

# STRASBOURG REFORMATION

## Strasbourg around 1500

- 25,000 inhabitants (largest town in southwest Germany)
- politics: free city claiming independence within the German Empire, self-government by a city council and representatives of the guilds, strong influence of a few patrician families
- economy: Regional trade and banking, agriculture, small manufacturing, printing
- church: flowering of medieval piety; humanism in the Upper Rhine region; John Geiler of Kaisersberg
- sacral topography: see of a bishop residing outside the city; cathedral chapter; three collegiate churches with canons' chapters; nine parish churches; eight male monasteries, one convent of canonesses, seven female monasteries

## Martin Bucer (1491–1551)

**1491** born in Schlettstadt/Sélestat (Alsace) → Latin school  
**1507** Dominican order  
**1515–19** study of theology in Heidelberg and Mainz → Thomism + humanism  
**1518** Heidelberg disputation → contact with Luther  
**1519** critique of scholastic theology  
**1520–22** close contact with Franz of Sickingen and Ulrich of Hutten  
**1521** release from the Dominican order  
**1522** marriage  
**1522/23** preacher in Weissenburg/Wissembourg (Alsace)  
**1523** pastor of St. Aurelia in Strasbourg  
**1524** Bucer's program for church reform  
**1524–30** mediating position in the controversy about the Lord's Supper  
**1527** Bern disputation → support for Zwinglianism  
**1530** main author of the Confessio Tetrapolitana  
**1533/34** propagator of the new church order  
**1534–36** negotiations with the Wittenberg Reformation on the one and the Zurich Reformation on the other hand (First Helvetic Confession/Wittenberg Concord)  
**1538/39** advisor to Philip of Hesse (Leipzig colloquy)  
**1540/41** leading representative of the Protestants in the Imperial religious colloquies  
**1542–47** advisor to Herman of Wied → attempt to introduce the Reformation to the electorate of Cologne  
**1547–49** resistance to Augsburg Interim  
**1549–51** exile in England (Regius Professor of Divinity in Cambridge); revision of the Book of Common Prayer; De Regno Christi (first print: Basel 1557)

## Evangelical movement 1521–29

**1521** Matthew Zell begins to preach the Reformation Gospel in the cathedral and attracts many listeners → in 1522/23 the council protects him from coercive measures by the bishop  
**1523** Wolfgang Capito, Martin Bucer and Caspar Hedio come to Strasbourg and begin their ministries → evangelical preaching in the parishes and Latin lectures on Reformation theology; marriage of several clerics → sanctions of the bishop are ignored by the city authorities  
**1524** growing support for the evangelical movement among the leading classes (Jacob Sturm); conflicts between evangelicals and traditionalists; first measures of church reform → no episcopal jurisdiction over the local church, inventory of church property, appointment of the pastors by the city authorities, partial removal of religious images, German baptismal liturgy and communion under both forms in the vernacular without the canon, closure of monastic institutions, schools for every parish, publication of the programmatic pamphlet "Grund und ursach ausz gotlicher schrifft der newuerungen . . . zuo Straßburg fürgenomen"; monks and nuns begin to leave the monasteries (the cathedral chapter, two of three canon chapters, two male monasteries and three female monasteries are able to resist the Reformation); traditionalist critics of the innovations are silenced and some leave the city  
**1524ff** nonconformist individuals and groups find refuge in Strasbourg (Andreas Karlstadt, Kaspar von Schwenckfeld, Anabaptists etc.) → small circles of nonconformists in the parishes  
**1525** reform of worship service (but still masses in several churches for the traditionalists); orderly removal of more images; citizenship and taxation for clergy; peasants' war in Alsace → reformers and city authorities resist pressure from the peasants; Franciscans leave their friary to the city  
**mid-1520s** Protestant culture of piety (preaching, Bible, hymn singing)  
**1527** coercive measures against non-conformists such as Anabaptists and anti-Trinitarians; establishment of a commission to manage the monastic estates  
**1529** abolition of the mass in all churches

## Establishing a Protestant church 1530–55

**1530** Confessio Tetrapolitana; Strasbourg joins the Christian Confederation of Protestants estates in Switzerland; removal of images from all churches  
**1531** founding member and lead force of the Schmalkaldic League → imperial politics; removal of the last images; establishment of the office of church custodian in the parishes → moral supervision → tensions with the city authorities over the question of moral disciplining  
**1533** first Strasbourg synod → approval of reform, basic documents of the Strasbourg church (confession, church order), condemnation of Anabaptism and other non-conformist groups  
**1534** publication of the new Church Order → organizational stabilization; additional order for church discipline → church wardens for supervising the morality of the parishioners  
**1536** Wittenberg Concord  
**1538** founding of the city gymnasium by Johannes Sturm (since 1566 recognized as an Academy and developed into one of the leading universities in Southwest Germany)  
**1530s/40s** exile for French Protestants (Calvin) → influence on the Genevan Reformation; Bucer as advisor for the Reformation in other cities and territories (Ulm, Hesse, Cologne)  
**1547/48** Schmalkaldic War → expulsion of Protestant clergy and politicians (Bucer flees to England) → partial reversal of reforms

## Beginnings of Lutheran confessionalization 1555–98

**1552** John Marbach senior pastor → greater uniformity of religious life, transition to Lutheranism  
**mid-1550s** English refugee church  
**1555** Religious Peace of Augsburg  
**1559** abolition of the mass  
**1560–63** conflict between Jerome Zanchi and Johannes Marbach (Augsburg Confession, Lord's Supper, predestination)  
**1563** closing of the French refugee church → no Reformed worship within in the city walls  
**1581** John Pappus senior pastor  
**1598** Lutheran Church Order

## Bucer's theology

### Bucer's main works:

**1523** That no one should live for oneself, but for others (VD16 B 8862)  
**1527/28** commentaries on the four gospels (VD16 B 8870–8872)  
**1534** Large Catechism (VD16 B 8896)  
**1536** commentary on Romans (VD16 B 8899)  
**1538** Of true pastoral care and right shepherding (VD16 B 8941)  
**1548** Summary of Christian teaching and religion taught in Strasbourg for the past 28 years (VD16 B 8927)  
**1550** De regno Christi (VD16 B 8906)  
**1510s** intellectual background: medieval Thomism, rediscovery of Augustine, and Erasmian humanism → God's universal law for church and world  
**1520s** double influence from Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli → basic ideas about Bible and salvation in accordance with the Wittenberg Reformation; interest for the working of the Spirit, for sanctification and for the visible church in accordance with the Zurich Reformation  
**Holy Spirit** connection between God and man → salvation and moral guidance; thanks to the Spirit Christian freedom within the framework of divine law  
**ethics** justifying faith makes love of God and one's neighbor possible → Bible as guideline for Christian life  
**church** criticism of the medieval church; visible community of the elect → requirement of holiness → necessity of church discipline; interest in church order and organization; cooperation of church and secular authority to secure the holiness of the church  
**sacraments** working of the Spirit in the elements as main characteristic; in the 1520s theological explanation and liturgical practice of the sacrament more in accordance with the Zurich Reformation; in the 1530s shift towards the Wittenberg Reformation (spiritual presence in the external elements for the believer)  
**mediating position between Wittenberg and Zurich** interest in theological compromise; similarities to Melancthon's mediating position