

The Peasant's War

We have previously talked about the social life in Germany and the voiceless lower classes with the lack of government inclusion for the poorer groups. With the general poverty of a depression in the early part of the 16th century and the loss of the security of the feudal system, there was a great sweeping dissatisfaction among the masses who thought they should have "more of the action." Against the excesses of their lords and barons, peasant masses began rioting for more food, etc., and some just because they liked to riot. There was a legitimate social cause although riots rarely meet the true need.

Basically Luther did not indulge much in politics or in social idealogy. He seems to have been rather unknowing in these areas. The revolt of the peasants caught him by surprise (apparently) and when he found that his works were used by some to justify their radical actions, he was greatly irritated. Reacting to the extremism of T. Mincer, et al, he called for the government to put down the masses and he described them in extremely unfriendly terms. To him the revolt was a violation of Christian principle and the manner in which it was carried out was offensive to life on all levels. He opposed it therefore as a matter of practical and Christian policy. He did say some strong things about the excesses of the nobility, too, but this was rather lost in the rush.

The revolt was put down with great force and slaughter and not much immediate social change was evidenced. It did produce in Luther a feeling of distrust for the masses and in some places made the poor distrust him. In general, the Peasants War did more to harm the Reformation than to help it. It did not advance the cause of Rome however, for the peasants who could not identify with Luther certainly could not identify with the excessive richness of Rome.

The Age of the Interims...1531-1555

II.4.d

The Interim Arrangements

As the Emperor could not achieve his ends at Augsburg and several diets thereafter, there developed a form of diplomacy known as the interims and sometimes called the standstills. It amounted to an agreement for a time to let things stand while other issues were being settled (The Turks, the King of France, the pope, etc.). The interims were never seen as the terminal points and always left an air of