

# Anna Reinhard Zwingli – ‘Apostolic Dorcas’, ‘dearest housewife’, ‘angel-wife’, ‘ziel van mijn ziel’ and ‘mater dolorosa of the Reformation’: From woman to valued citizen



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A biography of Anna Zwingli might be compiled by skipping from one pinnacle point in her life to another. However, much of her story is relative to what is known about her husbands John Meier von Knonau and Ulrich Zwingli. But Anna was more than simply the wife of a lesser noble or a famous reformer. Her life story was also intertwined with development of the Reformation in Zurich and the impact it had upon her and her family. The Reformation did not only bring about religious reform but also had an impact on women and their ministerial roles. Anna was indeed a woman of the Reformation but also the wife of a reformer. Together with other women of the Reformation and of Zurich she served its cause from within its gender confines overshadowed by her husband, Ulrich Zwingli. The role of woman/women remains a contentious issue for many in the Christian church.

## Introduction

Among the many women involved during the Reformation two remarkable groups stand out: women of royalty and high aristocracy<sup>1</sup> and the wives of leaders of the Reformation.

Although documentation on prominent female figures during the Reformation can be found, little is known about the lesser female figures during this time. These include the wives of well-known reformers. History focuses on the role of male reformers, but includes little about the women who wrote letters, hymns, debated theological matters, and agitated for reform in their own communities and congregations. While we gain many insights from their perspective, the available information is not as extensive as that of their husbands. For this reason it is not a simple matter to piece together the life of some of these women. Hence, when, for example, Hermione Lee<sup>2</sup> (2005) in her biography of Virginia Woolf confronted a lack of information, she began to fill in the gaps with snippets of information and incidental references.<sup>3</sup> Walsh (1999) cautions against lapsing into the style of standard male biographical articles and suggests a fresh approach to the presentation of a multi-gendered cultural history.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, a female biography must be about the woman taking her story into consideration. For Gunn and Faire (2012:4) it is method and not so much research that shapes the knowledge gleaned. This epistemological link is the cue for this author who finds himself limited by the relatively sparse availability of material about Anna Reinhard/Meier von Knonau/Zwingli.

Anna left no known documented works or papers, only the story of her life. Reduction to a simple life-story would neither take into account the complexity of events in her life nor her background, which includes her first marriage to a disinherited aristocrat and mercenary. The usual emphasis is on her second marriage to a Protestant reformer. But both marriages ended in widowhood for her. It was the socio-political approach to war that led her husbands into war, though Ulrich Zwingli was also motivated by the reformational dynamics of Zurich and that of the wider Reformation.

1. Obviously some promoted while others opposed the Reformation choosing to support Rome. Among the latter are: Catherine de Medici (1519–1589), Elizabeth de Valois (1545–1568), Marguerite de Valois (1553–1615), Renata, Duchess of Ferrara (1510–1574), Catherine Parr (1512–1548), Lady Jane Grey (1536/7–1554). Among the promoters of the Reformation are: Catherine von Bora (Luther) (1499–1552), Idelette de Bure (Calvin) (died 1549), Anna Reinhard (Zwingli) (1484–1538), Anna Adlischweiler (Bullinger) (c. 1504–1564).

2. Hermione Lee wrote a major biography of Virginia Woolf and is judge for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction.

3. ‘When she began the work of constructing a life of the English artist Roger Fry, Virginia Woolf posed a question which all historians would recognize: “How can one make a life out of six cardboard boxes full of tailors’ bills, love letters and old picture postcards?”’ (Gunn & Faire 2012:89).

4. Walsh (1999:147, fn. 303), while appreciative of Bainton’s ‘Women of the Reformation’ series, is critical of his patronising manner, his uncertain stance as to their status, and his failure to address sexism, misogyny and subordination; therefore she prefers Douglass (1974).

This article also takes cognisance that 'good biography need not be about aristocrats, kings or generals, but it should have a purpose which defines the central character as significant, even if it is about an obscure figure like Martin Guerre [*in this instance, Anna Zwingli*]' (Jeansonne 1991:246). Anna Zwingli's purpose is easily defined: she was a devoted wife to her husbands, a mother to her children, a matron of the church, and who, after being widowed the second time, retreated into obscurity. In this light there is little to suppose that her life was not much more than a history of events lived in the shadow of her husbands and of the city of Zurich. But it is precisely this contextualisation that gives fuller meaning to her story (Hiebert 1984).

## Wives of the Reformation

The wives of reformers<sup>5</sup> (and other leaders of the Reformation) served as examples and their homes became models for marriage,<sup>6</sup> relationships<sup>7</sup> and Christian confession. Although these women/wives shared in the rediscovery of spiritual equality (*cognitio dei*) and 'the priesthood of all believers', Stjerna's (2009:32) suggestion that it was so '*at least in principle*' (cursive added for emphasis) begs the question if there really was a reformation for women. It was a time when women emerged from houses and convents, transcended status<sup>8</sup> accorded by birth, and emerged as figures inextricably linked with the work of the gospel. This had an impact on visible and invisible ecclesial and societal structures (*cognitio humanis*). At all levels of society it was no more only aristocrat or bourgeois ties that linked women to degrees of prominence but for the first time recognition of their person. Christian women increasingly gained the respect of the community in particular as Christian virtues manifested in their social work.

It was the gospel that brought about a new dispensation for women<sup>9</sup> in a misogynous age when witches were considered female, definitely not male (Nelson 1979). In Swiss cantons Zwingli's powerful sermons challenged monastic ways of life and celibacy and seclusion from the world, proclaiming instead the 'sacredness of daily ordinary life' of motherhood and marriage (Stjerna 2009:33). It was also common knowledge that many leaders of the Reformation, such as Erasmus,<sup>10</sup> Leo Jud, Heinrich Bullinger and the Anabaptist

Felix Manz, were the illegitimate children of Catholic priests. From the convent of Königsfeld Zwingli received a letter informing him of the changes the gospel brought in the lives of the women,<sup>11</sup> awakening within them desires of serving God in their families rather than being secluded in a cloister (Spalding 1875:178). Katherin von Zimmern was among the nuns who heard Zwingli preach. She became evangelical and married Eberhard von Rischach in 1525 despite her family's objections that he was not her social equal (Plummer 2012:239). Sometimes marriages were kept secret,<sup>12</sup> though evangelicals especially had to be married (Furcha 1992:137; cf. Plummer 2012:257).

Women also entered into societies in which gender equality was unheard of. For a pastor's wife equality did not extend to teaching and general ministry. Her role was supportive<sup>13</sup> (Plummer 2012:216). Biblical arguments and interpretations of the day established the societal roles of women, by and large domesticating them. Former monastic freedoms, such as hierarchical authority, independence in preaching and teaching and decision making were to a large degree forfeited. Elsewhere the Italian Renaissance, for instance, laicised education though male dominance still prevailed. The 16th century continued the practice of *cortigiana*<sup>14</sup> (Fleischer 1981:114 fn. 34).

Bainton (1971:14, 216f.) suggests that the more visible and enduring impact of the Reformation is most evident through mostly uneducated, and by implication unknown, women who were steeped in the Word of God and a new approach to marriage. The salvation of God liberated sinners, men and women, and imputed the righteousness of Christ (Gordon 2002:60). The story of the Reformation was of redeemed women and men who then fitted into a new evidential order.

Women who escaped from convents<sup>15</sup> and got married bore a double stigma. Though competent for the task many married beneath their social standing (Stjerna 2009:35). Non-aristocratic pastors' wives were mostly from bourgeois families. These families sometimes held, to some extent, a degree of influence in cities. Wives of scholars<sup>16</sup> often took charge of the family's financial affairs in addition to their

5.'Matrimony was, in almost all cases, the dénouement of the drama which signaled the zeal for reformation'; it was acquiescence to carnality (Spalding 1875:176, 180).

6.See a comparison of the Lutheran and reformed theologies of marriage and their impact on social standing (Douglass 1974).

7.Not everyone was of the opinion that the Reformation was the work of God (Spalding 1875:102–103).

8.One way of determining social classes politically was: the First Estate (the clergy), the Second Estate (the nobility) and the Third Estate (residents of chartered towns) (Wiesner-Hanks 2013:104).

9.Early Christian history is replete with stories of ascetic lifestyles of both men and women and the complete break of family ties but with the added benefits of being allowed to further education, travel, become socially involved in works of compassion (Clark 1981). Luther hesitated about marriage, the process of reform was still ongoing, matters of celibacy and marriage still needed more thought. Nevertheless, thousands of Catholic priests, nuns and monks got married between the 1520s and the early 1540s with provost Bartholomäus Bernhardt, Augustinian monk and priest, serving as example leading thousands of priests and monks deciding to marry (Plummer 2012:1, 51 fn. 3).

10.Zwingli got a copy of Erasmus' New Testament in Greek in 1516 and memorised Paul's epistles. In the process he discovered the discrepancy between preaching and teaching of the Catholic Church and the Bible (Reeves 2009:68–69, 76).

11.'During the summer of 1523 the attack on monasticism was starting to take effect: the Dominican nuns at Oetenbach, following a sermon by Leo Jud, expressed their desire to be released from their vows' (Gordon 2002:61).

12.Secretcy was often attributed to 'wilde Ehe'. The status of a 'priest's whore' (Pfaffenhur) was a respectable one in Switzerland (Potter 1976:79) and commonly tolerated. Elsewhere, clergy wives in similar circumstances between 1521 and 1534 suffered enormously stigmatised by the public in general and sometimes by the very people they were serving as they struggled for identity (Plummer 2012:212f.). It is implied that their bastard children suffered similarly (Plummer 2012:16).

13.Plummer (2012:216) also notes that many women refused marriage in the light of a reduced social participation.

14.Female courtesan and often applied to a court-mistress or common prostitute whose clients included members of a royal court. Consequences of reformed preaching were the emergence of issues associated with this new freedom to get married. It led to problems such as 'self-divorce' practised by some women who tired of their husbands or sought lovers (Plummer 2012:279, 286) and particularly problematic for evangelical clergy who needed to be married.

15.Some convents became little more than hotels, stripped of relics and images (Reeves 2009:78). Nuns sometimes did not have a personal choice whether to leave the convent or not. City councils that reformed often closed down cloisters and convents entirely and often the nuns had to be absorbed into the social fabric of society (Plummer 2012:241).

16.Zwingli's party stopped at the house of the dean of the cathedral at Strasburg, Pastor Matthias Zell. The intelligence of the pastor's wife impressed Zwingli such that he declared that she ranked higher than many of the learned doctors (Grob 1883:149).

matronly duties of mainly housework and caring for the children (Fleischer 1981:115). A prototype of the modern pastoral couple was, for instance, modelled by the childless Anabaptist<sup>17</sup> Katharina Schütz Zell of Strasbourg. She served as an equal partner in marriage participating in public/ecclesial/family life more than most and is known for her lectures, letter-writing and polemical debates.<sup>18</sup> According to her, clergy had a right to marry and lay responsibility included men and women not only to preach the gospel but also to minister the sacraments (Stjerna 2009:131). Stjerna (2009:131f.), however, questions the definition of Zell's role as a gender-defined, masculine interpretation of femininity. Nevertheless, the point is that the role of women was seminally being formulated within the church, at home and in society. One of the great liberations was that marriage, which had been institutionalised by the Reformation, introduced marital intimacy without the stigma of guilt (Fleischer 1981:118).

Far from being house-bound, many wives of the Reformation took on administrative tasks and joined in theological discussions (Stjerna 2009). An emergent move came about as women agitated for, and defended their right to, pursue vocations beyond their station assigned to them by birth, views of marriage beyond that of 'Kinder, Kirche, Küche, und Mann' (Nielsen 1999). The ideal model of the evangelical and reformed parsonage was taking shape as woman's experiences became synthesised into visible theology.<sup>19</sup> One of the most prominent women in the spotlight of this reformation was Catherine von Bora Luther. She not only managed her household and supported her husband but also offered generous hospitality. She also raised their children and often other children not of her own, all the while pursuing her own spiritual growth and supporting the Reformation (Stjerna 2009:67). Some significant contemporaries included: Ursula von Münsterberg, Argula von Grumbach, Wibrandis Rosenblatt, Katherine Melancthon,<sup>20</sup> Olympia Fulvia Morata (prodigy, humanist scholar) while not as prominent, no less important was that of Anna Zwingli.

Catholic priests and their supporters did not take these matters and the loss of their congregants to the Protestant cause lightly.<sup>21</sup> It was regarded as an unmitigated disaster when the general abolition of confession, penance, abstinence and vows took place claiming it gave rise to unbridled sensual social carnality (Anderson 2011:234). Zurich countered this accusation as the city was instrumental in the early development of public platforms where women could

raise their grievances before the church and the city council. In Zurich the marriage court, or so-called 'Ehegericht' and its 'Eheordnungen',<sup>22</sup> came about in 1525 and it was soon emulated in other cities (Furcha 1992:139).

It was into this world that Anna Reinhard had been born and in which she, a woman, shaped her life as a human being, wife, mother and citizen of Zurich and Switzerland. She was born into a dynamic society that was changing, being shaped by political events and the winds of change brought about by the Reformation.

## Anna Reinhard's life unfolds in Zurich

### Anna Reinhard and John (Hans) Meier von Knonau: before the prevailing winds of the reformation

Anna, daughter of Oswald Reinhard<sup>23</sup> and Elizabeth (Wynzuern) Reinhard was born sometime in 1487. Her first husband at 17<sup>24</sup> (1504), was a Junker,<sup>25</sup> John Meyer/Meier von Knonau. He was stigmatised because he married beneath his station to the beautiful Anna (Good 1901:6). Consequently, John was disinherited by his father.

Despite his efforts to block his son's appointment, John was appointed to the Zurich city council (1511) (Good 1901:6-7). Apparently, for some time Anna was able to dress in a manner fitting the rank of her husband, but it seems that shortage of money became an issue. To remedy this John von Knonau followed in Swiss canton tradition. He joined the army as a mercenary,<sup>26</sup> a lucrative option. Campaigning eventually took its toll. He returned gravely ill to Anna, leaving a son and two daughters when he died.<sup>27</sup>

Anna von Knonau, like other widows, struggled to make ends meet. Some relief came in the form of her 3-year-old son Gerold/Gerald whose physical beauty attracted his grandfather's attention. Gerold enjoyed his grandfather's favour staying with him until the latter's death 9 years later.<sup>28</sup> There is some indication that Anna and her daughters benefitted from this new relationship and that a degree of reconciliation came about. Nevertheless, the point is that Anna and her children survived the tragedy of

22. This dealt with women in society, function and place and with remarriage. Men and women were seemingly equally protected by the law in Zurich in these matters. For instance, pre-marital sex was usually seen in the light of leading to marriage, if not suitable fines and punishments were imposed (Furcha 1992:139-140). Disciplinary records regarding the sacrament such as the Lord's Supper showed the ignorance of laity and clergy alike and the theological controversy of the 'is' (presence/non-presence) (Gäbler 1986:131-138). In addition life was proscribed by rules and regulations pertaining to dancing, excessive eating, drinking and public amusement.

23. Landlord of the Little Horse Inn.

24. Grob (1883:163) claims she was 20 years old.

25. Power at a local level had the most impact upon people's lives. Wiesner-Hanks (2013:121-122) gives some insight into the impact upon the lives of people of power at a local level.

26. Mercenaries earned far more than ordinary soldiers.

27. Margaret, Agatha and Gerold.

28. Care of young Gerold was continued by his step-grandmother (Good 1901:8).

17. The Anabaptist leaders of Rottenburg were arrested together with their wives, showing the courage and commitment of the wives to their husbands and the Anabaptist movement itself (Estep 1996:66).

18. Following the Anabaptist approach of 'the higher revelation in the New Testament that that of the Old [Testament]' (Estep 1996:64). Zwingli and the city council of Zurich were united in their offence against the Anabaptists (Estep 1996:51).

19. This statement may be challenged by a feminist such as Walsh (1999:157-158) supported by a host of references of the same chapter (1998:157-166).

20. Her husband Philip called his home 'a little church of God'.

21. Both sides had some choice words for the other: Catholic priests denounced their opponents as heretical soul-thieves and soul-murderers, while the evangelicals replied with such choice bits as flesh-sellers, blood-suckers, mass-men, and idolaters (Potter 1976:400 fn. 4). Not least according blame to one side or another for the continued socio-theological-political military conflicts.



bereavement and she did so without a hint of scandal or lasting evidence of compromise. She managed to ride the storm of estrangement with her in-laws and, to their credit, her daughters accepted the favouritism shown to their male sibling.

## Anna Reinhard/Meier von Knonau and Ulrich Zwingli: Winds of reform come to Zurich

### Anna and the prevailing views of ecclesial marriages

Unlike many other wives, Anna had not been a nun but she had been married before. She did not wrestle with ecclesial views of celibacy and clerical marriages. As former ecclesiastics disavowed the Middle Ages' elevation of marriage as sacrament and took on marital vows, such marriages became more commonplace. This was significant as marriage brought into play a redefinition of reformed ecclesial roles for former priests and nuns and a realignment of personal status in the community.<sup>29</sup> Gender and social expectations inevitably came to the fore and needed to be addressed (Plummer 2012:2). These matters were the stuff of debate in taverns, imperial meetings and civic chambers: it was wide-ranging and robust.<sup>30</sup> A characteristic was that it was by and large neglected by theologians who focussed more on the theological implications than on the practical (Plummer 2012:2). But it was more than simply adopting the Protestant faith publicly. Though the reform process took time it began to crystallise. Priest or nun, layperson or widow, the foundational element in marriage was to adopt a biblical pattern. That is what unfolded for Anna during this time in Zurich. Immediate Christian liberty with regard to women would, however, take some generations yet.<sup>31</sup>

### Anna von Knonau and the preacher

Anna von Knonau sought in particular to attend church every time a red-headed, 35-year-old preacher named Ulrich Zwingli (Reeves 2009:69) visited to preach. He had come to Zurich after the death of his grandfather. In 1519 he was the newly installed 'Leutpriester' in the most important pulpit in Zurich the Grossmünster.<sup>32</sup> Though cautious by nature, he was to become Luther's foil and Calvin's forerunner, a representative of early reformed teaching (Gordon, Baschera & Moser 2014:4).

He soon faced the ravages of the plague (1519). Although he contracted the disease,<sup>33</sup> he continued pastoral duties to visit the sick after he recovered. His 'Plague Hymn' reveals his

29. See Plummer's (2012:236) Table 6.2. 'Social status of husbands of former nuns, 1522–1530'.

30. Indeed the debate focussed on why would sexually active priests/monks/nuns want to disturb the status quo of concubinage for public marriage risking incurring Rome's wrath? (Plummer 2012:3). Sexual misconduct among clergy was well-known.

31. One is reminded of the Ghandi's inclusion of women in politics, the unconditional participation in Mao Zedong's communist party (Chandran 2009/2010:288).

32. Heinrich Bullinger took on the office of chief preacher in the Grossmünster from 1531 to 1571.

33. Reeves (2009:70) tries to draw a parallel between Luther's hit by lightning fourteen years earlier and Zwingli's brush with death through contracting the plague, claiming '[w]hen he recovered, he was a changed man, a man on a mission to do something bold for God'.

comprehension of God's sovereignty and his readiness to serve God in any circumstance (Locher 1981:152). It was soon apparent that Zwingli preached on a variety of subjects<sup>34</sup> and soon the new theological winds blowing from Wittenberg stirred in Zurich. What resulted was not mere protest: it was true reformation<sup>35</sup> (Gordon, Baschera & Moser 2014:2). His preaching in particular addressed the oppression of the poor, usury, and unseemly dress, the abuse of alcohol and mercenary practices.<sup>36</sup> Not least was his support of young men getting married,<sup>37</sup> since he saw no command in Scripture to forbid it; rather, it commended marriage. He also advocated that to avoid marriage was to avoid 'great pains' and stated that there was risk in remaining single as well as in getting married (Furcha 1992:135 fnn. 18–19). 'Zwingli's ideal woman would be "so pleasant in nature as to soften a rough man"' (Furcha 1992:136 fn. 20).

The proximity of Anna's house, (named Hoefli/Höfli) to the parsonage made it a convenient venue for choir practice and Latin schooling (Baiter 1900:161). Again it was Anna's young son, Gerold, who was instrumental in drawing attention, although indirectly to his mother. Gerold impressed Zwingli at the church seminary<sup>38</sup> with his keenness to study. Consequently, he began to coach Gerold in Greek and Latin and in the process became a father figure to the boy. But there was more to the boy than the makings of a scholar. Gerold's piety and gentle disposition led Zwingli to believe that it implied good home training from a pious mother (Grob 1883:163) who, by further implication, was imbibing the biblical teaching she was receiving from the newly installed pastor.

## Ulrich and Anna Zwingli married but facing controversy

### Secret marriage

Anna and Ulrich got married in 1522. Despite his public approval of marriage he was secretive about his own and did not reveal<sup>39</sup> it publicly for almost 2 years (Plummer 2012:63). Nothing is known about Anna's views on this matter, but as her first marriage raised the ire of her husband's family, the second could raise the same from the Protestant Christian family in Zurich. Good (1901:10) is of the opinion that in all

34. He boldly replaced the mass by preaching instead through the Gospel of Matthew in 1519. After the First Zurich Disputation (1523) between Zwingli and delegates from the Bishop of Constance the City Council of Zurich voted to become Protestant.

35. There is no doubt the support of prominent families such as the Roists was vital to lasting change (Gordon, Baschera & Moser 2014:4).

36. As a young chaplain he was disgusted at 'the sale of flesh and blood for gold/trading blood for gold' by the Swiss confederation as was evident on the battlefields (Potter 1976:39; Wiesner-Hanks 2013:181). He in fact proposed missionary outreach to the Mohammedans as an alternate to war (Locher 1981:115–116).

37. Zwingli had petitioned the Bishop of Constance on behalf of 11 fellow priests for permission to get married. This was denied.

38. For its beginnings see Reeves (2009:77f.).

39. This seems not to have been too uncommon. For instance Paul Speratus kept his marriage to Anna Fuchs in Salzburg in 1517 secret for about four years (Plummer 2012:70 fn. 82). When it was eventually revealed publicly in 1524 it apparently caused greater commotion in Toggenburg than in Zurich (Good 1901:10). Plummer also shows that clerical marriage was forcefully advocated by most reformers rather it came about as priests/clergy interpreted Luther's teachings and acted accordingly (Plummer 2012:131f.).

likelihood Ulrich did not want to add even more controversy to his already laden agenda and risk public reaction to the marriage of a priest in 1523.<sup>40</sup> But it seems also probable that insights into the biblical reasons for marriage and celibacy still had to percolate into the fabric of the believing community of Zurich in the light of centuries of Roman-Catholic tradition (D'Aubigne 1846:383–384). A third reason could have been that Anna was marrying beneath her status and to add fuel to fire presumably entered into a questionable relationship with a former priest. Secrecy however had its consequences. She would have been gossiped about as being the secret mistress of the priest Ulrich Zwingli (Nielsen 1999). These social dynamics and their interplay must be taken into account<sup>41</sup> when their marriage was made public and officially sanctioned in 1524. It was shortly before the birth of their first child,<sup>42</sup> Regula (1524–1564). The question is of course whether Zwingli only agreed to this public announcement because of the impending birth of his first child. He certainly was at the tail end of former priests in announcing their marriages. Anna bore the strictures imposed on her by Ulrich as she did those of her first marriage and widowhood. But it was within the latter marriage that reformational principles were applied as Ulrich sought to justify his actions.

#### Private and public appreciation of the minister's wife and testing

Ulrich Zwingli referred to his wife as 'his dearest housewife'. In due course the Zurich community in which they served called her their 'apostolic Dorcas' (Good 1901:11). Both pronouncements imply recognition of her biblical witness in serving. Her husband was equally accorded the same communal appreciation, sometimes referred to as 'beloved of God'<sup>43</sup> (Grob 1883:140). Their marriage clearly merited the blessing of the community. By 1524 legal matters regarding her children from her first marriage were sorted at city council level.

Yet the pastoral couple did not escape gossip. Some said that he married her<sup>44</sup> for her beauty while others said he did so for the money she received from Gerold's employment (cf. Spalding 1875:176). Unabashed Zwingli replied that Anna was worth more than 400 guilders/florins.<sup>45</sup> He earned the amount of 60 gulden with use of the parsonage, garden and some lesser emoluments (De Weerd 1935:100). When gossip again flared up, this time about her clothing and beauty that seemingly distracted people while she was on her parish rounds, Anna responded radically, refusing to wear jewellery

40. In 1523 Wolfgang Capito married Agnes Roettel.

41. Added to this may be the implication of Martin Bucer's letter of 1524 to Zwingli, congratulating him on his marriage and implying that Zwingli may serve God even better than before.

42. Both Anna and Regula were immortalised by Hans Asper in a portrait. Furcha (1992:135) claims the ages of mother and daughter respectively as 25 and 7. Anna's age would be hard to reconcile with her historical chronology. Anna had four children by Zwingli: Regula, Anna, Wilhelm and Huldrych. Zwingli was baptised 'Ulrich' but adopted the name 'Huldrych' meaning rich in grace 'as a sign of his prophetic confidence' (Gordon 2002:49).

43. In a letter from Michael Hummelberg, about 1522 (Grob 1883:140).

44. Spalding states that 'Zuingle himself espoused a rich widow'.

45. Sources differ as to the currency.

and simplifying her personal appearance and dress<sup>46</sup> to more modest tones (Good 1901:10). Bainton (1971:161) seems to misinterpret her response to the gossip and implies that Anna's dress served to typify a caricature of a minister's wife. It rather seems that her care for her husband exceeded her care for the parish and above all reflects her desire to serve as Christ would, without drawing undue attention to herself.

But Anna Zwingli had to contend with another matter as well: whether Zwingli had a sexual past. This is still debated (Furcha 1992:134 fn. 13). Jackson (1901:119) says that his unchaste behaviour was one of the reasons that almost cost him the call to Zurich. Reeves (2009:69) claims Zwingli admitted visiting a prostitute, who may have been a nun, during his pastorate at Einsiedeln. A second matter also came to the fore. Zwingli was also able to show that the letter claiming his part in the wronging of a daughter of a prominent citizen of Einsiedeln was false<sup>47</sup> (Jackson 1901:119). These accusations never cast any doubt as to Anna's faithfulness. Despite these accusations it seems that their marriage and loyalty to one another was never in dispute. In the final analysis they emulated what Zwingli believed and preached about marriage and against celibacy grounded in scriptural norms developed by the patristic tradition (Furcha 1992:135).

#### Anna, the pastor/reformer's wife

Anna married a Catholic priest,<sup>48</sup> scholar, musician,<sup>49</sup> orator, loving father and husband – a man entirely without personal ambition. While he lacked Calvin's logical and theological acuity, he reflected the graciousness that Luther lacked. His enthusiasm and personal availability to his congregation and the city council, his willingness to assist Christian and non-Christian alike in need and his sincere concern for the fatherless by serving as stand-in father figure and role model endeared him as pastor to the congregation (Furcha 1992:134). Not least was his wife's personal ministry that complemented him at community level. Zwingli was entirely convinced that it was the sufficiency of the preached Word of God that made change possible (Potter 1976:418–419). Change came about in Zurich (Estep 1996:12). It appears that Zwingli seems to have told his wife little of church politics and debates.

Anna was aware that, for instance, not everyone adhered to Ulrich's theological persuasion.<sup>50</sup> Conrad Grebel, for instance, became increasingly enamoured with adult/believers baptism<sup>51</sup> and broke from Zwingli on the matter in 1524 (Estep 1986:183). She also knew that her husband wrestled with the

46. This may refer to the clothing befitting the rank of one who had been married to an aristocrat.

47. It was probably fabricated by his opponents trying to prevent his appointment in Zurich.

48. The break with Rome would officially take place with refusal to celebrate mass and so ushered in new perspectives on worship (Vischer 2003:13–14).

49. Zwingli was an accomplished musician and often spent time making music for his children (Reeves 2009:77).

50. It is impossible to refer to the wide range of matters that Zwingli wrestled with and for that reason only a sample of the most important are mentioned.

51. The beginnings of the Free Church movement which rejected the jurisdiction of the Zurich council and of the Zurich church (Estep 1996:18) and claimed to possess truth through self-interpretation.

matter of restoring apostolic simplicity to the sacrament of Holy Communion, a matter on which he only gradually moved towards a conclusive stance (Estep 1996:37). There is only one letter<sup>52</sup> extant from Ulrich to Anna. It was written on the occasion of the birth of their son, January 11, 1528.

### Anna and her spiritual development

Anna did not neglect her spiritual development. She loved listening to the Word of God being preached and enjoyed her husband reading his Bible translations<sup>53</sup> in Schweizer-Deutsch (Swiss-German). When published it became Anna's favourite book. Her favourite readings were the gospel stories. Soon her desire was that every family should own one. Reticent by nature she often listened to religious conversations and at times delighted to partake in them whether with her husband or visiting reformers. When the strain of translation became too much for her husband, Anna would intervene as her husband's carer (Good 1901:11). But sometimes he acted in secret. When, for instance, he went to Marburg to meet with Luther, Anna was not even aware of his plans (Grob 1883:149).

In the community Anna was like a mother to the poor and visited the sick without discrimination (Good 1901:10). Her deeds visibly demonstrated her husband's social ethics explicated in the light of predestination and election (Locher 1981:139ff.; cf. fn. 78). Foundational to this view was that divine righteousness accompanies the command to love God and one's neighbour.<sup>54</sup> On the occasion of Zwingli's absence she kept an open home to the constant stream of visitors and accorded the highest praise of Leo Juda<sup>55</sup> and Pelican. When in 1526 the upper chancellor of Silesia, Arator, visited, he was so touched by Anna's ministry and housekeeping that he called her 'an angel-wife' (Good 1901:12–13).

### The Zwingli couple and family face threats together

The death of the Czech reformer Jan Hus (c. 1369–1415) was ever a possibility to them as well, as the family faced constant threats made against Zwingli. There was the threat to kidnap him and carry him off to a Catholic canton to face papal fanaticism. They kept close watch over his food fearing poison and Good (1901:13) and Grob (1883:139–146) document some of the attempted murders on Zwingli and by association this cloud hovered over Anna and the family as well. Sometimes the city council even instituted a formal guard to watch their residence (Grob 1883:142; cf. Reeves 2009:73f.).

52. In it he requests she send him his coat but makes no mention of the theological progress that eventually led Bern to adopt a Protestant stance. In letters to the city council at Zurich he mentions his wife only in passing, on one occasion assuring them that he does not allow rumours to reach his wife. There are only seven letters addressed to him by women in correspondence and none of his replies remain except for one pastoral letter in manuscript form from Zwingli to Margareta Fehr of Einsiedeln and one to Anna Zwingli (Furcha 1992:131).

53. He began translating in 1525 and the Bible was published in 1529, five years before Luther's complete Bible became public (Good 1901:11).

54. His tract was entitled 'Von göttlicher und menschlicher Gerechtigkeit' (regarding divine and human righteousness) and served as impetus towards social reform in Zurich and Germany (Raath & de Freitas 2005:2; cf. fn. 4).

55. The 'little priest' from Einsiedeln and former colleague of Zwingli. He arrived in Zurich at the end of 1522 (Spalding 1875:171).

### Anna's son and his stepfather

When Gerold Meyer von Knonau was 14 years old he pursued studies at Basel (Baiter 1900:161–162) and was about to visit the hot springs at Baden notorious for its lack of keeping moral standards. In his concern for his stepson Zwingli presented the boy with a 'bath gift'; a Latin treatise on how to live life (Potter 1976:217–218). It is generally regarded as the first treatise of the reformation on education. Gerold amended his lifestyle, secured a good position in Zurich and made sure his mother was well cared for.<sup>56</sup> Furcha (1992:134) poses the interesting question: if Anna's eldest child had been a girl, would Zwingli have written a different instruction to include girls? He and Anna had two of their own daughters.

But the story of Anna and Ulrich Zwingli was about to come to a final conclusion in a war supposedly based on reformation principles.

## 'Blessings after dark night'

### Prelude to widowhood

The peace of the first battle of Cappel/Kappel (Erster Kappelkrieg) between Zurich and Zug was decided in 1529 without a battle. Although both the Protestant and Catholic alliances<sup>57</sup> agreed on compromises, the Catholic party felt aggrieved. Peace was entertained and celebrated, though Zwingli believed that a real battle was inevitable. Fuelled by the promulgation of the Augsburg Confession (Confession Augustana) of 1530 as well as various political factors, war<sup>58</sup> became inevitable (Grob 1883:176–177). Zwingli did not oppose military intervention, but mercenary conscription. When the Catholic cantons allied themselves with the Habsburgs of Austria, he persuaded the Zurich council to respond by creating an anti-Habsburg alliance (Wiesner-Hanks 2013:181). While Zurich campaigned for a reopening of hostilities, it was unprepared to face the consequences of its agitation.

On October 9, 1531, Zurich faced the news that a Catholic army<sup>59</sup> was approaching. What the impact was on Anna and the children is not known. What is known is that Zurich did not have a disciplined and enthusiastic army to meet the threat adequately. The numbers of the army were depleted, many citizens were unwilling to fight (Potter 1976:407) and there was no able commander. On October 11 Ulrich Zwingli accompanied the little Zurich army as chaplain<sup>60</sup> to fight the 'battle(s) of the Lord' (Good 1901:14; Spalding 1875:169). The foreboding suggested by the appearance of a comet records Zwingli saying 'Our only comfort is in God!' (Grob 1883:184)

56. The measure of Gerold Meyer was that at eighteen he was voted in as member of the city council and at 21 as its president (Good 1901:9).

57. These alliances were fragile and often taken advantage of by popes and secular rulers (Wiesner-Hanks 2013:180).

58. War was not the only solution for Zwingli. He considered missionary outreach to the Muslims as a better alternative than outright war (Locher 1981:116).

59. Comprising of the five Catholic forest cantons: Lucerne, Zug, Schwyz, Uri and Unterwalden (Cross & Livingstone, eds. 1977:1514).

60. His first experience as chaplain was accompanying the Swiss troops to Italy as chaplain in 1512–1515.



On Charity Square, at 11:00 am, October 11 Zwingli bade a sad, but resolute farewell to his wife and family (Good 1901:13; Grob 1883:187): 'As a dying one blesses his own, so did Zwingli bless his wife and children, committing them to the care of God'. Anna's farewell to him was: 'We shall see each other again if the Lord will. His will be done. And what will you bring back when you come?' Zwingli's answer to his beloved wife was: 'Blessings after dark night'. Anna cherished those words for the rest of her life. He kissed each of them again, mounted his horse and rode away (Grob 1883:188). At home she prayed the words of Jesus in Gethsemane, 'Father, not my will, but Thine be done'. Together with everybody else, Anna waited for the outcome of the battle (Good 1901:15).

At seven o'clock that evening Anna heard the cry, 'Zwingli is dead'. The city had been defeated. She kissed her fatherless children, sank to her knees with them and sobbed in prayer: 'Lord, Thy will and not ours be done' (Grob 1883:192). With the news of her husband's death came reports about the deaths of her son Gerold, her brother, sons-in-law, her brother-in-law, her cousin, and many friends who had also fallen. She was overcome with grief<sup>61</sup> and wept bitterly with her children (Grob 1883:192). Anna and her children were just one family among many who had lost loved ones on the battle field.

### Anna Zwingli, widow in Zurich

Anna and her children, together with the citizens of Zurich, heard of Zwingli's stand during the battle. Pierced to death by Captain Vokinger of Unterwalden who cried out: 'Die, thou obstinate heretic, shameful traitor and malefactor'. Death had finally come to the 47-year-old reformer (Grob 1883:191). But Anna had her children to care for. Good called her 'the Mater Dolorosa (mother of sorrow), the weeping mother of the reformation' (Good 1901:18). Letters came from far and wide to comfort her.<sup>62</sup> Sadly nothing much is made of her mourning the loss of her son Gerold or of her family members and friends.

Comfort came in the person of Heinrich Bullinger, her husband's successor whose words to her were: 'You shall not want, dear mother. I will remain your friend, your teacher and adviser'. He backed up his words with many deeds (Good 1901:15–16). In time the Zwingli household became an integral part of the Bullinger household and Bullinger became a substitute father to Zwingli's children. In Zurich the Reformation had begun with Zwingli and it was Bullinger who continued his work. In spite of this the Reformation in Zurich lost its impetus and Geneva took on the transfer of leadership (Cross & Livingstone 1977:116). It was against this backdrop that the life of Anna Reinhard Zwingli and the other women of Zurich unfolded.<sup>63</sup>

61. It is said that Oekolampad died of grief over the result of the battle on November 24 (Grob 1883:193).

62. When Luther heard of Zwingli's death he characteristically said: 'Gott hat schon zweimal gestraft; erstlich unter dem Münzer, jetzt unter dem Zwinglin' (God has punished twice: first under Münzer, now under Zwingli) (Potter 1976:414 fn. 3).

63. For some insightful commentary appreciative of the emerging roles of women of the Reformation, see Stjerna (2009:213–222).

Little is known of Anna's later life. She rarely left the house except to go to church. She continued to live for her children and to serve her Lord. She became very sick and although struggling with her illness for some years bore her suffering patiently (Good 1901:16). Anna had four children with Zwingli. Regula, born in 1525, married Bullinger's foster-son, Rudolf Gualther. Rudolf succeeded Bullinger as chief pastor of Zurich. Anna and Zwingli's eldest son William, born in 1526, died at age 15 in 1541 while studying theology in Strasburg. Ulrich,<sup>64</sup> born in 1528, died at 43 in 1571. He followed in his father's footsteps and was a pastor and also a professor of theology in Zurich. Anna, the youngest of the four siblings, was born in 1530 and died in infancy.

Bullinger's account of Anna's death on 16 December 1538 reads:

I desire no more happy end of life. She passed away softly, like a mild light, and went home to her Lord, worshipping, and commending us all to God. This remarkable woman's death was like her life – sweet, quiet, beautiful. (Good 1901:16)

### The lasting value of Anna Zwingli

The Reformation in Switzerland manifested as localised reformations of cities and states rather than a national movement (Gordon 2002:119). When both Berne and Basle adopted the Reformation in 1528 and 1529 respectively, it left, together with Zurich, three powerful members of the confederation outside of the Roman-Catholic Church (Gordon 2002:122). These cities faced an uncertain future. But as was shown in this article the story of the Reformation contains much more than merely a focus on reformers, politics, theological disputes and wars.

The story of the Reformation cannot be told accurately without taking into account the role that many remarkable women played during this time. Due to the lack of sources, it may never be clear what Zwingli's true attitude to women was (Furcha 1992). Much insight can be gained from Heinrich Bullinger's<sup>65</sup> 1528 treatise on the morality and conduct of the ideal Christian woman (Furcha 1992:136). But would that suffice for the present day?

Clearly the gender issue is far greater than that of a focus on Anna Zwingli alone. It is an ongoing matter. While the Reformation brought about some remarkable changes for all women, it tended to become prescriptive. Modern day theologians such as Breed, Van Rensburg and Jordaan (2008) would have challenged Protestant Zurich by insisting that ministry belongs to a shared gender platform. Exegetical studies on gender matters may conclude with some fluidity of opinion allowing for differing theological views of the same matter. A view, they suggest, is not sufficient to warrant dissension within the church but essential to address matters

64. His son, also Ulrich, said to resemble his father, became professor of theology but died in 1600, aged 29. He was married to Bullinger's daughter who died of the plague in 1565. With him the male line of Ulrich Zwingli, the reformer died out (Grob 1883:164).

65. Bullinger's courtship correspondence with Anna Adlischweiler, the future Zurich 'Zürimutter', reveals his persistence, her refusal of marriage and eventual marriage after her mother's death (Furcha 1992:136–137).

of conscience with integrity and celebrate the freedom allowed by God's Word. Whether one agrees with the aforementioned or not, the conversation is ongoing as the church regards gender issues in the context of the wider priesthood of believers. For that reason it has to contend with the powerful witness and ministries of many women in the church, some more visible than others, but all equally done to please the Lord of the church.

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