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## Modern Anabaptist Research

SOME notable contributions to research in Anabaptist history and thought in the last few years have been published, unfortunately for most English readers, in the German language. It is the purpose of this article to acquaint English readers with the results of this research as found in five recently published volumes. These are, in order of review: (1) Fritz Blanke, *Brethren in Christ*, Zwingli Verlag, 1955; (2) Ekkehard Krajewski, *Life and Death of Felix Mantz, Leader of the Zurich Anabaptists*, Oncken Verlag, 1957; (3) J. F. G. Goeters, *Ludwig Hätzer, Spiritualist and Antitrinitarian*, 1957; (4) Hans Denck, *Religious Writings*, ed. W. Fellmann, 1956, the last two published by Bertelsmann Verlag in the series *Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte*, and finally, (5) J. J. Kiewiet, *Pilgram Marbeck*, Oncken Verlag, 1957.

These five volumes present the Anabaptist movement in some of its great variety. Dr. Blanke has written the moving story of the courageous and pathetic attempt to establish a dissenting *Gemeinde*,<sup>1</sup> in the face of a hostile church-state alliance. Krajewski has essentially re-told this story, but follows through it the trail of Felix Mantz, one of the originators of the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland. Consequently his account is wider in scope and time. Dr. Goeters' work on Ludwig Hätzer also overlaps to some extent with the ground covered in the first two volumes, but again it includes new material both historical and theological, since Hätzer stood between the Anabaptists and the Spiritualists. Hätzer's activities take us into the thick of the young Anabaptist movement in South Germany. Fellmann's volume of Denck's works is purely theological and the basis of the later theological writing of Pilgram Marbeck. Kiewiet's book tells the story of South German Anabaptism as seen through the life, work, and thought of its greatest leader, Pilgram Marbeck.

I. There is no need to recount again the outward succession of events that led to the formation of the first Anabaptist *Gemeinde* in Zollikon near Zürich, since there are several accounts available in English.<sup>2</sup> What is important is Dr. Blanke's interpretation of the total event based on a careful reading and evaluation of the primary sources.

The life-span of this *Gemeinde* was just two months, from the

first believers' baptism on January 21st, 1525, to the dissolution of the fellowship at the end of March. The whole movement, Dr. Blanke declares, had the characteristics of an "Awakening." The stages of this awakening applied to individuals can be traced as the experiences of these people are related in the records of prison and trial interrogations. (1) The disturbed conscience due to awareness of sin, (2) prayer for a thorough knowledge and recognition of sin, (3) deep conviction of sin, (4) the cry for salvation after sincere repentance, and (5) forgiveness experienced in baptism, baptism being the sign of God's grace and pardon. In baptism God gives grace to the penitent sinner and strength for the new life (36-37).<sup>2a</sup>

The author claims that this eruptive movement of repentance with its consequences is unique in Reformation history and therefore it has to be explained. There are two reasons, one theological and one personal. Already in 1524 the leaders Grebel and Mantz had become convinced that repentance must precede baptism. Without repentance there is no baptism, that is, no salvation. This was the theological reason. The personal reason was that Georg Blaurock, one of the leaders, was a persuasive evangelist, a dynamic and fiery preacher. No doubt he provided the initial impetus for the whole event (40-41).

Dr. Blanke further emphasizes that the Anabaptist movement in Zollikon was a Reformation movement, and not an extension or a resurgence of the Old Evangelical sects of the Middle Ages as some claim. The test ought to be made here, in this earliest Anabaptist *Gemeinde*. The outstanding features of this movement are Zwinglian in nature. The prayer for recognition of sin with the realization that it too is a gift of God; belief in the total depravity of unregenerate man; the teaching of salvation by faith; the conviction of being led personally by God, and above all, the non-sacramental character of baptism and the Lord's Supper; all of these are clearly Zwinglian formulations. Added to this was the fact that the fellowship had all the marks of a Church; preaching, baptism and the Lord's Supper, and church discipline. The Waldensians knew nothing of all this and therefore the case is clear: the Anabaptists were children of the Reformation. Blanke also rejects the frequent charge that social and political motives influenced the growth of the movement as completely without foundation in the sources (43-45).

Finally the author devotes a chapter to a strange event that occurred in June, 1525, after the fellowship had been broken by civil and ecclesiastical pressure. A procession of men, women, and children from Zollikon, with willow wands twisted about their waists, entered the city of Zürich denouncing Zwingli as the big dragon of *Rev. xii. 3* and calling the city to repentance with cries of woe, woe, woe! What is the explanation of this strange phenomenon? Though there is no evidence of apocalyptic elements among the Zollikon Anabaptists in the sources, Blanke feels that an

undercurrent of prophetic eschatology must have been present, for the words and symbolisms of these prophets are not accidental. Perhaps it was initiated by an individual; perhaps it was merely a deep disappointment with Zwingli and the Church in Zürich (68-75).

When the Anabaptists of Zollikon finally gave in it was a truce of exhaustion and not of conviction. They started their work before the time was ripe, says Blanke. However, no blame rests on them for this, for there must ever be those who will set out on pilgrimage to a new dawn, undeterred by the spirit of the time. Such were the men and women of Zollikon, and we stand in their debt (82).

II. Since biographical details of the life of Felix Mantz are very scarce indeed, the author has actually done little more than tell again the story of the rise of Anabaptism in Zürich and its subsequent fortunes and misfortunes. But even with the paucity of source material, Krajewski has managed to give us a picture of the man.

There is nothing extraordinary about Mantz. He always seemed to remain somewhat in the background. He was a young man, gripped by a conviction, who wrestled manfully with questions that are even today very much in our minds. What is the Church and what form should it take? What is the position of the individual within that Church? What is the relationship of the interpretation of Scripture to the Church? He never looked back once he had put his hand to the plough. Leonhard von Muralt, the prominent Swiss secular historian, has said of Mantz that he was the most quiet and persistent, the most deeply religious, and the clearest thinker of the Anabaptist leaders of Zürich.

Mantz was an educated man for he studied the biblical languages, especially Hebrew, with Zwingli. He seems to have been a leader of the separatists from the beginning, that is, from the time when it became clear that there was a basic divergence of views. Until that time there had not been a Grebel-Mantz group, but now the common disagreement with Zwingli drew them together. It is a Mantz characteristic to shun verbal controversy, and he requested repeatedly to be allowed to dispute in writing.

There is next to no detailed information on his work after the separation had become complete as a result of the first believers' baptism which took place in Mantz's house. He worked in the Cantons to the north, east and south-east of Zürich at various times. He seemed to go only where work had already begun. He was imprisoned in Zürich four times, the last imprisonment ending with his death. Before he died he had come to great honour among the Anabaptists because of his suffering for the faith, but also because of his quiet, winning ways.

That Mantz had learned well from Zwingli can be seen from the main points of his theology. These were: (1) the conviction of the

sole authority of the Scriptures in matters of faith, and this forms the basis for his whole approach. (He did, however, go beyond Zwingli in his application of the principle, and also varied from him in his understanding of it); (2) the doctrine of salvation through faith in the work of Christ. Mantz's distinctive theological position involving his views about the Church, the Sacraments, and the Christian life, was developed in controversy with Zwingli. He stood in complete agreement with the beliefs of the Swiss Brethren as they have been stated above.

Since Mantz was personally active in arranging for the printing and circulation of some of the anti-sacramental tracts of Carlstadt, Krajewski deals with the matter of "enthusiast"<sup>3</sup> influence on the Swiss Brethren. To begin with there is no evidence that Mantz was influenced by Carlstadt's views (43-47). The author then discusses the letter of the Brethren to Thomas Müntzer of September, 1524. His conclusions are that they had come to their own convictions from the Scriptures before they wrote that letter, and that Müntzer's writings, which they said had "taught them a great deal," had merely expressed more clearly some of the things they already held to be true. Thus there can be no question of any theological influence of Müntzer on these men of Zürich. With regard to Bullinger's remarks<sup>4</sup> about the meeting of the Brethren with Müntzer later in the autumn of 1524, the author admits that it could have been so as there is nothing to contradict it, notwithstanding Bender's argument<sup>5</sup> to the contrary, but that it is highly unlikely (49-59).

The sentence of death passed on Mantz was legally justified. In March, 1526, the Zürich Council issued a mandate which provided that anyone found to be re-baptizing was to be executed by drowning. Mantz admitted that he had baptized a woman in April, 1526, and thereby pronounced himself guilty. Zwingli no doubt agreed to the sentence although with reluctance. Mantz went to his death praising God and with the words "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Why this severity on the part of the Zürich Council? They saw in the Anabaptist movement a threat to the whole work of the Reformation, particularly since Zürich was increasingly threatened by the Catholic Cantons to the south. They decided to make an example of Mantz. His execution was the beginning of a corporate martyrdom that has no equal.

III. This book on Ludwig Hätzer is not only one of the best biographies in Anabaptist research, but also one of the most penetrating analyses of the movement in so far as the author discusses it. Hätzer was not a true Anabaptist since he was never baptized himself and for other reasons shown below. Goeters calls him a peripheral figure of early Anabaptism.

The broad outlines of his life and wanderings are quickly summed up. He was born in Switzerland about the year 1500. After acquir-

ing a humanistic education in the *via antiqua* he took up the duties of a priest in a village near Zürich, where he was converted to the evangelical faith under Zwingli's influence. Because of anti-Reformation sentiment in the village he left his charge, and was from then on a wanderer. In Zürich he soon found himself in the radical<sup>6</sup> camp, and, because of his views left for Augsburg in June, 1525, where he worked as a proof-reader, at the same time continuing the polemical writing he had begun at Zürich. He entered the eucharistic dispute, came out on the side of Carlstadt, and gathered around him a sort of conventicle. After being banished from Augsburg in October, 1525, on charges of being an Anabaptist, he went to Basle, from where he was reconciled with Zwingli through the mediation of Oecolampadius. In the Zürich disputation about baptism in November, 1525, he took the floor against the Anabaptists. This reconciliation with Zwingli, says Goeters, is to be understood on the basis of the sharp distinction made by Zwingli between water baptism and the baptism of the Spirit. An incipient spiritualism is present here, if not with Zwingli, at least with Hätzer. In Basle Hätzer worked with Oecolampadius, translating his works into German, but had to leave after a year because of a moral lapse involving a servant girl.

At Strasbourg he met Denck and was greatly influenced by him. It was there that he began his translation of the Old Testament prophets, and finished it later with Denck's assistance at Worms. It was completed in six months and met a real need for it was, in 1527, the only part of the Bible so far left untranslated by Luther. It went through twelve editions in five years and was then superseded by the official translations of Wittenberg and Zürich. Both Luther and Zwingli rejected the "Worms Prophets" because the authors were schismatics, but they nevertheless expressed grudging approval of the work. The charge of plagiarism levelled against Luther and Zwingli by some historians is ruled out by our knowledge of the facts surrounding both translations (104-105).

From Worms Hätzer went to Regensburg where he actually baptized four persons, and was considered as an elder by the local Anabaptist group. From Autumn, 1527 until November, 1528, nothing certain is known of his whereabouts, but that he was not idle is proved from his literary efforts. He was brought to trial in Constance and beheaded on February 4th, 1529 on a moral charge, thus disposing of a dangerous heretic (156-157).

Goeters deals with the development of Hätzer's thought in considerable detail. His overall judgment of the man is that he was not really an independent thinker, but took his ideas from others and drove them far beyond the intentions of their originators. Among his teachers were Zwingli, Hans Denck, the *Theologia Deutsch*, Hans Hut, and Carlstadt.

The main strand of Hätzer's thought concerns the relationship

between Spirit and Scripture. In his early days at Zürich he was an outspoken biblicist. This is abundantly clear from his first work directed against images (17-19). The prologue to this work and his introduction to the minutes of the Second Zürich Disputation, at which he was secretary, state clearly his views of the Scriptures. The Word of God is over all other authority; yes it even exposes other so-called authority as worldly wisdom. The Old and New Testaments he considers as of equal value, the Old Testament being obligatory on Christians in all things except in matters of church ritual. His biblicism had two aspects, ecclesiastical and ethical. The first can be called Biblicist Purism with regard to cultic practice, and the second "Imitatio Christi," the ethical expression of the faith. In these views he was in full accord with the radicals in Zürich, and joined them on occasion in criticizing the Zürich Reformation on these grounds (41). A feature of Hätzer's development from Biblicist to Spiritualist was his view of the Lord's Supper. While in Augsburg in 1525 he adopted Carlstadt's view which was that the bread and wine is not even a sign and assurance of faith, for this is the prerogative of the Spirit, but only a remembrance and proclamation of the Lord's death (63).

It is at this point, says Goeters, that a basic change in Hätzer's thinking takes place. The Biblicist begins to decline and the Spiritualist becomes more prominent. The introduction to his translation of Malachi and Oecolampadius' commentary on it reveals this clearly (84-85). The authority of the Bible is still considered great, but it is now supported with the teaching of verbal inspiration. The Scriptures are no longer important for outward aspects of the *Gemeinde*, the weight has shifted to the individual Christian life. The Spirit is needed to understand the Scriptures. In his contact with Michael Sattler in Strasbourg late 1526, he supported the view that only through faith do men enter the *Gemeinde*, and that baptism is of little value (90).

His gradual drift to Spiritualism can also be seen in his views of the canon of Scripture (127-128). He believed the apocryphal books to be above suspicion and that they ought to be considered as Scripture. He charged the Reformers with limiting the Holy Spirit by circumscribing the canon. Since the Scriptures designated as canonical by the Reformers contained contradictions within themselves, the contradictions between that canon and the Apocrypha cannot be used to prove the non-canonicity of the latter.

The introduction to his translation of the "Prophet" Baruch contains interesting insights into the final shape of Hätzer's view of the relation of the Spirit to the Scriptures (129-130). Faith is the union between the human and divine wills; the denial of one's own will and complete surrender to God. This faith is essentially knowledge and cannot be described in terms of dogmatic orthodoxy or ethical attitude. The Scriptures cannot be the source of this faith,

nor do they mediate knowledge of God, since faith does not come from reading, hearing, or intellectual study of the Scriptures. It comes only from God Himself, and therefore must be sought only in God. Thus there is no identity of the Scriptures and preaching with the Word of God. The Word of God is the voice of the Spirit and above the Scriptures. The written Word shows the way of faith, but the light of the Spirit is needed to understand it. Goeters calls this a union of Spiritualism and mystic anthropology. It clearly reveals the influence of Denck (132), although in a superficial way, and it is important to notice that there was no sign of these spiritualistic formulations until after he met Denck. Hätzer's spiritualism is determined by his mysticism which he got from *Theologia Deutsch*.

His anti-trinitarian views are closely connected with his mysticism and are evident from his edition and publication of the *Theologia*, and also from some of his hymns (135, 138). The denial of the trinitarian formula is also apparently the theme of an unprinted work on the person of Christ (141-146). There seems no real doubt that he denied the deity of Christ and considered him only as the example of the God-man relationship.

Two observations of the author on the events in Zürich during 1524 are worthy of mention. (1) In his discussions of the origins of the Anabaptist movement there he emphasizes particularly the disagreement over the payment of tithes (31-35) and he sees in this the beginning of the division. It was here that the connexion of Church and State most affected the laity and the radicals were determined to overthrow this ancient alliance by refusing to pay. This point, says Goeters, is one of the sources of the apolitical outlook of Anabaptism. (2) The radicals were led to question the whole traditional doctrine of baptism by the things Zwingli had said and by the changes in the liturgy of baptism made by Leo Jud (47-49). They discovered, so Hätzer says, in canonical law that "salvation is promised by the outward baptism with water." They quickly drew the conclusion that paedobaptism was commanded in canon law, therefore an invention of the Papacy, and thus a "devilish abomination." Comparison with the New Testament showed no command to baptize children, and so the die was cast. Wilhelm Roubli began to preach against baptism of infants in Witikon near Zürich in the spring of 1524.

IV. The works of Hans Denck, South German Anabaptist leader, occupy a singularly unique place within the total picture of religious writing in the Reformation Era, for they are free from the vulgar personal attacks, name-calling, and lack of Christian charity that are so characteristic of the writings of the Reformers, and to a much lesser degree, of other Anabaptist writers. Denck acted upon his conviction that love is the great commandment, regardless of what his opponents said or did. This is reflected in all his writings with-



out exception. He was a man of conviction and independent thought, but at the same time always conciliatory and admitting his own proneness to error, an attitude that was certainly out of keeping with the spirit of the time in which he lived. It is a pity to have to condense his main works, for they are in themselves concise, clear, and free from tedious argumentation.

Because of the limited scope of this paper it is not possible to deal with each of the seven works separately. His thought will be presented under several convenient, if to some extent arbitrary, headings. Moreover the work *Whether God be the Cause of Evil* will not be included here, firstly because it is available to English readers,<sup>8</sup> and secondly because it bears a strong resemblance to *The Order of God*. The six works reviewed are: (1) *Confession before the Council of Nuremberg*, 1525 [Confession]<sup>9</sup>; (2) *Concerning the Law of God*, 1526 [Law]; (3) *Whosoever sincerely loves the Truth*, 1526 [Truth]; (4) *Concerning the True Love*, 1527 [Love]; (5) *The Order of God*, 1527 [Order], and (6) *Retraction*, 1527 [Retraction].

Denck's works were written chiefly in opposition to the Lutheran doctrines of justification by faith *alone*, and predestination. Denck's Law of God, for instance, followed closely upon *De libero arbitrio* by Erasmus and Luther's answer *De servo arbitrio*. He emphasizes repeatedly that, for example, both Paul and James are right, but that choosing one in preference to the other is to build on a half-truth which is worse than a lie.<sup>10</sup>

Fellman's text is a critical edition in the early high German, based on first prints.

A. *Faith*. Where does faith come from? is the first question Denck asks. It is not inherited nor is it from the Scriptures, for "by nature I cannot believe the Scriptures. But that which is within me, not of me, I say, but that which drives me without my will and co-operation, thus urges me to read the Scriptures for the witness they bear."<sup>11</sup> That driving force is Christ, to whom the Scriptures bear witness that he is the Son of God.<sup>12</sup> Therefore the Word of God in the depths of the soul precedes the Scriptures and inspires faith as the grain of mustard seed, and when this faith arises, the darkness of the soul is overcome.<sup>13</sup> "Faith is obedience to the Word of God, be it to death or to life, with the firm conviction that it points to that which is best."<sup>14</sup> It is trust in God's promise through Christ. Where there is no obedience, there is no real trust.<sup>15</sup>

B. *The Scriptures*. The Scriptures are greater than all earthly treasures, but not as great as the living, powerful and eternal Word of God.<sup>16</sup> They are a lantern that shines into the darkness of man's unbelief, but they are the products of human hands, mouth, ears, and eyes,<sup>17</sup> and thus cannot be the source of faith.<sup>18</sup> They are a witness to drive man to the extremity in which he chooses either

God or condemnation, but only a witness to the truth, not the truth itself.<sup>19</sup> Man cannot receive the witness of Scripture unless he has the guidance of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> and it is only after man knows God that the Scriptures are a guide,<sup>21</sup> chastisement, instruction, and comfort.<sup>22</sup> Only the Spirit can correctly interpret the Scriptures.<sup>23</sup> They help believers to the good and blessedness, but the unbeliever cannot understand them because he has not the Spirit, and if he reads them he will read to his own damnation.<sup>24</sup> Thus a man, chosen of God, may be saved without preaching or Scripture. Not that one ought to neglect preaching and Scripture, but that otherwise all the illiterate, and whole nations, that have not heard for lack of a preacher, would be lost.<sup>25</sup>

C. *The Freedom of the Will.* This forms the basis to Denck's whole approach. God is good and so are all created things because He made them. Man's evil is of his own making and God cannot be charged with it. But God is merciful and His light, the Word of God or the Spirit, shines in the hearts of all men that are born. Men are free to choose or to reject that Word, for God forces no one.<sup>26</sup> "Man is free," says Denck, "in the degree in which he resembles or approaches the source of his being, [God]. The deeper he is in condemnation, the more he is in bondage. . . . No matter how free he is, the good can only be done through suffering. . . . No matter how deep his bondage, he is free to allow the working of the Word of God in him."<sup>27</sup> Man's will is separated from God's by sin.<sup>28</sup> Salvation, for Denck, consists in bringing these wills together again. When the almighty Word of God enters the soul a battle ensues before the human will is overcome, which is despair because of a fear of perishing utterly.<sup>29</sup> The Word tells man that he is to blame for his sin, and as soon as man becomes aware of the Word he is free either to go on in evil or to sacrifice himself in suffering. If he listens to the Word he goes through the sufferings of hell to yield his will to God and become nothing himself.<sup>30</sup> He who resists this suffering sinks into death.<sup>31</sup>

D. *The Law of God.* The outward law that was rejected by the Apostles as a yoke of bondage was given to Israel to remind him of the simplicity of God's law, namely, to love the Lord God only.<sup>32</sup> The law was given not merely that by it we should recognize our sin, but to be fulfilled.<sup>33</sup> If the single-minded love of God is present in man, there is no difficulty in keeping the commandments.<sup>34</sup> Whosoever says that he cannot keep the law denies that Christ has come in the flesh and infers that reconciliation with God is impossible.<sup>35</sup> Natural man cannot fulfil the law of God, but to those who have faith all things are possible, not to men as men, but to men as those who are one with God.<sup>36</sup> A man who has received the new covenant of God, in whose heart the Holy Spirit has written the law, is just. Whosoever fulfils the law of love, thereby also fulfils all outward ceremonies.<sup>37</sup> But the merit for fulfilling the law

belongs to Christ, who alone has completely fulfilled it. We fulfil it in Him, for we are made one with Him by the power of God.<sup>38</sup>

E. *The Sacraments.* Since the law of love is the only one expressly bound on Christians the ceremonies are secondary. They are to be observed only "as a witness and as a remembrance, during which the children [of God] are to witness to and remind one another whereof and to what they have been called, namely, from the world to God, that they may serve God throughout their lives in holiness and righteousness."<sup>39</sup>

Baptism is the sign of the covenant of a good conscience with God,<sup>40</sup> and the initiatory rite (literally matriculation<sup>41</sup>) into the fellowship of believers.<sup>42</sup> Where this covenant is consummated the Spirit comes and ignites the fire of love which purges out all evil. As long as outward baptism is thus practised it is good; otherwise not. It is not necessary for salvation, but the baptism of the Spirit is.<sup>43</sup>

Concerning the Lord's Supper Denck says that as bread is the sustenance of the body when it is eaten, so Christ's body will quicken the soul through the power of God. As the wine refreshes the heart of man and makes it joyful, so the blood of Christ, shed in the love of God for man, will refresh the soul and make it joyful in love, so that it will become one with Christ, even as food and drink becomes, in a sense, one with the human body.<sup>44</sup>

These ceremonies in themselves are not wrong, but where they hinder that higher loyalty to God through the Spirit, they become a burden.<sup>45</sup> He who hopes by these to gain salvation is deceived. It would be better to do without them than to misuse them.<sup>46</sup>

F. *The True Love.* Whosoever desires true love must seek it in Jesus in whom it was perfect. In the measure in which we fasten upon this perfection our blessedness increases. Only what is done by love is good and true. Where Jesus has superseded Moses and David in love, they are to be considered wrong.<sup>47</sup> Since love is the fulfilment of the law, dropping the ceremonies and adding a greater demand to the written Word is not adding or subtracting from the law, but is rather its true interpretation and fulfilment.<sup>48</sup> Love is the touch-stone for all Christian behaviour. This is true, therefore, also in matters of faith where there must be no compulsion. If anyone tries to compel me, says Denck, I must diverge from him. This separation is not because I consider myself superior to others, but that I may search for the costly pearl without hindrance. Nor do I consciously desire any fellowship with error or unrighteousness, even though I too am a sinner and prone to err.<sup>49</sup>

V. The Anabaptists never formulated a system of theology for they were not interested in it. Pure life rather than pure doctrine was their concern. The works of Pilgram Marbeck like those of Hans Denck, his teacher, came into being only in controversy. Marbeck's theology is not systematic but a treatment of points of

disagreement with the Spiritualists on the one hand, and the Lutherans on the other. With these general observations Dr. Kiewiet introduces his thorough if brief work on Marbeck's life and thought and on the Anabaptist movement of South Germany. His reconstruction from the sources presents the picture of a strong, extremely diverse movement, which towards the end of Marbeck's life came to at least a measure of the unity that he so much desired.

Marbeck was born in the Tyrol about 1495. He attended Latin school at Rattenberg and by 1523 was a member of the Council. About 1528 he became an Anabaptist via Lutheranism, lost his positions and left his home, going to Strasbourg. Sometime between 1528 and 1530 he was baptized for in 1530 he became a leader of the Anabaptists in Strasbourg, having found secular employment as an engineer in that city. The South German Anabaptist movement had come into existence through Hans Denck, whose dissent from Luther is described above. His legacy of "Imitatio Christi" and the eschatology of his co-worker Hans Hut were the two strands of thought which characterized early South German Anabaptism. In the early 1530s Strasbourg Anabaptists divided on these lines, the first developing into pure spiritualism, and the other into an even more radical eschatology that eventuated in Münster. Marbeck became leader of those who were left. But because he aroused the ire of Bucer by his bold preaching, he had to leave Strasbourg in January, 1532, and went, presumably, to work in what is now northern Italy. About this time fierce persecution had removed most of the Anabaptist leaders. This, together with the killing and scattering of great numbers of the members, the Münster episode of 1535, and utter discouragement, all but destroyed the once large and virile movement. It was into this situation that Marbeck returned in 1539. Only a few scattered groups had remained and the influence of Schwenckfeldtian Spiritualism was strong. Marbeck saw his main task to be a uniting of all Anabaptist groups. His efforts with the Hutterian Brethren in Moravia failed because of their insistence on communism. However, in 1554 there was a general meeting of Anabaptists at Strasbourg at which time, Kiewiet says, a union almost certainly came about, for after this time the fellowship presents a picture of unity with Strasbourg as the centre.<sup>50</sup> The many factions disappear and we are left with three large groups: the Mennonites in the North, the Hutterians in Moravia, and the Swiss Brethren, which eventually included all the South German groups, in Upper Germany and Switzerland. Marbeck died in 1556.

His literary activity began in 1542 with an edited version of a work on baptism by the Münster Reformer Bernhard Rothmann. Schwenckfeldt promptly attacked it because of its emphasis on the external rite. Marbeck answered with a lengthy discussion of the Sacraments under the title *Defence (Verantwortung)*. In the mean-

time an attack had come from the Lutheran side. Marbeck parried with the *Elucidation of the Covenant* (*Testamentserläuterung*), in which he set forth the Anabaptist view of the Covenant, challenging the Lutheran view that the Old and New Covenants are essentially the same.

Marbeck's axiom is "The Order of God,"<sup>51</sup> created by God, by which God deals with man, and through which He comes to man. Within this order God limits His power so that it is possible for men to come into living relationship with Him. The greatest limitation of God is that revealed in Jesus Christ. Marbeck has no specific doctrines of man and God as such, but a concept of a God-man relationship, outside of which man as such does not exist. This one all-inclusive "religious order" becomes concrete in the covenant idea (84-85).

The first condition of man was a perfect covenant relationship with God. God made all things good; sin came in by man's choice, that is, conscious disobedience (88-89). Marbeck accepts the notion of original sin, but only alongside of an original grace, and the crucial moment of this twofold heritage is not physical birth, but the point at which each man becomes accountable (92).

This first covenant, which, though man proved unfaithful stands because of God's faithfulness, is basic to all the other covenants as those with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. These Old Testament covenants tell the story of God's dealings with man with increasing clarity (93), but are all included under the Old Covenant.

Between the Old and New Covenants there is an absolute difference. Old Testament religion was external; that of the New internal. In the former both temporal and spiritual promises were given, but only the temporal promises were fulfilled. The difference is as the difference between figure and reality, promise and fulfilment, death and life; it is a difference of essence, not of degree (94-102).

The New Covenant is a new beginning and the suffering and death of Jesus is the point of division. Salvation is wrought at that point in history, both for the New Covenant as also for the Old. The coming of the Spirit marks the birth of the visible *Gemeinde*, and the working of the Spirit in the New Covenant is of a different nature than that in the Old (107).

The Holy Spirit gathers the *Gemeinde* by the space-time means of Scripture and preaching, and their effectiveness depends on the faith of the hearer. To the call of the Spirit must be added the response of the subject called (111). In baptism the call of the Spirit and the human confession come together in the solemnizing of the Covenant. Baptism is, therefore, a reciprocal act; man confesses sin and faith; Christ receives him into the Covenant through the *Gemeinde*. Therefore baptism is more than a mere sign (113). It is a witness (*Zeugnis*) that testifies that the believer has been received into the Covenant. It is a witness precisely because it is

joined with the Word of God, and the two must not be separated (136). Since baptism is part of the New Covenant it must be of the intrinsic nature of that Covenant which is reality as opposed to sign. If it be objected that such a space-time thing cannot be spiritual reality, Marbeck answers that within His order God uses these very means to express Himself (137-138).

The *Gemeinde* is a company of believers, all of whom are priests because they all have the Spirit (115). It is the faith relationship between Christ and the believer, and the love relationship between the members. The highest expression of this is the Lord's Supper in which only believers take part. It is a remembrance of what Christ has done for them and what they must do. It is the witness of the members to each other of their oneness in Christ and therefore it is through the Lord's Supper that the *Gemeinde* is kept pure by excluding those who do not live as becomes members of Christ (118-119).

<sup>1</sup> This term will be used throughout this review, for the Anabaptists rarely used the word Church (*Kirche*), and yet it has a wider meaning than congregation.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>2a</sup> Numbers in brackets are page numbers.

<sup>3</sup> "Enthusiast" is the translation of the German word "*Schwärmer*" which Karl Hall uses to designate Müntzer and Carlstadt.

<sup>4</sup> *Reformationsgeschichte* (Frauenfeld, 1838), Vol. I, p. 237.

<sup>5</sup> S. Bender, *Conrad Grebel* (1950), pp. 112-116.

<sup>6</sup> Radical is used here to distinguish the Purists from Zwingli, and without polemical connotation.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>9</sup> Words in brackets are the abbreviations used in footnotes.

<sup>10</sup> *Truth*, p. 68; *Law*, p. 58.

<sup>11</sup> *Confession*, p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> *Order*, p. 97.

<sup>15</sup> *Retraction*, p. 107.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>17</sup> *Confession*, p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>19</sup> *Law*, p. 60-61.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>23</sup> *Confession*, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> *Retraction*, p. 106.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Order*, p. 90.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>29</sup> *Confession*, p. 24.

<sup>30</sup> *Order*, p. 95.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>32</sup> *Law*, p. 54.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 58.

<sup>39</sup> *Love*, p. 81.

<sup>40</sup> *Confession*, p. 24.

<sup>41</sup> *Einschreibung*.

<sup>42</sup> *Retraction*, p. 109.

<sup>43</sup> *Confession*, p. 24.

<sup>44</sup> *Retraction*, p. 110.

<sup>45</sup> *Law*, p. 54.

<sup>46</sup> *Retraction*, p. 109.

<sup>47</sup> *Love*, p. 78.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>49</sup> *Retraction*, p. 108.

<sup>50</sup> p. 66.

<sup>51</sup> Denck's influence is very apparent here.

## APPENDIX

The following is a list of English works related to this review:

E. A. Payne, "The Anabaptists," *New Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. II, *The Reformation*, 1520-59, pp. 119-133.

H. S. Bender, *Conrad Grebel, The Founder of the Swiss Brethren*, Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1950.

F. L. Weis, *The Life, Teachings and Works of Johannes Denck*, 1495-1527, Strasbourg, 1924.

J. J. Kiwiet, *Hans Denck*, unpub. B.D. thesis Baptist Theological Seminary, Rüschtikon-Zürich, 1954. Very good.

*Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers, Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. XXV, ed. Williams and Mergal, S.C.M. Press. This volume includes the work by Denck omitted above.

F. L. Weis, *Ludwig Hetzer*, Strasbourg. Weis to be used with caution because he writes in Unitarian interests.

*Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*, ed. G. F. Herschberger, Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1957. A series of essays on Anabaptist history and theology.

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