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**THE ANABAPTISTS OF THE SIXTEENTH
CENTURY**

THE ANABAPTISTS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

· BY REV. HENRY SWEETSER BURRAGE, D.D.

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I.

RECENT STUDIES OF THE ANABAPTIST MOVEMENT.

New methods of historical study are securing important results. The demand now is not only that those who write history shall go back to the sources, but that by a thorough examination of the materials which the sources furnish, and by the employment of sound canons of criticism, the facts, so far as possible, shall be obtained. Because of this demand not a little of what has hitherto been regarded as veritable history has been discovered to be untenable and misleading. In no field of historic research are these results more conspicuous than in that which has been traversed in recent years by those who have directed their attention to the history of the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century.

Cornelius, a Roman Catholic professor, formerly at Bonn, now of Munich, a learned and painstaking investigator, led the way to a broader and more scholarly treatment of this great movement in his *Geschichte des Münsterischen Aufruhrs*, the first volume of which was published in 1855 and the second in 1860, an unfinished work, yet breaking the road over which others have passed in securing for the Anabaptists at least some measure of the justice for which they have so long waited in vain. His *Die Niederländischen*

Wiedertäufer appeared in 1869. Egli, formerly pastor at Ausersihl, near Zürich, now professor extraordinary of church history in the University of Zürich, followed, in 1878, with his valuable monograph, *Die Zürcher Wiedertäufer zur Reformationszeit*, and in 1879 with his even more important work, *Actensammlung zur Geschichte der Zürcher Reformation in den Jahren 1519-1533*, a treasure-house of materials for the study of the history of the Swiss Anabaptists. In 1880, Dr. Ludwig Keller, director of the State Archives at Münster, a most diligent and enthusiastic investigator, with rare opportunities for an examination of the sources, published his *Geschichte der Wiedertäufer und ihres Reichs zu Münster*. Other works by the same author rapidly followed: *Ein Apostel der Wiedertäufer* [Hans Denck], in 1882; *Die Reformation und die älteren Reformparteien*, in 1884; *Die Waldenser und die deutschen Bibelübersetzungen*, in 1886; *Zur Geschichte der altevangelischen Gemeinden*, in 1887; and *Johann von Staupitz und die Anfänge der Reformation*, in 1888. In these later volumes the author aims to connect the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century with the pre-Reformation evangelical churches. Dr. Keller, who belongs to the German Reformed Church, has been bitterly assailed in certain quarters since the publication of these volumes. But while one may not be able to assent to all of his deductions, his writings furnish abundant evidence that he is a lover of truth, and is sincerely seeking to discover and establish the truth. Especially worthy of note is Dr. Joseph Beck's *Die Geschichts-Bücher der Wiedertäufer in Oesterreich-Ungarn, betreffend deren Schicksale in der Schweiz, Salzburg, Ober- und Nieder-Oesterreich, Mähren, Tirol, Böhmen, Süd-Deutschland, Ungarn, Siebenburgen, und Süd-Russland in der Zeit von 1526 bis 1785*, published in 1883 by the Historical Commission of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in Vienna. Dr. Beck is the Court Counsellor of the Austrian Supreme Court of Judicature and Cassation, and in this magnificent work he has brought together from many sources a vast amount of materials, largely chronicles, pertaining to the Anabaptist movement, to which he has added a valuable introduction

and many helpful and learned foot-notes. In 1884 appeared *Berner Beiträge zur Geschichte der Schweizerischen Reformations-Kirchen*, edited by Professor Friedrich Nippold. Part III., by Gottfried Strasser, pastor at Grindelwald, is entitled *Der Schweizerische Anabaptismus zur Zeit der Reformation*, and is the work of a scholar whose interest in his theme has led to a careful and thoughtful study of the sources. In 1885, Richard Nitsch, a Roman Catholic, published his *Geschichte der Wiedertäufer in der Schweiz zur Reformationszeit*. While his point of view is not one of sympathy with the Anabaptists, he aims to present the facts of the movement accurately. In the same year Friedrich Otto Zur Linden published his *Melchior Hofmann, ein Prophet der Wiedertäufer*. The author undertook this work at the request of Professor Nippold, of Jena, and he has produced a monograph that is worthy of a place with the valuable works to which reference has already been made. If the author presents Hofmann in a more favorable light than the traditional writers, it is not because of any sympathy with the Anabaptist movement, but from a praiseworthy willingness to follow the facts whithersoever they lead.

In this country attention has been called to the Anabaptist movement by the writer of this paper in a volume entitled *The Anabaptists of Switzerland*, 1882. Several review articles with reference to the Anabaptist movement have also appeared, among them "Balthazar Hubmeyer," by Rev. W. W. Everts, *Baptist Review*, April, 1881; "The Moravian Baptists," by Prof. A. H. Newman, *Baptist Quarterly Review*, Jan., 1889, and "The Anabaptists in Switzerland," by Dr. Philip Schaff, *Baptist Quarterly Review*, July, 1889. The latter says: "The history of the Anabaptists of the Reformation period has yet to be written from an impartial, unsectarian standpoint." A beginning, however, has been made. It is the purpose of this paper briefly to present the Anabaptist movement in the sixteenth century in the light of these recent investigations.

II.

BEGINNINGS OF THE MOVEMENT.

The beginnings of the Anabaptist movement are commonly connected with the fanatical outbreak at Zwickau, in Saxony, in 1520. Thomas Münzer, who came to Zwickau that year, having accepted the pastorate of one of the churches, had already joined the reform movement; but here, finding himself more in sympathy with the Zwickau Prophets than with Luther, he soon developed radical tendencies. These were largely social and political, however, not religious. The wrongs of the oppressed peasants occupied his thoughts, and he became a leader of a crusade that resulted in the Peasants' War. It is true that in Münzer and his associates opposition to infant baptism is discernible, but as a theory rather than as a fact. Münzer never re-baptized any one, and only a short time before his tragic end, in a conversation with Œcolampadius at Basel, he said that he had not departed from the usual custom of the Church, except that he baptized only once in two or three months, before the whole congregation, the infants born in that interval.¹ In his intercourse with the Anabaptist leaders in Switzerland at this time, Münzer did not meet with the welcome he had anticipated. Plainly his aim and theirs were not the same. The Swiss Anabaptists were in sympathy with the oppressed peasants, but they would right their wrongs not by an appeal to arms, but by restoring primitive Christianity. In a letter to Münzer, written after his departure, having mentioned some things in which they were not in agreement, with a delicate allusion to Münzer's practice as it would seem, Grebel and his associates said: "Since you have expressed yourself against infant baptism, we hope you do not sin against the eternal word, wisdom, and command of God, according to which believers only are to be baptized, and that you decline to baptize infants." Indeed, in answer to those who at the time of the

¹ Herzog, *Das Leben J. Oekolampads*, S. 302.

Reformation ascribed the origin of the Anabaptist movement to Münzer and the Zwickau Prophets, the Anabaptists often and energetically protested that they did not spring from them, and that they had no sympathy with them in their revolutionary purposes.

Nor is the origin of the Anabaptist movement to be found in the earlier reform parties. Dorner says that Anabaptism in the sixteenth century was essentially bound up with pre-Reformation principles. "All the different anti-ecclesiastical tendencies," he tells us, "which, for the most part, with a dualistic coloring, had secretly pervaded the life of the people in the Middle Ages, got vent after the reform excitement issued from Wittenberg, and obtained a wider extension under the new movement."¹ Without doubt there were then at work among the people all over Central Europe influences proceeding from reform movements in earlier times. Evangelizing agencies, whose origin we can clearly trace to reformers before the Reformation, were in operation long before Luther appeared. They were in operation then. The Mystics, for example, were everywhere, especially in Germany. Luther himself was profoundly influenced by them. Of that noble work of the mystical school, "The German Theology," he once said that, next to the Bible and the writings of Augustine, he had learned more concerning God, Christ, man, and all things from that little volume, which he erroneously ascribed to Tauler, than from any other book. But the great movement of which Luther was the head, did not have its origin in the reformatory work of the Mystics. As little can we find in their work, or in the work of any of the old evangelical parties that preceded the Reformation, the origin of the Anabaptist movement, even though in some of them we discover reformatory principles which re-appeared and were made prominent in connection with the spread of Anabaptism.

Least of all are we able with Ritschl (*Geschichte des Pietismus in der reformirten Kirche*, 1880, S. 22 ff.) to find the origin of Anabaptism in the principles of the Franciscan

¹ *Geschichte d. protestantischen Theologie*, S. 132.

Order. As a justification of this singular hypothesis, Ritschl appeals to an expression of Bullinger, who says that among the apostolic Baptists some were like the new Bare-footed monks or Franciscans. But evidently by these words Bullinger meant only that there were certain peculiarities which were common to the Bare-footed monks and the Anabaptists. Among other things, they were alike in that they made prominent non-conformity with the world, were opposed to the bearing of arms, refused to take oaths, etc. But there is no evidence whatever that these peculiarities were derived by the Anabaptists from the source which Ritschl suggests, and certainly his hypothesis has no explanation of the institution of Anabaptism.

Rather was Anabaptism a child of the Reformation,¹ and its beginnings are to be found in connection with the reform movement in Switzerland. In this movement Grebel, Mantz, Hetzer, Reublin, Stumpf, and others stood at first with Zwingli in his opposition to the Roman Catholic Church. They accepted his principle, namely, to reject in doctrine and practice whatever the Scriptures do not enjoin; but at length, in the development of the reform movement, they applied the principle in ways that Zwingli had not foreseen. The idea of a church composed of believers only was suggested by Stumpf to Zwingli in the summer or autumn of 1523. Whether the idea originated with Stumpf, or not, is unknown. Certainly it was shared by Stumpf's radical associates. Early in the reform movement they had separated from the Church of Rome, and very naturally they were

¹ *Berner Beiträge*, S. 237: "Von der hohen Werthschätzung der Schrift aus, in Folge deren die ersten Anabaptisten auf die urchristlichen Prinzipien zurückgriffen, erklären sich leicht alle die verschiedenen Forderungen, welche sie aufgestellt haben. Es ist also nicht falsch, wenn wir sagten, der Anabaptismus habe mit mittelalterlichen Richtungen die gleiche Grundtendenz. Aber Nachweis einer äussern historischen Verbindung zwischen der Wiedertäufern und ihren Vorgängern braucht es nicht. Auch darf man nicht vergessen, dass ja die ganze Reformation mit jenen Richtungen, die man ihre Vorläufer nennt, im Zusammenhang steht; und so ist es das kürzeste und zutreffendste, wenn man sagt, der Anabaptismus sei ein Kind der Reformation; und speziell der schweizerischen Anabaptismus ein Kind der schweizerischen (zwinglischen) Reformation."

busy with the question, What should take its place? Following the principle they had adopted they turned to the New Testament, and in the discussion that followed they claimed that the apostolic churches were composed of believers only, and that a union of believers and unbelievers as in the Roman Catholic Church, or in the new State Church, was unscriptural. Zwingli was urged to accept this view, but he was immovable. He believed that its influence would be harmful to the work of reform. Separation would not cure the evils of the Church. Turning to the Scriptures in discussing with the advocates of this view, he appealed to the words of Christ, "He that is not against us is for us"; also to the parable of the tares and the wheat; claiming that such a separation as was proposed would not be in harmony with the teachings of the parable. Besides, if they were now to separate the tares from the wheat, what would remain for the angels to do at the end of the world?

Felix Mantz, who had been associated with Zwingli from the commencement of the movement for Church reform, also endeavored, in the interest of Church unity, to induce Zwingli to adopt the new view.

Meanwhile the radicals advanced to another position. They claimed that infant baptism had no warrant in the Scriptures, and assailed the practice as a human invention. Zwingli had formerly been troubled with doubts on this point, and for awhile he entertained the view that it would be better not to baptize children until they were somewhat advanced in years.¹ In connection with Grebel, Hubmeier, and others, he had previously taken this position. Nor did he assail it now when the radicals announced their position with reference to infant baptism.² But he was very soon led to abandon his doubts. As Dorner says:³ "He saw that the setting aside of infant baptism was the same as setting

¹ *Werke*, ii., S. 245.

² "Zwingli und die andern Prädicanten begriffen diesen Eifer anfangs nicht, bis sie merkten, dass es auf die Wiedertaufe als auf ein Abzeichen der angestrebten Sonderkirche abgesehen sei." Egli, *Die Züricher Wiedertäufer*, S. 17.

³ *Geschichte der protestantischen Theologie*, S. 293, 294.

aside the National Church, exchanging a hitherto national reformation of the Church for one more or less Donatist. For if infant baptism were given up, because faith was not yet there, then there only remained as the right time for it the moment when living faith and regeneration were certain. And then baptism would become the sign of fellowship of the regenerate, the saints, who bind themselves together as atoms out of the world."

In March, 1524, the pastor at Rifferschwyl, in a sermon, referred to infant baptism as a "useless thing." In the same month Grebel wrote to Vadian at St. Gall: "Those who understand the teaching of the Scriptures in reference to baptism refuse to allow their children to be baptized." About the same time William Reublin, pastor at Wytikon, assailed infant baptism in his preaching. During the summer the leaders of the radicals expressed a desire to discuss the matter with the Zürich pastors. The desire was granted, and two sessions were devoted to the discussion, but without practical results. At length, in August, the Zürich Council examined two members of the church in Wytikon who had refused to have their children baptized. They said they had done so in accordance with the teachings of Reublin. Reublin's arrest and imprisonment followed, while those who had refused to have their children baptized were threatened with punishment if they persisted further in their obstinacy. January 15, 1525, a public discussion was held in Zürich. The opponents of infant baptism maintained that infants can neither exercise faith nor understand what baptism signifies, and accordingly baptism should be administered to believers only, in accordance with the teachings of the Scriptures. In his reply Zwingli claimed that infant baptism in the Christian Church takes the place of circumcision in the Jewish Church. He appealed also to 1 Cor. vii., 4, where Paul speaks of the children of Christian parents as "holy"; also to the household baptisms mentioned in Acts xvi., 25, 33, and 1 Cor. i., 16. The Council decided that the weight of the argument was with Zwingli, and ordered that those who had children unbaptized should

have them baptized during the following week or be banished. Grebel and Mantz were directed to abstain from further discussion, while their associates, who were not natives of the Canton, viz., Reublin, Brödl, Hetzer, and Castelberger, should leave the country during the week following. February 1, 1525, a second mandate from the Zürich Council followed, directing the magistrates to arrest and imprison those pastors who refused to comply with the previous mandate concerning infant baptism.

It is at this time that we find the first reference in the history of the reform movement to what is known as Anabaptism. Naturally those who denied the validity of infant baptism were soon led to consider their own duty with reference to baptism as indicated by the teachings of the New Testament Scriptures. The first case of so-called re-baptism, or Anabaptism, occurred at one of the meetings of the "Brethren" in Zürich. According to a Moravian chronicle, all present bowed in prayer before God that he would grant them power to fulfil the divine will. Blaurock then arose and asked Grebel to baptize him upon confession of his faith. This was done. All the rest were then baptized by Blaurock. Like scenes soon occurred at other meetings at various places in and around Zürich.¹

Here, then, in Switzerland, among Zwingli's former associates, we find the beginnings of Anabaptism. The movement was the result of a development of radical principles,

¹ As yet no question in reference to the act of baptism seems to have been raised, and Grebel and his associates administered the ordinance in accordance with the usual practice in Switzerland at that time. Shortly after, however, as Kessler tells us (*Sabbata*, i., S. 266), Wolfgang Ulimann, on a journey to Schaffhausen, met Conrad Grebel who instructed him so highly in the knowledge of Anabaptism that he would not be sprinkled out of a dish, but was drawn under and covered with the waters of the Rhine. Sicher, a Roman Catholic eye-witness (Arx, *Geschichte d. Stadt St. Gallen*, ii., S. 501), says: "The numbers of the converted (at St. Gall) increased so that the baptistery could not contain the crowd, and they were compelled to use the streams and the Sitter River." Dr. Schaff (*Baptist Review*, July, 1889, p. 272, note) says: "The river Sitter which flows from the Santis into the Thur, is deep enough for immersion, and in that river modern Baptists perform the ceremony of immersion. So I am informed by an intelligent Swiss of that region."

which, so far as we can see, had no impulse from without, but proceeded along lines that can be easily and clearly traced.

III.

EXTENT OF THE MOVEMENT.

The new movement spread with great rapidity throughout the Canton, and soon into the adjacent Cantons. The decree of banishment made missionaries of the leaders, and with the enthusiasm of the early disciples, who were scattered abroad at the time of the persecution that arose about Stephen, they went everywhere preaching the word. The people came together in lonely places. The Bible was read. Its solemn lessons were unfolded with simplicity and earnestness. Much was made of religious experience. There were words, too, of good-will and sympathy for the oppressed, which found a ready entrance to the hearts of the common people. Converts were multiplied. These also became missionaries, in accordance with the Saviour's exhortation, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Indeed, there was no hamlet so remote or so secluded among the German-speaking Swiss, to which speedily and joyfully these apostles of Anabaptism, singly or two by two, did not make their way. Some of them soon appeared in the cities, towns, and villages of Southern Germany, where ere long there were numerous Baptist strongholds. Blau-rock, whom Beck calls "The Second Paul of the Baptists," visited the Tyrol, and through his labors from 1525 to 1529, Baptist churches sprang up on every hand. Denck made his way to Augsburg in the summer or autumn of 1525, and that city became the centre of the Anabaptist movement in Swabia. In the following year, with Hetzer, Denck was in Strasburg, where the Anabaptists were numerous and influential. Hubmeier, the most prominent of the Anabaptist leaders, who had been imprisoned in Zürich and then banished from the Canton, made his way, in 1526, to Moravia.

Here he found not only an asylum for himself, but for many of his brethren from Switzerland and Southern Germany. The rapid growth of the Baptist movement in Moravia, however, was not the result of immigration alone. Hubmeier made Nikolsburg the centre of extensive evangelizing operations. Froschauer, the publisher, came thither from Zürich, and books and tracts were largely multiplied and widely scattered. An old chronicle, referring to Hubmeier's work, says: "The people received his teachings, and in a short time many were baptized."¹ Indeed, Moravia soon became to the Anabaptists "The Promised Land," a veritable "New Jerusalem."

Melchior Hofmann, who at first, with Luther's endorsement, had labored with fiery zeal to advance the work of reform in Northern Germany, was in Strasburg early in 1529, and entered into close relations with the Zwinglian party in that city. Early in the following year his sympathies were with the Anabaptists. It is not known that he formally united with the Strasburg radicals, but when, as early as May, 1530, he made his way to East Friesland, he was in harmony with the Anabaptists, and at Emden about three hundred persons soon received baptism at his hands. From Emden he went forth as an "apostolic herald." Jan Trypmaker, who was with Hofmann in East Friesland, made his way to Amsterdam at the close of 1530, and was the first to introduce Anabaptism into Holland. Hofmann followed in the course of the following year. The movement in Northern Germany was much more extensive than has generally been supposed. "There were churches in Cologne, Aachen, Wesel, Essen, and many other places in this region. Münster was the most strongly infected. . . . In all the cities in the Archbishopric, with scarcely one or two exceptions, there were Anabaptists, and even in the country towns and villages. The same was true of the neighboring districts, especially in East Friesland, in the churches of Bentheim, Lingen, Oldenburg, and Minden. . . . There were Baptists in the Westphalian cities, Soest, Lippstadt, Lemgo,

¹ Beck, *Die Geschichts-Bücher der Wiedertäufer*, S. 48.

Unna, Dortmund, Minden, Blomberg, Osnabruck, etc. . . . In the evangelical cities, Bremen, Hamburg, Lubec, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund, Brunswick, Hanover, Luneburg, etc., it can be proved that there were either fully established Baptist churches, or at least individual Baptists, and that, too, among the clergy even."¹

In fact, as Dorner says, "Anabaptism, in the third and fourth decades of the sixteenth century, spread like a burning fever through all Germany; from Swabia and Switzerland, along the Rhine to Holland and Friesland,—from Bavaria, Middle Germany, Westphalia, and Saxony, as far as Holstein."²

IV.

CHARACTER OF THE MOVEMENT.

The character of the Anabaptist movement has both been misunderstood and misrepresented. In his "Church and State," the late Rev. J. P. Thompson, D.D., says: "The Anabaptists of Germany in the sixteenth century had most of the characteristic features of Mormonism. They claimed to be inspired; they refused to acknowledge the civil government; they established a theocracy, calling Münster 'Mount Zion,' they collected tithes and practised polygamy." Dr. Thompson, in making this statement, evidently had in mind the Münster fanatics, whose shameful and horrible practices he ascribes to the entire Baptist brotherhood in Germany. Nothing could be more unjust. The evidence is abundant that the great body of the Anabaptists of Germany in the sixteenth century, as in all other lands, were pious, law-abiding, peaceable citizens. They were not perfect men it is true. They had the faults of radicals in any movement. Some of them were not free from doctrinal errors, while others, though comparatively few, were swept away into fanaticism and wild excesses. It could hardly have been otherwise in an age of theological upheaval. But, as Cornelius says: "All these excesses were condemned and opposed whenever

¹ Dr. L. Keller, in *Preussische Jahrbücher*, September, 1882, S. 238.

² Dorner, *Geschichte der protestantischen Theologie*, S. 132.

a large assembly of the Brethren afforded an opportunity to give expression to the religious consciousness of the Baptist membership."¹ Dr. Philip Schaff's testimony is of like import: "The excesses of a misguided faction have been charged upon the whole body. They were made responsible for the Peasants' War and the Münster tragedy, although the most of them were quiet, orderly, and peaceful citizens, and would rather suffer persecution than do an act of violence."²

The Anabaptist movement will best be understood if attention is directed to its historical development and the influence of its different leaders. Egli, in his valuable monograph on the Anabaptists of Zürich, says: "Unquestionably the principles from which the Baptists proceeded manifest a powerful grasp of primitive Christian ideas." What were some of the ideas that characterized the Anabaptist movement of the sixteenth century? The following are especially worthy of attention:

1. That the Scriptures are the only authority in matters of faith and practice.
2. That personal faith in Jesus Christ alone secures salvation; therefore infant baptism is to be rejected.
3. That a church is composed of believers who have been baptized on a personal confession of their faith in Jesus Christ.
4. That each church has the entire control of its affairs without interference on the part of any external power.
5. That the outward life must be in accordance with such a confession of faith, and to this end it is essential that church discipline should be maintained.³
6. That while the State may properly demand obedience in all things not contrary to the law of God, it has no right to set aside the dictates of conscience, and compel the humblest individual to surrender his religious views, or to inflict punishment in case such surrender is refused. Every human soul is directly responsible to God.

¹ *Geschichte d. Münsterischen Aufruhrs*, ii., S. 67.

² *Baptist Review*, July, 1889, p. 263.

³ Wer nach der Taufe wieder in Sünde verfallt, solle mit dem Bann ausgeschlossen werden.—Egli, *Die Züricher Wiedertäufer*, S. 28.

These ideas characterized the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland. They appeared in the public discussions held with Zwingli and his associates. The supreme authority of the Scriptures was made especially prominent in these teachings.¹ The great evangelical truths which the Swiss reformers preached, they held. They believed in regeneration by the atoning blood of Christ, but they demanded the fruits of regeneration. Their hymns, which happily have been preserved, show no trace of revolutionary or fanatical doctrines, but abound in devout sentiments pertaining to Christian experience and hope, and exhortations to fidelity and steadfastness in the faith, although persecution and death should be the result.²

These ideas the banished leaders of the Swiss Anabaptists made known in other lands. Prominent among these leaders was Balthasar Hubmeier. Indeed no one influenced the Anabaptist movement from 1525 to 1528 more profoundly than did he. Pastor of a Reformed church at Waldshut, across the Rhine from Switzerland, he, with many of his church, was baptized by Reublin at Easter in 1525. He was a man of scholarly ability and devout piety. Having been banished from Switzerland, he made his way into Moravia, where he guided the new movement until his death at the stake, which occurred at Vienna March 10, 1528. His numerous published writings bear witness to his

¹ Grebel und seine Anhänger berufen sich nirgends auf unmittelbare göttliche Eingebungen, nirgends setzen sie der Bibel, als dem todtten Buchstaben, das innere Wort oder die lebendige Stimme Gottes entgegen; was sie wollen ist die Schrift, nichts als die Schrift, die ganze Schrift, und wenn sie sich des rechten Geistes rühmen, so ist damit nicht eine Quelle neuer Offenbarungen gemeint, sondern das subjective Prinzip des christlichen Erkennens und Lebens.—Cited in *Berner Beiträge*, S. 236.

² "The Anabaptists produced some of the earliest Protestant hymns in the German language, which deserve the attention of historians. Some of them have passed into orthodox collections in ignorance of the real authors. . . . They dwell on the inner life of the Christian, the mystery of regeneration, sanctification, and personal union with Christ. They breathe throughout a spirit of piety, devotion, cheerful resignation under suffering, and readiness for martyrdom. They are hymns of the cross, to comfort and encourage the scattered sheep of Christ, ready for the slaughter in imitation of their Divine Shepherd."—Dr. Philip Schaff, *Baptist Review*, July, 1889, p. 273.

evangelical spirit and his devotion to Baptist principles. "Baptism," he says, "is an ordinance of Christ. It is not enough that one believes in Jesus; he must confess him openly. He who confesses Christ before men, Christ will confess before his Father. The divine order is, first: the preaching of the Word; second, faith; third, baptism." When it was charged against the Anabaptists that they proposed to establish a church of sinless persons, Hubmeier replied: "You do us an injustice. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." The charge of communism he indignantly repelled. "I have always said with reference to community of goods," is his testimony, "that one should have regard to others, so that the hungry may be fed, the thirsty receive drink, and the naked be clothed; for we are not lords, but stewards. There is certainly no one who says that all things should be common." When it was said that those who are opposed to infant baptism hold that no one can be saved without water-baptism, Hubmeier replied: "Salvation is conditioned neither on baptism nor on works of mercy. Condemnation is the result not of a neglect of baptism, but of unbelief alone." And when it was added that the thief on the cross believed, and on the same day was with Christ in Paradise, yet he was not baptized with outward baptism, Hubmeier replied, "The man who has the excuse of the thief on the cross will have the favor of God though unbaptized."

Hubmeier's printed works, twenty-five in number, appeared in rapid succession, were extensively circulated, and became important factors in the development of the Baptist movement.

Not long before his death, Hubmeier was brought into conflict with Hans Hut, a German Anabaptist, whose views in some respects were at variance with his own. Hut was a pre-millennarian. He also held and taught that a Christian ought not to bear the sword, *i. e.*, engage in military service. These views he zealously endeavored to impress upon the Baptists of Moravia; but having at length been arrested he made his escape into Southern Germany, where after further

labors in extending his peculiar doctrines, he suffered martyrdom at Augsburg in 1529.

About the same time an added effort to subvert the teachings of Hubmeier in Moravia was made by Jacob Wiedemann, who came to Nikolsburg possessed with the idea that community of goods was of the essence of Christianity; but he, too, with those whom he had won to his standard, was soon compelled to leave the country. His doctrine of community of goods, however, in the absence of a strong opponent like Hubmeier, at length became a fundamental one with the Moravian Anabaptists; although a small company of Swiss Anabaptists among them resolutely rejected the doctrine and held to the principles advocated by Hubmeier. The Chiliastic views of Hut failed to obtain a foothold in Moravia.

In the teachings of Melchior Hofmann, who for a while was prominent in the Anabaptist movement in Northern Germany, beginning with 1530, Chiliasm received considerable attention. Hofmann, who, as we have seen, was primarily prominent in the Lutheran Reformation, believed that the end of the world was at hand, and full of evangelistic fervor, he earnestly impressed his convictions upon the minds of his eager listeners wherever he went. It is worthy of notice in this connection that Luther busied himself at times with like speculations. He not only looked forward with longing to the end of all things, but from the commencement of his own conflict with Anti-Christ he hoped for the speedy overthrow of this mighty opposing power by means of the Saviour's return. In 1540 he regarded the close of the world-period as at hand. Melanchthon also was accustomed to speak of the world as "bereits im Greisenalten."¹

It is not surprising, therefore, that Chiliastic views found a welcome in some Anabaptist circles. The signs mentioned in the Scriptures in connection with the final catastrophe the Anabaptists saw as did Luther; and as Hofmann made his way among the scattered flocks and foretold the speedy end of the wrongs which the oppressed classes had suffered, and the glory of the new kingdom in which dwelleth righteous-

¹ Köstlin, *Studien u. Kritiken*, 1878, S. 125, 126.

ness, they received his message as glad tidings. Some, who accepted Chiliastic views, made shipwreck of faith, and abandoned themselves to the wildest excesses and abominations. But they were few in number compared with the great Anabaptist body. These avoided the rock upon which the Münster fanatics had perished, and under the guidance of wiser leaders were preserved from serious doctrinal errors.

V.

DECLINE OF THE MOVEMENT.

This was due in part to the loss of its leaders at a very early period in the history of the movement, and also to the fact that men of like spirit and doctrinal views were not found to take their places. Such men as Hubmeier, Grebel, Mantz, Reublin, Blaurock, Denck, Hetzer, had no successors, and as all of them were dead before 1530 they were not connected with the movement long enough to guard it from certain extravagances introduced by men like Hans Hut and Melchior Hofmann. Moreover, among thoughtful minds there can be no question but that the doctrines of pre-millennarianism and community of goods, made so prominent by both Hut and Hofmann, tended to bring the movement into disrepute, and so to weaken it.

But the strong arm of the civil power, which was early raised to smite the new movement, accomplished more. The men who struck down the leaders did not end their work with them. March 26, 1530, the Council of Zürich said: "We are determined not to tolerate Anabaptists within our borders. There must be no fellowship with them whatever." And it was ordered that all the inhabitants of the canton, and all in any way allied with them, especially all superior and inferior officers, magistrates, etc., should seize the "Brethren" wherever discovered and deliver them to the Council to be punished by death according to the law. And so the work of extirpation went on in Zürich and in the other cantons where Anabaptism had obtained a foothold;

and ere long in Switzerland the triumph of the civil authorities was complete.

The opposition of the civil authorities in other lands was as unrelenting. In Southern Germany, the states that formed the Swabian League voted, in September, 1527, to proceed against the Anabaptists. "Armed horsemen," says Keller, "roamed over all the states of the League, and their commanders had power to put immediately to death, without trial, the fanatics whom they arrested in their wild hunt. So outrageous were the proceedings that the Margrave George of Ansbach, of the house of Hohenzollern, thought it necessary to enter a protest against them. Horrible also were the persecutions in Bavaria. Duke William gave the frightful command: 'Whoever recants let him be beheaded; whoever will not recant let him be burned.'"

In Moravia persecution began in 1528, but the first great persecution was in 1535. King Ferdinand demanded the extermination of the Anabaptists, and in obedience to this cruel demand their communities were broken up and the members scattered. The great persecution of 1547-1554 was even more terrible in its consequences. Yet, though cast down, the "Brethren" were not destroyed. Then, near the close of the century, the Jesuits engaged in the work. The Baptists maintained their ground, however, until the middle of the sixteenth century, when other hostile influences aided the opposition, and an added century of cruelty and crime completed the bloody task.

In the Tyrol and Görtz the number of Anabaptist executions had reached nearly a thousand in 1531. At Ensisheim, according to Sebastian Franck, the number was six hundred. In the Palatinate, about the year 1529, "the Palgrave Ludwig in a short time put to death, on account of their faith, between one hundred and fifty and two hundred." Along the Rhine, State and Church vied with each other in the endeavor to crush out the movement. In Northern Germany and in the Netherlands the work of extermination was zealously prosecuted. Untold horrors were perpetrated. But even the severest measures were only partially success-

ful, and at length, wiser counsels prevailing, the Anabaptists, under Menno Simons, a worthy leader, were allowed with less hindrance to walk the peaceful ways they loved and which they had long desired to enter.

VI.

SOME OF THE ABIDING RESULTS OF THE MOVEMENT.

The Anabaptist movement in the sixteenth century suffered apparent defeat, as a whole, yet some of its distinguishing features, although fiercely assailed, were not destroyed; and these in the centuries that have followed have exercised an important influence in the development of the Christian Church.¹

Especially is this true of the idea of religious liberty. The Anabaptist principle that every man is directly responsible to God, and that magistrates rightfully have no authority to exercise compulsion in religious concerns, has obtained wide recognition, and Christians of every name are sharing in the benefits it has already secured.

The entire separation of Church and State is another feature of the Anabaptist movement that has found increasing favor in succeeding generations. It seemed to Zwingli as if the foundations would be removed altogether if religion should not receive the continued support of the strong arm of the civil power. But time has dispelled this illusion. It has been abundantly proved that the Christian Church has no need of helps from such a source. Already a Church independent of State aid or control is a hope full of inspiration for the future of Christianity.²

¹ Die Täuferi ist äusserlich unterlegen, und doch hat sie Vieles erreicht. Egli, *Die Züricher Wiedertäufer*, S. 93. Wie manchem Gedanken der Täufer ist eine spätere Zeit, wenn auch in anderer Form gerecht geworden? Strasser, *Berner Beiträge*, S. 238.

² The interest in this matter just now in Germany is significant. Rev. Dr. J. H. W. Stuckenberg, pastor of the American Chapel, in Berlin, recently wrote to the *Independent* (London): "The proposals for the improvement of the Church are so numerous, and have come so suddenly, that they are bewildering. It looks as if the crisis were hurrying beyond the hope of a

The importance of Church discipline is another idea of which much was made by the Anabaptists. Christianity, it was said, demands holy living and the fruits of holy living; and members of the body of Christ, living in entire disregard of the claims of religion, were dealt with according to the teachings of the New Testament. The importance given to Church discipline by the Anabaptists compelled Zwingli to give attention to it in the Reformed Church, and its importance in Church administration has been more and more widely conceded from the period of the Reformation.

Another idea developed in the Anabaptist movement is that of congregational self-government. The independence of the local church was asserted by the Anabaptists in the conviction that such independence is in accordance with the model furnished by the primitive churches; and this idea is now held not only by the Baptists of Europe and America, but by the Congregationalists and other smaller Christian bodies.

The Anabaptist idea that baptism is to be administered only to believers, on confession of their personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, has also had an increasing influence outside of Baptist churches, especially in the United States; while the related idea that infants can be saved without baptism advanced by the Anabaptists, and for which they were condemned by the Augsburg Confession, is one that now has the assent of thoughtful minds generally.¹

reformation to a revolution. Free the Church from the dominion of the State is now the demand of many who a few years ago denounced all who dared to advocate a free Church. Every day it is becoming more evident that secular power is not fit to manage the kingdom of God. Not only are the energies of Christians undeveloped, because the government professes to do for them what they ought to do themselves, but they are hampered by the State when they want to work."

¹ Art. IX. *Damnant Anabaptistas, qui improbant Baptismum puerorum et affirmant pueros sine Baptismo salvos fieri.* "There are few Lutherans who would subscribe to this condemnation now."—Dr. Philip Schaff, *Baptist Quarterly Review*, July, 1889, p. 270 (note).