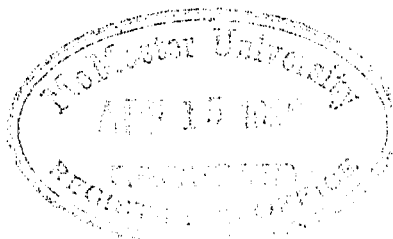


ANABAPTISM IN EUROPE DURING THE REFORMATION PERIOD

M. A. THESIS.

April 10th, 1926.

Thomas E. Richards.  
Grimsby, Ontario.



## CHAPTER 1.

### Progress of Anabaptist Thought up to the Sixteenth Century.

The name Anabaptism means re-baptism or baptizing again. The Anabaptists repudiated this name declaring that the baptism received in infancy was not Bible baptism and that they were quite satisfied with one baptism. The followers of Peter of Bruis in the twelfth century complained that Peter of Clugny slandered them by calling them Anabaptists as did their Swiss and German brethren after them. The London confession, 1646, protests that the English Baptists were commonly though unjustly called Anabaptists. In 1653, Hagger rebukes Baxter for its use, "Ye do wickedly to call them Anabaptists thereby to cast odium upon us, why I pray you, are you so wicked and malicious as to call them Anabaptists". Blackwood, writing in 1645 complains of being nicknamed Anabaptists, "We deny your title; Anabaptism signifies baptism again, our consciences are fully satisfied with one baptism, provided it be such as we judge to be the baptism of Christ, and if our consciences judge that sprinkling we had in our infancy to be none of Christ's baptism, I ask you whether can we in good conscience rest satisfied therewith"<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless they retained the name Anabaptist.

The history of these interesting people dates back several centuries. To say that the fundamental difference between them and other religious sects lies in the method of Baptism is wide of the truth, the distinction is much broader, deeper, and more radical. There was no need for serious protest against the Roman Hierarchy, for example, on the subject of immersion, for it was a settled custom down to the thirteenth century and is still the custom of the Greek church. The living and underlying principles of Anabaptist churches relate to the sovereign and absolute headship of Christ; to the exclusive authority of scripture as containing his law for the direction of all things; to the supernatural regeneration of each Christian forming the churches; to the liberty and responsibility to God of each individual conscience; and to the complete separation of church

1. Armitage - History of the Baptists, Page 337.

and state. However it must ever be kept in mind that the whole body of Anabaptists had never put forth an authorised expression of their principles and practises in the form of a creed aside from the Bible. In the main each separate church expressed what it thought the scriptures required of it as a church in a "Declaration of Faith".

1.

It remained for the twelfth century to witness the more powerful rebellions against the church. In the earlier centuries, there had been the individual protest against the impurities, the vices and the cruelties of the Roman system but they had been easily overpowered by the strong organization back of the Papal See. The earliest of the more powerful protests that took definite form grew out of the work of Peter of Bruys who conducted preaching tours in Southern France and after a score of years was burned as a heretic at St. Gilles in 1126. Dr. Wall declares that Peter of Bruys was probably the first anti-pedobaptist preacher that ever set up a church or society of men holding views against infant baptism. We are indebted to an enemy of Peter of Bruys for a statement of his teachings which are as follows;

2.

1. A rejection of tradition and an appeal to scripture as the sole authority in religion.
2. The Church, composed of believers, is a spiritual body, and baptism ought to be administered only to such as believe in Christ.
3. They denied the doctrine of transubstantiation.
4. They denied the doctrine of Purgatory and prayers for the dead.

These so called errors are what Anabaptists held to be precious and fundamental truths.

3.

Henry of Lausanne 1116 - 1150, followed and was closely related to Peter of Bruys in his theology and teaching. He was a monk of Clugny who put off the cowl to become a preacher of righteousness. His first impulse of resistance to the church

1. Vedder - Short History of the Baptists. Page 58.
2. Armitage - History of the Baptists. Page 287.
3. Vedder - Short History of the Baptists. Page 63.

was caused by the wicked lives of the clergy and the corruption not only tolerated but abetted if not openly practised by the higher dignitaries. He taught and practised the baptism of believers only, accepted the supreme authority of scripture, and rejected the authority of Tradition. In 1148, this noble preacher was condemned to solitary confinement and died soon afterwards.

Arnolda da Brescia was another monk who could not follow his vocation. The political corruptions of the Church in Italy at this period made a deeper impression on him than the religious, and throughout his career he was a reformer of political even more than of religious institutions. His wonderful success attracted the attention of Rome and was soon followed by his defeat, surrender, and martyrdom, his body being burned and his ashes thrown into the Tiber. The chief significance of Arnolda as regards Anabaptists is that he was the first to proclaim with insistence the doctrine of soul liberty and separation between church and state. He also denied infant baptism and the sacrament of the Mass.

The reformer of the twelfth century who made the deepest and most lasting impression however, was Peter Waldo. He came to notice in 1150 when past middle life and was a rich merchant of Lyons. Being troubled about the salvation of his soul and not receiving the help and comfort through the usual channels of the church, he consulted a learned theologian stating that he desired to follow the most perfect way. His teacher replied in the words of Christ. "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven and come take up thy cross and follow me." Waldo accepted the advise literally, went home, provided for his wife and two daughters, and distributed the remainder of his wealth to the poor. He set himself to a study of the scriptures and with this knowledge began to relate his experiences to the people, who listened eagerly to the story of the cross. He travelled from place to place, and the number of his converts multiplied rapidly.

Such a work could not go on without attracting the attention and arousing the jealousy of the priests. Waldo was forbidden to preach by the Archbishop of Lyons, and an appeal to the Pope brought no relief. He was received kindly by the Pope but ordered not to preach without the consent of his diocesan. Denied the privilege of preaching, Waldo, who had been up to this time a faithful son of the Church soon decided that he ought to obey God rather than man. He began preaching tours and soon Southern France was not only filled with his followers but with lay preachers of the word. He demanded three things: The voluntary poverty of his preachers; the free use of the Bible, and the right of laymen to preach. The preachers were known as the Poor Men of Lyons and later their followers were called Waldensians. Waldo died about 1217, but previous to his death he and his followers were condemned by the council of Verone, and expelled from Lyons. Thence they scattered all over continental Europe and increased in numbers in spite of bitter persecutions.

The rapid growth of the Waldensians was probably due to the preparation of the people by the preaching of Peter of Bruys and Henry of Lausanne. Where these men preached and their followers lived, the soil was found most favorable for the propagation of the teachings of Waldo. These men had arrived at the same truths independently, the doctrines of the Waldensians being substantially identical with the Peterbruisians, the persecutors of both being witness. Maintaining these views they were the spiritual ancestors of the Anabaptist churches that sprang up all over continental Europe just before the Lutheran Reformation. It is an interesting fact that these Anabaptist churches were most numerous precisely where the Waldensians of a couple of centuries previous has mostly flourished and where their identity as Waldensians had been lost. Few who have studied this period, doubt but what there was an intimate relation between the two movements.

From the thirteenth century a number of leaders sprang up who accepted at least in part the doctrines held by the later

Anabaptists. John Tauler 1290 - 1361 was a mystic. For eight years he sought some one to lead him nearer to God and at last found his tutor in a poor beggar at the gate of a cathedral. He joined himself with those known as the Friends of God at Strasburg and Cologne and was noted for his piety, eloquence and learning. John Wycliffe 1324?-1380 was the first great master to really catch the spirit of the Reformation. He was called the Morning Star of the Reformation. Froude finds a resemblance between some of Wycliffe's views and those of the Anabaptists, and some claim him as a Baptist.<sup>1.</sup> Dr. Thomas Armitage thinks it more accurate to say that many who carried his principles to their legitimate conclusions became Baptists. His foundation principles were: That all truth is contained in the scripture; that Christ's law is sufficient by itself to rule Christ's church; that we must receive nothing but what is in the scriptures; that whatever is added to it or taken from it is blasphemous; that no rite or ceremony ought to be received into the church but that which is plainly confirmed by God's word; and that we admit no conclusions that is not proved by the testimony of Scripture. During his life time Wycliffe sent out great numbers of itinerant preachers, who preached in market places, moors, commons, and wherever they could find hearers. They increased so rapidly that Pope Martin raved against them in the most vulgar manner and Archbishop Courtney spent five months in purging Oxford University of their presence. The underlying spirit of Lollardism sought the right of unfettered thought, the free interpretation of the Bible as the rule of faith, and the apostolic simplicity of the ordinances.

Wycliffe's works and his translation of the scriptures had a tremendous influence in Germany and especially in Bohemia on the lives of John Huss and Jerome of Prague. Anne of Bohemia having become Queen of Richard II of England and intercourse grew up between the two countries in which the English Reformer's works were carried to Bohemia. When Huss and Jerome were burned all Bohemia were stirred, and in 1415 four hundred and fifty nobles not only subscribed to their doctrines but bound themselves

1. Armitage - History of the Baptists, Page 315.

to protect the preaching of God's word on their estates. They maintained the Bible as the supreme authority in all matters of doctrine. Later this body divided, part rejecting all that was not expressly taught in the scriptures and the others accepting all ecclesiastical practices not expressly forbidden. The former attitude coincided with the Anabaptist thought. They were led by Ziska a most intrepid leader and were called Taborites. In 1420 they published fourteen articles among which are the following: That the faithful are not to receive the views of the learned, unless they are found in the Bible; that no decrees of the Fathers, or ancient rite, or tradition of men is to be retained, but those which are found in the New Testament; that infants ought not to be baptised with exorcisms; and that the use of sponsors should be discontinued. Some members of this body joined the Brethren of the Law of Christ or the Bohemian Brethren.

✓ Peter Chelcicky whom Palacky ranks as next to Huss as the greatest thinker of the fifteenth century, refused to join either of the Hussite factions. He insisted on the necessity of the new birth and thought it better to baptize believers only who could show their faith by their works. He says that Christ speaks of faith first, and then of Baptism, but he did not strictly adhere to this belief in practice. Peter formed a new party which through persecution became almost extinct in fifty years. It appears that the Hussite and Brethren adhered fairly strictly to immersion as the mode of baptism. What Erasmus said of the Hussite was true of the brethren, "They admit none until they are dipped in water".

At the opening of the reformation period the Waldensian communities were numerous on the Cottian Alps, Naples, and Provence besides scattered congregations in Italy, Switzerland, France, and Germany and at various times were strong at Bern, Strasberg and Passau. They were naturally attracted by the reformation movement and their connection with the Bohemian brethren became a turning point in their history. The Bohemian

bretherhood grew rapidly and soon numbered about one-quarter of the population and in 1500 the Pope sent a band of Dominican Monks to preach amongst them and hold conferences in an endeavor to win them back to the fold. Three years later, King Ladislaus II issued bloody edicts banishing their laymen who refused to recant and committing their preachers to the flames. This scattered them but did not crush them. The persecution, with its tortures, imprisonments, and burnings, ended only with the King's death in 1516. Bohemia has been called the cradle of the Reformation.

THE ANABAPTISTS IN SWITZERLAND

The origin of the Anabaptists in Switzerland is somewhat obscure. According to the writing of contemporaries, they received their main doctrines from sects that ante-dated the Reformation period. Vadian says <sup>1.</sup> "There were before the Reformation people in Zurich who, filled with errors, gave birth to the Anabaptists. Grebel was taught by them; he did not discover his own doctrines but was taught by others". While we have not any proof of a historical union between Anabaptists and the mediaeval sects, the identity of their religious convictions plainly show the Waldensians and Peterbrusians unmistakably forerunners of the Anabaptists. On the testimony of their enemies, <sup>2.</sup> these earlier sects lived quietly; God fearing lives; believed all the articles of the Apostles creed; were strongly anti clerical; lived quietly and rarely appeared in history save when the chronicle of some town makes casual mention of their existence or when an inquisitor ferreted them out and recorded their so-called heresies. They objected to all church festivals; to all blessings of buildings, crosses, and candles; they alleged that Christ did not give his apostles stoles; they scoffed at excommunication, at indulgences, and at dispensations; they declared there was no regenerative efficacy in infant baptism; and they were keenly alive to all injunctions of Christian charity. These are the principles in the main for which Anabaptists contended, and, while we cannot trace their continuous descent down to the period of the Reformation we do find in the earliest decades of the sixteenth century notices of the existence of small praying communities which have all the marks of those recorded in the inquisitors reports belonging to the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries. The rise of the Anabaptists had a suddenness which only the foregoing facts can explain. The Movement seems to have sprung up in many places about the same

1. Vedder - Short History of the Baptists, Page 75.

2. Lindsay - History of the Reformation, Vol. 11, Page 433.

time and its general growth was wonderful between 1520 and 1570. Keller says <sup>1</sup>. "The anabaptist movement was so rapid, that the presence of Anabaptist views was speedily discoverable in all parts of the land". He mentions Switzerland, Moravia, the south and north German states and Holland with many principalities and writes "The more I examine the documents of the time the more I am astonished at the extent of the diffusion of Anabaptist views".

Switzerland was no exception and the very suddenness of the outbreak of the movement in Zurich and other centres was no doubt due to the fact that Zwingli was favorably impressed with Anabaptist views especially the rejection of infant baptism, nevertheless he was absolutely wedded to the idea of a state church. He could not see how the church could exist apart from the state. He had led the reactionary party against the abuses of the church and had finally brought a separation between the Papal See and the reformers and had been upheld in his work by the council who now were the supreme authority in matters of religion. To ask these men to repudiate infant baptism was asking them to unchurch themselves. Zwingli was compelled to choose between the view of the Anabaptists rejecting infant baptism and separation of church and state, and acceptance of infant baptism and a state church. He chose the latter.

When Zwingli became leader of the Swiss Reformation, he demanded obedience to the word of God in all Christian matters and resolved to reject what it did not teach. <sup>2</sup> This was a foundation principle which he laid down when debating with Dr. Faber before 600 Roman Catholics at Zurich in 1523. <sup>3</sup> Faber asked who should be judges on the matters in dispute and Zwingli pointed to the Scriptures. The Doctor proposed that the issue should be decided by the universities of Paris, Cologne, and Freiburg. Zwingli replied that the men in that room could tell

1. Armitage - History of the Baptists, Page 329.

2. Burrage - The Anabaptists in Switzerland, Page 52.

3. Armitage - History of the Baptists, Page 350.

better what the scriptures taught than all the universities. "Show me," he demanded "the place in scripture where it is written that we should invoke the saints". When Faber defended the doctrine by the councils, Zwingli showed that these had erred, nothing was binding but the Bible. Many of his hearers had strong Anabaptist tendencies and took in this radical doctrine. Educated by so able a leader, they turned his own weapons upon him when they took issue with him on other subjects, and the moment he fell into controversy with his own Anabaptist disciples, broke with his fundamental principles, and made the magistrates the decisive judges in the dispute.

The Anabaptists of Zurich soon began to openly assail the the doctrine of infant baptism. One pastor called it a use-<sup>1.</sup>less thing. Grebel wrote that those who understood the teaching of scripture refused to allow their children to be baptized. So strongly was the matter pressed that the council appointed a public discussion. Grebel asked that the debate be in writing with the Bible as the only source of appeal, Zwingli agreed to this but the council refused. At the discussion in the council hall which was held in January 1525, the Anabaptists represented by Grebel, Mantz, Hatzer, Reublin and Blaurock, urged the acceptance of the Bible as the only<sup>2.</sup> authority but Zwingli ungraciously charged them with dictating that he should preach nothing but what suited them. He presented the current Pedo baptist arguments of his time, that infant baptism of the New Testament took the place of the rite of circumcision of the Old Testament. The council of course in duty bound declared in favor of Zwingli. The next day they decreed that all should have their children baptized within a week or be banished. On January 21st the council ordered the Anabaptists to be silent on the subject, and, upon refusing, they were ordered to leave the country within one week. However, the Anabaptist children were not brought for baptism and on February 1st the Council ordered that those who were dis-

1. Burrage - The Anabaptists of Switzerland, Page 77..

2. Burrage - The Anabaptists of Switzerland, Page 80, 109.

obedient should be arrested and the babes as soon as born should be baptized. Mantz and Blaurock with twenty-four<sup>1.</sup> parents of Zollikon were arrested. They were ordered to pay the costs of their imprisonment and to pay a fine of 1000 gulden, all were released except two. This however did not deter them in their work and a few days after at Zollikon, Blaurock spent the whole day in preaching and baptizing. When this news reached Zurich, the council fined those who had been baptized and threatened to banish all who should be thereafter. Some few recanted but most of them refused to submit. Instead of arresting the growth of the Anabaptist movement, we find it enjoying steady progress. As persecutions were forced upon them, like the early Christians, they went everywhere preaching the gospel.<sup>2.</sup> They had this advantage: they stood on the solid rock of scripture authority; they went from village to village and from house to house holding personal interviews with the inmates; and they made much of personal experience. The influence of these Anabaptist exiles was soon manifest in many places, at Schaffhausen and at Waldshut, at Hallau where the entire church received baptism at the hands of Broadli and Reublin, at St. Gall the Anabaptists withdrew from the churches leaving them almost empty and held services in private houses and in the open fields. In a short time the Anabaptists numbered 800 members. Crowds flocked into St. Gall and some writers say as many as 1500, others as many as 2200 became<sup>3.</sup> converts to the new faith.

So great was the progress that the council became alarmed and ordered another public disputation to be held on November 6th. As they knew full well that Zwingli was all powerful with the council, it was not probable that the Anabaptists expected a victory. The usual arguments were brought out by the Zwinglians while the Anabaptists argued that there is no command or example for infant baptism in the New Testament and that instruction and belief are enjoined

1. Burrage - The Anabaptists of Switzerland, Page 101.
2. Burrage - The Anabaptists of Switzerland, Page 110.
3. Burrage - The Anabaptists of Switzerland, Page 119.

before baptism. Zwingli charged the Anabaptists with being separatists, to which they made the un-answerable reply that if they were they had as good a right to separate from him as he had to separate from the Pope.<sup>1</sup> The decision of the council was to the effect the Zwingli and his followers had overcome the Anabaptists, annihilated Anabaptism and immediately started to annihilate the movement by means of the civic power. All children were ordered to be baptized and adults were to abstain from Anabaptism. The council also warned that any who should disobey would be fined a silver mark and if any shall prove disobedient "We shall deal with him further and punish him according to his deserts without further forgiveness."

That the above was no light threat, the Anabaptist had immediate reason to know. Grebel, Mantz, Blaurock, and Hubmaier with others were summoned before the council and commanded to retract their errors. They refused, were thrown into prison, loaded with chains, and kept there several months. Having started the persecutions the Zwinglians found that to be effective they could not stop short of the stake and the sword. On March 7th 1526, the council decreed that whosoever rebaptized should be drowned and a second decree on Nov. 19th confirmed the first decree. Felix Mantz who had been released and had renewed his labors at Schaffhausen and Basel, was re-arrested on Dec. 3rd, found guilty of the heinous offence of Anabaptism and was sentenced to death on Jan. 5th 1527 by drowning.<sup>2</sup> The sentence was duly carried out.

The effect of his execution was electric and Anabaptists sprang up all over the land. Capito wrote to Zwingli from Strasburg "It is reported here that your Felix Mantz has suffered punishment and death gloriously, on which account the cause of truth and piety which you sustain is greatly depressed".<sup>3</sup> If anything could depress the Zwinglian movement one would think it would be this brutal treatment of

1. Burrage - The Anabaptists in Switzerland, Page 140.
2. " " " " " " 172.
- Armitage - A History of the Baptists, Page, 335.
3. Vedder - Short History of the Baptists, Page, 86.

those whose only fault was that they had been consistent where Zwingli himself had been inconsistent in keeping close to the new testament teaching and practise. Two years later, Jacob F'aulk and Henry Rieman, having firmly refused to retract,<sup>1.</sup> were condemned and sentenced to be drowned. For these persecutions Zwingli stands condemned before the bar of history. As the burning of Servetus has left an eternal stain on the good name of Calvin, so the drowning of Mantz and others is a damning blot on Zwingli's career as a reformer.

Grebel was spared a like fate by an untimely death. He was a natural leader of men, at Schaffhausen, at St. Gall, at Minwyl and other places he preached the gospel with great power and gathered large numbers of converts into the churches.<sup>2.</sup> Hubmaier was arrested, imprisoned, and forced to recant. He denied his recantation, was imprisoned again, and finally led to the gate of the city where he was forced to take an oath never to return. We will meet him as we turn to the study of the movement in Germany. Blaurock was burned at the stake at Claussen in the Tyrol in 1529. Hatzler was banished from Zurich, went to Strasburg for a time, was banished again, and made his way to Constance where he was arrested, imprisoned for four months and then put to death.

These leaders, all of whom were cultured and educated gentlemen, the equal of Zwingli in learning and debate, were one by one executed, driven away, or died of natural causes. At length the persecutors attained their end. At first the persecutions increased the number of Anabaptists but they were for the most part a plain unlettered folk and not able to hold out unaided and unled against a persecution so bitter and so determined. Gradually the Anabaptists disappear from the annals of Switzerland but not without having left the impress of their character on the nation and on the Zwinglian reformation.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland had been in vain. Of it Egli says,<sup>3.</sup>

1. Burrage - The Anabaptists in Switzerland, Page 192.
2. Vedder - Short History of the Baptists, Page 88.
3. Burrage - The Anabaptists in Switzerland, Page 220.

"Anabaptism apparently suffered defeat, but in fact it accomplished much. It was from the beginning ~~of~~ a ferment in the development of the idea of separation of church and state, and in the Unterland through its efforts for an improvement in discipline and morals, led to the most important results. Even although its direct influence upon the ritual for Baptism; the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; the Synod with its censorship of morals; upon the publication of mandates pertaining to morals and upon the exclusion of church music, may not be fully established, still Zwingli would not have given attention to church discipline for a long time had not his opponents compelled him to do so".

## CHAPTER 111

### THE ANABAPTISTS IN GERMANY

- 17 -

1.  
A modern historian says, "The name Anabaptist in the literature of the Luthern Reformation stands as a synonym for the extremest errors of doctrine and the wildest excesses of conduct. The Anabaptists were denounced by their contemporaries, Romanist and Protestant alike with a rhetoric so sulphurous that an evil odor has clung to the name ever since. If one were to believe the half that he reads about these heretics, he would be compelled to think them the most depraved of mankind. Nothing was too vile to be ascribed to them, nothing was too wicked to be believed about them". Most of the Anabaptists, as the Lutherans, were an uncultured people but the great majority of their leaders were highly educated and unsurpassed in educational affairs revealing a breadth of mind, sincerity of spirit, and keen knowledge of the original scripture. It is only when we consider the leaders of the Munster outrage that we find men totally unqualified by lack of education, genius in statesmanship, common sense, and decency to stand at the head of any movement.

At the opening of the Reformation bodies of Anabaptists sprang up every where. In this respect matching the growth of the body in Switzerland, but there is this distinction, in Switzerland there was a fairly strong idea of unity in matters of belief but in Germany anyone who differed in doctrine from the Lutheran creed and who even held widely divergent views were stigmatized Anabaptists. Thus a great deal of opprobrium was cast on the true Anabaptist. Many who were called by this title were never Anabaptists, but consistently practised pedobaptism and some who rejected infant sprinkling never really grasped the spiritual conception of the movement.

Our attention is called first to the outbreak at Zwickau in 1521. The Zwickau prophets, Nicholas Storch, Marcus Storch and Marcus Thoma are referred to as Anabaptists by some historians but these men were never Anabaptists since they anticipated the Friends in rejecting water baptism as unnecessary.  
1. Vedder - Short History of the Baptists, Page 92.

1. to those who had the baptism of the Spirit. Thomas Munzer also of Zwickau is wrongly called an Anabaptist. His writing of a tract against Infant Baptism is probably responsible for this but he never abandoned the practise of baptising them. 2. These prophets as they were called began to announce the speedy end of the age and the setting up of the kingdom of Christ. Disorders followed, they were arrested, thrown into prison and later exiled. They soon appeared at Wittenberg where Carlstadt and Melanchthon were the leading men. Both were greatly influenced by the prophets, received them kindly, and gave not a little credence to their doctrines. A letter of Melanchthon shows how near he came to acknowledging the genuineness of the men's inspiration. Luther, who was watching things from his captivity at the Wartburg, suddenly appeared, preached a series of violent sermons, had stormy interviews with the reformers and finally drove them out of town. Munzer next appeared as pastor of the church at Alstedt and at the beginning of 1525 appears at Muhlhausen which was at this time the storm-centre of the Peasants uprising. He announced himself as a prophet of God come for the purpose of setting up the kingdom of heaven in the city, he promised destruction of princes, community of goods, and the gospel to be made the rule of life in all things. By such means he made himself the head of the revolt and thousands of deluded peasants of South Germany flocked to his standard. On May 15th 1525, the peasants were defeated and before peace came their leaders with probably 100,000 of their number were slain. It is significant that no contemporaries have charged the Anabaptists with responsibilities for the disorders at Muhlhausen, this was left for later Pedobaptists of the nineteenth century to do. 3. If Anabaptists joined the revolt, they suffered as the others suffered but not as Anabaptists.

Dr. Ludwig Keller holds that the origin of Anabaptists lies far back of this period and traces their connection with medieval endeavors at reform. 4. Anabaptism is according to Keller's opinion the real Reformation movement from which both Luther and

1. Vedder - Short History of the Baptists, Page 95.
2. Newman - Church History Vo. 11 Page 157.
3. Vedder - History of the Baptists, Page 99
4. " " " " " " 100.

Zwingli turned aside for political reasons. Their rapid growth in South Germany is in no small part due to the labors and teachings of Balthasar Hubmaier, whom as we have already noted, was a distinguished scholar.<sup>1.</sup> At an early age he was Professor of Theology at Ingolstadt. Three years later he was rector of the famous Ingolstadt high school. Eck referred to him as the most eloquent man in Europe, equally esteemed for his learning and his piety. In 1516, he was called to be cathedral preacher at Regensburg and enjoyed such success as a preacher that he might well have considered the highest places in Bavaria open to him. In 1519, feeling that he could no longer conscientiously occupy such positions, he retired to the little town of Waldshut. At first his preaching was by no means evangelical in doctrine and practise and it was only after his return from a visit to Zwingli in 1523 that he decided to join the party of reform and began to introduce changes. Hubmaier could not remain satisfied with any half-way measures or reform as Luther and Zwingli had done, he had in reality done what they only professed to do - taken the New Testament as his sole rule of faith and practise. He rejects infant baptism, although at first compromising with his conscience by advising parents against the baptism of their children, yet performing the ceremony when the parents insisted on it.

In 1525, Hubmaier was baptized by William Reublin at Waldshut and then Hubmaier baptised 110 others on profession of faith and shortly after 300 more. The coming of the Austrian army in December compelled him to leave Waldshut and he sought refuge at Zurich. Here he was thrown into prison and dispicably treated by Zwingli, his former friend. On his release, he was found at Nicholsburg in Moravia, here he finds many Swiss Anabaptists who had sought refuge and the way was prepared for the proclamation of the truth. He was tremendously successful, great crowds being attracted by his preaching, but his success was short lived, on the order of the Emperor he was seized and taken to Vienna. After an imprisonment of three months, during

1. Lindsay - History of the Reformation Vol. 11 Page 436.

which time the Roman theologians did their utmost to induce him to recant, he was taken on March 10th 1528, to the place of execution and after being most cruelly afflicted by having red hot pinchers thrust into his flesh, he was beheaded and his body burned. Three days later, his wife was thrown from a bridge into the Danube with a heavy stone about her neck and drowned.<sup>1.</sup> Hubmaier was a great character and a prolific author of large literary ability. His motto "Truth is Immortal" gives the keynote to his high, bold, and logical spirit. He was original in his thinking, had keen insight, and delighted in making the truth of God supreme. His translations of the Gospels, Epistles to the Romans and Corinthians, with his twenty-four works are prohibited in the index at Rome, although he was one of the most pure and aimable men of his age.<sup>2.</sup> His declarations written earlier to Oecolampadius "Now the hour is come in which I shall proclaim publicly and upon the housetops what I have hitherto kept pent up within. The great God be praised who has vouchsafed to me and equally to my hearers this spirit of liberty" and that written to Zwingli, "So I am well content, for I will ever give God the honor and let his word alone be empire; to Him will I be subject and yield myself as well as my doctrines.. The Truth is Immortal", were the norms by which he lived and worked.

Next to Hubmaier, Hans Denck stands out as the most prominent Anabaptist leader in Germany. Entirely different from Hubmaier,<sup>3.</sup> Denck was a mystic. He had drunk deeply at the well of the fourteenth and fifteenth century mystics, hence his teaching was tinged with many of their views. He believed there was a spark of the Divine nature in man, an inner light, which urged men to walk in the ways of God and that men could always keep true to the inward monitor, who was none else but Christ. Graduating from Basel, an excellent classical and Hebrew scholar, he became a proof reader and teacher, being associated with Oecolampadius. Later, he was appointed rector of Nuremburg where in 1525 he became heretical enough to be

1. Armitage - History of the Baptists, Page 381.

2. Newman - History of Anti Pedobaptism, Page 125-26.

3. Lindsay - A History of the Reformation, Vol.11. Page 400.

- 21 - vanished and forbidden to return on pain of death. He travelled in South Germany and Switzerland still further maturing his views. At St. Gall he greatly impressed Vidian as a most gifted youth. He seems at this time to have been so carried away by the thought of God's infinite love and mercy that he could not conceive of the eternal punishment of the wicked as a part of the eternal plan. At Augsburg he surrounded himself with kindred spirits and supported himself by private teaching. Here he writes his most famous work "The Law of God". As a result of Hubmaier's visit in June 1526, he was baptised and proceeded to organize an Anabaptist church. The local Evangelical ministers sought to show him the error of his ways and to avoid trouble he quietly departed from the city, but not before he had drawn together a membership of several hundred. By this time he had attained great eminence as a "Anabaptist Pope".<sup>1.</sup> At Strasbury, which by reason of its tolerance had become a refuge for persecuted radicals, Denck soon gained a large following. Later he settled at Worms then again at Augsburg where he participated in a great convention of Anabaptist Leaders. He was probably saved from martyrdom by an untimely death at Basel in 1527. By the time of Danck's death, there were Anabaptist churches or groups in most every city and hamlet throughout Germany. This was due to the zeal of the new converts and in no small measure to the persecutions that were instituted not only by Papal and Imperial edicts but by the Lutheran and Zwinglians themselves.<sup>2.</sup>

The town of Munster was destined to be the centre that was to bring disgrace on Anabaptism and was to cause the undoing to a certain extent of the movement. Newman writes<sup>3.</sup> that no episode in history has done so much to impede the progress of Baptist principles as that of Munster. Its influence is still quite marked in Germany and other European countries.

Melchior Hofmann, a man of piety, of evangelical spirit, of pure and devoted life, but with a mind of a dreary and mystical type, with a lack of knowledge and mental culture, making him an easy victim to speculations and vagaries, was to become the leader whose teachings contained dangerous germs of evil and

1. Newman - Church History. Vol. 11, Page 182.

2. Burrage - The Anabaptists in Switzerland, Page 218.

Lindsay - History of the Reformation, Vol. 11, Page 147.

3. Newman - History of Anti Pedobaptism, Page 292.

development under his successors was to bring great shame upon the cause. Hofmann was born in 1490 and published his first book in 1526 at Stockholm. It was an interpretation of the twelfth chapter of Daniel in which he gave free vent to his notions about the coming of Christ's Kingdom. In 1529 he arrived in Strasburg, a Lutheran seemingly unacquainted with Anabaptist views. Here the Anabaptists were numerous and the death of Denck had left them without a leader. The ardor of Hofmann and the novelty of his teaching naturally fitted him for the vacant leadership and in ~~and in~~ a very short time he was the recognised head of the Anabaptists of Strasburg. He taught, wrote, and made missionary journeys. His growing influence alarmed the magistrates who caused his arrest in 1533, the year in which he had predicted the setting up of the kingdom of God in Strasburg. Although he was discredited through the failure of his prophecies, those of Jan Matthys one of his converts in Holland were readily received. Mathys was fanatic, half lunatic, half criminal. He dreamed dreams and saw visions, he proclaimed himself the Elias of the new dispensation soon to begin and sent out twelve apostles to herald the coming of the new age. Converts to this new gospel were made by the thousands in Holland and Friesland.

The struggle going on in Munster to gain freedom from the ecclesiastical caste and the famine of 1529 brought the city to the verge of revolution and attracted the attention of Anabaptist leaders so strongly that they decided to make it their headquarters. Rothman began about 1529 to preach the Lutheran doctrine. Soon all the clergy aided within and a political religious revolution followed. Philip of Hesse persuaded the Prince Bishop to recognise Munster as a Lutheran city. Rothman pressed for further reforms. He advocated believers baptism and insisted on immersion. Just at this stage two of Matthys' apostles reached the city and began preaching and baptizing. In eight days, they are said to have baptized 1400 persons. Two weeks later Matthys arrived and by February the Anabaptists had so increased that they had no difficulty in electing

1. Vedder - Short History of the Baptists, Page 118.

electing a majority to the council and so controlled the city without striking a blow. The law was altered, all images and those who would not join were driven from the city. Community of goods became the law of the city, and fanaticism and wickedness began. In December 1534 Matthys made a sortie to drive back the forces of the Prince Bishop who had invested the city, and was killed in the attempt. John Bockhold of Leyden had no difficulty in proclaiming himself the successor of Matthys. He called Munster, Mount Zion, proclaimed himself King David, and that the kingdom of David was to be re-established. King David must have his harem, and polygamy was proclaimed as the law of the new kingdom. The farce was soon a bloody tragedy. The Prince Bishop's troops pressed the investment. The Munsterites looked for aid from outside but Anabaptists were either overawed or disgusted by the fantastic doings of the city and no army came. At length the town wasted by famine and weakened by dissensions was betrayed by traitors. It fell on June 25th 1535. There was great slaughter in the Town and the captured leaders after most cruel treatment were hung in cages to die of hunger.

The excesses practised at Munster were at once charged against the Anabaptists and the name became a synonym of all that was fanatical in creed and immoral in character. Without mercy and without distinctions, all who bore the name were persecuted until they were exterminated or driven into hiding. But it is no more fair to hold the Anabaptists as a whole responsible for what occurred because Matthys and Rockhold were Anabaptists than it is to hold the Lutherans responsible because Rothman was a Lutheran when he began his evil career. Happily, in modern times, the calumny, that the Anabaptists were responsible has lost its edge, and the truth has found its way to the surface.<sup>1</sup> Brandt attributes the atrocities to some "enthusiastic Anabaptists" but adds, "not to well meaning Anabaptists" Schaff declares it, "The greatest injustice to make the Anabaptists, as such responsible for the extravagances that led to

1. Armitage - History of the Baptists, Page 372.

the tragedy of Munster. Their contemporaries and men who knew them well: Capito, Metzel and Frank all bear testimony to the fact that Anabaptists lived quietly, manifested Godly fear and pure zeal, and strenuously objected to the use of the sword. Erasmus in 1529 said, "The Anabaptists have seized no churches, have not conspired against the authorities nor deprived any man of his estate or goods". Cornelius wrote "All these excesses were condemned and opposed wherever a large assembly of the brethren afforded an opportunity to give expression to the religious consciousness of the Anabaptist Membership".<sup>1.</sup> Again Cornelius, who is a Roman Catholic, writes that in the Tyrol and Gortz the number of persecutions reached 1000; in Ensisheim 600; at Linz 73 in six weeks. Duke William of Bavaria, surpassed all others, in issuing the fearful decree to behead those who recanted, and to burn those who refused to recant. Throughout the greater part of upper Germany the persecutions raged like a wild chase, the blood of these people flowed like water, so they cried to the Lord for help. But hundreds of them of all ages and both sexes suffered the pangs of torture without a murmur, despised to buy their lives by recantation and went to the place of execution joyful and singing psalms".

After the savage persecution following the downfall of Munster, one might have expected the Anabaptists to have been extirpated but although many were put to death and others forced to secret meetings, the principles for which Anabaptists stood, lived in many hearts that were able to withstand the severest sufferings and persecutions. It was left for Menno<sup>2.</sup> Simons, born 1496 at Witmarsum to once more bring some order and organization out of this scattered conditions. Menno was a man of integrity, mild, accomodating, patient of injuries and so ardent in his piety as to exemplify in his own life the precepts he gave to others. He spent twenty-five laborous years in visiting the scattered Anabaptists communities and uniting them in a simple brotherhood. Menno was educated for

1. Vedder - History of the Baptists, Page 118,  
Newman - History of Anti-Pedobaptism, Page 191,  
2. Lindsay - History of the Reformation, Vol. 11, Page 489.

the priesthood to which he was ordained in 1515. While his mind was full of doubts and he was undergoing a severe religious struggle, Sicks Snyder suffered a most cruel martyrdom. This death produced a host of converts among whom was Jeanne Simons. He decided on action. He found the Anabaptists greatly divided as well as discouraged. One party held the views that were worked out in Munster: they defended polygamy, believed in a speedy second coming of Christ, a second time incarnated to set up an earthly kingdom which his followers were to defend and extend by the sword. The other party condemned polygamy and the sword. At first the strife was keen but the weight of Menno's influence turned the scale in favor of a sane interpretation of scripture. He first began to preach and write with all earnestness against John of Leyden and the Munster Kingdom. In 1536 he openly renounced the Roman Catholic Church, and the next year he accepted the invitation of a deputation of quiet Anabaptists that he should assume the leadership of the shepherdless flock.<sup>1</sup> He hesitatingly accepted on account of distrust of his ability to lead the Anabaptist cause in such trying times. The wisdom of the choice was soon manifested. In view of the terrible disaster which had come upon the Anabaptist cause through the Chiliastic fanaticism of Matthys and John of Leyden, he laid special emphases on the duty of Christians to resist evil under any circumstances; exalted the doctrine of the new life in Christ, and repudiated the doctrine of justification by faith alone and insisted on the imitation of Christ in his life of utter self-abnegation. He defied lords, popes, cardinals, and bishops to prove with a single word of Scripture that a perverse, carnally minded man, without the new birth from God's spirit has been saved or can be saved merely because he vaunts his faith in Christ, or hears mass or goes to church or makes pilgrimages. "For us", he says "a counsel has been sent from heaven, to which alone we listen and which alone we must follow. This counsel stands, it stands I tell you, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it".

1. Newman - History of Anti Pedobaptism, Page 299.

Menno was indeed the apostle of truth, preaching and founding churches across the whole of Northern Europe, from France to Russia. In spite of the severest edicts and the bloodiest persecutions, he continued faithful to the calling and found willing hearers of the gospel wherever he went. He forced a strict standard of morals, repressed all tendencies towards fanaticism, and gradually moulded his followers into the mild peaceful and moral people that the Mennonites have ever since been.<sup>1</sup> There are three factors that counted for the rapid increase of the churches. In 1539, Menno issued his Fundamental Book of true Christian Faith and established his doctrinal teaching on solid ground. The change of name was also greatly in their favor, the name Anabaptist had fallen into disrepute, the name Mennonite provoked a feeling of mild curiosity as to what this new sect might be. The fact that the Netherlands favored a much greater measure of religious liberty than was found any where else in Europe favored the new development of the Anabaptists. After 1581, the mild, peaceable and law abiding character of the Mennonite gained for them a measure of toleration that other Anabaptists failed to enjoy; and with the independence of the Netherlands came religious freedom, the Mennonites being formally recognized in 1672. This is probably the reason why they alone of the Anabaptist parties of the Reformation have survived to the present day.

1. Vaddor - Short History of the Baptists, Page 185.

## ANABAPTISTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

As early as 1182 followers of Waldo were known to exist in the Netherlands, as they were persecuted in Southern Europe many of them found a refuge there so that by 1233 it is said Flanders were full of them. Many of them were weavers and the first Anabaptists found in Holland were of this trade. So numerous were they that Van Kate says,<sup>1</sup> "All the weaving was in the hands of the Anabaptists". Van Braght declares that hundreds of these refugees suffered martyrdom long before Luther was born. It has been clearly shown that they rejected infant baptism, church authority, confession to a priest, and adoration of saints. They accepted the sole authority of scripture, the headship of Christ, salvation only by Christ, good works in obedience to God, and the observance of Baptism and the Lord's supper. Because of their religious zeal which too often was not accompanied with wisdom, for they did not hesitate to openly entice many from the Roman Catholic church to their community and upon their invitation re-baptize them, they excited the anger of the people and the disapprobation of the Government which passed strong ordinances against them. When Luther made known his views they hailed them with delight in that they could unite with him in the main points but they adhered firmly to their own peculiar views especially respecting the baptism of adults. Another important sect that were very manifest, indeed, who made the Netherlands their chief stronghold, were the Brethren of the Common Life. They are remembered for their evangelical mysticism and their earnest devotion to Bible study. From the middle of the fifteenth century the Bible was widely circulated in the vernacular and zealously studied and this was followed by the publication of a vast amount of ascetical and mystical devotional literature. It is true that most of this was Catholic but its circulation shows that Christian life was alive and it prepared the way for an evangelicalism of a more thoroughgoing type.<sup>2</sup> There was also the influence of the teaching of the

1. Armitage - History of the Baptists, Page 408.

2. Newman - History of Anti Pedobaptism, Page 238.

Brethren of the Free Spirit, humanism under the lead of Erasmus, and other less wholesome forms of dissent had been widely diffused. Natural conditions also made possible for the Netherlands the activity and working out of radical types of evangelical life. There was the density of population, the large number of prosperous cities, the large and influential artisan class, and the facilities furnished by the natural and artificial waterways.

The writing of Luther served to encourage the Anabaptists and to have made them bold in the proclamation of a more certain gospel and to break the power of Romish superstition. Their zeal in proclaiming the doctrine of adult baptism aroused the opposition of the government which issued the strongest edicts against them. The practise had become so wide spread that the first question of the inquisitors was, "Have you been re-baptised."

1.

In 1523, a book entitled "The Sum of the Holy Scriptures" appeared anonymously. It was soon translated into English, French, and Italian, and so many editions sold that it aided largely in spreading Anabaptist views throughout Europe. In regards to baptism, the writer says in part, "So are we dipped under as a sign that we are, as it were, dead and buried, as Paul writes in Romans chapter six and Colossians, Chapter four. The pledge is given when we are plunged under the water".

By 1526 Lutheranism, whose teachings were being widely diffused and eagerly read, came into conflict with Zwinglianism and reached an acute stage by 1529. Carlstadt & Hofmann siezed the opportunity to proclaim with their own substantially Zwinglian views of the supper their more radical schemes of reform. Neither the German or Swiss reform movements had at this time gained sufficient foothold among the people to be able to resist the strong popular influence of Hofmann, who proclaimed the approaching end of the age with all the enthusiasm and confidence of a prophet. On his return to Emden in May, 1530 Hofmann did not proclaim himself an Anabaptist but seems to have posed as a Zwinglian and thereby to have gained such an influence over the anti Luthern element as enabled him a little later, to proclaim his more radical views. Difficulties arose which interfered

2.

1. Armitage - History of the Baptists, Page 409.

2. Newman - History of Anti Pedobaptism, Page 268.

with his work, and he left London with Jan Trijpmaker in charge, while he went forth as an apostolic herald to proclaim the gospel covenant and to gather out from the multitude the "Lovers of Truth". About November 1530, Trijpmaker moved to Amsterdam where he carried on an effective propaganda in a quiet and unobstructive manner. He succeeded in ~~organizing~~ many places churches of "The Lovers of Truth", who accepted at his hands the sign of the covenant. Hofmann appeared in Holland again in 1531 and being less-circumspect soon got into trouble with the authorities and had to flee for his life. However Trijpmaker and eight companions were arrested and beheaded. They showed wonderful heroism and devotion to their principles. Hofmann now issued an order suspending baptism for two years, intimating that at the end of this time there would be a wonderful manifestation of God's power on behalf of the "Lovers of Truth". The effect of Hofmann fixing the date of the advent of Christ was wonderful.<sup>1</sup> His disciples were filled with enthusiasm. There was no longer any doubts of the future. The growth of the Hofmannite party was rapid. Lutheranism and Zwinglianism was completely vanished and from this time down to 1566 evangelical teaching was almost exclusively of the Anabaptist type. From Holland the movement extended through the Netherlands and into the surrounding countries as well as into England.<sup>1</sup> In 1532 and 1533 Hofmann made his last missionary journey to the Netherlands. His time was spent in encouraging and confirming his followers in the faith. All his followers however did not agree with him, Jan Matthys whose influence was soon to exceed that of Hoffmann, questioned his authority to suspend the administration of baptism. Hofmann returned to Strasburg to await the inauguration of the new dispensation where at the time predicted for its fulfillment he was languishing in prison. Of his writing the most influential were "The Ordinance of God", "The Joyful Witness of the Truth, Peaceable Eternal Gospel", and "The True all Glorious, Solo Majesty of God".

1. Newman - History of Anti-Pedobaptism, Page 271.

Jan Matthys, a Haarlem baker, now became the recognised leader of the Anabaptists. In him we see the spirit of the Taborites and Thomas Munser revived, and that in an intensified form. He was utterly fanatic. Weary of waiting for the promised inauguration of the new age at Strasburg, he proclaimed himself a prophet of God, the prophet Enoch who according to Hofmann was to appear just before the great event. Messengers were sent to the Hofmannite congregations to inform them that the promised Enoch had appeared and that baptism was to be resumed as a preparation of the great event. The news of the overthrow of Roman Catholicism at Munster and of the rapid growth of the Anabaptists soon reached the Netherlands and multitudes from these regions flocked to Munster where they hoped to find protection and succor. Early in 1534, two missionaries from Matthys reached Munster and made known to the leaders that Enoch had appeared in the person of Jan Matthys and that the millennial kingdom was at hand. Matthys was soon in Munster where he continued to play the role of chief prophet. The tragedy of Munster has already been outlined in the previous chapter. The blame for this disgraceful affair was placed by the authorities upon Anabaptists regardless of their fanaticism or saneness.

One must not suppose that the various reforming sects made such progress in the Netherlands without passing through the fires of persecution. <sup>1.</sup> Fifteen years before Munster, indications of persecution were seen in Alexander burning eighty Luthern and other books at Louvain and on Charles V return from the Diet of Worms he issued a proclamation against Luther, his books and his followers. In 1522, Charles established the inquisition within the seventeen provinces. The first victim was the town clerk of Antwerp, a poet and humanist, he was dismissed from office, imprisoned for two years and finally vanished. The earliest deaths were Henry Voes and John Black who were burnt at the stake in 1523. Edict followed edict with increasing severity until in 1529 the penalty for publishing a forbidden book was a public whipping on the scaffold.

1. Lindsay - History of the Reformation, Vo. II Page 229.

branding with a red hot iron, or the loss of an eye or a hand at the discretion of the judge. Great difficulty evidently was found in enforcing the edict, sometimes officials were dilatory, magistrates warned suspects and even planned a way of escape, yet notwithstanding a large number of Protestant martyrs, women as well as men suffered torture and death rather than deny the faith.

The severest persecutions however were reserved for the Anabaptists. In 1532 it was forbidden to harbour Anabaptists.<sup>1</sup> By 1535 the severest edict against the sect was issued, "All who had seduced or perverted any to this sect or had re-baptized them were to suffer death by fire, all who had suffered themselves to be re-baptised or who had harboured Anabaptists and who had recanted were to be favored by being put to death by the sword; women only were to be buried alive. Jan Walen and two others were the first Anabaptist martyrs. These were executed in a peculiarly atrocious way at the Hague in 1527. They were chained to the stake and instead of being burned alive were slowly roasted to death by a huge fire built near by. This frightful method was reserved for the Anabaptists. It was repeated at Haarlem in 1532 when a woman was drowned and her husband and two others were roasted. At Amsterdam a congregation grew so rapidly as to attract attention. The minister and nine of his followers were arrested, were taken to the Hague, and beheaded on express orders of the Emperor, their heads packed in a bag and sent back where they were set up on poles. Many other persecutions followed, the Anabaptists were tortured on the rack, scourged, imprisoned in dungeons, roasted to death, drowned, buried alive, pressed into coffins too small for their bodies till their ribs were broken.<sup>2</sup> In all it is said that up to the year 1535 there were over 50,000 martyrdoms, a very large proportion of whom were Anabaptists. On June 10th 1535, a furious decree was issued at Brussels calling for the death of this entire people. Even if they recanted they were to die by the sword instead of

1. Lindsay - History of Reformation Vol. 11 Page 255,  
2. Armitage - History of the Baptists, Page 411.

fire, the women were to be buried alive and all persons were forbidden to petition for any grace, favor or forgiveness for them. Ten Kate says that in the Netherlands the Anabaptists furnished ten martyrs where other reformed sects gave one. In spite of these persecutions, they met where they could to hear the gospel, in darkness, in barns, brake, and bush, through cold, snow, and hail. Officers hunted them by the light of the moon and stars to detect their secret places of worship, and tragedy usually followed in one form or another. The charge against them was that they worshipped and administered baptism at midnight; then came separation from home, child, parents, and friends. Flight or banishment followed; arrest, imprisonment, inquisitors and tortures were only the beginning to the end. The whole land was stricken with terror and the cries of the tortured were heard continually, gallows and trees on the highways were hung with dead bodies. 2. Fr. Rulc wrote "The very air was polluted with the stench, and the knell of death sounded heavily from every belfry. The Duke of Alva gloated over the carnage. This fiend invented many new methods of torture for the amusement of the soldiery, amongst them the screwing of iron to the tongue and burning of the end till it dropped off and when the sufferer screamed they mocked at his "fine singing".

In spite of these persecutions, they multiplied perpetually. Keller says that in 1530 there was scarcely a city or village in the Netherlands where Anabaptists were not found. Ballinger complains that the whole province of Belgium was infested with them, and Micronius wrote that Menno's kingdom not only extends through Belgium but from Flanders to Dantzic. In 1550 it is said the leading reform element was Anabaptist and in Friesland in 1586 every fourth inhabitant was a Anabaptist.

In the midst of this most bitter persecution one was raised up who was to become the first great exponent of the principle "Freedom of Conscience". William Prince of Orange was born of Lutheran parentage but raised a Roman Catholic that he might lawfully claim an inheritance. From 1569 William had been Governor of Holland but three years previous while still a Catholic wrote,

1. Armitage - History of the Baptists, Page 415.  
2. " " " " " " Page 408.

"I have neither the will nor the means to help the inquisition or execute the placards. If peace is to be preserved in this land, liberty of worship must be guaranteed to every inhabitant." When he was required to uproot heresy he determined to surrender his office and then to take up arms against Alva. In their determination to shake off the Spanish and Papal yoke the states of Holland made him Viceroy. Of all Europe no country was more thoroughly soaked with the blood of the saints than Holland under Philip II, Duke of Alva and the inquisition, but its bitterest trial was to come in 1572 in its contest with the Spaniard. In addition, the lot of the Anabaptists was especially hard. Catholic raved against the Protestant and the Protestant against the Catholic and both against the Anabaptist. William made his appeal to the courts of North Europe for aid in rescuing Holland, but largely in vain. Even after several victories his appeal to the wealth of Holland was met with coldness and frowns. He had thrown all his own possessions into the struggle, had sold his plate and jewels, mortgaged his estates, and was on the verge of abandoning the attempt when a trivial circumstance gave him new courage. Two poor Holland Anabaptist preachers met him as he was walking near his headquarters at Dillenburg and offered their services to the Prince. They explained their principles and he told of his purposes and needs and asked them to urge their friends to contribute money for the advancement of the common Christian cause and thanked them heartily for what they promised to do. The same month he issued the following decree. "Be it known to the magistrates and the officials of the north that you are by no means to allow anyone who preaches and observes the true word of God, according to the Gospel, to be hindered, injured or disturbed or to have his conscience examined, or on that account to be persecuted by the inquisition or placard". When he was declared Governor in place of Alva he decreed that "the freedom of religion shall be guarded, everybody shall exercise it freely in private or in public, in church or in chapel without let or hindrance from anyone". And eight days later in

camp, he made proclamation to protect Catholics. When the Anabaptists made their offering of one thousand florins out of the pecuniary of their belongings, burdened by hosts of widows and orphans, left by thousands of their martyrs he asked them, "Do you make no demands"? They answered, "Nothing but the friendship of your grace if God grants to you the government of the Netherlands". He kept faith with them to the letter although his fidelity involved him with constant turmoil with his best friends. No man seemed to understand or comprehend that he struggled to establish not freedom of Calvinism but freedom of conscience. In 1577 when the reformed preachers tried to persuade him to limit the liberty of the Anabaptists he replied that the time is past for the clergy to assume control over consciences, and attempt to subject all men to their opinions. On another occasion his reply to these agitators was that "To persecute them would justify the Catholics in the persecution of the Protestants".<sup>1</sup> In 1579 Article XIII of the Union of Utrecht declared, "Every one shall be free in the practise of his religious belief and that no one shall be held or examined on account of matters of Religion" Motley writes that this clause relating to freedom of conscience became the foundation stone of the Netherland Republic and that the republic became a refuge for the oppressed of all nations whether Jews or Gentiles; Catholics, Calvinists and Anabaptists prayed after their own manner to the same God and Father.

The Anabaptists of the Netherlands fell into many divisions on questions of church discipline, marriage, dress, and social relations. Monno Simon states their tenets as follows: "The faithful preaching of God's word and obedience thereto, in a holy life and the endurance of persecution if need be for Christ's sake. They seemed to abound in divisions and subdivisions and in the little city of Hoorn there were thirteen different sects of Anabaptists. As to the question of immersion it does not appear that they immersed as a rule until after the middle of the 16th century. As sprinkling and pouring had commonly taken its place amongst all sects.

1. Armitage - History of the Baptists, Page 410.

- 35 - they endorsed the prevailing view that baptism by immersion was the only valid mode of baptism. The apostles laid great stress on baptism in water, and we have no record of any other mode of baptism besides dipping in water which is clearly maintained in his word. Let who will oppose this as the only mode of baptism that Jesus Christ instituted and that the apostles taught and practised".

1. It is extremely difficult to classify the tenants of the Anabaptists. Those who differed from the Lutheran, Zwinglian, Reformed and Catholic churches were called Anabaptists. They displayed a strong individuality, hence it will be readily seen that there would of necessity be a wide divergence in the opinions held by them. Perhaps the only tenent is which they were agreed was that of absolute separation of church and state involving freedom of conscience. This followed naturally from their belief in the spiritual constitution of the church and hence the denial of infant sprinkling.

Two views prevailed regarding civic government, one regarded the use of the sword as an "ordinance of God outside of the perfection of Christ, ordained over the wicked for punishment and death and forbad christians to serve as magistrates", a very considerable part advocating those principles of non resistance that have been professed by the Friends of later date. Hubmaier and Denck with a considerable following held that the scriptures direct men to perform their duties as citizens, that christians may lawfully bear the sword as magistrates and execute the laws save in persecution of others.

The matter of the mode of Baptism there was considerable difference, sprinkling, affusion and immersion being practised in different parts and in different periods.

2. In Anabaptism, we have seen the principles of Luther and Zwingli carried out to their logical conclusions. Luther had given the bible to the German people in their own tongue and had fought the Pope on the authority of scripture and these dissidents from Lutheranism fought the reformers on their own ground. The reformers sought a simpler faith and worship and a firmer trust in God, than the Catholic church encouraged or even permitted. They laid great emphasis on the right relation between God and man and regarded as far less important a right relation between man and men. They understood the first great commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself". It was left to little groups of

- 37 - Anabaptists to re-discover the fact that religion must re-act on the social, political, and economical relationships of life. They sought to revive the social ideals of primitive Christianity and saw that to re-introduce it meant more than a modification of doctrine and change of ceremonies. It involved abolition of rank, recognition of the dignity of labor, living of the simple life, voluntary sharing of possessions with the poor and a fraternal spirit pervading all property rights as in early times. Conditions that existed were so opposed to the mind of Christ that no compromise was possible. Could these groups have made themselves heard the Reformation would have been a different movement and three centuries of blood shed and martyrdom would have been unnecessary, but Anabaptists were silenced, trampled upon and civilization set back, three hundred years. A modern historian sums it up as follows, "One is tempted to sum it all up by saying that the chief difference between Anabaptists and Lutherans of the sixteenth century is that the former failed where the latter succeeded, and as a price of success the Lutherans were compelled to deny their earlier revolutionary teachings and become the quiet and decorous party of law and order."

3 The Anabaptists have been charged with the responsibilities of the Peasants Revolt. That the charge is unfair has been proven by modern historians of this period. From the latter part of the fifteenth century social uprisings were frequent and all more or less impregnated with crude religious beliefs. The reform movement accentuated these influences because it set all thing in motion. The Anabaptists denied the authority of the organized religion, scoffing at excommunication, indulgences, and dispensations. They declared there was no regenerative efficacy in infant baptism and were keenly alive to the injunctions of Christian charity. Their influence naturally was on the side of social and economic betterment, and thus there is some truth in the conception that the Anabaptists were the revolutionaries of the time of the Reformation, but they can never be charged with being leaders or agitators leading to open rebellion against authorized rulers.

1. Veeder - The Reformation in Germany, Page 385.

2. Lindsay - History of the Reformation, Vo. II, Page 400.

- 38 - If Anabaptists were found among the revolters and doubtless there were some, they were there as citizens and patriots protesting vigorously against social conditions that were trampling them in the mud for if ever a class had good reason to revolt it was the German peasants of the sixteenth century.

4. For centuries the happenings at Munster were held up to the world as an example of what would happen if Anabaptist principles were allowed to be worked out to their logical conclusions. Hence for many decades an odium has been cast on Anabaptists. The responsibilities for Munster rests primarily with the institutions that made possible the oppression of the working classes. This grinding oppression has become intolerable and before Luther's time fanatical leaders had appeared with visionary schemes for the emancipation of the down trodden. The messages of Luther with the now wider diffusion of the scripture aroused new hopes and convinced the people that the treatment they were receiving was unjust and unchristian. The violent suppression of the great peasant uprising had not killed the seeds of discontent. In addition to this there was emphasised the Chiliastic doctrine coupled with prophetic mysticism, this being quite marked in the utterances of Hut, Rinck, Hofmann and Matthys. The unrelenting persecution of the Anabaptists and the utter hopelessness of their cause from a human point of view put the people in such a state of desperation that they were ready to listen to any one who claimed to be divinely inspired. Hofmann, Matthys, and John of Leyden claimed this inspiration and the people believed and followed. However it must be remembered that only a portion of the Anabaptists were involved in this Chiliastic heresy and that the great element were not only unsympathetic but repudiated the movement.

5. It is interesting to note that the principles for which the Anabaptists contended are largely held by Baptists to day. Indeed they have obtained a much wider recognition. Churches still solemnly cherish the doctrine of infant baptism, insist on a regenerated church membership, the independence of the church.

religious liberty, and the separation of church and state.

Succeeding centuries have justified the principles of the Anabaptists and it can hardly be doubted but that the years to

come will justify others. As one <sup>1.</sup> historian says, "Certainly not in vain did the Anabaptists of Switzerland adopt these principles and sacrifice so much in maintaining them".

1. Burrage - The Anabaptists in Switzerland, Page 222.

# The Fundamental Tenets of The Anabaptists.

## Chapter v.

1. A modern historian in summing up the fundamental differences between the Reformers and Anabaptists says "the Reformers aimed to reform the old church by the Bible; the Radicals attempted to build a new church from the Bible. The former maintained the historic continuity, the latter went directly to the apostolic age and ignored the intervening centuries as an apostasy. The reformers founded a popular state church including all citizens with their families; Anabaptists organized on the voluntary principle select congregations of baptized believers separated from the world and from the state". The Radicals made use of the right of protest against Luther and Zwingli which the Reformers so effectively exercised against popery. They charged the Reformers with inconsistency, and semi-popery. They denounced the state church as worldly and corrupt and its ministers as mercenaries. They were charged in turn with pharisaical pride, with revolutionary and socialistic tendencies. They were cruelly persecuted by imprisonment, exile, torture, fire and sword, and almost totally suppressed in protestant as well as Roman Catholic countries. The age was not ripe for unlimited religious freedom and congregational self government.

The difficulty of a scientific classification of Anabaptists and Anabaptist views has

1. Schaff - Church History Vol. VII. Page 71.

already been pointed out. This great diversity of views, especially at the earlier date, was due in part to the survival of mediaeval modes of thought with which individual leaders were influenced and also by the mental and moral temperament of the leaders, swayed as they would be by the revolutionary spirit of the times. For example the leaders who live under the influence of mediaeval chiliastic enthusiasm, when encouraged by the Protestant reformation to state their reformatory schemes were sure to insist on believers baptism as the initiatory rite into the churches of the regenerate, and to emphasize the eschatological views that had long had a place in their religious thinking. Leaders reared in the atmosphere of the biblical views of the Waldenses and the Bohemian Brethren could

-57- not fail when opportunity came, to found churches according to their own ideas, and to inculcate in their doctrine and practice the leading features of their earlier beliefs. The same is true of those leaders raised in the atmosphere of evangelical mysticism on the one hand, and the pantheistic modes of thought of the Beghards, and the Brethern of the Free Spirit on the other. The Anabaptists too displayed a strong individuality which makes it increasingly hard to classify their tenets in a body of doctrine which can be held to express the system of belief that lay at the basis of the whole movement.<sup>1.</sup> Bullinger mentions thirteen sects within the Anabaptist circle. Franck notes all the sects mentioned by Bullinger but refrains from any classification. "There are," he says "more sects and opinions which I do not know and cannot describe but it appears to me that there are not two to be found who agree with each other on all points".

1. Lindsay† Reformation Vol. 11. Page 437.

The first and chief aim of the Radicals was not, as often stated, opposition to infant baptism and still less to sprinkling and pouring, for the Roman Catholic Church provided for immersion and pouring as equally valid. The early Anabaptists baptised by sprinkling and pouring as well. Blayrock baptised by sprinkling, Manz by pouring. The first clear case of immersion among the Swiss Anabaptists is that of Wolfgang Uliman.<sup>1.</sup> He was converted by Griebel on a journey to Schaffhausen and not satisfied with being "sprinkled out of a dish, was drawn under and covered over in the Rhine". On Palm Sunday April ninth 1525, Griebel baptised a large number in the Sitter, a river a few miles from St Gall, which descends from the Santis and flows into the Thur and is deep enough for immersion. The Anabaptists aim was the establishment of a church based on the supreme authority of Scripture; a church claiming for itself and granting to all not only toleration but absolute freedom of worship according to the dictates of conscience; <sup>A church whose members were conscious</sup> of a definite religious experience in opposition to a mixed church of the world. The Anabaptists were not satisfied with separation from popery, they wanted a separation from all the ungodly. They appealed to the examples of the disciples in Jerusalem who left the Synagogue and the world,

-58- gathered in an upper room, sold their goods and had all things common.

1. Schaff. Modern Christianity Vol.VII. Page 79

The Anabaptists rested their case upon the authority of Scripture, but this is exactly the basis upon which Luther and Zwingli, both of whom repudiating tradition and all human authority made the Bible the only rule of faith and practice and aimed at the restoration of Apostolic Christianity. Soon men who had received a personal religious experience came to see the inconsistency of the state church instituted by both Luther and Zwingli, wherein both the converted and unconverted mingled together and partook of the sacraments. They longed for a church of the regenerate, ~~where~~ where brethren and sisters in Christ could associate together in true christian love. Already, at least a dozen editions of the Bible had appeared, and were in the hands of the people, but Luther soon recognized the fact that if the Reformation was to succeed the German people must not only have the Bible in their own tongue but written so that the humblest could understand. "It was his endeavor," he said, "to make the Prophets speak German". In a short time the Bible was as free and open to the poorest citizen as to the Clergy. The general diffusion of light, the rise of the printing press, the conditions of popular learning, and Luther's teaching all prepared the people for the Bible, and they learned to look

-1- Lindsay- Reformation Vol.I. Page 150.

upon it as the one infallible authority in matters of religion, an authority which each one could consult for himself. Luther loved to call himself "a Doctor of the Scripture", and as time went on the scripture assumed greater importance in his eyes, experience led him and his enemies drove him until he had no recourse and no defence but the scriptures. In his debate with Eck at Leipzig he definitely took his stand on the Word of God as the final authority, superior to both popes and councils. He maintained the same position at Worms, and by so doing he had made the issue between the authority of scripture and the authority of the church so plain that the common people could understand. Later (1522) in working out his ideas of reform Luther adopted the principle of retaining whatever practices the scriptures

-39- did not forbid. By this method he was able to retain the practice of Infant Baptism and to institute a state church. The Anabaptists accepted only what was enjoined in Scripture. They protested and declared that the scriptures did not teach Infant Baptism, and did teach complete separation of church and state, and that the membership should be composed of the regenerate only. This was not the kind of a church that Luther wanted." Where they <sup>want to</sup> go I am not disposed to follow", he said, "God save me from a church in which are none but the holy". Then followed the bitterest condemnation upon the Anabaptists because they stood by the authority of scripture while Luther for the sake of policy, peace, and the unity of Protestants, with the added advantage of the influence and protection of the Princes, departed from the teaching of the Word. This is one of the most vital points in connection with the Reformation showing where the Radicals broke with Luther on the principle of absolute obedience to God's Word. Luther evidently could not conceive of a church apart from the authoritative hand of the Princes. 1. Zwingli in his interpretation of Scripture adopted the opposite principle to Luther, 'to reject in doctrine and practice whatever the scriptures do not enjoin'. This principle he made very prominent in the discussion which he held with the old church party in 1523 known as the first Zurich discussion. He won the debate simply by insisting that Faber gave book, chapter and verse wherein the invocation and intercession of saints are taught. In 1525 only two years later the first discussion between the reformed party and the Radicals took place on the question of Infant Baptism. In the earlier stages of the Reformation, Zwingli was quite sympathetic with the views of the Anabaptists. In the exposition of the articles defended in the First Disputation in 1523 he writes, "although I know as the

-1- Burrage- The Anabaptists in Switzerland- Page 51.

-2- Jackson- Zwingli. Page 243.

Fathers show, that infants have been baptized occasionally from the earliest times, still it was not so universal a custom as it is now, but the common practice was as soon as they arrived at the age of reason to form them into classes for instruction in the Word of Salvation, and after a firm faith has been in-

-40- planted in their hearts, and they had confessed the same with their mouth, then they were baptized. I could wish that this custom of giving instruction were revived today. Hubmaier and others pressed him to accept the clear statement of scripture. Zwingli, however realized that if the Reformation was to succeed he must have the support of the council. To have a church of the regenerate only and to deny Infant Baptism was to ask many in the council to unchurch themselves. This they could hardly be expected to do, and Zwingli to gain the support of the council was compelled to take his stand against the Radical party. -1- Bullinger an eye witness of the discussion says that the opponents of infant baptism maintained that infants can neither exercise faith, nor understand what baptism signifies; that baptism is to be administered to believers only, to those to whom the Gospel has already been preached, who comprehend their desire to be baptized and henceforth

-1- Burrage- The Anabaptists in Switzerland. Page 96.

to walk in newness of life. Such is the teaching of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. Zwingli replied by stating that baptism takes the place of circumcision, and of repeating Cor. 7-14 where Paul speaks of the children of christians being pure. Blaurock declared that Zwingli did violence to the Scripture and falsified them more than the pope, and he offered to make good his statements before the council. Zwingli's reply furnishes the best reason for his opposition to the views of the Anabaptists. He presses the objection that the Anabaptists are schismatic, and that their course will result in the division of the Church and the destruction of the standing order. To which they replied that they had as much right to divide from him as he had from the pope.

-1- Hubmaier in an address before the Zurich council, Oct. 1525 declared "That in all disputes concerning faith and religion, the scriptures alone proceeding from the mouth of God, ought to be our level and rule, for the Lord himself has put that Judge on the Throne. Wherefore the Lord himself has ordered that the scriptures shall be searched, and commanded that we have Moses and the Prophets, for he will not receive the testimony of man.

-41- Christ had said the same, likewise Paul and all the apostles..

For, however after they had to contend against Satan or men

-1- Vedder- Balthasar Hubmaier. Page 59.

evidently wicked, they pressed upon such the scriptures, as the most fitting judge of every controversy, and by means of these alone they won the victory. For the Scripture is the sole light and is a true lantern by whose light all the fictions of the human mind may be discovered, and all darkness be dispelled.

The Word of God is Eternal and Immortal." Once for all Hubmaier has taken his stand on the principle that for him the voice of Scripture is the only voice of authority, and consequently the only voice he will obey.

The doctrine of absolute liberty of conscience was another fundamental tenet of the Anabaptists which was adhered to by practically all sects. Liberty of conscience was a principle that dominated the Renaissance, and later the Protestant Revolution, whose leaders repudiated the theology of the schools, and the authority of the Papacy, and insisted on arriving at their own conclusions. Like their forerunners the Waldensians, the Anabaptists believed that truth should be diligently searched for with the use of all the powers of the soul, and of all the objective means available, and that each individual should be free to communicate to others the results of his researches. They asserted the right of each believer by the use of the means that God had placed within his reach, to determine for himself, what he should believe, how he should worship, and how he should live. Luther and Zwingli claimed the same freedom of conscience for themselves, but as the Reformation made progress, and some differed from them in points of doctrine and policy they were not ready to grant it to all. They were led by temperament and conditions that arose to redden their hands with the blood of evangelical christians, who could not rest content with the half-way reforms of the Reformation leaders, and authorized by the government authorities.

Luther in the earlier development of the Reformation was emphatic in his declaration in favor of complete Religious liberty. In his "address to the Christian Nobility", he wrote "We should overcome heretics with books, not with fire as the old Fathers did. If there were any skill in overcoming heretics with fire the executioner would be the most learned Doctor in the world, and there would be no need to study, but he that could get another into his power could burn him". In his Babylonian Captivity he wrote "I cry aloud on behalf of liberty of conscience, and proclaim with confidence that no kind of law can with justice be imposed on Christians, whether by men or by Angels, except so far as they themselves will; for we are free from all". At the time of the Wittenburg trouble he wrote from the Wartburg, ~~xxxxxxx~~ "See that our Prince does not imbrue his hands in the blood of those new Prophets from Zwickau". "Heresy", he wrote later "is a spiritual thing, that can be cut down by no sword, burned with no fire, drowned with no water". Vedder thinks it doubtful if Luther realized the sweeping character of such declarations and their logical deductions. When opposition came Luther found that he was not willing to tolerate the other man.

-1- Vedder - Reformation Page 293.

He did not approve of bloodshed, but he would treat all disturbers as he treated Carlstadt; they should be banished from the place where they were a disturbing element. Soon we find that Luther began denying the right of any to reject the teaching of scripture, by which he meant his own interpretation of Scripture, and this was followed by an increasing tendency to identify his own view with the truth, until he practically claimed infallibility for himself, and regarded all his enemies as of necessity the enemies of God. "Since <sup>1</sup>I am sure of it", he writes, "I shall through it be your judge, and the judge of Angels as St Paul says (Gal. 1-8), so that he who does not embrace my doctrine cannot be saved. For it is God's doctrine and not my own; therefore the judgment too, is God's and not mine". In the end Luther advised the utmost severity in some cases. "For even as we punish thieves with the sword, murderers with the rope, and heretics with fire,

-43- wherefore doe not lay hands on these pernicious teachers of damnation, on popes, or Cardinals, Bishops, and the swarm of the Roman Sodom, yea with every weapon that lies within our reach, and wherefore do we not wash our hands in their blood".

-1- Vedder- Reformation - Page 295

Thus we see the gradually changing of Luther's ideas of Religious freedom as he came to look upon himself as God's mouthpiece. Eventually the Princes were given the power to declare what religion should be propagated within their principalities. The Anabaptists took their stand on the same principle as Luther in his fight against Rome, and maintained it in the face of bitterest persecution claiming liberty of conscience for themselves, and granting it to all. The only probable exception being the Munster episode.

-1- Hans Denck in writing to Oecolampadius concerning separation and sects in Article six says " Those who walk in the footsteps of Christ I rejoice in and love, wherever I find them, but of those who will not hear me and yet will not keep silent I cannot have much fellowship, for I do not discover in such the mind of Christ, but a perverted mind, which will force me to abandon my faith and compell me to adopt its own, whether it be right or wrong. For it should be known that in matters of faith everything should be free, voluntary and without compulsion. Therefore I separate myself from some, not that I regard myself better or more righteous than they, but even if I were lacking in many things that I might seek freely and unhindered the costly pearl, and having found it may hold it at peace with every man in so far as it is possible for me".

-2- Hubmaier's tract written at Schaffhausen in 1524 on, Heretics and their Burners, constitutes one of the most thorough going pleas for liberty of conscience that the age produced, as well as the earliest plea that has come down to us for complete freedom of conscience. His arguments are built entirely on the sure word of Scripture. Those are heretics who perversely strive against scripture. The devil was the first of these when he said " Thou shalt not surely die". Those also are heretics who obscure Scripture,

-1- Burrage- The Anabaptists in Switzerland Page 185.

-2- Newman- Church History. Vol.11. Page 172.

Vedder- Balthasar Hubmaier Page 84.

and interpret it otherwise than the spirit requires. Heretics are to be overcome by means of holy instruction. If heretics will not yield to words of power or evangelical considerations they are to be left to their own condemnation. To God alone judgment belongs and he will either convert them or harden them so that the blind leading the blind both the perverted and the perverter shall be led to ruin. So Christ meant when he said " Let both grow together until the harvest". The greatest arch-heretics are those who against Christ's teaching and example condemn heretics to the flames, and before the time of the harvest destroy wheat and tares together. Christ did not come to butcher, to murder, to burn, but that men may have life and that more abundantly. Every christian has a sword against the godless, that is, the Word of God, but not a sword against evil doers. The civil power has a right to execute evil doers, but the Godless, God alone shall punish. He ends his tract with these words " Now it is manifest to everyone, even to the blind that the law for the burning of heretics was devised by the devil. The truth is immortal".

The Doctrine of Passive Resistance was held by almost all the earlier Anabaptists but in such a variety of ways that a merely general statement gives a misleading idea. The earlier Anabaptists believed that it was unchristian to return evil for evil and that they should take the persecutions that came to them without attempting to retaliate. Hans Denck pushed the theory so far that he believed no real christian could either be a Magistrate or a soldier. A small band of Anabaptists to whom one of the Counts of Lichtenstein had given shelter at Nicholsburg, told their protector, that they utterly disapproved of his threatening the Austrian Commission with armed force, if he entered Nicholsburg territory to seize them.

Again there were certain Anabaptists who rejected the tenet of non-resistance to this extent at least, that the godly might use the sword against the ungodly. In other words there was always a chiliastic wing of Anabaptists who believed that the Kingdom comes not only with observation but by violence. By these Hans Hut who had been baptized by Denck in the spring of 1526, was speedily hailed as a Prophet, and he had no hesitation in proclaiming himself as such. He proclaimed that the day of the Lord was at hand.

- He was the Prophet sent by God to warn the ungodly that their overthrow was near. To the Saints he announced that their mission was that of the chosen people. The time of the persecution of the Saints was nearly at an end; the two edged sword of God's vengeance would soon be put in their hands. It was a curious feature of the teaching of these fanatical Anabaptists, that while they denied the right of the sword to magistrates, and denounced all war as carnal, they believed that when Christ should begin his millennial reign it would be not merely the right, but the duty of his subjects to take up the sword and put the ungodly to slaughter. At Nicholsburg he joined forces with Jacob Wideman who made the cardinal principle of the Gospel, community of goods. Wideman had taught an extreme form of non-resistance, insisting that christians are forbidden to use the sword in self-defence or as magistrates, and farther that christians ought not to pay taxes, since these were used for the support of governments, and the waging of war. He and his followers called taxes "blood money". In spite of these divergent views Hut and Wideman Speedily joined forces, the latter and his adherents finding little difficulty in drafting Hut's doctrine of the sword as exclusive right of the Saints. Hubmaier, by whom they found themselves confronted, was too wise and too well versed in the scriptures to be carried away by this fanaticism. He had never taught the extreme doctrine of non-resistance, nor that christians might not be Magistrates. The result of the controversy was a schism in the ranks of the Anabaptists at Nicholsburg, but not until after Hubmaier's death. The immediate result was the composition and printing of the treatise "On the Sword", by Hubmaier in which he set forth his ideas on civil government with the utmost clearness, fulness and frankness.

In Hubmaier's tract, which is temperate in language, and thoroughly christian in it's tone, he puts himself at variance with the old evangelical brotherhood and with the great majority of his Anabaptist<sup>1</sup> contemporaries. His judgment is based on a careful examination of the Scriptures, and is in entire accord with that of modern Baptists. He defends the right of Magistrates, as a christian institution, and vindicates for christians the right to exercise magistracy, and to bear the sword. He cites one after the other of the fifteen scriptural texts on which the opponents of magistracy chiefly relied, and shows

-46- that fidelity to Scripture does not necessitate the conclusion reached by his contemporaries, and caps his argument with the passage "Let every man be subject to the higher powers". "This Scripture alone dear brethern," he writes, "is sufficient confirmation of magistracy against all the gates of hell".

In his exegesis of the fifteen texts Hubmaier shows himself

-1- Newman. Church History. Vol. 11. Page 174.

" History of Anti-pedo baptism. Page 182

a good interpreter of Scripture. He also points out the errors of his brethern. These have been caused by a too rigid literalism of interpretation of Scripture, and a failure to <sup>1</sup> compare scripture with scripture. He claims that Paul speaks of the two fold sword, the spiritual and the temporal. The former is the Word of God, with which the christian is to overcome his advesaries. The latter is borne by the Magistrates for the protection of the innocent, and the punishment of the evil doer. Governments are of God. The Magistrate is his minister. When Jesus forbade his followers to use the sword, he spoke to men who had no right to use it. They had not been appointed or elected for that purpose. He refused to be judge. He that takes the sword without authority shall perish by the sword, but not he that bears the sword according to God's command and order. In short Hubmaier made good his claim that the Scriptures interpreted throughout do not condemn Magistracy but sustain it.

-1- Vedder- Hubmaier. Page 175.

The fundamental conceptions which lay at the basis of the whole Anabaptist movement, precluded the idea of a state church. They insisted that an Evangelical Church must differ from a Roman or Catholic Church, in that it should consist of members, who had made a personal profession of faith in their Saviour, and who had vowed to live in obedience to Jesus Christ. It could not be like a State Church to which people belonged without a personal religious experience. They insisted that the church thus formed, should be free from all civil control, to decide for itself what doctrines, and ceremonies of worship were founded on the Word of God, and agreeable thereto, and should make this decision according to the

-47- opinions of the majority of their members. They claimed the right to be free to exercise brotherly admonition, and discipline on such members as offended. They also contended that the church which thus rejected state control ought to refuse state support and proposed that the tithes should be secularised. The New Testament they said, knew nothing about interest, usury, tithes, livings and prebends.

1.

Another characteristic tenet of the Radicals was the doctrine of the Inner Light. They were strongly influenced by mysticism, and believed themselves to be under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit, and this immediate intercourse with the source of all truth rendered them independent of any other guidance, even that of Scripture. The free interpretation of the Bible which seemed a priceless boon to Luther was a poor thing to men who believed themselves to be at least as much inspired as the writers. This doctrine was especially emphasized by the more extreme and led to all kinds of fanaticism, and was largely responsible for nearly bringing into disrepute the whole Anabaptist Movement. They were strongly individualistic, and claimed the right to interpret Scripture, the chief qualification for correct interpretation being the illumination of the Holy Spirit. It is also charged that they claimed to have revelation and visions, which they regarded as more important than Scripture, hence there was no need of learning, for the internal word was more than the outward expression. Such claims were made by Nicolas Storch, Thomas Munzer and Marcus Stabner, who when forced to leave Zwickau, joined hands with Carlstadt<sup>2</sup> and Zwillling at Wittenburg. Early in 1522 riots broke out: priestly garments and auricular confession were disused; the abolition of mendicant orders was demanded; an agitation was begun for closing of all places of amusements, and schools and universities.

-1- The Americana Vol.1.

Ency of Religions & Ethics Vol.1. Page 410.

-2- Cambridge Modern History. Vol.11. Page 166.

American Cyclopaedia. Vol.1. Page 499.

-48- were denounced. All forms of learning were superfluous in a generation directly informed by the Holy Spirit. The Wittenburg Master, Mohr, himself, besought parents to remove their children from the schools, and students began to desert the University.

It was the logical working out of this extreme view that threatened to overthrow the whole reformation, and hurriedly brought Luther from his hiding at the Wartburg. In a course of eight sermons he so strenuously opposed Carlstadt, and his fellow Prophets, that they were forced to leave the city. Luther was in sympathy with many of Carlstadt's reforms, but disapproved of violence, and the use of force to advance the Reformation.

Influenced by the doctrine of the Inner Light, simple, illiterate men felt impelled to become itinerant preachers. The "call" came to them, and casting personal responsibilities aside, left business, home and family to preach the new Gospel. Witness one  
-1- Hans Ber a poor peasant, rising from his bed and beginning to dress. "Whither goest thou", asked his poor wife, "I know not, God knoweth" he answered. "What evil have I done thee? Stay and help me bring up my poor children". "Dear wife", he answered "trouble me not with the things of time, I must away that I may learn the will of the Lord". These wandering preachers were not drilled in any common set of opinions but conceived the primitive teaching and social life as he seemed to see it reflected in the New Testament, and as the Inner Light revealed it.

1.

Hans Denck was the most widely known and probably the  
-1- Lindsay- Reformation. Vol. 11. Page 439.

most highly esteemed of the Anabaptist Leaders. His teaching was tinged with many of the ideas of the fourteenth and fifteenth century Mystics. He believed that there was a spark of the Divine nature in man, an Inner Word, which urged man to walk in the ways of God, and that man could always keep true to the inward Monitor, who was none else than Christ. He calls the inner light the Word of God. He writes "The <sup>2.</sup> Holy Scripture I esteem above human treasures, but not so highly as the Word of God, which is living, powerful and eternal, which is separate, and pure from the elements of this world, since it is God himself, spirit and not letter, written without pen and paper, so that it can never

be blotted out. Therefore blessedness is not bound up in scripture, however useful and good it may always be in that direction. It is not possible for Scripture to make better a bad heart, but a pious heart is seattered by all things. A man who is chosen by God may attain to blessedness without preaching, without Scripture. The voice of my heart, of which I assuredly know that it renders the truth, says to me that God is righteous and merciful, and this voice speakd in every good heart distinctly and intelligibly, the more distinctly and clearly the better each one is".

Hubmaier alsowidely known and highly esteemed did not advocate so strongly the Doctrine of the Inner Voice. If he were living today he would be called upon to make fewer changes in his system of

-1- Lindsay- Reformation. Vol.11. Page 436.

-2- Newman- Anti- Pedobaptism, Page 164.

Doctrine than any man of his time. He did not claim inspiration, or rely on the Inner Voice any more than an Evangelical Christian claims the leading of the Holy Spirit today. In Article Eight of his Christian belief written while a prisoner in Zurich he says<sup>1.</sup> "I believe also in the Holy Spirit, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and yet with them is the only and true God, who sanctifieth all things, and without him is nothing holy, in whom I set all my trust that he will teach me all truth, increase my faith, and kindle the fire of love in my heart by his holy inspiration".<sup>2.</sup> Again he claims that "effectual calling" is two fold; inwardly and outwardly. The outward drawing takes place by the public proclamation of his Holy Gospel which Christ commanded to be preached to every creature and is now made known everywhere.

The inward drawing is wrought by God, who enlightens the soul within, so that it understands the undeniable truth, and is so thoroughly convinced by the spirit, and the preached word, as to confess from the conscience that these things must be so, and cannot be otherwise.

Hoffman, Rothmann, Matthys and John of Leyden the first three singularly straight forward and courageous, were believers in, and advocates of the Doctrine of the Inner Light to an extreme degree.

-50- Haffner a furrier by trade, versed in Scripture, and supposed himself to be in possession of the key of all the mysteries of the Sacred book.

-1- Vedder - Hutmaier Page 134.

-2- Vedder - Hutmaier Page 199.

He influenced many, mainly in South Germany and the Netherlands, to accept his views. At first a Lutheran, later 1530, he identified himself with the Anabaptists. The books of Daniel and Revelation especially attracted him, and these he interpreted with reference to his own times, and he revelled in thoughts of millennial glories about to be revealed. He was driven from Strasburg but returned early in 1535, under the impression that this city was to be the New Jerusalem, whence the conquering Hosts of God would march forth to destroy the enemies of the truth. At the time set for the beginning of the Millennium, Rothman was languishing in prison, nevertheless great numbers of people accepted his teachings of scripture, influenced as it was by visions and the Inner Light, the natural outgrowth of which finally brought about the one dark blot on the fair history of Anabaptism; The Munster Tragedy.

Rothmann was a scholar, imbued with humanistic culture, gifted with the power of clear reasoning, and with natural eloquence. He was immensely popular, his sermons were full of that sympathy for the down trodden toiling masses of the community,

-1- Newman - Anti-Pedobaptism. Page 262.

which was a permanent note in all Anabaptist teaching. It is fairly certain that he held the Doctrine of the Inner Light in the same sense as the Anabaptists. Strong opposition was aroused by his preaching, but he denounced both the council of Munster, and the Lutheran preachers. Events now happened quickly. About Jan. 5th, 1534 two missionaries arrived in town announcing that Enoch had appeared in the person of Matthis and that the Millennial Kingdom was at hand. John of Leyden appeared a few days later commissioned by Matthis to remain in Munster, <sup>2</sup> and lead in the great work. Learning of the success of his emissaries in Munster, Matthis reached the conclusion by Divine revelation as he claimed, that the city of Munster was the New Jerusalem. Matthis himself

8

-51- was soon in the city where he was hailed as the chief Prophet. He sent out messengers to invite all the faithful to come to Munster, and to participate freely in the good things that were there in abundance. In April Matthys, true to the inner Monitor, with only twenty companions, made a sally out of the city to attack the the Bishop's army. After a desperate struggle he was slain.

-1- Lindsay - Reformation. Vol.11. Page 456.

-2- Newman - Anti-Pedobaptism Page 288.

1.  
John of Leyden immediately proclaimed himself King, and set up the Throne of David. "God has chosen me ". he declared "to be King over the whole world. But I tell you dear brethern, I had rather feed swine, or follow the plow than be King. Yet what I do, I must do, for God has appointed me thereto". He almost immediately instituted polygamy, and seems to have easily persuaded his leaders to proclaim it to the people. Old marriage relations were completely ignored. Women were in many cases forced to unite with men who felt it a sacred duty to have a plurality of wives. It was truly a reign of terror, in which the wildest license on the one hand, and the most absolute dispotism on the other prevailed. For more than a year the wretched fanatics were able to resist the Bishop and his troops. Hunger and internal dissention finally opened the gates to the victors. The scene ended in a horrible massacre and in the most revolting torturing of the leaders.

-2- No episode in history has done so much to impede the progress of Baptist principles, as that of Munster.

-1- Newman - Anti-Pedobaptism Page 290.

-2- Newman - Anti-Pedobaptism Page 291.

## Chapter VI.

### The historical importance of Anabaptism.

-52-

The historical importance of Anabaptism cannot be overestimated, and yet it is difficult to trace the influence through the centuries. Today the world enjoys to a very large extent the privilege of Democracy and the right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience, while the Churches, especially the Non-conformists demand a definite subjective religious experience. These principles were all held by the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century. They were not the originators of these precepts for they are as old as christianity itself. They entered the world, and fought their way through a hostile world by the purely moral force of truth and righteasness<sup>1</sup>. Tertullian in the second century gave vigorous utterance to the view of religious freedom when he boldly challenged the heathen prosecutor and told him, " it is no part of religion to force religion, everybody has a natural right and power to worship God according to his convictions". Occasionally some champion was heard in the early and mediaeval centuries proclaiming the right of freedom of conscience,<sup>2</sup> perhaps only to introduce some other religion. But the voices became more insistent as the spirit, and tone of the Roman Church lowered.e.g.Albigenses, Waldenses, Husites, etc. In the sixteenth century it was the Radicals or anabaptists, who while rejoicing in the reforms of Luther and Zwingli, swept by them and demanded absolute liberty regarding the conscience and worship. The liberty of conscience that the Lutherans

-1- Schaff- Christ and Christianity Page 286.

-2- E.G. Constantine 315.

<sup>1</sup> demanded, was the right of each State of the Empire to establish and maintain whatever religious system it's ruler chose, to compel the adoption of this by all its subjects and citizens, and to persecute all those who claimed the right that the Emperor asserted for themselves in the name of God and the Divine Lord. Luther made the initial mistake of confusing order with uniformity. He seems to have had no conception of order with liberty. The Anabaptists sought a true democracy through the revival of the social Gospel proclaimed by Jesus, and realized for a time

in the primitive church, and to Luther no heresy could have been greater than this. Nor could any other form of heresy seem more dangerous to the ambitious princes of the Empire.

The Protestant Revolution was a protest against the authority of the corrupt hierarchy in Doctrine and practice, and claimed the right of each individual to determine for himself what he should believe, how he should worship, and how he should live. Yet Luther and Zwingli were led by temperament and conditions that arose to persecute to the death Evangelical Christians who dared to assert their personal rights. The Anabaptists repudiated any sort of interference by the secular authorities in matters of religion, and the use of any other than moral means by individual Christians or churches for the enforcement of religious duties. The peace of Westphalia (1649), barely contained the seeds of liberty of conscience. Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Calvinistic princes

-1- Vedder- Reformation Page 292.

agreed to tolerate each other, not because they believed such a thing was possible, or in accordance with the nature of the Christian religion, but because they realized that the pacification of Europe, so urgently needed could not be otherwise brought about. The Roman Catholics soon repudiated the treaty, and Lutherans were still ready as far as might be expedient to persecute Catholics and Calvinists, while all three were of one mind in their intolerant attitude towards the Anabaptists. Toleration and the impracticability of liberty of conscience are antagonistic to the conservative mind. Only those, who had made up their mind to follow the principles of the New Testament regardless of results were likely to venture upon the advocacy of these principles, before they had been shown by experience to be practicable. Such were the Mennonites and related parties of the Mediaeval times and the Anabaptists.

-1-

There were influences at work that made a general acceptance of the principles of liberty of conscience difficult; the view that the precepts of the Old Testament regarding treatment of dissenters from the established form of religion applied to New Testament Christianity; the union of Church and State as regarded those concerned with civil administration of fundamental importance; freedom of conscience seemed incompatible with the

-54- successful working of a State Church; the spirit of conservatism also furnished a great obstacle to the triumph of liberty of conscience. On the other hand there were influences which helped

-1- Newman - Church History Vol.11. Page 417.

the principle of freedom of worship. Humanism insisted on the right of each individual to determine for himself by research what is truth in every realm of thought; the proclamation of the old evangelical view of religion as a purely voluntary relationship of the believer to his God, and completely outside the sphere of civil jurisdiction. The Anabaptists perpetuated this type of Christianity and was taken up and advocated by English Anti Pedobaptists (1609 onward), and was proclaimed in America by Roger Williams and John Clark, (1638 onward) and by them successfully put in practice in Rhode Island; after the peace of Westphalia it was demonstrated that toleration was practical and would work for the benefit of all. In England the Independents led by Cromwell revealed that it was quite possible to recognize the rights of all evangelical christians and not disloyal to the government to carry on their work without interference and even with the encouragement of the State.

With the growth of toleration and liberty of conscience denominationalism was sure to flourish. It is probably the most unique feature of the present period. In Germany, Switzerland, France and other countries the dissenting church works side by side with state Churches. In Great Britain the freedom of worship is freely granted, but the dissenters are forced to financially support the established church, but to all intents and purposes the subjects of Great Britain enjoy as much religious liberty as any people and there is more religion in Great Britain than ever before. The United States made an important step beyond England to the full recognition of Religious Liberty and equality of all churches within the limits of public morality and order. Puritans, Quakers, Baptists and others fled from persecution to this country to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, while Anglicans, Dutch Reformed, and other Colonists who were not molested at home set up their churches. Several of the Colonists were at first exclusive and intolerant in their religion.

-55- but they were forced to yield to circumstances, and to make concessions to the growing number of dissenters in their jurisdiction. The battle began in Virginia with the revolution, and Declaration of Independence, and by the combined efforts of the dissenters the Episcopal establishment was sacrificed to the principle of equal justice to all, and the separation of church and state was carried through the Virginia legislature in successive acts 1776 to 1785. The General Government in adopting the constitution under Washington declared that, "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States". To make the matter more plain and emphatic the first amendment to the Constitution, enacted by the first congress in 1789 declares, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of the Press, or the rights of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the Government for redress of grievances".

The blood of the Martyrs is never shed in vain. The Anabaptist movement was defeated but not destroyed, it revived among the Mennonites and the Baptists of England and America. The question of the subjects and mode of baptism still divide the Baptist and Pedo-Baptist Churches, but the Doctrine of the salvation of unbaptized infants is no longer condemned as a heresy. The principle of Religious Liberty and separation of Church and State for which Anabaptists of Switzerland and Germany, and other countries suffered and died, has made great progress. It is not only tolerated, but encouraged by the Governments in leading countries of the world.