maienfeld he died (possibly) of the plague. Nothing is known of his burial place, nor of the exact time of his death, although it must have taken place about July 1526. (Approximately at age 28)



A few years Later Zwingli had Conrad Grebel's father executed.



December 3, 1526 Felix Manz and George Blaurock are once again arrested for Wellenburg prison.

Felix Manz Sentenced to Death!

January 5, 1527



"Because contrary to Christian order and custom he had become involved in **Anabaptism**, had accepted it, taught others, and become a leader and beginner of these things because he confessed having said that he wanted to gather those who wanted to **accept Christ and follow Him**, and unite himself with them through **baptism**, and let the rest **live according to their faith**, so that he and his followers **separated themselves** from the Christian Church and were about to raise up and prepare a sect of their own under the guise of a Christian meeting and church; because he **had condemned capital punishment**, and in order to increase his following had boasted of certain revelations from the Pauline Epistles. But since such doctrine is harmful to the unified usage of all **Christendom**, and leads to offense, insurrection, and **sedition against the government**, to the shattering of the common peace, brotherly love, and civil cooperation and to all evil, Manz shall be delivered to the executioner, who shall tie his hands, put him into a boat, take him to the lower hut, there strip his bound hands down over his knees, place a stick between his knees and arms, and thus push him into the water and let him perish in the water; thereby he shall have atoned to the law and justice. . . . His property shall also be confiscated by my lords."

After a month's imprisonment in Zürich, Manz, as is well known, was executed by drowning on 5 January 1527 as the first martyr of the Anabaptists in Zürich.

George Blaurock was treated as a non-resident, and as it could not be proved that he had violated the law of 6 March in the canton of Zürich he fared better. His sentence read:

Georg vom Hause Jakob, called Blaurock, who as a true instigator and chief agent of Anabaptism has previously been held in the dungeon of my lords and in hope of future improvement and that he would cease his erroneous plan of Anabaptism was graciously released, since his mere word was accepted without an oath as he wished it, yet he disregarded this; and although it was told him in clear words that if he ever returned into the realm and territory of our lords he would receive the penalty he deserved, he has nevertheless come back, and, even though he says he has not baptized since then, he has accused the preachers of doing violence to and falsifying Scripture in spite of the disputations, whereas rebaptism is altogether in opposition to and prejudicial to the Scripture as well as to common good usage, which has been preserved unanimously throughout all Christendom, and (rebaptism) has thus far created only offense and insurrection, he should for this seditious character, meeting in mobs and misconduct against Christian government and Christian authority be mercifully sentenced thus; the executioner shall be ordered to remove his clothing to the waist, tie his hands, and then beat him with rods from

the Fish Market down the street to the gate in Niederdorf, . . . he is then to be banished under oath, the penalty for return being death by drowning.



Anabaptist History (Day 8) The Swiss Brethren

What Happened to Zwingli?



Zwingli dreamed of uniting with Luther but there was one thing that they just could not agree on: What happens to the bread in communion?

Luther regarded Zwingli as a *Schwarmer* (a fanatic). Luther insisted that they had to take the Lord's Word's "This is My body" literally. Zwingli maintained that this has to be understood as a metaphor (as in "I am the Vine" and "I am the Bread of Life"). After the resurrection, Christ ascended bodily into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God. Christ is omnipresent only in His Divinity, not in His humanity. "The Spirit gives life, the flesh is of no avail."