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THE
RENAISSANCE
AND THE
REFORMATION

SECOND EDITION

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THE RENAISSANCE AND THE REFORMATION, Second Edition

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THE ANABAPTIST REVOLT

THE TERM Anabaptism as used in this book applies to the religious movement which began in Switzerland under the leadership of Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz and continued in a great variety of manifestations until the advent of Menno Simons (1496–1561). After Menno's death Anabaptists became generally known as Mennonites.

Origins of religious movements often are difficult to trace, and this is especially true of the Anabaptists. One must consider first of all the basic religious experience which gave rise to this group. Next should be studied the peculiar social, economic, and political conditions out of which it rose. But at the outset one is confronted with questions which have engaged the attention of many scholars, and most of which cannot be solved because documents are lacking. It has been argued that Anabaptists trace their origin back to the Taborites of Bohemia, the Waldensians, and other sects who continued to live unnoticed in sullen insubordination to the traditional Church. Direct connection with these medieval sectaries cannot be proved. More and more it is recognized that the movement really began with the doctrines advanced by Felix Manz and Conrad Grebel and their supporters in Zurich against the teachings of Zwingli.

DIVERSITY OF RELIGIOUS AGITATION

Considerable difficulty confronts the student of Anabaptist history of the diversity of the movement. Lutheranism and Zwinglianism owe their being largely to the activities of two remarkable personalities, the biographical element in each group providing a central thread which makes it possible to trace its progress with comparative ease. But it is different with Anabaptism. In Switzerland many leaders besides Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz revolted against Zwingli and spread their doctrines throughout the cantons. In Germany Hubmaier, Denck, Schwenckfeld, and Hoffmann, to mention only a few, were responsible for the propaga-

tion of new ideas. In Moravia and Austria Hut, Wiedemann, Huter, and a few others exerted much influence, and in the Low Countries there was a large number of active agents. Indeed, Anabaptism spread over all lands in which German influence was powerful, and even into England, France, Sweden, and Denmark. This geographical diversity alone renders it impossible to trace its history in simple outlines.

Doctrinal differences were so numerous among these people that it sometimes is difficult to decide whether a group may be correctly classed with Anabaptists. From the beginning Swiss Anabaptists taught that union of Church and state was unchristian. They held that the Church was a company of the regenerate, and that the sign of such regeneration was to be expressed in the rite of baptism. Because baptism followed conversion and was a sign of it, they held that infant baptism at the hands of Catholic priests and Lutheran and Zwinglian ministers was not valid. Their opponents therefore called them Anabaptists (rebaptizers). They also rejected the idea that the state possessed the right to control people in their faith, to inflict punishment in life and limb because of their religious beliefs. They were opposed to all violence, and held that military service was wicked and that payment of taxes to the state which engaged in war was sinful. Often they refused to recognize the state in any way, community of goods being advocated by some groups.

Their Biblical literalism prompted many to put forth strange doctrines. Some taught that the millennium was imminent; others held that it should be ushered in by the use of the sword. Besides these, there were some who seem to have descended spiritually from the mystics of the Middle Ages. Some believed in visions, direct revelations of the truth, or special illumination from God which would interpret for them the letter of Scripture. But most of them lived simple lives without ostentation, trying to apply the precepts of Christ to every act of life.

At this time three prophets from Saxon Zwickau came to Wittenberg—Nicholas Storch and an unnamed friend, weavers, and a former student of Melancthon named Stübner. It is possible that Taborite conceptions influenced them. Storch prophesied God's speedy judgment upon the world—the end would come in 5 or 7 years; all the unrighteous would be slain, and only those professing the true faith and who had been rebaptized would be left. Stübner argued against the baptism of infants.

Thomas Münzer (d. 1525), priest at Zwickau, also was to exert much influence. He admired Storch whom he thought inspired by the Holy Spirit, therefore he knew more about things divine than any priest; for Münzer believed that a special inner voice taught man how to interpret the Bible and that whatever was so taught had binding value over every

dictum of the Church and her theologians. He held that this inner voice subjected the body in such manner that it would faithfully proclaim its message. Man must look for signs sent by God to test his faith. Münster thought that visions and dreams were important, but he inveighed against priests, altars, pictures, images, and the use of Latin in the service. German was used in his services. He claimed to hold special commission from God to found a new kingdom in which, following the example of apostolic days, equality of social status and community of goods were to be established. If this new realm could not be instituted peacefully, it was to be done by force—one of the elect guided by God could strangle 1000 enemies, two could slay 10,000! Münster's teaching became popular. He settled as a pastor in Alstedt in Thuringia and married a fugitive nun. He was killed at Frankenhausen on May 15, 1525, during the Peasants' War, when trying to command his disorderly followers.

BEGINNINGS OF ANABAPTISM IN ZURICH

For a while Zwingli's teaching in Zurich was acceptable to all, and his appeal that the Bible was the sole standard of faith and religious practice was readily received. Soon, however, there was difficulty, for some wanted a complete application of Biblical teaching, and Zwingli was loath to go to such lengths. The zealots held conventicles which for a time the reformer attended. In 1522 a number of enthusiasts from Basel joined them, as did Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz. This gave the dissenters great strength because these men were well educated according to the humanist conceptions of the day, Manz being a splendid scholar in Hebrew literature. They held that Church and state should be completely separated. The Church was to be spotless as it had been in apostolic days, and people of dubious life should be excluded. Zwingli, a man of practical political insight, felt that such an organization was impractical and rejected their plea.

A disputation was held in October, 1523. To their argument that conditions obtaining in apostolic days should be revived, Zwingli sought to make crushing rebuttal by showing that the clothes of those times and the practice of washing feet had nothing to do with religion. But Manz and Grebel offered bitter opposition. They continued their meetings at which they expounded the Bible, and they went so far as to sunder themselves entirely from Zwingli and his supporters in all social matters. Other sympathizers came to Zurich at this time, among whom were Louis Hetzer who knew Hebrew and the classics, and George Blaurock, a

runaway Premonstratensian monk. The latter was held to be possessed of the Holy Spirit and to be a second Paul.

The group appears to have grown rapidly. In 1524 its leaders began to discuss the validity of pictures, images, and the Mass. They questioned the lawfulness of paying tithes to the established Church and the practice of infant baptism. It appears that Münster's influence brought about this latter agitation, although Karlstadt's writings about the rite also became known at this time. The group now came to believe that baptism was a sign of regeneration and that infant baptism was a device of the devil. A disputation was held in January, 1525, and a decree followed, ordering that all unbaptized children should forthwith be baptized under pain of banishment of the parents. Conventicles were now also forbidden, and a number of zealots were ordered out of the jurisdiction of Zurich.

These steps to repress the movement only provoked greater resistance, which was led by Grebel. At Zollikon on Lake Zurich a meeting was held at which Grebel baptized Blaurock, a man who was to display a zeal characteristic of neophytes. He at once administered the rite to fifteen more. Baptism of those old enough to understand the step which they were taking and a simple table of the Lord as a memorial of Christ's sacrifice were adopted as the chief tenets. Soon they also rejected predestination, adopted the doctrine of free will, and insisted on moral character and practical Christian conduct. Thus they were opposed to the idea of total human depravity. Their denial of any connection between Church and state seemed like treason to Zwingli, and he wrote such tracts on baptism as *Refutation of the Tricks of the Baptists*, and *Concerning Baptism, Rebaptism, and the Baptism of Children*. The officials of Zurich were alarmed. In March, 1526, drowning was made the penalty for holding Anabaptist ideas, and in January, 1527, Manz was drowned in the Limmat, the river on which Zurich is situated. The Anabaptists dispersed. Now began their long and painful martyrdom, one of the saddest on the page of history.

SOME EARLY ANABAPTIST LEADERS

Balthasar Hubmaier came forward at this time as chief leader of these persecuted folk. He was of bourgeois parentage, born about 1481 in Augsburg, and educated at the University of Ingolstadt under John Eck. He was a humanist and was acquainted with the great scholars of the day. He became pastor at Waldshut just over the Rhine in Germany where he soon abandoned the old faith and accepted Lutheran and Zwinglian doctrines. He left for Schaffhausen because of the design of the Austrian

government to seize him. In 1524 he wrote a tract, *Concerning Heretics and Those Who Burn Them*, which was a noble plea against the execution of people for their faith. He was much interested in the progress of the Reformation in Zurich and, after his return to Waldshut, became convinced that baptism of children was contrary to Scripture. Swiss Anabaptists visited him in 1524, and one named Roubli baptized him. On Easter Day Hubmaier baptized more than 300 persons. Water for this purpose was conveyed in a plain pail, and the font, so long used in baptizing the children of Waldshut, was unceremoniously cast into the Rhine. He also inaugurated the simple rite of the Lord's Supper and, in literal application of Scripture, instituted the washing of feet. Hubmaier now became one of the more important Anabaptist leaders. But the Catholics of Waldshut were opposed to him, and the Austrian government was unceasing in its hostility. He and his wife fled to Zurich; he was seized, subjected to torture, found guilty, and banished from the town.

Quite different in many ways was Hans Denck (d. 1527). He was educated as a humanist and was acquainted with many famous men of learning. He was appointed rector of St. Sebald's School in Nuremberg. Soon he abandoned his Lutheranism and began to accept the teachings of Münzer but not his radical revolutionary doctrines. He was also influenced by Karlstadt and owed much to the German mystics of the Middle Ages such as Tauler, Eckhart, and the author of the *Theologia Germanica*. In 1525 he began to teach about the inner voice which he claimed came from God. He held that all external rules, rites, and practices were of no value. God's love was universal, His voice spoke to the soul, and there was no total depravity. Men might not resist violence. Salvation came only by participating in God's love, as did Jesus. Denck was expelled from the town by its Lutheran officials, wandered from place to place, and finally died of the pest in Basel.

Nicolsberg in Moravia became a haven of refuge for Anabaptists. The seigniors of Liechtenstein tolerated them and even accepted their doctrines. Hubmaier was the first of the persuasion to settle in this community, which became famous far and wide. Thither trekked many of the persecuted brethren, and a vigorous propaganda went forth from it. Sectarian factions arose. Hans Hut, a follower of Thomas Münzer, had been captured in the fight at Frankenhausen, but he escaped execution and continued expounding his master's ideas. He taught that the righteous should use the sword to exterminate the wicked and should set up God's kingdom with ruthless might. He knew little of the Bible, but had conned well the texts which he believed supported his notions. He preached that

the day of the wicked was nearly over; he himself had been sent by God to announce their speedy overthrow. Indeed, it was to happen on May 15, 1527. Then would God's seed rise and, like the Israelites of old, smite their enemies. He became, until his death at the close of 1527, a leader of the extreme left wing of the Anabaptists.

Jacob Wiedemann taught community of goods which he held to be a prime doctrine in Scripture and the rule of apostolic society. No Christian might use force or violence under any circumstance. Taxes were sinful because the state used the money thus gotten for war. Finally some of Wiedemann's followers united with those of Hut. Hubmaier was a practical man and disapproved of these extreme views. He liked none of their chief tenets, especially their prophetic visions which foretold the advent of Christ's kingdom on earth. The seigniors of Liechtenstein also opposed this radicalism. Hubmaier now defended the institution of the state in his tract, *On the Sword*, in which he argued that rulers might use compulsion in all matters hostile to the established order. Meantime, after the Battle of Mohács (1526), Ferdinand of Austria became margrave of Moravia. His orthodox conscience and his conception of government prevented toleration, and on August 28, 1527, he ordered that the Edict of Worms be enforced in Moravia without delay.

Officials soon began to ferret out people who denied the real presence. Hubmaier and his wife were brought to Vienna, and Hubmaier was tortured, tried, and finally burned on March 10, 1528. Three days later his wife was thrown into the Danube with a large stone tied to her neck. The Anabaptists fled, and Wiedemann settled at Austerlitz where his followers practiced community of goods. An even stricter faction separated from them under the leadership of Jacob Huter. Ferdinand insisted on their expulsion when an Anabaptist kingdom was set up in Münster, and persecution began in 1535. These poor people, simple, ignorant, morally austere and upright, who only sought to live according to the precepts of Scripture as they understood them, were hunted down like savage beasts and dragged forth from their hiding places in forests and mountains. Huter was burned at the stake in Innsbruck in 1536.

Of the numerous itinerant Anabaptist preachers and teachers, only few can be mentioned here. Melchior Hoffmann (d. 1543), a furrier's apprentice born in Swabia, never received a formal education. He fabricated his own system of theology. At first he was a Lutheran, but soon fell under Anabaptist influence. He pondered long and earnestly over the advent of Christ and the last judgment, prayerfully studying the Bible for answer to all his questions about these themes. Soon he believed that he was a prophet of God, a tool in His hands. He led a wandering life, preaching

in Livonia, Sweden, northern Germany, and Holstein. He clashed with Karlstadt, fled to East Friesland, and finally arrived in Strasbourg. The Zwinglians in that center refused to accept him, and he went over to the Anabaptists. He taught that the advent of Christ was imminent, foretold it in the most fantastic manner, completely rejected all violence, and denounced baptism of infants. Later he preached that Strasbourg would become the center of God's new kingdom in 1533. He returned to East Friesland and at Embden formed a large group of Anabaptists. Expelled from the country, he went to Holland, but soon returned to Strasbourg. He was cast into prison, terribly abused and tortured, and finally died in 1543.

A mystical tendency among some of the Anabaptists remains to be noted. Sebastian Franck (1499–1543) of Donauwörth opposed formalism in religion and worship of the letter of the text of Scripture, preferring instead a church composed of folk ruled directly by the spirit of God. Since the Bible was to be understood only in a spiritual manner, Franck opposed all groups, even many Anabaptists to whom he showed kinship. Casper Schwenkfeld (1489–1561) advocated an inner and spiritual divine voice which should lead men to God. He denied Lutheran, Zwinglian, and Catholic conceptions of the Lord's Supper, and taught that the bread and wine were simply spiritual food and drink.

By 1530 Anabaptism had become common in many parts of Germany. This was a period of grave religious unrest. Luther and Zwingli were the first to break with Catholicism, but, when they drew back from their own demand that religious practices must be justified by Scripture, the common man often insisted on continuing to the logical end. Like Zwingli, Luther also was opposed to Anabaptists, but at first he preferred to have them banished rather than executed since he believed that the simple itinerant preachers were emissaries of the devil. Soon he was alarmed and urged summary methods. Even the more gentle Melancthon thought that the death penalty was justifiable. Butzer, the theologian of Strasbourg, likewise opposed Anabaptist teaching and urged the government to proceed against the sectaries with force. A decree was issued against them by the officials of Strasbourg in July, 1527. Butzer believed also that the authorities should punish Anabaptists in life and limb. Indeed, the reformers generally looked to the state to establish the reformed cult. The Church in effect became a branch of the state; heresy was to be repressed by secular law, and Anabaptists, because of their refusal to have anything to do with the state, were treated as rebels as well as heretics. In short, princes and reformers generally believed in repression. Prosecution by

sword, fagot, drowning, mutilation, and burial alive was the order of the day.

All things conspired to force a fanatical outburst. The fires of persecution burned brightly. The more moderate of the Anabaptists soon perished, the doctrine of nonresistance gaining them no mercy. Extremists became more prominent and assumed leadership. After the Peasants' War ended in defeat, disappointed folk fondly dreamed of Christ's coming and the dawn of His kingdom in which only righteousness would reign. Economic difficulties, social dislocation, and hard times also contributed their share. These conditions make it possible to understand the motives which led to the founding of an Anabaptist kingdom in Münster, an episode which has attracted undue attention simply because of its extraordinary character. It is an error to assume that all or even most Anabaptists were revolutionaries.

Anabaptism in the Low Countries centered around Amsterdam where John Trypmaker, a pupil of Melchior Hoffmann, carried on active propaganda. The more moderate and really typical Anabaptist teaching of the Swiss brethren occurred in Cleves, Juliers, and Berg where Henry Roll introduced it from southern Germany. But the more radical Melchiorite propaganda was to have great success in the county of Holland. Times were hard in that land after 1525. Trade with Scandinavia and the Baltic area was nearly at a standstill because of the struggle over the Danish succession. Christian II of Denmark was a brother-in-law of Emperor Charles and sought to use the Low Countries as a base of operations. Poverty and hunger stalked the land, and the authorities feared violence. Anabaptism appeared in Rotterdam, and David Joris (George) of Bruges (1501–1556) began to teach his doctrine in Delft. Its adherents were also plentiful in Friesland and Groningen.

INGATHERING OF THE SAINTS AT MÜNSTER

Melchior Hoffmann appeared in Amsterdam in 1531 with many of his followers who had come with him from Embden. Secret meetings were held, and propaganda was spread rapidly among people of low degree in town and country. In a state of religious ecstasy, these simple people hoped for a new order which would correct all the ills under which they lived, if not in this world at least in the next. Hoffmann wished no violence, but he could not restrain his more ardent followers, especially after he returned to Strasbourg in 1533. John Matthyszoon, a baker from Haarlem and a fanatic without conscience, now assumed leadership.

He had given the officials of Haarlem some trouble because of the laxity of his private morals. This apostle of wrath asserted that he had received a revelation from God in which he was commissioned to use the sword. The Anabaptists were no longer to be led to the shambles like sheep! Christ was surely coming, and His servants should prepare the way for Him; Münster in Westphalia was the place!

Towns and cities in northern Germany had in recent years witnessed great religious changes, often accompanied by social disturbances. Catholicism was displaced by Lutheranism, but in most cases Anabaptism exerted some influence. Münster was the seat of a bishopric. Since 1529 Bernhard Rothmann, a canon, had been preaching in an Erasmian vein, criticizing abuses in the Church and emphasizing the futility of such practices as pilgrimages, indulgences, and veneration of saints. In 1531 he returned from a visit to Wittenberg determined to effect a Lutheran revolution. The council refused to entertain any such move, but the common folk, led by Rothmann and Bernhard Knipperdollinck, persisted. Knipperdollinck was a member of the upper classes who a few years before had consorted with Anabaptists. Thus the aristocratic element was opposed to a change while the handicraftsmen insisted upon a thorough reformation. The council could not expel Rothmann for fear of violence. On June 1, 1532, a new bishop was named—Franz von Waldeck, a man who boasted connections among the Westphalian nobility. Finally in the face of growing agitation the council yielded to the Lutheran preachers who on August 10 occupied a number of pulpits.

Emperor Charles ordered the bishop in July, 1532, to drive out Rothmann and uproot the heretical nest, but this only resulted in more determined opposition, whereupon the bishop began to collect troops. Finally, at the intervention of Landgrave Philip of Hesse, the town was permitted to adopt the new faith and to enter the Schmalkalden League (February, 1533). The better class of townsmen remained true to Lutheranism whereas Anabaptist propaganda won adherents among the lower groups. Meanwhile Rothmann progressed in his beliefs and became a radical Zwinglian. In 1532 he fell under the influence of Henry Roll of Juliers and embraced Anabaptist doctrines. By the end of 1533, Rothmann and other clergymen refused to baptize infants. They began to talk about the necessity of obeying God rather than man and sought to put into practice such Anabaptist ideas as selling all and giving to the poor. The authority of the town council waned visibly.

At this juncture arrived emissaries of John Matthyszoon, among them his agent John Beukelszoon of Leiden, a tailor 25 years of age whom he

had baptized the previous year. John of Leiden had a wife in Leiden who managed a hostel of shady repute, and he himself was polygamous before he entered upon his strange career in Münster. He was courageous, eloquent, and handsome, and he easily won the confidence of people, especially women. He was received into Knipperdollinck's house and married his daughter Clara. He and his host became the center of vigorous propaganda. There was a demonstration on January 28, 1534, but it was put down with little trouble. Some townsmen thereupon attacked a convent of nuns, and the inmates renounced their vows.

One day John and Knipperdollinck rushed out of the house into the streets, their eyes fixed heavenward. They cried, "Penance, penance, woe, woe, woe, do penance, and convert yourselves that you may not draw upon you the wrath of your heavenly Father!" Some people had visions—one man, a simple tailor, saw God in His glory in the skies with Christ beside Him bearing a banner in His right hand. Knipperdollinck's daughter began to prophesy and preach to excited crowds. Many fled the town, convinced that it was dangerous to remain. A climax was reached on February 25, when the Anabaptists secured control of the council and the reign of saints began.

Just before the council fell, Matthyszoon arrived in Münster, bringing with him the radiant beauty Divara, a fugitive nun from one of the convents of Haarlem. He at once acquired much influence, and his fanaticism led to violence. On February 27 the godless who refused rebaptism, whether men, women, or children, were ejected from the town. Around the walls were gathered the troops of the bishop and his allies. But it was necessary to increase the number of able-bodied men to help defend the new Zion, and Matthyszoon issued an appeal to all coreligionists in Cleves, Holland, and elsewhere to come to the defense. They were to meet in Guelders near the town of Hasselt on March 24, whence they were to proceed up the Yssel valley toward Münster. Boats loaded with men, women, and children came from Zeeland, Leiden, Haarlem, Amsterdam, and many other places. About 3000 deluded folk, for the most part unarmed, carrying with them some scanty possessions and money received from the sale of their property, were seized by agents of the government. There is some comfort in the fact that only their leaders were put to death.

Matthyszoon's career came to an end on April 5, 1534. He announced that God had chosen him to be His prophet—another Gideon. With twenty men he would drive off the besieging troops! As he and his band sallied forth on Easter Day, they were set upon and hacked to pieces.

KING JOHN OF LEIDEN RULES THE SAINTS

John of Leiden now assumed leadership. This man was without doubt a great religious quack, ignorant, able, without conscience, and violent. It is not certain whether he really believed in his divine mission. He now married his friend's widow Divara. What followed is a most amazing chapter in the history of the Reformation. The organization of the town was remodeled to make it conform somewhat to Old Testament ideas, and twelve elders were appointed. All marriages hitherto contracted were dissolved. Polygamy was introduced after the example of the patriarchs, the leaders taking several new wives each. John eventually permitted himself the luxury of as many as sixteen wives besides Divara.

For the moment the cause of the saints flourished. Internal opposition was extinguished in blood, and an assault by the besiegers in May was repulsed—victories which still further stirred the ecstasy of the populace. Another reorganization of government took place, and John became king in the New Jerusalem and imitated the regalia of the kings of the Holy Roman Empire. Aldegrevier has left a splendid engraving of the man decked with the imperial insignia, wielding a scepter of gold studded with costly stones, and bearing an orb emblematic of the Christian world with two swords crossed through it to indicate his high jurisdiction. A royal and an imperial crown were made, each set with jewels. Divara was named queen, his other wives becoming her handmaidens. There was much pomp and ceremony—all for the exaltation of God whose unworthy agent John claimed to be.

Similar strange manifestations took place in other towns. When men and women began to set out for Münster in March, 1534, there was much excitement in Amsterdam, and on March 23, five Anabaptists rushed through the streets, brandishing swords and shouting something about God's blessing and curse upon the people. Chiliastic propaganda grew apace because the rule of the saints in Münster seemed successful. The government of the county of Holland was uneasy—it was a dangerous sign that many officials were loath to proceed against the poor fanatics. In October, King John of Münster sent out twenty-seven apostles to carry his message to the world. They left all their wives at home in Münster. Four of the prophets appeared in Amsterdam carrying handbills exhorting the faithful to unsheath the sword against the ungodly. God, they stated, would surely come, but not until the wicked had been exterminated. These emissaries were to plant a banner in each of four places—Juliers, Limburg, Amsterdam, and Groningen.

Fortunately many Anabaptists refused to listen to this counsel, and

thus wholesale risings were prevented, but nevertheless there was much agitation. On February 11, 1535, four men and seven women rushed naked through the streets of Amsterdam crying, "Woe, woe is come over the world and over the godless." They were executed soon after capture. In another town a man ran through the streets shouting in prophetic strains, "Strike dead, strike dead all monks and priests, destroy all government of the world, especially ours!" On May 10 a group of excited men seized the open space before the town hall of Amsterdam but were put down on the following day.

Meanwhile, hunger and famine stalked in the streets of Münster. Treachery delivered the city into the hands of the bishop and his allies on June 25, 1535, Rothmann falling in the fighting which followed. After 4 days of frightful carnage and plunder, a judicial court was set up. Divara refused to recant and was beheaded, and all men who had played a conspicuous role were treated in like fashion. On January 22, 1536, King John, Knipperdollinck, and their partner Krechting were done to death in the most cruel manner of that cruel age. Afterwards their bodies were placed in an iron cage and hoisted high up to the tower of St. Lambert's church. Their remains were not removed until 1881.

The saints of Münster have always been condemned by Anabaptists for their violence and are not to be regarded as typical of the group. Even when the wildest ecstasy and chiliastic prophesying swept numbers off their feet, many more adhered faithfully to the saner view that violence was wrong. The failure in Münster discredited forever the extremist faction. John van Batenburg sought to restore King John's fallen realm. He also advocated polygamy and claimed to be the prophet Elias. But his propaganda found little acceptance in Holland, and he was executed in 1538. David Joris, another fanatic, also claimed to be a Messiah and exerted much influence upon the people. He favored polygamy, marriage according to him being an outworn institution which should not bind the regenerate. Fleeing prosecution, he finally settled in Basel where he lived until 1556 on the money he had collected from his followers. Henry Nicholas taught doctrines much like those of David Joris. Love, according to him, drew the faithful close to God, and believers were to retire from the world as much as possible. His organization, Family of Love, became a famous institution.

MENNO SIMONS REFORMER

Soon after the tragedy of Münster, Menno Simons (1496–1561) began to preach among the scattered and persecuted brethren. Born at Witmar-

sum in Friesland, he became a priest but abandoned the traditional faith in 1536, after he had come to doubt transubstantiation, the Real Presence, and the validity of infant baptism. Soon after he fled to East Friesland and began the career of an active itinerant preacher. Opposed to the doctrines of the brethren of Münster, he published pamphlets and treatises, engaged in disputations, and was eminently pious, humble, and devoted to the ministry.

The greatness of Menno Simons lay in his heroic devotion to the Anabaptist cause. He succeeded in weaning the sympathizers of the Münsterites from their doctrines of violence and bringing them back to the original teachings of Anabaptist leaders. He held that the Church was the communion of the faithful, the chosen of God set aside by act of baptism, the sign of conversion, and cannot be applied to infants. The Lord's Supper is in both kinds. Justification is by faith only. Denying predestination, they held to free will; perfectionism was the object of the Christian's life, and there were no new revelations. Menno was in part responsible for the institutions peculiar among his followers, known as the ban and its attending practice, avoidance. They were liberally employed even to separate husband and wife or parents and children, and to prevent marriage between parties who would not submit to discipline. His great service lay in quieting the excited brethren. His missionary activity was spent in the Low Countries and adjacent lands of northern Germany.

Menno's life was one of great difficulties; the government at every hand was against him. After 18 years of labor among his people, Menno wrote the following about his difficult life:

For eighteen years now I, my poor feeble wife and little children have endured extreme anxiety, oppression, affliction, misery, and persecution; and at the peril of my life have been compelled everywhere to live in fear and seclusion; yea, while the state ministers repose on beds of ease and of soft pillows we generally have to hide ourselves in secluded corners; while they appear at weddings and banquets with great pomp, with pipe and lute, we must be on guard when the dogs bark lest the captors be on hand. Whilst they are saluted as doctors, lords, and teachers on every hand, we have to hear that we are Anabaptists, hedge preachers, deceivers and heretics, and must be saluted in the name of the devil. In short, while they are gloriously rewarded for their services with large incomes and easy times, our recompense and portion must be fire, sword, and death.

It would be hard to find a story sadder than that of the Anabaptists. Because they denied the teachings of Luther and Zwingli as well as of Catholicism they invited prosecution. But their denial of any connection between Church and state, and their refusal to have anything to do with

the state led secular authorities to view them as insurrectionists. As the world of that day was constituted, separation of Church and state was unthinkable, and in affirming this doctrine they deliberately chose the bloody path of martyrs, their martyrology thus being a most impressive monument of the Reformation. They sacrificed themselves for a principle which could not yet be accepted. Not until later in the century—in the United Netherlands under William of Orange—did they win for the first time legal rights in any land.

Anabaptist hymns are worthy of study. Written in the vernacular, composed often in halting meter, they nevertheless possess the spirit of hymnology. They usually deal with martyrdom, and in reading them one gets glimpses of the dreadful ordeals through which these people were forced to pass. Anabaptism was a crime for which outraged majesty demanded the extreme penalty. Many of these stirring martyrdoms are preserved in the great martyrologies. The following from Schiemer's *Martyr's Hymn* is a fair sample:

Thine holy city they destroyed,
Thine altar overthrew they,
Thy servants have they put to death,
Where they could apprehend them.
Of us alone, thy little flock,
But few are still remaining.
Throughout the land, in shameful flight,
Disgraced, they have expelled us.
Scattered are we like flocks of sheep
Without a shepherd near us;
Abandoned stand our home and hearth
And like the owl or birds of night
Seek shelter we in caverns.
In clefts, on crags, in rocky wilds
We make our home—still they pursue;
Like birds or fowl we're hunted.

Anabaptists were usually workmen possessing little learning. They studied the Bible long and earnestly, and as a rule their leaders knew but this one book. Their aversion to secular learning, government, and industry made it impossible for them to become anything but farmers, a mode of life which enabled them to form a society composed of men and women who cherished these simple world-denying ideas. In this capacity they were successful wherever they settled. Their influence can be traced in many subsequent religious movements whose adherents sought asylum in distant places in Russia and along the American frontier.