

## Footstep #32 The Peasant Situation 1524

*“Through their windows the nuns could see the populace abused and the smoke rising from burning castles. When the war ended, 70 cloisters had been demolished in Thuringia, and in Franconia 270 castles and 52 cloisters. When the Palatinate succumbed to the peasants, the disorder was so great that their own leaders had to invite the former authorities to return to assist in the restoration of order. But the authorities preferred to wait until the peasants had first been beaten.”* (Roland H. Bainton. *Here I Stand*. pp. 213-214)

Historians are not in agreement on how Martin Luther handled the Peasant situation. Some view him as being a consistent voice for peace and others for raising expectations that became violent.

*“Luther’s prestige as a leader of the people suffered greatly because of the role which he played in the Peasants’ Revolt, even though he was thoroughly consistent and impartial throughout....The Christian, he maintained, had no right to appeal to natural right and take justice into his own hands, but must suffer injustice.”* (Harold J. Grimm. *The Reformation*. p. 175)

*“It is no wonder that the Lutheran movement lost much of its popular appeal. While the princes, who had put down the revolt without help from the weak Imperial Council or the absent emperor, and Lutheranism, which had denied medieval theories supporting opposition to tyrants, drew closer together, the period of strong popular support of Lutheranism came to a close. Many of the disillusioned peasants and townsmen now turned to the Anabaptists, who promised to bring the kingdom of heaven down to earth.”* (Harold J. Grimm. *The Reformation*. p. 176)



The Peasants Revolt – About 100,000 were executed and excessive fines were imposed.

*“Meanwhile, Luther was busy closer to home, where he seemed to have fathered civil disturbances instead of justification by faith. His own Wittenberg saw the first violent popular eruption which was an attempt to bring about reform overnight. The Catholic Mass was abolished (1522) as were all images in the churches. Several men arrived from neighboring*

***Zwickau claiming to have established a personal contact with the Lord, and disclaiming the need for scripture.***” (George L. Meese. *The Reformation*. pp. 35-36)