

Zwingli's Plague Song (1519)

Alongside of Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, and John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli is remembered as one of the great minds behind the Reformation. Zwingli was a Swiss Reformer who became the father of the churches we now know as Anabaptist (churches who do not baptize infants).

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) was the newly appointed People's Priest, or Leutpriestertum, at Zurich's Groosmünster church. While visiting the Swiss town of Bad Pfäfers in September 1519 he learned of a new wave of plague devastating Zurich and immediately returned home. Zwingli ministered to the city's afflicted and himself fell ill. His brother, Andreas, would perish from the disease, along with an estimated quarter to half of all Zurich's citizens.

(The first four stanza were written when he first contracted the disease.)

Lo! at my door
Gaunt Death I spy;
Hear, Lord of life,
Thy creature's cry.

The arm that hung
Upon the tree,
Jesus, uplift--
And rescue me.

Yet, if to quench
My sun at noon,
Be thy behest,
Thy will be done!

In faith and hope
Earth I resign,
Secure of heaven--
For I am thine!

(These four stanzas were written as the disease progressed.)

Fierce grow my pains:
Help, Lord, in haste!
For flesh and heart
Are failing fast.

Clouds wrap my sight
My tongue is dumb,
Lord tarry not,
The hour is come!

In Satan's grasp.
On Hell's dark brink,
My spirit reels,--
Ah! must I sink?

No, Jesus, no!
Him I defy,
While here beneath
Thy cross I lie.

(The last four stanza were written when he was recovering.)

My Father God,
Behold me whole!
Again on earth
A living soul!

Let sin no more
My heart annoy,
But fill it, Lord,
With holy joy.

Though now delayed,
My hour must come,
Involved, perchance,
In deeper gloom.

It matters not
Rejoicing yet
I'll bear the yoke
To Heaven's bright gate.

[Song text from <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/31225/31225-h/31225-h.htm>]