

CLASSICS  
OF THE  
RADICAL  
REFORMATION

# Sources of South German/Austrian Anabaptism



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Anabaptism***

## *Classics of the Radical Reformation*

Classics of the Radical Reformation is an English-language series of Anabaptist and Free Church documents translated and annotated under the direction of the Institute of Mennonite Studies, which is the research agency of the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, and published by Plough Publishing House.

1. *The Legacy of Michael Sattler*. Trans., ed. John Howard Yoder.
2. *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*. Trans., ed. William Klassen and Walter Klaassen.
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*Sources of South German/Austrian  
Anabaptism*

Translated by  
Walter Klaassen, Frank Friesen  
and Werner O. Packull

Edited with an Introduction by  
C. Arnold Snyder



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***Dedicated  
with affection to  
past and present colleagues at  
Conrad Grebel University College***

***but especially to  
John E. Toews  
for hope and direction,  
enabling  
a community at work***

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**Abbreviations**

Bossert, *Quellen I*: Gustav Bossert, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Wiedertäufer, I. Band. Herzogtum Württemberg* (Leipzig, 1930).

*Chronicle I: The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren* vol. I (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough Publishing House, 1987).

*Chronicle II: The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren* vol. II (Ste. Agathe, MB: Friesen Printers, 1998).

Franck, *Chronica*: Sebastian Franck, *Chronica, Zeitbuch unnd Geschichtbibell...* (Ulm, 1536; Photo reprint edition, Darmstadt, 1969).

Franz, *Quellen IV*: Günther Franz, *Urkundliche Quellen zur hessischen Reformationsgeschichte, IV. Band, Wiedertäuferakten* (Marburg, 1951).

*ME: Mennonite Encyclopedia*. 5 vols. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1955-59, 1990).

*ML: Mennonitisches Lexikon*. Vols. 1-3 (Frankfurt a.M. and Weierhof, 1913-42, 1958); Vol. 4 (Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider, 1967).

*MQR: Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

Müller, *Glaubenszeugnisse*: Lydia Müller, *Glaubenszeugnisse oberdeutscher Taufgesinnter, I* (Leipzig, 1938).

Schorndorff, *Quellen II*: Karl Schorndorff, ed., *Quellen zur Geschichte der Wiedertäufer, II. Band. Markgraftum Brandenburg (Bayern, I. Abteilung)* (Leipzig, 1934).

Schorndorff, *Quellen V*: Karl Schorndorff, ed., *Quellen zur Geschichte der Wiedertäufer, V. Band. (Bayern, II. Abteilung)* (Gütersloh, 1951).

## ***General Editor's Preface***

In the last several decades the Institute of Mennonite Studies has been involved in the publication of primary source materials of Radical Reformation and free church documents through its *Classics of the Radical Reformation* (CRR) series. This tenth volume in the series continues an important tradition of providing translations in the English language, which are intended to be faithful to the original documents, yet readable and accessible to a wide audience.

*Sources of South German/Austrian Anabaptism* is a significant contribution to Reformation studies. In recent years scholars have emphasized the diverse nature of the origins and development of sixteenth-century radical reform in general and Anabaptism in particular. The present volume underscores this growing awareness. It unveils an important current of Anabaptist thought and piety, and sheds light on a stream of spiritualist writings that have been underrepresented in translation collections.

Gratitude for making these writings available to the English-speaking world goes to the editor, C. Arnold Snyder, and to the primary translators Walter Klaassen, Frank Friesen, and Werner Packull. Appreciation is also due to the sponsoring institution of the Institute of Mennonite Studies, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary of Elkhart, Indiana. Finally, special thanks must go to Pandora Press Canada for its commitment to publishing this volume, which we trust will make a contribution to both the church and the academy.

Karl Koop, Editor, CRR  
Institute of Mennonite Studies

## ***Editor's Acknowledgments***

This collection of translated sources had its own peculiar genesis and development, as do all projects of this kind. A core of documents published here dates back to a publication done twenty years ago by the Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies, Conrad Grebel University College. The collection, entitled *Sixteenth Century Anabaptism: Defences, Confessions, Refutations* (1981), was translated by Frank Friesen and edited by Walter Klaassen. The book contained some rare and valuable material, but it was published as a bound typescript volume, intended for very limited circulation. The book was soon out of print. One of the first projects undertaken by Pandora Press in the mid-1990s was to make preparations to republish the Friesen/Klaassen collection. Thanks to Sam Steiner and the IAMS, permission was granted to proceed with the project, and IAMS has continued its support throughout.

The tasks of scanning and proofreading followed, with Linda Snyder doing the work of converting the material into a workable digital format. At this early point in the project, the intention was to reprint the original book in the *Anabaptist Texts in Translation* series, published by Pandora Press. As work on *Sixteenth Century Anabaptism* continued, however, the germ of a larger project began to take shape. Most of the documents in the Friesen/Klaassen collection related to the early South German/Austrian Anabaptist stream. Translated documentation from the earliest years of this movement was generally unavailable. Could material be added to make the collection more broadly representative of South German/Austrian Anabaptism?

The edition of Anabaptist documents edited by Lydia Müller, *Glaubenszeugnisse oberdeutscher Taufgesinnter* (Leipzig: Nachfolger, 1938; Johnson Reprint, 1971) offered important South German/

Austrian materials hitherto unavailable in English, and consultation with Walter Klaassen and Werner Packull resulted in a proposal for an enlarged and more comprehensive collection of documents. Walter Klaassen agreed to do a series of new translations for the larger collection; Werner Packull worked with his student, Mary Buck, in preparing a translation of Jörg Haugk von Jüchsen's pamphlet; and John Roth, editor of the Mennonite Quarterly Review, extended permission for the inclusion of two pamphlets translated by J. C. Wenger and published some years ago in that journal. Thanks is due to them all for their hard work and cooperation—but especially to Walter Klaassen, who did the lion's share of the new translation work and from his retirement has graciously donated his linguistic gifts and historical expertise to this and other translation projects.

The expanded collection, under its present title, was proposed to the *Classics of the Radical Reformation* editorial board, and accepted for publication in that series. Thanks to the Institute of Mennonite Studies, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, for its continued support of the task of making available radical reformation texts in English. Thanks go also to Karl Koop, editor of the series, for his logistical and editorial help throughout. This volume is being co-published with Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania. Their cooperation and support has enabled the continuation of the historic connection with the original publishers of the CRR series.

The provenance of individual translations in this volume is identified at the foot of each new chapter page. The designation "Friesen/Klaassen" indicates material taken from *Sixteenth Century Anabaptism: Defences, Confessions, Refutations*. The original translations were reviewed, revised and corrected, as needed, by the editor for publication in this volume; the essential work, however, remains that of Friesen and Klaassen. Four items contained in the original Friesen/Klaassen volume are not included in the present collection for editorial reasons, namely a brief letter by Melchior Rinck (#8 in Friesen/Klaassen), a letter by Hans Schmidt and Wolf Kürschner (#9 in Friesen/Klaassen), an apology by Georg Schnabel (#11), and a confession by Peter Tasch (#14). The latter two writings were excluded because they represent writings from the Melchiorite tradition, rather than the South German/Austrian tradition. It is hoped that they can be included in a collection of early Melchiorite writings, still in the planning stages at the present time. The two tracts by Langenmantel, translated by J. C. Wenger and previously published in the *MQR*, were substantially re-

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worked and revised by the editor; they are, in effect, new translations. Further additions to the collection were five relevant items previously published elsewhere. Two items in our collection were translated originally by Linda Huebert Hecht (#9, 23), two by Pamela Klassen (#10, 33), and one by Elfriede Lichdi (#16). They were first published in C. Arnold Snyder and Linda H. Hecht, *Profiles of Anabaptist Women* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996). They are reprinted here with the kind permission of WLU Press.

A large thank you goes to Galen Peters, graduate student in history, Wilfrid Laurier University. Galen spent the summer of 2001 working at Pandora Press, researching and writing introductory material for this volume, laying out the manuscript, and preparing the scriptural and general indexes. Galen's work was subsidized by a generous grant from the Jubilee Charitable Trust, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Our final thanks is reserved for Dr. Robert L. Kruse, trustee of the Jubilee Charitable Trust, for his enthusiastic support of Anabaptist publishing. The "private" support of a public project such as this is a model that, one hopes, will be emulated by others.

It is fitting that a volume dedicated to writings by and about the South German/Austrian Anabaptists—the most "communal" of the Anabaptist groups—should itself have been the result of such a clearly communal effort.

C. Arnold Snyder, editor  
August 26, 2001

## ***Introduction***

Dating from studies in the 1960s and 1970s, the sixteenth-century beginnings of three primary baptizing groups—Swiss Anabaptists, South German/Austrian Anabaptists, and North German/Dutch Anabaptists—have been identified and described in some detail.<sup>1</sup> Of the three original Anabaptist groups, the Swiss and the South German/Austrian Anabaptists stand closest in time, geography, and mutual influence, even though there are distinct emphases in the original teachings of each. The baptism of adults began in January 1525 in Zürich; its initial appearance in South German territories is not as well documented, but there is evidence of baptizing activity about one year later. North German/Dutch Anabaptism began only in 1530, with the baptism and missionary activity of Melchior Hoffmann. North German/Dutch Anabaptism developed in northern Europe with little visible influence from the Swiss and South German/Austrian movements. In the second half of the sixteenth century—well after these groups had matured and developed beyond their original peculiarities and particular emphases—more contacts developed between the baptizers in the south and the north, with Mennonite influence from the north predominating in these later exchanges.

Historians have noted significant diversity among the earliest Anabaptists in geography, levels of social involvement, faith emphases, and church practices. At the same time, there is also the recognition that along with diverse points of origin and emphasis, the various baptizers also exhibited fundamental commonalities that allow us to speak of a sixteenth century “baptizing movement” as such.<sup>2</sup> To contemporaries of the Anabaptists, their most obvious common teaching

was their uniform opposition to infant baptism and their insistence that baptism was to be reserved for adults, following a sincere confession of faith. Among other common emphases visible to the historian are the celebration of a memorial Lord's Supper (as opposed to maintaining a "real presence of Christ" in the elements), belief in the freedom of the human will as a result of God's grace, the conviction that saving faith is the result of the Holy Spirit's activity in the heart, and must include the "fruits" of discipleship and obedience (as a result of God's grace, not by human effort alone), a practice of fraternal admonition (discipline) among members, and a concern for economic sharing and solidarity with the believing community as visible evidence of one's faith in Christ. As the movement matured over the course of the sixteenth century, more points of consensus emerged among the baptizers, for example, that no oaths were to be sworn (only "yes" and "no" were to be used) and that believers were to live without recourse to weapons (*Wehrlosigkeit*).

The documents collected in this volume are writings that emerged from, or that relate directly to the South German/Austrian Anabaptist grouping, that is, the second geographical and ideological wave of the sixteenth century baptizing movement.<sup>3</sup> The geographical boundaries of the South German/Austrian baptizing movement are imprecise, and shift over time. In spite of important points of genesis in Thuringia and the Tyrol, a significant early presence in South German imperial cities like Nuremberg and Augsburg, and refugee membership extending from Silesia to the Rhineland, the geographical core of the movement came to be located in Moravia. Moravia was the place of refuge for many thousands of Anabaptists in the sixteenth century, and was the particular location for the growth and development of the South German/Austrian branch of the baptizing movement.

There is no one document in this collection that, taken by itself, summarizes the birth and development of this branch of Anabaptism. Taken collectively, however, the documents translated here provide important avenues for understanding this unique group of "baptizing brothers and sisters in the Lord" that was active in the south-central regions of Europe.

Looked at in terms of genre, the collection of sources published here contains an eclectic variety of material, well representing the kind of documentation available to historians of this branch of Anabaptism.

—*Edifying treatises and letters.* Some of the writings collected here were composed primarily for the edification of others (#1, 2, 3, 7, 13,

20, 22). Of these, two (#1, 3) date from the pre-Anabaptist period, and illustrate the continuity that existed between the baptizing movement and some of the currents of reform that preceded it.

–*Prison Documents.* By far the most numerous in our collection are Anabaptist writings originating in various prisons, reflecting the reality of religious persecution. The “prison documents” include judicial records of prisoners’ replies to questioning (#4, 11, 16, 17) and epistles and treatises written in prison, intended for the edification of the communities (#5, 6, 12, 24-32). The collection also contains a complete confession of faith written in prison by a group of prisoners (#21).

–*Hymns.* Hymns were an important means of communication for the Anabaptists. They generally borrowed well-known melodies (secular as well as sacred) and composed verses to be sung to these tunes. The hymns functioned as memorials and reminders of historical events—above all, of the martyrdoms of brothers and sisters in the faith. The stories (and the teaching hymns) all served didactic purposes, all the more practical as a medium because of the aid to memorization provided by rhyming couplets set to music. Two hymns are included in our collection (#10, 33). This is a disproportionately small number, relative to the number of hymns actually composed and preserved in the sixteenth century, but will provide readers with a sense of this important genre of Anabaptist documentation.

–*Refutations and defences written by non-Anabaptists.* The collection also contains writings composed by opponents of the South German/Austrian Anabaptists, intended to refute Anabaptist teachings and practices (#8, 11-B, 14, 18). Also included are two writings composed by non-Anabaptists that portray them in a less polemical light, and plead for toleration (#15, 19).

–Finally, rounding out the collection are sources that defy easy classification, but that shed valuable light on the movement. Included here is a translation of the recantation procedures applied in Hapsburg territories (#9), a letter of inquiry from Hutterite leaders to an Anabaptist outside Moravia (#20), a confession by an Anabaptist woman directed to her fellow church members (#23), and the reminiscences of a Hutterite missionary (#34).

Emphases common to all Anabaptists will be plain to see in these writings, but also visible will be the particular emphases that marked the South German/Austrian movement both in its historical origins and in its subsequent development. Of particular interest is the role played by late medieval mysticism in shaping the spiritualism visible



in early South German/Austrian Anabaptism—a connection to an earlier spirituality that is less clearly evident in other branches of Anabaptism. A second particular mark of early South German/Austrian Anabaptism is its emphasis on the nearness of the End Times. Anabaptism in south-central Europe began in the midst of a heightened apocalyptic consciousness, in the shadow of the great Peasants' War. Its baptizing practices were shaped initially by apocalypticism. A third feature that will be evident in our collection of documents is the subsequent movement away from apocalyptically-inspired itinerant ministries, toward settled communities. As the movement matured, and apocalyptic predictions proved false, it became more and more important to establish faithful communities that could survive in the longer run. The growing importance, over time, of a congregational mentality and polity, and the apparent influence of the Swiss Brethren in this regard, will also be visible in the documents collected here. Finally, the importance of communal thinking (concrete expressions of mutual aid) will be visible in the documents gathered here. A few documents in our collection will point to the emergence and continuation of Hutterian communal Anabaptism in south-central Europe, but no attempt has been made to adequately document the early years of the Hutterites, since those documents are available elsewhere.

### ***I. Anabaptist Sources in English Translation***

English-speaking readers with an interest in the beginnings and development of Anabaptism have not had equal access to the historical sources documenting the sixteenth-century movement. However, there are some source anthologies that survey the field rather well. One of the best collections available in English remains the third volume in the *Classics of Radical Reformation* (CRR) series, Walter Klaassen's *Anabaptism in Outline* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1981). Also useful, even though more limited in focus, is C. J. Dyck's, *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1995). Two collections that include Anabaptist writings within the broader Radical Reformation rubric are George H. Williams, *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1957) and, more recently, Michael G. Baylor's *The Radical Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). The anthologized Anabaptist writings translated and collected in these books give English-speaking readers a good sense of the broad panorama of views present in the sixteenth century baptizing movement.

For readers interested in more detailed sources written by specific Anabaptist writers, or for those who wish to study the Anabaptism of a particular geographical area more intensively, the sources available in English are quickly diminished, and only selectively available. The writings of the very early Swiss Anabaptists (1525 to ca. 1530), for example, are well represented in English translation, with three volumes of writings available in the *Classics of Radical Reformation* series for this narrow slice of historical time and place.<sup>4</sup> Writings of the later Swiss Brethren (1530-1600) are extant, but are not well-known in any language, since they circulated primarily in manuscript form and must be individually sought out and read in European archives.<sup>5</sup> However, a Swiss Brethren biblical concordance from this later period is now available in translation,<sup>6</sup> and a *Classics of Radical Reformation* volume translating some central writings of the Swiss Brethren in the last quarter of the sixteenth century is in preparation and, it is hoped, will be available in a year or two from the time of publication of this present book.

The writings of the North German/Dutch Anabaptists are even more selectively available in English, and in fact present a seriously truncated view of the birth and development of the Anabaptist movement in the lowlands. Of the numerous and influential booklets published by Melchior Hoffman in his lifetime, the only writings translated into English are his "Ordinance" (in Williams' *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*) and some important selections in Klaassen's *Anabaptism in Outline*.<sup>7</sup> The general unavailability of Melchior Hoffman's writings represents a serious lacuna for serious students of Anabaptism, since understanding Hoffman's thought is central for understanding all that comes later in North German/Dutch Anabaptism, including of course, Menno Simons himself. The considerable body of writing by Bernhard Rothmann, Anabaptist theologian and apologist for the Münsterite group, is available in a German critical edition,<sup>8</sup> but is unavailable in English, with the exception of an occasional excerpt here and there.

In contrast to the unavailability of so many crucial early Melchiorite writings, the selection of writings dating after the fall of Münster (post-1535) is far richer, although also far from complete. As might be expected, writings valued by Mennonites are well represented, whereas the writings of Anabaptist dissidents have fared less well. The writings of Nicholas van Blesdijk and Adam Pastor, for example, are generally unavailable in translation. By contrast, the collected writings of Menno Simons as well as those of Dirk Philips have been available in

English for many decades now, as has the *Martyrs Mirror* and various confessions of faith.<sup>9</sup> Thanks to the *Classics of Radical Reformation* series, there is now even a good selection of writings by the eccentric spiritualist Anabaptist, David Joris, available in English.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of the relative wealth of material for this later historical period of Anabaptist/Mennonite history, it should be clear that readers who rely exclusively on sources translated into English will receive a truncated and selective view of Anabaptist origins and development in the north, with the preponderance of available writings dating from the post-Münsterite period and representing a particular Mennonite perspective.

Against this backdrop, the writings of South German/Austrian Anabaptists are relatively well represented in English, but there are some notable omissions, particularly from the earliest period of baptizing activity. The Anabaptist writings from south-central Europe that have predominated in the English literature have been those of the Hutterites.<sup>11</sup> Historically speaking, however, the Hutterites represent a later Anabaptist development in South German/Austrian Anabaptism (much like the Mennonites in the North in this regard). A Huttero-centric picture of the movement in south-central Europe consequently leaves important gaps in documentation. Renewed interest in North America in Pilgram Marpeck has helped to round out the picture. Almost all of Marpeck's writings have been translated, with some work still to be done in this regard.<sup>12</sup> The translation of Marpeck's writings and those of his circle have considerably widened the sources of South German/Austrian Anabaptism, but they likewise left untouched the sources documenting the beginnings and early evolutionary steps of the movement in this region. The primary aim of this volume of translated sources is thus to fill this gap and to make available a representative selection of the rich and interesting material documenting the earliest years of the South German/Austrian movement. Consequently, readers will find a concentration of documents dating from the 1520s and 1530s. As the collection moves forward in time, documentation becomes more selective than representative.

A review of the birth and development of South German/Austrian Anabaptism will allow us to locate the writings in this present collection within the framework of the South German/Austrian movement as a whole.

## ***II. South German/Austrian Anabaptist Sources in Translation***

For the sake of this introduction, we will identify three phases of development of South German/Austrian Anabaptism and note some of the source literature available in English that documents these phases of the movement.

### **1. Beginnings in radical reform and social upheaval (1517-1526)**

The immediate context out of which South German/Austrian Anabaptism grew was Martin Luther's call for church reform on the basis of Scripture alone and an understanding of salvation by faith. What sheds particular light on South German/Austrian Anabaptism, however, are late medieval mystical writings that were considered "reforming" literature in their own right in the first decades of the sixteenth century.

Martin Luther's calls for church reform initially galvanized a wide spectrum of support, but as Luther began to define his program in more politically conservative directions, especially following his return to Wittenberg from the Wartburg in 1522, the reforming movement began to fragment. Andreas Karlstadt's estrangement from Luther and Karlstadt's grass roots reforming efforts in the small town of Orlamünde were an early sign of a more radical reforming direction. Thomas Müntzer's dissatisfaction with Luther and his own reform in the town of Allstedt mirrored Karlstadt's experience. In contrast to the increasing clericalization of Luther's reform, and its conscious integration into the reigning political order, both Karlstadt and Müntzer expected common people to be spiritually informed participants in church life and reform; both retained a greater role for the direct action of the Holy Spirit; both expected "true faith" to result in changed lives and a visible, moral reformation; and both were more interested in changing the social-political order (according to what they understood to be biblical models) than they were integrating into the existing order. Luther increasingly insisted that salvation was a complete gift of divine grace, known to God alone, and so saving faith could never be judged by visible works; furthermore, his reformation was to have everything to do with divine salvation, and nothing directly to do with social change as such.

This rupture within the early Reformation movement is well known, and historians have often pointed (rightly) to the social/political "impatience" of the radicals, who pushed for wholesale changes with lit-

tle consideration of the practical political results. However, there were also significantly different ideological points of departure informing the “mainline” and “radical” reformations. These become visible in the way mystical literature was interpreted by either side.

The early Luther and his early supporters, Karlstadt and Müntzer, shared a common grounding in late medieval mystical theology. In fact, Luther’s earliest publications directly promoted mystical theology. In 1516 and again in 1518, Martin Luther published an anonymous writing he called the “German Theology” or *Theologia Deutsch*.<sup>13</sup> It was a Taulerian mystical text that described the process of yielding self-will so that Christ might be born within, all of which would result in a new life. This message appealed to many in the reforming camp. Karlstadt was an enthusiastic supporter of the book and its ideas, and he acknowledged his debt to it.<sup>14</sup> Müntzer was even more deeply immersed in Tauler’s writings than were either Karlstadt or Luther.<sup>15</sup> Hans Denck, the important early South German Anabaptist leader, wrote what some have called an abbreviated commentary on the *Theologia Deutsch* which was often subsequently republished with later editions of the *TD*.<sup>16</sup> The Spiritualist Sebastian Franck, who did not share the adult baptism of Denck and the Anabaptists, nevertheless had in common with the South German/Austrian Anabaptists a similar understanding of the mystical process of regeneration and an appreciation of the *Theologia Deutsch*.<sup>17</sup>

South German/Austrian Anabaptism grew out of the late medieval thought-world represented by the *Theologia Deutsch* and in many ways, continued to champion a “protestantized” late medieval mystical spirituality. Martin Luther never openly disavowed the book he had brought to light and published, but he resolutely moved away from some of its central presuppositions. For their part, orthodox Lutheran theologians in the second half of the sixteenth century came to consider the *Theologia Deutsch* a pernicious and dangerous book, and disavowed it openly.<sup>18</sup> The case of the *Theologia Deutsch* thus provides a good point of departure for understanding the theological grounding of South German/Austrian Anabaptist reforming movement and its differences with Luther’s later reform.

A central point on which Luther and the later radicals came to disagree, was in their respective understanding of “faith” and the work of Christ. Luther’s radical followers continued to insist, much in the manner of the *Theologia Deutsch*, on the necessity of a spiritual rebirth and the subsequent sanctifying work of “Christ in us.” True faith, in the

radical (and medieval mystical) understanding, could be attained only by going through a painful process of self-negation, leading up to the birth of Christ within—it was necessary to yield to the work of Christ in the heart. The understanding that this ascetic, spiritual process would give birth to “true faith” was a radical protestant interpretation of the mystical process of achieving *Gelassenheit*. Reading the writings of both Andreas Karlstadt and Thomas Müntzer is instructive in this regard.<sup>19</sup>

Martin Luther, by contrast, came to place the atoning work of “Christ for us” at the centre of his theology. In Luther’s understanding, faith was a pure gift of God that could not be “attained.” The divine gift of faith changed the sinner’s standing before God, not because Christ was working within, to transform sinners into actual saints in this world (something Luther considered an impossibility), but rather sinners were forgiven only because of the atonement that Christ had already wrought for all sinners, on the cross. Sinners are forgiven and saved (“justified”), said Luther, by the grace of God and for Christ’s sake. Period. It appears that what most impressed Luther in the mystical literature was the initial “self-emptying” phase leading up to a total dependence on God’s grace, and not the “regenerationist” steps that followed.

It might be said that these contrasting emphases on the “work of Christ” were differences in degree, not differences in kind. The radicals also continued to stress Christ’s atoning work on the cross (without which no one would be saved), and Luther continued to preach that true faith would bear good fruit in the world. Nevertheless, the differing respective emphases on the nature of faith and the work of Christ did lead to fundamentally different understandings of salvation, how the Christian life was to be lived, and how church reform should be carried out.

South German/Austrian Anabaptism built directly upon the radical protestant appropriation of mystical theology, rather than on Luther’s stress on Christ’s atonement for sin. Readers who move from the *Theologia Deutsch* and the writings of Andreas Karlstadt and Thomas Müntzer, on to the Anabaptist writings of Hans Denck and Hans Hut will see the connections immediately. Hans Denck’s Anabaptist writings reflect his continued grounding in the mystical tradition. None of Denck’s writings are included in this collection, since they are all readily available in a new and fine translation,<sup>20</sup> but they are nonetheless central background to the writings contained here. Likewise, although our collection includes an important writing by Hans Hut on the interpretation of Scripture, the intimate connection between his

thought and that of Thomas Müntzer is most clearly visible in Hut's tract *On the Mystery of Baptism*, recently translated and published elsewhere.<sup>21</sup> Readers wishing to understand the thought-world of South German/Austrian Anabaptism should be aware of the writings of Andreas Karlstadt and Thomas Müntzer, and not omit a careful reading of Denck's works and Hut's tract on baptism, as well as translated excerpts from Hut's prison testimony translated in Klaassen's *Anabaptism in Outline*.

The earliest documents in our collection demonstrate the close link that existed between "protestant mysticism" and early South German/Austrian Anabaptism. Jörg Haugk von Jüchsen's *A Christian Order of a True Christian* (#1) was written before adult baptism had begun anywhere. It therefore belongs to the pre-Anabaptist category of radical reform writings, along with Müntzer's writings and the early writings of Andreas Karlstadt. Nevertheless, Haugk's booklet also belongs in our collection of South German/Austrian Anabaptist writings, not only because Anabaptists like Denck and Hut echoed Haugk's views (with the added feature of adult baptism), but also because South German/Austrian Anabaptists emphatically made Haugk's *Christian Order* their own: they continued to reprint and copy this work into the seventeenth century. Hans Denck and, to all appearances, Pilgram Marpeck, both were responsible for later printings, and the Hutterites made numerous copies of Haugk's tract in their manuscripts. In fact, a review of themes brought to light by Haugk's writing provides a good introduction to the particular emphases visible in the early South German/Austrian baptizing movement that adopted Haugk's writing as its own.

### ***Suffering, Spiritual Regeneration, and Faith***

In a manner reminiscent of Thomas Müntzer, Haugk's *Christian Order* emphasizes the process of spiritual regeneration of believers. It is this painful process that leads to "true faith," says Haugk, as opposed to an "invented faith" that wishes to achieve salvation on the cheap. Haugk uses mystical language, concepts, and imagery, but transforms it all by interpreting the mystical legacy through the Reformation lens of salvation by faith. His language and imagery closely echoes Thomas Müntzer's criticism of Luther's "justification by faith alone." This mystical/radical Protestant emphasis on attaining true faith through a painful process of having Christ come to birth in one's heart—in opposition to a "false faith" attained by mere hearing the Word of God

(Luther)—would remain a central feature of South German/Austrian Anabaptism, and re-appears in various configurations in the Anabaptist writings collected here.

It was a foundational conviction in South German/Austrian Anabaptist thinking that suffering is integral to spiritual regeneration and faith. Hans Hut taught that suffering was integrated into the nature of creation and that it provided the key to understanding Scripture and attaining salvation (see #2). He taught that there was a “gospel **of** all creatures” (a mis-reading of Mark 16:15) embedded in the natural order which taught the need for all creatures (including humankind) to suffer the will of those who stood above them in the hierarchical chain of being. In the case of humankind, it was God’s will that needed to be accepted into one’s heart and life. This would lead to suffering, first because the pleasures of sin, self-love, self-will, and love of the world all resist the call to “yield” before God’s will and work. Doing God’s will, rather than one’s own, was bound to cause pain to the “old Adam.” It could not be otherwise. But in the second place, “yielding” to God was bound to be painful because when God adopted the yielded sinner as God’s child, Christ was born within and the believer would begin to reflect Christ’s nature. Achieving “Christlikeness” in this way meant nothing less than accepting even more suffering, because the believer would be called (as Christ was) to embrace the suffering of the cross.

The atmosphere of persecution into which South German/Austrian Anabaptism was born seemed amply to confirm the link between the birth of Christ within, and the continuation of suffering in this world. The central biblical texts read: “They persecuted me, they will persecute you also.” The world would continue to persecute Christ, wherever Christ appeared in “his members,” that is, in his adopted brothers and sisters who had followed him, and yielded to the working of God’s will and Spirit in their lives. This was the nature of “the world,” the way God had created and ordered things, and it guaranteed continued suffering for “the body of Christ,” the true church.

The late medieval, ascetic tone of this understanding of the saving process is undeniable, but so also is the resolute application of the “yielding” process to the burning issues of the Reformation. The point of “yielding” was not to attain merit or salvation through good works of penance (even though true penitence was central to the process), but rather the point was to allow true, saving faith to be born within. True, saving faith is a faith tested in the crucible of suffering. It under-



goes the pain of self-denial; it does not shrink from the cross; it honours God above all and is obedient to God above all; its commitment is absolute and complete, and is proven in all that is said and done, even unto death. Hypocritical or feigned faith, by contrast, might repeat all the right words and formulae (such as “salvation by faith alone” and reciting the Lord’s Prayer), but a false faith will avoid testing and suffering at all cost.

Readers will note the ongoing emphases on regeneration, “true faith,” and suffering in virtually all the selections in this collection, but especially in the early Anabaptist writings of Hans Hut (#2), Ambrosius Spitelmaier (#4), Leonard Schiemer (#5), Hans Schlaffer (#6), Eitelhans Langenmantel (#7), Hans Nadler (#11), Wolfgang Brandhuber (#12), and Jörg Zauring (#13).

### ***The New Life***

“A good tree will bear good fruit” (Matt. 7:17ff). This oft-repeated saying of Jesus was also foundational for the South German/Austrian Anabaptists, and grew directly out of their understanding of spiritual regeneration and true faith. Expressed positively, the call for “good fruit” was a challenge to believers to allow Christ’s nature, born within, to express itself in Christ-like action in the world. A long list of virtues and virtuous actions often was the result of this positive expression of what “good fruit” would look like. Expressed negatively, Jesus’ saying was often applied to the mainline reformation as a reproach: “They claim to have faith, but one look at their works reveals the truth of the matter.” Such reproaches were often followed by an impressive catalogue of the sins and failings of so-called “reformed” preachers and their flocks. In a typical example, at his judicial hearing in 1563, Paul Glock answered the priest who had asked him why the Anabaptists did not attend the state churches. Glock’s answer (not calculated to win him friends) was: “Your teaching, preaching, church and assembly is a mob and an assembly of fornicators, adulterers, liars, blasphemers, drunkards, proud, usurers, and all unclean spirits in whom the devil has and does his work... Your teaching and preaching is not done according to the counsel of Christ nor in his Spirit. Therefore, also, it does not bear any good fruit.” (#25: “First Defense, 1563”).

Whether expressed positively or negatively, the conviction was universal in South German/Austrian Anabaptism that true faith would bear the Christ-like fruits of faith, and that these “fruits” would—of necessity—be plainly visible in life. Protestant opponents derided this

view as “salvation by works”; the Anabaptists defended their understanding by insisting that any “good fruit” was purely the result of God’s grace alone, working in the human heart (not the result of human striving), and merited nothing. At the heart of the disagreement stood two very different understandings of the nature of faith, visible already in the disagreements between Luther on the one hand, and Karlstadt and Müntzer on the other. The “Sermon on Sin,” most likely written by Hans Langenmantel (#7), provides a good example of how the link between regeneration and a new life was explained and elaborated by these Anabaptists.

### ***Scripture and the Holy Spirit***

Haugk’s *Christian Order* illustrates a further theme that played an important role in early South German/Austrian Anabaptism, namely the emphasis on the activity of the Holy Spirit as the primary mode, not only of regeneration, but also of revelation. “The Scriptures give only an outer witness of a true life, but they cannot create a new being in me,” writes Haugk. This sentiment, given expression by Hans Denck, Hans Hut and other Anabaptists, gave the early South German/Austrian movement a strongly spiritualist cast that eventually was resolved only by the later departure of the more avowed spiritualist Anabaptists on the one hand, and the establishment of the more biblicistic and rule-oriented Hutterites on the other.

The spiritualistic approach to Scripture, like the regenerationist understanding of saving faith, was an early and crucial point of separation between the radical reformers and the mainline reformers. The radical evangelical reformers insisted that reformation would not come simply by hearing the biblical Word preached by learned pastors interpreting passages of Scripture (that is, by “Scripture alone”) but rather, a true reformation of the church would take place only through the birth of the living Word in the hearts of “yielded” people—by the creation of new beings who would become living members (“limbs”) of Christ’s body. Thomas Müntzer had already identified Luther as one of the “learned doctors” who, in spite of his knowledge of “the letter,” did not know what he was talking about because he lacked the living, regenerating Spirit. Hans Hergot’s bitter attack on the “Scripture wizards” (#3) makes plain the profound sense of betrayal felt by those who sided with the commoners in 1525, in the face of Luther’s call for their extermination by the princes.

The true interpretation of Scripture, the radical wing insisted, had to be the result of a successful process of yielding to God's Spirit by suffering God's work within, and then being brought to life by that same Spirit of God. The true exegete would be one who gave evidence in life of the activity of God's Spirit within. To many observers, Luther's actions generally—and especially his two printed pamphlets of 1525 which called for the peasantry to be killed like mad dogs—were evidence enough of the lack of the Holy Spirit. Certainly that was Hergot's conclusion.

The relentless critique of "the learned scribes" (Protestant clergy and theologians) continued to be heard in South German/Austrian Anabaptist writings; the fact that Protestant clerics supported and justified the persecution of Anabaptists only confirmed for the Anabaptists what "spirit" was at work in the mainline reformation. A thoroughgoing anticlericalism—hostility towards the Roman Catholic "priests" as well as the Protestant "learned shepherds"—is evident throughout the documents in this collection (see #2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14, *et passim*).

Hans Hut's booklet on biblical interpretation (#2) is an original and ingenious application of the principles that the true "Word of God" is spiritual, not literal, and that therefore true biblical interpretation is carried out only by the spiritually regenerate. Hut's listing of a series of "literal contradictions" in Scripture is intended to make the point that a mere reading of "the letter" is of no avail, and thus the skill in biblical languages displayed by the "learned doctors" is not only useless, but a positive hindrance. To penetrate the true meaning of Scripture, one needs to be able to transcend the literal through a spiritual understanding.<sup>22</sup> Hut's trinitarian interpretive structure is loosely based on the Apostles' Creed, but it does not make a dogmatic point about the Trinity. Rather it serves to make the point that "true believers" must *experience* the Trinity in themselves, in a three-fold process, in order to grasp the true meaning of Scripture. There are strong echoes of this experiential trinitarianism, along with similar conclusions regarding one's fitness for biblical interpretation, in Spitelmaier's response to questioning (#4) and Leonard Schiemer's essay on the "three-fold grace" (#5).

### ***A Commoner's Reformation***

The radical emphasis on regeneration by the Spirit, rather than the interpretation of the written letter, had the practical consequence that

the educated lost all advantage in the interpretation and understanding of God's will. In fact, the privileged were at a real disadvantage, given the exalted positions they usually assumed in society, since a true spiritual understanding could only come to those who were able to humble themselves enough to yield their self-will to God's will. The poor and downtrodden had a shorter distance to travel in this regard. A very few members of the lower nobility and patrician classes in the Tyrol were attracted to Pilgram Marpeck's Anabaptism, as was the noblewoman Helena von Freyberg (#23), but Anabaptism in south-central Europe was overwhelmingly a reformation of common people, with particular strength among the artisans.

Several documents in our collection provide graphic evidence of how South German/Austrian Anabaptists established an interpretive and educational model geared to the uneducated and even the illiterate. Hut's essay (#2) certainly is geared to the common person and emphasizes experience (and suffering) rather than learning. Spitelmaier (#4) sounds a note commonly heard in South German/Austrian documents, namely that the Gospel is to be taught to the common people "through the trade of each." There is a "gospel" that is written in creation, that is available to learned and unlearned alike. The "gospel of all creatures," taught by Hut to his followers, is most clearly explained in our collection by Hans Schlaffer (#6) in his description of the "first witness" of created things. The "gospel of suffering" that was to be learned from the "creatures," along with related lessons concerning spiritual regeneration, baptism, and living the new life, were in fact the basic Anabaptist teachings that were communicated to converts in the south-central parts of the Holy Roman Empire. The vast majority of these converts were commoners, artisans, and peasants. These teachings were "sealed" publicly by water baptism.

One of the most remarkable documents in the corpus of Anabaptist court records—because of what it tells us about the communication process in the sixteenth century—is the confession and statement by Hans Nadler (#11). Nadler was an illiterate needle peddler who also functioned as an evangelist for the Anabaptist cause. In his confession, taken down by a court scribe, he described the details of his evangelistic method. His testimony thus provides an extremely rare window into the world of reforming commoners, who carried out their calling to preach and convert others in spite of a lack of education and even (as in Nadler's case) without basic literacy. Anabaptism spread primarily through one-on-one contact and conversation. There were

innumerable opportunities for social interaction in the sixteenth century, particularly for itinerant salesmen like Hans Hut, who was a book peddler, and Hans Nadler. But artisans such as weavers, tailors, and seamstresses also were notoriously mobile, setting up “shop” in houses and barns, and working together in informal groups. It was in such settings that Anabaptist instruction took place.

It is clear from court testimonies and other sources that Anabaptist religious instruction revolved around key biblical texts that provided answers to the burning questions of the day. Many Anabaptists demonstrated an amazing capacity to absorb and remember Bible verses relating to a variety of topics, as is amply documented in court records across all of Europe. Endres Keller’s rambling testimony (#17), written following torture, under horrible conditions in a dungeon with no access to a Bible, demonstrates an astoundingly detailed recollection of Old and New Testament texts that address a wide variety of religious topics. Keller had a rudimentary literacy, but that did not take the place of a zeal for committing Scripture to memory. This emphasis on memory was foundational in a culture that still depended on oral/aural means of communication—and thus depended on mnemonics for the retrieval of information.

The “common people” took the Reformation call to “prove all things by Scripture” quite to heart. In the Anabaptist movement, one way of appropriating Scripture was to collect and remember topically-organized Scripture passages. These biblical concordances were sometimes written, less frequently printed, and most frequently committed to memory, as fully as the person was able. The printed topical concordances that have survived sound remarkably like the prison testimonies still extant in court records.<sup>23</sup> In the case of memorized and printed “texts,” both were composed of selected Scripture passages, addressing topical subjects, woven together by a minimum of commentary. Even in the reasoned testimony of a Paul Glock (#24-32)—who was fluidly literate and wrote his epistles with the aid of a printed Bible—the topical and thematic grouping of Scripture texts, so characteristic of oral/aural mnemonics, is quite evident.

It is also evident from the South German/Austrian sources collected here that the Lord’s Prayer and the Apostles’ Creed were used repeatedly as instructional tools. They were basic Christian texts, known and memorized by virtually everyone, that could be re-interpreted and invested with new Anabaptist content. A “negative” and critical re-telling of the Lord’s Prayer (focusing on the supposed hypocritical recita-

tion of the prayer by those in the mainline churches) seems to have been common currency in the proselytization of this part of the Anabaptist movement (see #5, 6, 7, 11). The teaching of the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Ten Commandments continued to be central in Anabaptist education and catechism, and later formed the core of religious instruction for children in the settled Hutterite communities.<sup>24</sup>

The effectiveness of underground, grassroots communication was a source of great consternation to the religious and political authorities. The "texts" of biblical interpretation that were spreading orally at the grassroots represented a remarkably coherent, biblically-based, counter-theology that was not subject to the control of the authorities or their sanctioned preachers. Furthermore, these oral texts contained implicit and explicit criticisms of state-sanctioned church reform and social injustices which, the authorities feared, would undermine the existing religious, social, and political order. All this may help explain why the attempt to silence the Anabaptists through persecution was as fierce as it was.

### ***From Social Reform, through Apocalyptic Hope, to Communalism***

As noted above, Haugk associated closely with Thomas Müntzer and Hans Hut and, besides sharing their grounding in late medieval mysticism and their criticism of Luther, also was implicated in the Peasants' War, as they also were. Combining mystical thought with church reform and political revolt is rather an odd blend, and calls for explanation. Thomas Müntzer was the one who best put these pieces together.<sup>25</sup> In Müntzer's understanding of divine and human history, God was acting not only to lead individuals to salvation by a process of purgation and cleansing, God also was redeeming the world by an analogous process. The pain associated with social purgation and cleansing was simply a preparation for the new and just world which would be inaugurated by the coming of Christ himself. When Christ returned in glory, those who had humbled themselves and suffered the process of inner regeneration—the elect—would come into their eternal inheritance. On the other hand, those who had proudly resisted the "sharp ploughshare" because of their pride and love of the world, were resisting the movement of God's Spirit both within themselves and in society at large. The most culpable among these stubborn and prideful people were the clergy and "false biblical scholars" (or

“snakes”), who would go to a particularly painful eternal reward because of their role in misleading so many others.<sup>26</sup>

When the Peasants’ War erupted, Müntzer became convinced that the final act in history had begun and that the peasants were the “elect,” the humble means chosen by God to purge the fallen world before Christ’s return. In this spirit he preached to the peasant army at Frankenhausen, just before their disastrous defeat on May 15, 1525. Hans Hut was present at that battle, a supporter of Müntzer who soon re-interpreted Müntzer’s apocalyptic scenario in Anabaptist terms. There is no evidence that Jörg Haugk von Jüchsen was at the battle itself; at the time he was functioning as preacher to rebellious peasants in his home territory.

Haugk’s *Christian Order* belongs to the period leading up to the Peasants’ War.<sup>27</sup> There is nothing in the *Christian Order*—or, for that matter, in Hut’s *Comparing and Interpreting Divine Scripture* (#2)—that suggests a militant apocalypticism or incipient support for rebellious peasants. The one tract in our collection that openly encourages the establishment of a new and more just society (in its first part) is Hans Hergot’s *New Transformation* (#3), although Hergot’s tract also reflects (in its second part) the bitter disappointment of betrayal at the failure of the attempt. Hergot’s writing is not an Anabaptist tract as such, but belongs in our collection because of the light it sheds on the social and religious aspirations of the common people from whom the majority of Anabaptists in this region were drawn.<sup>28</sup>

In fact, little will be found in our collection of writings that openly refers to the Peasants’ War of 1525 in either its Franconian or Tyrolean phases,<sup>29</sup> even though the uprising in both geographical locations was fundamental to the beginnings of South German/Austrian Anabaptism. The lack of explicit comment on the Peasants’ War in our collection accurately mirrors the dearth of Anabaptist sources reflecting on those experiences—and this should not be surprising. The systematic baptism of adults in the south-central Europe emerged only after the Peasants’ War had failed. People implicated in the revolt were punished severely by the authorities when caught, and it was dangerous to put evidence in writing. The Austrian authorities in particular were convinced that Anabaptism was simply a continuation of the Peasants’ Revolt in another guise—another form of insubordination (see also the Lutheran polemic, #14, e). Anabaptist prisoners (however innocent) were routinely questioned under torture about the supposed insurrectionary plot they were carrying out under the cover of

Anabaptism. This was Hans Schlaffer's experience (#6) and it was shared by many other Anabaptist prisoners (see also Hans Nadler's testimony, #11). South German/Austrian Anabaptist beginnings originating with Hans Hut are bound up with Thomas Müntzer and apocalyptic expectations tied to the Peasants' War. There are also evident connections between Gaismair's revolt in the Tyrol and the Anabaptism that emerged there, but the writings collected here will shed little direct light on those original connections. The ideological links to those beginnings, however, are deep and significant and can still be discerned.

A deep-seated concern with social justice and economic sharing runs through South German/Austrian Anabaptism and provides a crucial thread of continuity with the peasants' call for a new social order based on the "Bible alone." Müntzer's pre-Anabaptist view was transmuted into a wary apocalyptic Anabaptism primarily by Müntzer's disciple, Hans Hut, who was baptized into the movement by Hans Denck in 1526. In the face of peasant defeat and the failure of Thomas Müntzer's prophecies, Hut saw in the Anabaptists a purer movement of renewal, in preparation for Christ's return. He transferred the mantle of "God's elect" from the peasants—now discredited by their military defeat—to those willing to accept a baptism of suffering and waiting, for the meantime. Hut became convinced that God himself would precipitate the final conflict and judgment in a direct way, and that Christ's return could be predicted for Pentecost, 1528. Many early Anabaptist converts South German and Austrian lands were convinced by Hut's message, and accepted his baptism with hopes of an imminent judgment for the godless "Big Jacks" and a quick redemption of the social order. In the meantime, they were to share common cause with each other, both spiritually and materially. In these early stages, the extent of material sharing was left undefined, but was nevertheless one of the primary messages communicated to converts.

The earliest South German/Austrian Anabaptist writings still hold out hope for a new and just society, but in the post-Peasants' War context that hope now rested with external forces that were in God's hands—the marauding Turks would lead up to Christ's coming, for example, rather than peasants-in-arms. Ambrosius Spitelmaier's testimony of October, 1527 (#4) gives the most graphic evidence in our collection for this early apocalyptic Anabaptist view that owes so much to Hans Hut and the expectations of the common people for a new social order. However, apocalyptic hope of this kind faded rather quickly. When it did, the hopes for a new society were transmuted into



descriptions of (and prescriptions for) the new community of the regenerate, where the new and just society would be modeled and lived out in microcosm. Although both Leonard Schiemer and Hans Schlaffer (see #5, 6) make passing reference to living in “these last perilous times,” and both clearly expect the End to come soon, their apocalypticism is muted in comparison with Spitelmaier’s. Their writings call for perseverance on the narrow way and a sharing of all things among true Christians. Their writings begin to trace outlines of what a longer-term community might look like.

The legislated communalism of the Hutterites which emerged a few years later thus stands directly in the lineage of Hergot’s utopian vision, transmuted by the painful experience of the defeat of the peasants and the subsequent vicious persecution of Anabaptists by the authorities—a persecution that claimed the lives of Hans Hut and Jacob Hutter, as well as the lives of many hundreds more. The connection between spiritual regeneration (which rested on “yielding” the self, me, and mine for the sake of God and the neighbour) and a new and just social order (a commitment to “ours” and what is “common to all”) was central to South German/Austrian Anabaptism from the start, and continued in suitably-modified ways as the movement developed. The communalism that is central to Hergot’s utopia (#3) can be seen in Hans Hut’s true believers holding “all things in common” (#2) as well as in similar expressions of Hut’s followers Ambrosius Spitelmaier (#4), Leonard Schiemer (#5), Hans Schlaffer (#6), Hans Nadler (#11), and Wolfgang Brandhuber (#12). The ideological thread connecting the Anabaptist community, the “pure body of Christ on earth,” to peasant utopianism is a shared vision of a just social order, finally established as God intended it to be. If society was not yet purged and ready, at least the “true church” could and should be.

From its very inception, South German/Austrian Anabaptism found itself on the margins of religious and civil society. In the context of religious reform, South German/Austrian Anabaptism was an unwelcome stepchild of the mainstream reforming movement already at the moment of its birth. Inheritors of the existing estrangement between Luther and his radical followers, the baptizers were convinced from the start that the Roman Catholic clerics were serving human custom rather than Scripture, and likewise convinced that Luther and his followers lacked the Spirit and had mis-appropriated Scripture and twisted its true meaning. South German/Austrian Anabaptism was thus born at odds with the religious establishment, gathering its first

followers among the discontented and marginalized, creating underground and persecuted groups of baptized believers. In the political context of the time, the close connection between the Peasants' War, Thomas Müntzer's failed mystical apocalypticism, and the subsequent rise of mystical-apocalyptic Anabaptism meant that the baptizers were suspect from the start as potential insurrectionaries—and not always without cause.<sup>30</sup>

The socio-political and religious shape of early South German/Austrian Anabaptism is thus a complex one. We see in the early teachings of South German/Austrian Anabaptism a continuation of a unique "protestantized" mystical path that placed an emphasis on spiritual regeneration and growth (Karlstadt, Müntzer, Haugk). Furthermore, the living Spirit of God was seen as the motive force behind the personal appropriation of saving faith and regeneration, as well as the true light of revelation for believers. The same living Spirit would bear good fruit in the lives of yielded believers. These elements, seen so clearly in the teaching and writing of Hans Denck, exercised a significant formative influence on the South German/Austrian movement and remained decisive in shaping the entire movement. We see these same spiritualist emphases in the followers of Hans Hut, but with the added apocalyptic expectation that Christ's imminent return was going to renew all the earth and establish justice soon, and very soon. The path of inner spiritual regeneration and the active role of the Spirit remained central to Hut, but these elements were placed within an apocalyptic scenario shaped by Thomas Müntzer.

The arrest and death of Hans Hut (December, 1527) certainly was a blow to apocalyptic Anabaptism, as was also the uneventful passing of the predicted time of the Second Coming. Christ did not return; the expected Kingdom of justice failed to materialize; the predictions had proven false.<sup>31</sup> Along with these failures came increased persecution in cities and territories that had earlier been somewhat lenient in tolerating the presence of Anabaptists. With these changes came a rapid shift in emphasis in South German/Austrian Anabaptism from a lively apocalyptic expectation—with itinerant apostles hurriedly baptizing the 144,000 elect of Rev. 7:3—to a concern for the establishment of strong communities that could survive the uncertain time until Christ came for his Bride, the church.

## 2. Persecution (from 1527)

The Reformation was as much a political event as it was a religious event, as the issue of religious toleration made clear. The fundamental political assumption in the sixteenth century was that order in the social-political sphere could only be maintained by a unified religious confession in any given political territory. A “separation of church and state” was virtually inconceivable in the sixteenth century, particularly when seen against the medieval political and religious backdrop. Civil enforcement of a uniform religious confession and the persecution of religious dissenters had a long, if inglorious, political history reaching back to the christianization of the late Roman Empire. The persecution of Anabaptists in the sixteenth century followed this bloody, time-honoured model. It came as no surprise to anyone in the sixteenth century that religious dissent evoked such a response; this had happened to religious dissenters for more than a millennium. What was surprising was that the coming of the Protestant Reformation changed so little in this regard.

The fundamental Reformation teachings, that human beings are saved by their faith (and not by objective sacraments administered by the priests), and that ultimate authority lies with Scripture alone, were critiqued in Catholic circles as calls to political insurrection. Perhaps one of the reasons for Luther’s vitriolic reaction to the peasants’ uprising was precisely because the peasants were appealing to Reformation principles (particularly to Scripture) in their struggle to change the social and political order—giving Roman Catholic polemicists a case study which they did not hesitate to apply. The Protestant reformers felt the need to demonstrate—to the political authorities in particular—that the call to faith and the appeal to the authority of Scripture could be harmonized with the maintenance of the social and political order—put crudely, that “reformation” would still leave princes and city councils in control of their territories.

If human beings are saved by their individual faith, on what basis could territorial religious uniformity be maintained? The radical reforming movement slowly drew out the implications of their understanding of the evangelical position, and it led to what appeared to be dangerous conclusions: If saving faith is a gift of regeneration from God alone, no human being or human institution can bring this to pass. The Anabaptists took this one step further and insisted that only those who had come to such a conscious, regenerating faith through the in-

ner work of the Spirit (adults, in other words) could or should be baptized into the church. Only those baptized into the church, and who were willing to amend their lives and submit to fraternal admonition, would be welcome at the Lord's Supper. Furthermore, this body of committed believers would be free to elect their own pastors.

The corollaries of such a model of church reform were frightening and almost unthinkable to many contemporaries. The political and religious authorities in any territory would lose control of the religious structures. The response of the political authorities was to reassert the need for civil enforcement of religious uniformity, which meant attempting to coerce religious dissenters into conformity by judicial means.

Much of what we know about the beliefs of Anabaptists comes from judicial records, prison testimonies of Anabaptist believers often extracted under torture. Many of these prisoners knew that they were soon to be put to death in unimaginably cruel ways. In our collection, the testimonies of Ambrosius Spitelmaier (#4), Hans Schlaffer (#6, B), Hans Nadler (#11) and Katharina Hutter (#16) are examples of surviving judicial records of this kind. Our collection also contains numerous writings written as "testaments" by Anabaptist prisoners themselves, as they awaited judicial sentence. The prison writings of Leonhard Schiemer (#5), Hans Schlaffer (#6, A), Endres Keller (#17), the Trieste prisoners (#21), the letters of Paul Glock (#24-32) and Hans Schmidt (#34), and the hymn of Ursula Hellrigel (#10) are examples of this kind of literature. The expectation of suffering, and preparation for it, were not peripheral to Anabaptist faith and life, and it is not surprising that so much biblical reflection was devoted to understanding the reality of persecution and suffering. It also is not surprising that Anabaptists were exponents of religious toleration.

Radical reformers were among the first to issue calls for religious toleration.<sup>32</sup> More cynical observers may say that calls for toleration are always a tactic of the powerless, but there seem to have been more profound religious motives at work as well. Radical reform was grounded in a transformational experience that began when individuals responded freely to God's call to repentance. A freely-chosen decision to testify to one's faith and readiness to follow Christ by water baptism (the testimony of a good conscience before God) was foundational to the formation of the baptizing church. Freedom to choose, and freedom of conscience concerning one's choice, were at the heart of Anabaptism.

It is an odd fact that the arguments for religious toleration that the Anabaptists developed are best summarized in our collection by the Lutheran pastor Urbanus Rhegius, in a systematic treatise written with the intent of demolishing the possibility of such toleration (#18). The main arguments put forward by the Anabaptists (as noted by Rhegius) are:

–No one can coerce faith. Therefore heretics must be opposed by God’s Word alone, and convinced in their hearts; coerced “confessions” simply create hypocrites, not believers.

–Those who err may eventually improve.

–The apostles successfully evangelized the world without using the worldly sword.

–Christ commanded preaching the Gospel, not coercion.

–Faith is of the heart and is known to God alone; therefore the state cannot judge concerning it, and should not involve itself in punishment in matters of faith.

–Judgment is ultimately God’s, and is not a human responsibility.

To Rhegius’ credit, his list included all of the central points used by Anabaptists. Rhegius did what he could to counter these points with biblical and theological arguments.

Regardless of how we may judge the matter from the twenty-first-century vantage point, to most sixteenth-century Lutheran reformers, an ecclesial model based on the toleration of individual religious convictions simply did not fit with the perceived need for territorial churches and political order. Rulers, they were convinced, needed to control the religious content taught to their subjects and practiced by them in their territories, if they were to have any hope of maintaining social and political order.

Anabaptism in south-central Europe was born into a context of persecution of religious dissent, but the levels of persecution varied with place and time. Consequently, political geography played a large role in the development of the movement. Although a crucial link to the beginnings of South German/Austrian Anabaptism was central Germany, that is eastern Hesse and Thuringia (areas where Thomas Müntzer was active and one of the regions where the Peasants’ War raged), the flowering of Anabaptism came further to the south and east, first in the south German cities like Nuremberg and Augsburg, but soon centred in Moravia. Similarly, there were crucial links between the Peasants’ Revolt in the Tyrol (under the leadership of Michael Gaismair) and later Anabaptists there, but determined persecution in

the Tyrol by the Hapsburg king Ferdinand I soon forced Anabaptists to flee to Moravia. Moravia thus became the primary Anabaptist haven, beginning already in 1527—a time when the political and religious pressure on the Anabaptists intensified in other territories. Later in the century, however, Hapsburg power reached into Moravia as well, and renewed hardship ensued for Anabaptist refugees there.

Werner Packull has identified three primary periods of persecution that impacted the Anabaptist communities in south-central Europe. From 1527 to 1529, there was initial pressure exerted by Ferdinand I, particularly in the territories under his direct control. The result of this first wave of persecution was increased migration from Hapsburg territories to Moravia, since the Moravian lords still managed to maintain a fair degree of independence from Ferdinand and his repressive policies. Increased military threat and pressure on Hapsburg territories meant more freedom for the Moravian lords, and more toleration in Moravian lands for Anabaptists. That pressure came primarily on the eastern frontier, from the Turks, and within the Empire from the Protestant states. Documents 1-15 in our collection date from the pre-1535 period which saw increased persecution in the Holy Roman Empire generally, but relative security and freedom in Moravia.

A wave of severe persecution finally reached the Moravian territories in 1534-1535. The Turkish threat to Hapsburg lands abated towards the end of 1534, at which point Ferdinand I was free to renew political pressure on the Moravian lords. Adding to this pressure were the unfortunate events in the city of Münster, which tainted all Anabaptists with the whiff of sedition and armed insurrection. The Moravian lords finally were sufficiently pressured by Ferdinand, and responded reluctantly by expelling the most visible Anabaptist communities. The wholesale expulsions of Anabaptists from Moravia in 1535 led to disappearance of the Austerlitz brethren, the Philipites, and the Gabrielites as distinct communities. The Philipites migrated back to their homelands in the Palatinate, the Rhineland, and Württemberg, most eventually joining the Swiss Brethren. The Gabrielites migrated back to Silesia and points east, from whence the majority of that community had come. The expulsions were a severe test also for the Hutterites. They lost all of their communities and most of their early leaders. Between 1535 and 1538 Jacob Hutter (see the testimony of Katharina Hutter, #16), Jeronimus Käls, Onophrius Griesinger, Leonhard Lochmair, and Georg Fasser had all met a martyr's death—but the Hutterites man-

aged to survive and reorganized under the leadership of Hans Amon during the easing of the situation in Moravia from 1537 to 1545.<sup>33</sup>

In 1545, Ferdinand I won a resounding victory over the Turks again, and immediately ordered renewed repression of Anabaptist groups in Moravian territories. This phase of persecution resulted in the publication of Peter Riedemann's *Account of our Faith*, published as an apology and an attempt to win living space for Hutterite Anabaptist communities.<sup>34</sup> In 1547, with the dual victory of Charles V over Protestant forces, and the defeat of the rebellion in Bohemia, the Hapsburgs were even more free to enforce their will in Moravia again. At this point, the remaining Hutterites were again driven from their re-established Moravian homes, left to wander to the East, living a precarious existence in caves near the Slovakian-Hungarian border. These years of trial came to an end in the 1550s, with a renewed military threat from the Turks. The Hutterites re-established their communities again on lands of friendly nobles in Moravia. The "golden years" of the Hutterite communities in Moravia began in the 1550s, and bloomed particularly following the death of their implacable enemy, Ferdinand I in 1564. It is estimated that the Anabaptist population in Moravia may have reached twenty-thousand in the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>35</sup>

Although persecution came and went in Moravia, in inverse proportion to external pressures on the Hapsburgs, in Austrian territories themselves (Austria, the Tyrol, parts of Württemberg), the reaction to Anabaptism (and to any form of Protestantism) was uncompromisingly hostile. The protocol outlining recantation procedures in the Tyrol (#9) demonstrates the sort of harsh treatment faced even by those willing to recant. Very little in the way of mercy could be expected by recalcitrant Anabaptists captured in Hapsburg territories, the only variable being the amount of independence enjoyed by a local lord vis-a-vis Ferdinand I of Austria. Occasionally, local officials could mitigate Ferdinand's demands for blood.

In the south German cities that were open to Reformation ideas (e.g., Nuremberg, Augsburg, Strasbourg) and in Protestant territories generally, there was a willingness to work a little harder at winning over the Anabaptists. Local Protestant pastors and theologians were given the task of convincing imprisoned Anabaptists to join the state church. Their tools were theological and biblical argument and persuasion. They sometimes succeeded in their attempts, but Anabaptist prisoners proved to be uncommonly stubborn. In some Protestant ter-

ritories, the local authorities sometimes extended efforts at coerced persuasion over a longer period of time. Hans Schmidt, for example, was in a variety of prisons for some five months (#34). Paul Glock's nineteen-year imprisonment (#24-32) was unusual for its length, the occasional leniency of his prison conditions, and the extended discussions that took place in efforts to dissuade him from Anabaptism.

When attempts to convert Anabaptists failed, the pastors made their best case to the public at large and, more importantly, to the political authorities. Sometimes pastors appealed to the authorities for mercy, as Johann Rurer did for Hans Nadler (#11-B); but later polemics increasingly called on the authorities to suppress Anabaptism altogether, and not to allow such "damnable errors" to continue circulating among the people (#14). Still later, in the face of a movement that refused to disappear and that argued for freedom of conscience, the Lutheran pastors found themselves providing biblical and theological arguments in support of civil prosecution of religious dissenters (#18). Four writings in our collection (#8, 11-B, 14, 18) provide a window into the world of Protestant pastors doing theological battle with Anabaptism, and provide an important outside perspective on the movement.

The anonymous "Theological Refutation" (1528) sounds themes that will be heard in later writings by Lutheran apologists: Anabaptism is an heretical sect because it separates from the one true church. The "true church" in the Lutheran definition was where the Gospel was preached and the sacraments celebrated—and it was understood that only in the state-sanctioned church did this take place (see also #14, B). In the second place, the Anabaptists could not be the "true church" because they did not accept the interpretation of Scripture as defined by the state church, which by definition was the "true church." (The circularity of these arguments seems not to have bothered the Protestant theologians; they used them repeatedly.) This second and crucial point of the "Refutation"—that Anabaptists did not accept the testimony of Scripture—was obviously overstated for polemical effect, as is plain to anyone who reads what the Anabaptists were actually writing and saying, but the accusation had at least some basis in fact. The early Anabaptists did hold that a true exegete had to be spiritually regenerated, as we have seen. In the hands of Lutheran apologists, this Anabaptist teaching was re-stated to say that their teaching was "self-invented," not based on "Scripture alone" but rather on dreams and visions of individuals. The "Refutation" (as would later apologies) was trying to shift the ground of the argument back to the literal text of



Scripture, and a learned exegesis of that text by the pastors authorized by the local political authorities (see also #14, C and Anabaptist responses by Hans Umlauf, #22 and Paul Glock, #25).

The "Refutation" also predictably challenged the practice of adult baptism, the rejection of a real presence in the Lord's Supper, and the Anabaptist practice of community of goods, but more fundamental was the final point: the Anabaptists, says the Lutheran apologist, "do not believe in Christ, nor think that the suffering of the Son of God was sufficient payment for sin." The heart of this early "Refutation" of South German/Austrian Anabaptism thus came back to the two crucial questions that were evident already in the disagreement between Luther and Müntzer. First, who has the authority to interpret Scripture, and how is that authority established—i.e., by a proper education and a "legitimate" appointment to the office by a secular authority, or by a spiritual rebirth? Are the Protestant preachers the "false prophets," as the Anabaptists maintained repeatedly, or are the Anabaptists the "false prophets," as the preachers argued (see also #14, C, D)? Second, what is the nature of salvation? Are we saved by faith alone, simply by believing in Christ's atonement for sin, or does salvation entail faithful obedience ("fruit") as well?

Urbanus Rhegius' "Justification for the Prosecution of Anabaptists" reaches another level of hostility by arguing systematically that the authorities ought to punish Anabaptists—if convincing them by biblical argument does not succeed. Rhegius composed his "Justification" in 1536, following the Anabaptist takeover, defense, and military loss of the city of Münster in Westphalia. Anabaptists everywhere experienced increased persecution as a result of the disaster at Münster, being tarred with the same brush as the Münsterites. Rhegius' "Justification" appealed repeatedly to the writings of Augustine to the effect that heretics should be "compelled" to come into the "true church." Rhegius identified the Donatists as "Anabaptists," and applied Augustine's anti-Donatist arguments directly to the sixteenth century baptizers.

Just as consistently, Rhegius appealed to the example of Münster to argue (on the basis of Deuteronomy and other Old Testament Scriptures) that false prophets and "all evildoers" should be punished and even put to death by Christian governments—as long as such punishment were done "in love." His point that heresy "has brought with it revolt and murder" was underlined by the events in Westphalia: "If at Münster they [the government officials] had not watched Bernhard

Rothmann so long, they might have saved the situation,” wrote Rhegius. “Since, however, they let matters go and spared the seducer, the terrible distress followed which Germany will never forget...” The moral of Rhegius’ story was not lost on most government officials, especially after Münster: Anabaptism was a dangerous heresy that needed to be strictly prosecuted and stamped out, the sooner the better, while there was still time. Anabaptist prisoners after 1536 routinely had to defend themselves by distancing themselves from the Münsterites (e.g. Endres Keller, #17).

The Anabaptists were not completely bereft of public defenders, although they were few and far between, and primarily were persons drawn to spiritualistic religion. The baron Georg Gross (Pfersfelder), who had spiritualist leanings, was one such defender. Pfersfelder was as critical of the mainline reformers as he was sympathetic to the Anabaptists (#15). Klaus von Grafeneck and his wife, who leaned in Schwenckfeld’s direction, were more lenient than was usual with their Anabaptist prisoner Paul Glock (#24-32). The common depiction of Anabaptists as heretical seducers and insurrectionists was also countered in print in the sixteenth century by the spiritualist Sebastian Franck. He wrote a description of the Anabaptists he knew (most of whom were from the South German/Austrian branch) in his monumental *Chronica*, published in Strasbourg in 1531 and again in 1536 (#19). Franck’s observations are coloured by his own spiritualist convictions throughout, but they are uniquely free of the rancour that characterizes so much sixteenth century literature documenting Anabaptism. Franck’s depiction of the Anabaptists as pious, if misled, people who should be extended religious toleration stands in stark contrast to the usual polemical accounts of theological opponents like Urbanus Rhegius and Zürich’s Heinrich Bullinger.<sup>36</sup> Franck’s observations provide an apt counterpoint to the mainline Protestant critiques.

Ironically, what Franck found most appealing about the Anabaptists, namely the non-dogmatic spiritualism of some baptizers like Hans Denck and Hans Bänderlin, was—at the time of his writing—in the process of being replaced in South German/Austrian territories by the feature Franck disliked the most, namely the propensity among some Anabaptists to cement the boundaries of their communities by establishing external “rules” to accompany the spiritual rebirth.

### 3. The emergence and growth of communal Anabaptism

Anabaptism was a grass roots movement that encompassed a rich variety of viewpoints. Even sympathetic contemporaries like Sebastian Franck claimed the Anabaptists were so divided amongst themselves, that he could not identify all the groups. Franck's statement was made with ulterior motives, with the intention of convincing readers to embrace a non-divisive, inner, spiritual Christianity. Nevertheless, his point is well taken: whatever fundamental agreements there might have been, the Anabaptists had trouble agreeing on the details. Nowhere was this diversity more evident than in Moravia, the destination for thousands of Anabaptist refugees—their numbers can only be roughly estimated—fleeing persecution in Switzerland, the Palatinate, Württemberg, the Tyrol, and Silesia.

Balthasar Hubmaier was an early refugee in Moravia, unique among Anabaptist leaders in the fact that he managed to establish a state-sanctioned Anabaptist church first in the Hapsburg city of Waldshut on the Rhine in 1525, and then in the small Moravian city-state of Nicholsburg in 1526. Anabaptist refugees in Nicholsburg coexisted, uneasily no doubt, under Hubmaier's leadership for more than a year, but there were contentious issues bubbling just under the surface. Hubmaier accepted the use of the sword in the hands of a Christian magistrate as a matter of course, and established his Anabaptist church in Nicholsburg under the protection of the local lords. There were, however, Swiss Anabaptist refugees who believed that baptized members of the church should not wield the sword—regardless of their role in government. Likewise, Hubmaier had accepted his role as leading pastor in the Nicholsburg church on the strength of appointment to that position by the local lords; some Anabaptists were of the opinion that church leaders should be chosen from the congregation, not appointed by state authorities. Finally, Hubmaier was not convinced that the "signs of the times" could be interpreted to yield precise information on the Lord's second coming, while Anabaptist refugees in Nicholsburg who had been baptized by Hans Hut or by Hut's followers had accepted baptism precisely in the expectation that they would be welcoming the returning Christ at any moment.

In the Spring of 1527, Hans Hut's visit to Nicholsburg brought many of the underlying tensions to the surface, specifically the question of how to interpret the biblical signs of the second coming and, consequently, how to prepare the church for the future. Hubmaier and Hut

debated publicly, after which Hut was arrested—only to escape the city with the aid of friends. Hubmaier not only did not share Hut's passion for the End Times, he also did not share Hut's conviction that "goods should be in common," opting for a lower level of mutual aid. A dissident Anabaptist group formed in Nicholsburg under the leadership of Jacob Wiedemann and separated from the official Anabaptist state-church. Wiedemann's group appropriated ideas characteristic of Hans Hut (apocalyptic expectation; community of goods) and combined them with pacifist ideas seen among some Swiss Anabaptists. In early Spring of 1528, 200 of these Anabaptists were asked to leave Nicholsburg. Eventually they found their way to a place of refuge in Austerlitz. On their way there, they decided to pool all their resources and institute a full community of goods.<sup>37</sup>

The "Austerlitz brethren" were thus the first Anabaptist community to practice full community of goods in Moravia, but they soon had plenty of company. From the first baptisms in Zürich, the baptizers had believed that the truly regenerate would share goods with brothers and sisters in need. There is evidence that in the earliest community in Switzerland, in the village of Zollikon, "holding all things common" was the earliest practice, until local conditions made this impossible.<sup>38</sup> Even where a full community of goods was not physically possible, the Anabaptist ideal was the sharing of possessions between brothers and sisters in the faith, with no member of the body of Christ claiming ultimate ownership over temporal goods. The Moravian territories provided a setting conducive to the establishment of communities in which possessions were shared in common. Furthermore, by 1528 apocalyptic hope for an early return of Christ had begun to fade. Anabaptist refugees began to consider how to establish settled and more permanent communities.

In 1528 a group of Anabaptist refugees—the majority originating from Silesia—gathered at Rossitz, Moravia, under the leadership of Gabriel Ascherham.<sup>39</sup> The "Gabrielites" also practiced community of goods in a settlement that came to number some 1200 adults. The Gabrielite community was a parallel and alternative community to the Austerlitz group. The following year, refugees from the Rhineland, the Palatinate, and Württemberg fled to Moravia and were gathered into a community under the leadership of Philip Plenner.<sup>40</sup> The Philipites first joined the Gabrielites at Rossitz, but after an amicable parting of the ways, settled at Auspitz. All three groups, the Austerlitz brethren, the Gabrielites and the Philipites, practiced community of

goods, and for a time, all three recognized Gabriel Ascherham as spiritual leader. The first phase of community-building outside Nicholsburg in Moravia was characterized by communities sharing their goods in common.

One exception might be the Marpeckite communities, about whom we know very little. Pilgram Marpeck, originally from the Tyrol, had been ordained an Anabaptist leader by an unknown community in Moravia in 1528, and retained connections to Moravia and communities there all his life. Marpeck seems to have been open originally to communal living arrangements (in the 1530s), but by the 1540s (probably in a negative response to the Hutterite position) he argued for voluntary, not legislated, sharing of possessions.<sup>41</sup> In any case, Marpeckite communities—although small—formed a part of the Moravian landscape from 1528 to the end of the century, as did Swiss Brethren communities, living alongside the more numerous Hutterian communal settlements.

No document in our collection more clearly illustrates the transition from short-term apocalyptic hope to longer-term community-building than does Wolfgang Brandhuber's "Letter to the Church at Rattenberg," written in 1529 (#10). The shifts in emphasis in this letter are subtle, but fundamental. Brandhuber, who probably had been baptized by Hans Hut himself, was leader of the Anabaptist group in Linz but was in touch with the new community in Austerlitz.<sup>42</sup> In his letter, Brandhuber speaks to a new situation with a new vision and language. Persecution is still interpreted as a test and discipline of the Lord, but in response to it, the church is to separate itself decisively from the world ("leave Sodom and Gomorrah"), and structure itself properly to survive in, and witness to, a fallen world. The true church, Brandhuber teaches, must hold all things in common—to the degree that it is possible in any given situation. Brandhuber resolutely maintained that private property has no biblical basis. Even if one could only manage a "community" consisting of a single extended family, it should be organized communally. There must be proper oversight and admonition by leaders appointed to the tasks of preaching, teaching, and stewardship of earthly goods. With the elevation of the "common purse" to the status of a rule concerning communal property (and the forbidding of private property), Brandhuber's letter presages what would become the decisive point of contention between the legislated communalism of Hutterian Anabaptists and the voluntary mutual aid

of non-Hutterite Anabaptists such as the Swiss Brethren and Marpeckites.

Also notable in Brandhuber's letter is what appears to be a common appropriation of Swiss Brethren teaching, that no weapons are to be used nor can war or armed defence be allowed to this community or its members. Brandhuber's contemporary followers of Hans Hut had not been so unequivocal about the sword.<sup>43</sup> Hans Nadler, for example, said at his trial that he knew of *some* who had renounced the sword, and that he himself had, but there was no "rule" concerning it (#11). It was otherwise with Brandhuber: He established a "rule" concerning nonresistance that brings to mind the Schleithem Articles of the Swiss Brethren.<sup>44</sup> The nonresistance or "living without weapons" (*Wehrlosigkeit*) taught by Brandhuber and others soon became the universally approved teaching among South German/Austrian Anabaptists. A decade later (1539) the Trieste prisoners had a copy of the (Swiss) *Schleithem Articles* in their possession, which they used freely in composing their own confession—including a verbatim copying of large sections of Schleithem's Article 6 on the sword (#21). As late as 1590, the Hutterite missionary Hans Schmidt could be found quoting Michael Sattler's words concerning nonresistance (#34). In spite of some wavering on the issue of the sword in the early apocalyptic phase of South German/Austrian Anabaptism, nonresistant living soon became one of the non-negotiable, visible signs of the true church, the body of Christ, for this branch of the Anabaptist movement.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, Brandhuber continues to speak the language of spiritual regeneration, but with a significant shift in emphasis. Where the earliest South German/Austrian Anabaptist literature concentrates on the process of coming from unbelief to faith (through yielding and suffering in the heart), and leaves the particulars of the "new life" rather undefined, Brandhuber's letter focuses the living of the new life, returning repeatedly to the continuing struggle between the spirit and the flesh for those who have committed themselves to walk the narrow way. Brandhuber's letter was written to provide guidance and encouragement for a congregation of believers who had already gone through the personal process of repentance and commitment, and were now gathered together facing an uncertain future in a hostile world. In response to this situation come suggestions (not to say "rules") for the structure and organization of the community. The Spirit called the community into being; the Spirit now required a structure that would

reflect God's revealed will, but would also ensure continued obedience and faithful perseverance to the end.

We can see clearly in Brandhuber's short letter the beginnings of an intense focus on the visible, gathered community as the real locus of the Spirit's activity. Jörg Zaunring's little exposition on the Lord's Supper (#13) underlines the same point christologically: the "body of Christ" that is present on earth is not Christ's physical body (which was crucified), or his glorified body (now in heaven), but rather is the church itself, where Christ is present as the head of his living members. Zaunring, like Brandhuber, concludes that there will be suffering for the body of Christ—thus continuing this early theme—but the locus of this suffering is now the community in the world, much more than in individual hearts suffering God's ploughshare.

The shift away from earlier interpretations of Hans Hut is seen clearly in the confession of the Trieste prisoners (#21). The confession quotes the Mark 16:15 passage concerning the preaching of the Gospel to/of all creatures—so central to Hut and his immediate followers—but there is not a hint of Hut's distinctive exegesis that extracted a "Gospel of all creatures" from this passage. The point of the passage, as interpreted by the Trieste prisoners, is that it illustrates the "proper order" of preaching, repentance, baptism and salvation—with not a word given to suffering the ploughshare of God in the soul. In fact, the entire confession of 1539 gives one line to the inner birth of the Holy Spirit (in the section entitled "Concerning the new birth"), investing the balance of the text to an extraction of the "commands of Scripture" by which the true church is to be guided in its actions: "Whatever our Lord Jesus has taught, prescribed and commanded us ... we will do," the prisoners emphasize. The suffering that is discussed has to do with the church as Christ's body, in particular (as per Zaunring), symbolized in the cup of suffering in the Lord's Supper.

An analogous shift may be seen in Endres Keller's confession (#17), with its strong emphasis on obedience to the commands of Scripture—an emphasis one associates more with the Swiss Brethren than with the spiritualism of the early South German/Austrian Anabaptists. At the same time, Keller stands comfortably in the South German/Austrian tradition, occasionally utilizing an allegorical exegesis to extract a "spiritual meaning," and reflecting on the importance of apocalyptic Scripture (Revelation, Esdras, Daniel).

The tensions between a more spiritualistic reading of Scripture and one more attuned to the "letter," and the analogous tension between

an emphasis on “inner” change and “outer” signs of the inner change, played themselves out as South German/Austrian Anabaptism matured. The spirit/letter tension appeared to increase as apocalyptic fervour decreased. Said another way, the spirit/letter tension increased in direct proportion to the increased concern for the long-term survival of the visible community, the body of Christ on earth—as contrasted with the earlier concern for inner regeneration, baptism of “the elect,” and the imminent return of Christ. In Brandhuber’s letter and in other South German/Austrian documents after 1529 we see a regulated shape being given to the “new life.”

Appeals to “freedom of the Spirit” functioned well when used against the “learned scribes” of established Protestant churches, but the same appeal didn’t provide much guidance in shaping communities. The letter of Scripture, on the other hand, provided tangible guidelines for what the “Spirit-shaped community” ought to look like, but inevitably restricted the “freedom of the Spirit.” Out of this shift in emphasis came a regulated community structure that probably was responsible for the ultimate survival of Anabaptist communities in South Germany and Austria, but along with those same structures came also the seeds of disagreement and, eventually, schism.

### ***Schism among communal Anabaptists***

The story of the schisms among the communal South German/Austrian Anabaptist groups in Moravia is not an edifying one. Strong personalities played their usual leading roles in precipitating the divisions that began to occur in 1531, and it also appears that regional differences among the various groups of refugees and their leaders added to the tensions.<sup>46</sup> All three communal groups were involved in one way or another in the leadership tensions, with a final rupture occurring in 1533. The dominating figure in the final division was Jacob Hutter. He had been a key Anabaptist leader in the Tyrol beginning around 1528. In 1529, Hutter had traveled to Moravia to visit the Austerlitz community. He returned to the Tyrol, in apparent agreement with the teachings and way of life of the Austerlitzers. He organized the flight of hundreds of Tyrolean refugees to the communities in Moravia, including a growing core of loyal followers from his own Puster valley. By 1533, the systematic repression of Ferdinand I made it clear that the Tyrol would not be a place where Anabaptists could continue living. Jacob Hutter decided to move permanently to Moravia, a move



that corresponded with continued leadership conflict among the communal Anabaptist groups.

The end result of Hutter's return was the formation of a communal group under his direct leadership—the group that came to be known as the Hutterian brethren, or Hutterites. Gabriel Ascherham and Philip Plenner were excommunicated, and all subsequent efforts at reconciliation failed. The purported doctrinal issue had to do with the strictness of discipline relating to community of goods. Jacob Hutter insisted on a strict giving over of all goods to the community by all members of the community. The practice prior to this time seems to have been a voluntary community of goods, with some degrees of private ownership remaining. With the mutual excommunications of 1533, however, the lines hardened. The distinctive teaching of the Hutterites became a legislated and total community of goods, without which none could be considered members—or saved, for that matter. The three remaining communal groups in Moravia (Austerlitz Brethren, Gabrielites, and Philipites) as well as the remaining non-communal Anabaptists, continued to practice varieties of mutual aid, ranging from communities where most members lived communally, to churches where most members owned private property but had a “common purse” to help the needy.

The division among the communal Anabaptist groups in Moravia soon came to an end, with the expulsion of all Anabaptist groups in 1535, as noted above. Faced with the need to disband their communities, the different leaders adopted a variety of strategies. The Gabrielites and the Philipites decided to migrate back to their original homes, in small numbers. They never re-established themselves again as distinct groups. A few survivors of both groups later joined Hutterite communities, but the majority of Gabrielites simply faded from view in Silesia, and the majority of Philipites joined with the Swiss Brethren, contributing their rich hymnody to the Swiss. The Hutterites, many of whom had come from the Tyrol, had no safe place to which they could return. The majority of the Hutterites formed smaller groups and remained in secluded places in Moravia, waiting for the wave of persecution to end, with only a few leaders returning to the Tyrol—with disastrous results. In the end, the Hutterian strategy turned out to be the preferred one for group survival, even though, as noted above, virtually all the original leaders, including Jacob Hutter and his wife Katharina, met their deaths back in the Tyrol.

Our collection of sources does not document the history of divisions among the communal South German/Austrian Anabaptists. However there are some selections that shed light on selected aspects of these events. Through Brandhuber's letter (#12) we have a connection with the Austerlitz community and Gabriel Ascherham, and can see communal Anabaptism taking shape. Katharina Hutter, Jacob Hutter's "wedded sister" as she called herself, was arrested at Klausen, Tyrol, along with Jacob and a few companions on November 30, 1535. Her prison testimony (#16) gives a vivid portrait of life on the run for Hutterite leaders in Ferdinand's Tyrol. Our collection also includes two hymns from the *Ausbund*, the Swiss Brethren hymnal first printed in 1564 (#10, 33). The core of the hymns from the *Ausbund* in fact was composed by some Philipite brethren, imprisoned at Passau as they were attempting to flee Moravia following the expulsions of 1535. Finally, the communities that looked to Pilgram Marpeck for leadership are represented by two documents. One of the hymns included in our collection (#33) is attributed to Walpurga von Pappenheim, a young noblewoman who was part of Pilgram Marpeck's circle. The unusual letter of confession by the noblewoman Helena von Freyberg (#23) also stems from the Marpeck circle and reveals the more "lenient" congregational discipline that was in use in Marpeck's circle.

Finally, the concluding group of documents by Paul Glock (#24-32) and Hans Schmidt (#34) date from the "Golden Age" of the Hutterites. Although Glock's letters were written in prison, and read and preserved in the communities in Moravia, readers will discern the outlines of the fully-developed and structured community that had emerged by the 1560s and 70s, most fully articulated in Peter Riedemann's *Account of our Faith*. The tension between the communal Hutterites, and the non-communal Anabaptists becomes quite visible from time to time in Glock's letters. The schism concerning the nature and form of mutual aid that dated back to Jacob Hutter remained a defining line of separation running between the South German/Austrian Anabaptist groups. The missionary efforts of the Hutterites, documented in Hans Schmidt's recollections (#34), were directed primarily to non-communal Anabaptist groups in the western Empire, in efforts to win them to "full community." As might be expected, tensions in Moravia between the communal Hutterites and their non-communal Swiss Brethren and Marpeckite neighbours sometimes ran high.<sup>47</sup>

### **III. Conclusion**

It should be clear from the foregoing that this collection of South German/Austrian Anabaptist sources does not (and could not) give a complete picture of the origins and development of this baptizing movement. Nevertheless, English-speaking readers will now be able to see the original roots of this branch of Anabaptism in late medieval mysticism and apocalypticism. Likewise, readers will be able to trace the evolution of early teachings as the movement matured and developed under difficult conditions in Moravia and the Empire.

This introduction has traced the development of an early emphasis on individual spiritual rebirth into its mature emphasis on the visible communal fruits of discipleship—from an “inner” emphasis of “yielding to God in the heart,” to an “outer” emphasis on what must be visible if that inner yielding has taken place. Equally evident is the transmutation of a live apocalyptic hope (with its expectation of a just world) into communities where the “biblical order” is visibly established within an unjust world. We have traced the division that took place in Moravia among the communal Anabaptists—a division based on a reading of the “biblical rules” for the establishment of such communities. This division led to the establishment of the Hutterian Brethren—the only communal Anabaptist group in all of Europe that was able to survive as an identifiable group, and the only identifiable group to survive the sixteenth century from the original South German/Austrian Anabaptist movement.

There remains one further note in this story of South German/Austrian Anabaptism, all the more important because no documents in our collection point to it. The early emphasis on spiritual regeneration as the central event in a Christian’s life left its mark on many Anabaptists in this region. The majority of South German/Austrian Anabaptists seemed able and willing to place a stronger emphasis on the outer life of conformity to the “commands of Scripture” in structuring their lives as individuals and in community. But for a significant minority, the establishment of rule-oriented baptizing groups was seen as a devolution of spiritual regeneration to a secondary status, when in fact they felt it should have remained the most important thing of all. Hans Denck’s last writing, called by some a “recantation” (1527), backed away from the “outer baptism” of water because of its divisive nature and pointed to an inner, more individual “spiritual” Christianity. Denck’s lead was followed by two South German/Aus-

trian Anabaptist leaders, Hans Bänderlin and Christian Entfelder. Both had been important Anabaptist leaders in Austrian territory, but by 1528 both had declared themselves to be spiritualists, who would baptize with water no more. Both Bänderlin and Entfelder migrated to Strasbourg, where their spiritualist (and anti-baptizing) writings were opposed in print by Pilgram Marpeck. His replies have been published in English translation, but theirs remain available only in German.<sup>48</sup>

In much the same vein as Bänderlin and Entfelder, but with less radically spiritualistic conclusions, Gabriel Ascherham composed *On the Distinction between Divine and Human Wisdom* (ca. 1540) from his Silesian exile, critiquing the Hutterian “externalization” and division of Anabaptism through the imposition of outer rules. Apart from translated excerpts in Packull, Ascherham’s Anabaptist treatise is not available in English.<sup>49</sup> Readers should be aware of the fact that there was a spiritualist challenge to the way in which South German/Austrian Anabaptism had changed and developed, namely in the structured, rule-oriented communal direction.

The earliest documents from the South German/Austrian Anabaptist movement provide clear examples of the spiritualistic and regenerationist principles that underlay all adult baptism in the sixteenth century. Consequently, the documentation from this branch of the baptizing movement also provides clear examples of the tensions that developed as the “spiritual rebirth” attempted to take shape in a concrete and imperfect material world. The inner change will be manifested in external behaviour—but how can that behaviour be measured? The body of Christ on earth will be guided by Christ’s Spirit—but what will be the concrete evidences of that Spirit? The regenerated will be enabled to interpret Scripture—but what happens once an authoritative interpretation has been established? Is a “spiritual” challenge to a previous biblical interpretation still possible? The body of Christ will be a community of justice—but how are injustices adjudicated within that body, when they occur?

The list could be extended, but there is no need for more extensive examples. The documents collected here give ample evidence of the birth of a reform movement based on the highest spiritual principles, as well as documentation of the difficulties encountered by the attempt to be true to those principles and to live them out faithfully. The story is one that challenges and chastens us, as it also invites us to engagement and dialogue.

# 1

*Jörg Haugk von Jüchsen*

## ***A Christian Order of a True Christian: Giving an Account of the Origin of his Faith (1524)\****

### Introduction

Little is known about Jörg Haugk von Jüchsen. He was obviously literate and, along with Thomas Müntzer and Andreas Karlstadt, influenced by a spirituality that emphasized the importance of an inner, transformational experience of the divine. Like his acquaintance Hans Hut, Haugk was implicated in the Peasants' Uprising of 1525, having been elected preacher by the rebellious peasants in his district. In May 1525 when Hut returned from the defeat at Frankenhausen, Haugk invited him to preach to his congregation at Jüchsen near Meiningen in south Thuringia. It seems likely that Haugk subsequently entrusted the manuscript of his *Christian Order* to Hut and that Hut brought it to Philip Ulhart's press in Augsburg where it was printed in 1526.<sup>1</sup>

Since Haugk's *Christian Order* makes no mention of the Peasants' Uprising or the peasants' defeat, it may be assumed that Haugk had

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<sup>1</sup>Source: Müller, *Glaubenszeugnisse*, 2-10

Translation: Werner O. Packull with the assistance of Mary Buck

## 2 / Sources of South German/Austrian Anabaptism

written the *Order* before these events. This scenario is further supported by the lack of any clear references to Anabaptism in his treatise, although the work does suggest the separation of the godly from the ungodly. All the more surprising then seems to be the continuous interest by Anabaptists in Haugk's work. Hans Denck appears to have been responsible for the first reprint of Haugk's *Christian Order* in a volume that included Denck's own writings. This collective volume was printed in Worms by Peter Schöffler Junior during 1527. A third edition came off Heinrich Steiner's press in Augsburg in the 1540s as part of a whole series of Anabaptist prints and reprints. Pilgram Marpeck, then resident in Augsburg, appears to have been the main mover behind these prints and reprints, including Haugk's *Order*. The *Order* has also been preserved in Hutterite codices<sup>2</sup> and reappeared with some of Denck's works in a seventeenth century print, entitled *Geistliches Blumengärtchen*.<sup>3</sup> Thus Haugk's *Christian Order* circulated freely among Anabaptists and their descendants into the seventeenth century, even though it was of pre-Anabaptist vintage.<sup>4</sup> In terms of content, it belongs to the ethos of early South-German Anabaptism as shaped by Hans Denck and Hans Hut.

What was it that interested early Anabaptists in Haugk's semi-mystical tract focusing on the seven stages of divine wisdom? The answer appears to lie in Haugk's connection to Hut and Hut's influence on the emerging Anabaptist movement. What is clear is that Haugk's *Order* was read as a critical alternative to Martin Luther's understanding of justification by faith alone. Like Müntzer, Haugk focused on the issue of how true faith originates and is discerned. He takes issue with the Lutheran notion that faith comes through hearing the spoken Word or by reading the Scriptures. According to Haugk, the Scriptures are a mere outer witness; true faith is an inner work of the Spirit. It is the Spirit's illumination that "lifts" a person out of unbelief and sends the believer on a seven-stage journey that transforms the inner being and thus leads to conformity with Christ. True saving faith is therefore above all transformational.<sup>5</sup>

Haugk's metaphorical, mystical language can be disconcerting at times, but it is revealing, suggesting the influence of the *Theologia Deutsch* combined with Reformation biblicism. Like Hans Hut, Haugk suggests the existence of an elementary revelation in the created order. Indeed, it is tempting to infer that Hut's notion of the "Gospel of all creatures" was in part derived from Haugk's treatise.<sup>6</sup> Haugk also alludes to the "key of David" and the need to consider the "cloven

hooves” when interpreting the Scriptures, concepts invoked by Hans Denck and Melchior Hoffman, suggesting a possible borrowing from one another. As noted, Haugk indicated familiarity with mystical vocabulary. He wrote of the *Seelengrund* [ground of the soul] and of *Gelassenheit* [yieldedness].<sup>7</sup> His *Order* contains criticism of the learned, of mere book learning and of the exploitation of the poor, all themes continued in Anabaptist writings; and as already noted, he implicitly argued for the creation of a separated, pure church. In short, the apparent influence and popularity of Haugk’s *Christian Order* justifies its inclusion in a volume of Early South German/Austrian Anabaptist sources.

Bibliographical Source:

Werner O. Packull, *Mysticism and the Early South German-Austrian Anabaptist Movement, 1525-1531* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1977).

***A Christian Order of a true Christian:  
Giving Account of the Origin of his Faith.<sup>8</sup>***

***Introduction***

A Christian life progresses by degrees or steps towards perfection; such progression can be numbered, timed and measured; Wisd. 11[:22]; 2 Esd. 4[:37]. Just as a child increases his understanding daily, so also may a faithful reader increase his understanding of the Scriptures. Such a reader will discover that the number sequence seven is found frequently in the Scriptures, beginning with the seven days in Genesis [Gen. 1-2] and continuing with the seven pillars in the book of Proverbs [Prov. 9:1]; the seven eyes in Zechariah [Zech. 4:10]; the seven candlesticks in Exodus [Exod. 25:31-40]; seven spirits in Isaiah [Isa. 11:2]; seven churches, seven lamps, seven angels, seven trumpets and seven bowls in Revelation [Rev. 1:11, :12, :20, 8:2, 15:7]. The number seven always points to perfection where all is at rest and cannot be more perfect. The human being made one with the Spirit is brought to perfection through the seven gifts of the Spirit. But one reaches this seventh stage of divine blessedness only through great trial and tribulation. At the final stage the Spirit rests on the person and that person is conformed to Christ. All Scriptures witness to this end; they cannot point to anything higher. It follows that the Christian life begins in the fear of God, advancing by degrees from stage to stage until it has been tried and tested to the highest degree through all seven stages and has become conformed to Christ. As will be seen clearly in what follows, this means that such a person has reached the true Sabbath where God's Spirit rests; Isa. 11[:2].

***The Spirit of Fear***

As David states in Psalm 110[111:10], Solomon in Proverbs 1 and 9 [Prov. 1:7, 9:10], the wise man in Sir. 1, 2[1:15] and Job in chapter 28[:28]: the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. This is why the prophet in Sir. 1[:20] refers to the holy fear of God as to the root of the tree of wisdom and of life. The trunk, branches and twigs that grow out of the root of this tree, that is out of the fear of God, remain forever. They are divine wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge and blessedness [Isa. 11:1-2]. The sacred Scriptures often communicate these seven degrees toward perfection figuratively or through parables; Exod. 25[:31-40]. Thus God shows us his Spirit figuratively through



the candelabrum with the seven candlesticks, or in John's Rev. 4[:5] through the seven lamps. Prov. 9[:1] speaks of seven pillars in the house of wisdom; Zech. 4[:10] refers to seven eyes; Isa. 11[:1-2] to seven spirits, to seven degrees or seven gifts of the Spirit. Our spirit must be tested and filtered through seven degrees or stages by the seven gifts of the divine Spirit until the true light, the sun of righteousness, rises in us and illuminates all our darkness. Then we will be encompassed by the clear truth and lifted out of our unbelief; John 8[:12-32]. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, that is the root, trunk and the branches of the whole tree of wisdom and of light. From this wisdom sprouts all divine understanding of God in us. It follows that a true Christian life begins in the fear of God and continues in it until the end; Isa. 11[:66:5-24]; Luke 1; Ps. 18[:19]; Wisd. 10. It is important to note how the fear of God advances wisdom, while fear of humans or of the creatures does the opposite: it hinders the wisdom of God. Note that Christ was put to death because of human fear, as has been the case with all his true followers since the beginning of his ministry; Matt. 23[:30-36]. For when the common people heard the counsel of Caiaphas, that the Romans would come and take their belongings and lives [John 11:47-51] because of Jesus, then their fear of the Romans led them to agree to Christ's crucifixion. Fearing the loss of their material possessions, they picked up a penny and let 100,000 guilders fall to the ground [that is, they forfeited the riches of God in Christ Jesus]. They forsook the innocent anointed one of God, Jesus Christ, for the sake of transient, temporal things, like Esau who gave away his birth right for a bowl of lentil soup [Gen. 25:29-34]. They all lacked spiritual rectitude, selling themselves for material gains as, unfortunately, the whole world now does. Therefore, God's spiritual overtures through which he attempted to draw them back into a proper relationship with him were in vain; for even though the spirit in them desired to do the right things, the bag of maggots, that is the flesh with its love and desire for the creaturely [material], hindered God's work in them; Mark 4[:1-9, :13-20]; Matt. 13[:1-9, :18-23]; for no one can profitably serve two masters; Matt. 6[:24]. A God-fearing person resists the fear of humans and prefers to side with David [2 Sam. 24:14], Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Abednego, Susanna and with all of God's blessed ones who committed themselves into the hands of God rather than into human hands, for with God is mercy. Therefore, two fears cannot exist beside each other in the same person, for what the fear of God begins and builds, fear of humans or the creatures destroys. Spirit and flesh cannot triumph at the same

time; what profits the flesh diminishes the spirit. Whatever a person loves or fears more than God that is the person's God. Jacob could not fear God as long as he feared humans; therefore he had to overcome his fear of humans by permitting his left hip, in which that fear of humans was located, to be fractured, so that he would fear God only and be assured of God's blessing; Gen. 32[:26-30]. And in as much as he prevailed with God against human fear, the fear of God purged all human fear in him. As the wise man said, the fear of God drives out sin, but the fear of humans is sin [Wisd. 1:21]. The discipline of the Lord cleans the wicks of the seven lamps; for if the wick, that is the flesh, desires to go beyond the spirit, then it dims the light and creates darkness in our temple. It darkens the truth and extinguishes the movement of the Holy Spirit in us. At that point the wick trimmer, that is the discipline and rod of the Father, must cut such hindrance off and throw it out of our temple so that the light can illuminate everything in us again.

All living creatures give witness that the fear of God is the beginning of divine wisdom; for all creatures fulfill their lives in fear, and none trusts the other. We can see that in nature all animals have their enemies, so that through fear they are exercised to become alert and wise and learn to avoid their enemies as the greatest evil. And this is to be an object lesson for humans: indeed, all creation has been ordained and ordered for this purpose. Thus all animals teach us that fear is the way to God's wisdom. No person of right mind knowingly eats or drinks something unfamiliar, no matter how appetizing it looks. This is the result of fearing the unknown; one fears deception and loss of life. Fear in turn leads to questioning and to the examination of all things, whether they are good or evil, beneficial or detrimental. So also does the fear of God give birth to wisdom.

For this reason has God given humans many enemies, as anyone with open eyes can see, unless one is absolutely blind. But because we have locked the fear of God out of our hearts, we must, according to God's righteous judgment, fear other humans and the creatures. Like Adam, we have all forsaken God through our desire for and pleasure in the creatures [Gen. 3:6-13]. And because we have come to love the creaturely in our hearts, God's creation order has been disrupted and we have been in turn cut off from God in height, depth, width and length and become imprisoned to the creaturely, so that we can be returned to God only through much drudgery and misery.

God has shown us the consequences of our unfaithfulness in the warring, quarrelling and deception that goes on in competition for the

creatures. Meanwhile all animals cunningly tear, choke, kill and feast on each other, becoming unnecessarily fat and sleek; none are satisfied with the ordained amount of food but live for the sake of the belly. For this reason the fox devours chickens, the wolf sheep, hawks pigeons, etc. Similarly, the tyrants, both temporal and spiritual, devour blood and flesh and sap the strength of all the working poor through usury. These exploiters are animals that live for the belly, born by nature to strangle; 2 Pet. 2[:10-15, :22]; Phil. 3[:18-19]. This is not right. God has not meant it to be that way. He is not the enemy of humankind, nor does he take pleasure in violence. No, God wants to open our eyes; he wants to shake us up and show us our disobedience so that we are ashamed and return to him; as when a son says to his father, "I will never do this again", and the father says, "Well then, I will no longer beat you but break the rod and throw it into the fire." If humankind were obedient to God and feared him, then all creatures would have to serve humans and obey them, but because humans are disobedient to God they are not worthy of the creatures which they use and eat. God created the creatures so that humankind should recognize and understand that they ought to be subject to God just as the creatures are subject to humans.<sup>9</sup>

But fear leads to anxious questioning, to an examination of oneself and of God in all things, persons, places, times, thoughts, words and deeds; yes, in all matters done or undone. Indeed, fear and anxiety lead to a constant examination of the unknown. Fear takes all things into account, examines them carefully and thinks on them until it has understood their true nature. Fear thus distinguishes evil from good, darkness from light, that which is certain from the uncertain, faith from unbelief, truth from lies, righteousness from unrighteousness, God from the devil, the eternal from the temporal, evil from good, appearance from reality, an invented faith from a proven or tested and unfeigned faith. It does not confuse good with evil and evil with good, the sweet with the sour and the sour with the sweet, as now the world does because it lacks proper judgment.

The discernment that comes through the fear of God and the Holy Spirit finds an analogy in the animals with cloven hooves; Lev. 11[:3-8].<sup>10</sup> These animals carefully chew their feed, moving it back and forth as if testing it. Similarly those standing in the fear of God take things to heart, sift them carefully whether they be true. With John they hold steadily to the immovable truth. They are not like the frivolous or foolish who are tossed about by every wind. Standing in the fear of God,

they are the pure whom Christ commands to eat [the eucharist] and whom he permits to come into his temple as living sacrifices; for where one God-fearing person joins another, there Christ's body is continually built up, Eph. 4[:14-16], but where the good join the evil ones, there everything deteriorates because what the good build up the evil ones break down; if this one prays, the other blasphemes. Therefore, the good and the evil ones must be separated from each other, so that proper judgment or discernment can reemerge; Matt. 13[:24-30].

The pure fear of God does not fear evil but shuns it; Ps. 18[Ps. 19:10]. It does not embrace the unfamiliar, lest it be deceived. It embraces only the good. Because all wisdom has its beginning in the humble fear of God, the good hearted long to do what is right and to leave the wrong. In contrast, those lacking the fear of God remain like fools without wisdom who proceed thoughtlessly and ruin themselves through the very thing in which they seek pleasure. But a wise person does all things in the fear of God, lest he fail to discern whether a thing be good and proper. Thus the pure fear of God gives birth to proper discernment [*Erkenntnuss*]<sup>11</sup> and it follows that the more one fears a thing the more one would like to understand it. Once one discerns it to be in truth wholly good and understands it properly, one loves it all the more; but if one discerns it to be evil, one falls on it with true hatred. For as fear gives birth to discernment and understanding, so understanding gives birth to love. Thus, if a person comes to another seemingly in full friendship and love, no matter how friendly that person acts, the other person will not trust him unless he has known this person previously; I mean truly known this person to be without deceit. All this is the result of fear and not knowing whether that person is honest or deceptive. But if one knows that person, it is easy to love him. For when one recognizes the good in the other, one develops love towards that person and when love flows out of proper discernment and understanding, all fear disappears, for love excludes all fear; 1 John 4[:17-18]. But before one reaches true discernment and understanding, one holds to the middle of the road and examines every thing cautiously, lest one stray from God, either in temporal or in eternal matters.

Now then, when true love has come out of proper discernment and understanding and has driven out fear, then faith or trust is added; for if one loves someone, then one believes that person; thus love gives birth to trust or faith; 1 Cor. 13[:7, :13].

One cannot believe or trust a person totally in earthly matters unless one first knows and loves that person. How then should I trust and hope

in the eternal God whom I do not see without first knowing and loving him, trusting and hoping for all the best from him? But when I know him in truth as my highest and only good, then I cannot help but love him in truth with my whole heart as my noblest treasure. For I know with certainty that he is faithful and just and the only singular [*ainfeltig*] good. Such love forces me out of experience to trust him and to expect all the best from him. Thus God's Spirit teaches us through all Scripture that we should recognize his goodness towards us. As a sure witness of his goodness and so that we may properly know him, he has created heaven and earth and everything in it for our good, for our service, and to aid us so that we may use all of it for our needs. Indeed, he so lovingly offers us his mild goodness that if he were human and we were divine, he himself would accept from us what he offers us and demands of us. He wants to be our Father and endows us with the riches of his glory [Eph. 3:15-16], and shares them with us [*gemain machen*], so that we might be his children and heirs eternally [Rom. 8:17].

Abraham feared God from his youth on and oriented his whole life accordingly. As a true servant of God, Abraham raised his son Isaac in the fear of God and gave him Rebecca for a wife so that God-fearing children would be born into the world. It is to the world's greatest detriment that one does not procreate [*erzeugt*] and raise children in the fear of God. The fear of God makes our human fear transparent; it does this in all the chosen. The fear of God is the beginning, middle and end of a true life, and all things must proceed in this fear if one is to fulfil one's life in God's will.

### ***A Short Order [of] How True Faith Grows Properly in a Person***

The fear of God gives birth to true understanding [*erkenntnuss*]; Ps. 110[111:10], [Ps. 19:8-10]; and understanding gives birth to true love; 1 John 4[16]; for we have understood and believed his love. Unfeigned love gives birth to true faith. Love believes all things, etc. and faith works through love [Gal. 5:6]. Love is a fulfillment of the law; he who loves me keeps my commandments.<sup>12</sup> All things serve for the good of those who love God; Rom. 8[28]. An experienced faith trusts God fully and surrenders completely to him; it wagers everything one has and is capable of; Heb. 11.

### ***The Spirit of Wisdom***

Originating in the fear of God, the spirit of wisdom distinguishes between good and evil, true and false. It meditates on and takes to heart the things that are in heaven and in Christ Jesus, who is risen and in whom all the treasures of all wisdom and the fullness of divine knowledge rest and dwell; Col. 2[:3]. Out of his fullness we all receive eternal light; John 1[:9]; according to the measure of our faith; Eph. 4[:7]; Ps. 67[68]. In turn we learn to despise as of little value the wisdom and the things of this world which are corruptible and passing. Yes, divine knowledge provides deep insight into our ignorance and takes cognizance of how far we have turned away from God and through ignorance of divine wisdom have become entangled in matters of this world.

True wisdom points me to heaven and earth and points me to the true head, Christ, who is the eternal truth of the Father; John 1[:17]. But this wisdom is the work of the Holy Spirit, whose loving goodness and power emanates from the Father and the Son, and leads into all truth; John 16[:13]; Rom. 8[:26-30].

Everything that leads me away from God to the creatures is evil. The lies and deception of the creatures had their beginning in the main deceiver, the old serpent, Satan; Gen. 3[:1-5, :13-15]; Isa. 14[:29]; Rev. 12[:9]; [John 8:44].

### ***The Spirit of Discernment*** <sup>13</sup>

Proper discernment or understanding born out of the fear and wisdom of God holds still and awaits the imprint [*eindruckung*] of the divine will, lest deception enter along with truth and the wisdom of God, for the angel of darkness and of error often disguises himself as an angel of light and intrudes proper discernment and subverts it; 2 Cor. 11:14. These are the wolves or deceivers who disguise their true nature and evil intentions under sheep skins, that is, under a good appearance, in order to destroy mercilessly the sheep fold and sheep stall of Christ. They always come in the name of Christ with the appearance of truth in order to mislead many [Matt. 24:5]. Through the Spirit of God David calls them mid-day devils or devils of light, because they seem to be on the side of plain truth, like the devil himself who addressed Christ politely, citing Scripture: "Are you God's son?" etc. When they wish to deceive, they speak in a high, sweet, flattering voice. They polish their act and scatter their seed like a fowler who throws something out to the unsuspecting little birds [Jer. 5:26]; puts honey into their beaks but

means to poison them. When they eat this food, it tastes sweet but is bitter in their belly. At present the whole world eats of it and it tastes very sweet in their mouth, but oh, how very bitter it will become in their bellies! Therefore, it is necessary to examine oneself and to permit Christ the crucified one to open one's discernment within, that is, the Christ who wells up from within. All other discernment is rejected by God and cannot endure, either to the right or the left, because it will not yield to obedience and service of Jesus Christ; indeed, it is incapable of turning away from all that resists the discernment of God in us. For this reason everything anticipated in faith needs to be understood and unlocked by the intellect which through faith in the promise of Jesus Christ justifies and is made manifest through the unconditional righteousness of the divine work in us; Rom. 1[:16-17].

Otherwise the Holy Spirit would be alienated by invented ideas and an invented faith,<sup>14</sup> which hates God's discipline; does not want to suffer the hand of God and does not want to be tested like gold in fire; Wisd. 1[Wisd. 3:4-7]. Therefore proper discernment is a certain assurance in the depth [*abgrundt*] of the soul<sup>15</sup> as to the eternal will of God, so that one knows truly that God has spoken rather than the devil or mere creaturely imagination.<sup>16</sup> Whoever bases himself on his own or on a stranger's discernment builds on sand [Matt. 7:26], remains unsure, creates fantasies and sects and carries contaminated water into the cistern [Jer. 2:13]. But if anyone lacks understanding, let him pray to God and he will be properly instructed; James 1[:5]; Sir. 1[:18-19]; [Prov. 2:3-5].

### *The Spirit of Counsel*

Furthermore, it is highly necessary for the elect to have the spirit of divine counsel so that they exercise proper discernment as to the divine gifts and, as Paul points out, do not despise their neighbour, who may have received a lower or a higher gift from God.

For this reason the judgments [*urteil*] of God must be searched out in a common account of faith in accordance with each person's gift, that is, through the spirit of counsel which leaves nothing undone that pertains to the fear, wisdom and understanding of God.<sup>17</sup> The spirit of counsel helps to recognize the good, so that it will not be misused or removed through thievery and the person deceived. The Spirit's counsel brings one into an unspeakable amazement, because God illuminates the ground of the soul [*grund seiner Seele*] so powerfully and with such wisdom, so lovingly, so kindly, in all things so benevolently and

irrefutably, in a way totally unknown to the person who has previously not discerned anything about God's glorious indwelling [*beywonung*].<sup>18</sup>

Such a gift, which is called the spirit of counsel, drives one to leave nothing undone in order to make the acquaintance of such a wonderful God and to come into the proper inheritance of divine fellowship. A person who has experienced the spirit of counsel will be driven by a desire, a longing, a sighing for the Spirit in pursuit of the unknown God, a desire which in turn will give birth to a hunger and thirst for divine understanding, so that all things which are not of God become bitter to such a person<sup>19</sup> and such a person remains inconsolable by things not of God. Such a person can counsel others, tell them about the origin of his faith, what happened to him before he came to such a faith or discernment of God, what he suffered from within and without on account of it and how bitter the struggle was before faith and the inner truth overcame unbelief; indeed, how he had to navigate first through an ocean of contrariness [*widerwertigkeit*]. Through his own experience such a person knows the way and can attest to the dangers that will be encountered in the beginning, the middle and the end. This is what Peter means in 1 Pet. 3[:15] when he writes: "One should be willing to give an account of one's faith."

At this stage one feels like the prodigal son, Luke 15[:11-32], or like the person who fell among the robbers on his way to Jericho; Luke 10[:30-37]. One comes to an inner yieldedness [*Gelassenheit*] regarding all things, including oneself, and with an empty, disconsolate soul one awaits the consolation of God; Matt. 16[:24-28]; Luke 14[:27].

And because from youth on one has consumed and spent one's strength in worldly lusts and in the works of sin as if one pours out water, it is necessary at this stage in accordance with one's own will to reach out to God with all one's strength in order to come to know his loving will. And because one has frivolously and willfully wasted one's strength on all kinds of evil, has become corrupt and is no longer capable of any good and because one has in manifold ways strayed from God, one must in turn be drawn back to God's good will in various ways. One must experience justification and the testing of faith through many trials and much tribulation, yes, in equal measure to the energy or strength formerly expended on the lusts of the flesh; for to become righteous one must be tried and tested like gold in fire; 1 Pet. 1[:6-7]; Sir. 2[:5]; Wisd. 3[:6].



### ***The Spirit of Strength***

For the above process of justification one needs to be strengthened by the Spirit of God, who strengthens the person according to that person's yielded strength [*gelassene kraft*], that is, according to the weight and measure of the gift needed [Rom. 12:6]. At this point one becomes courageous and upright [*rechtschaffen*], proclaiming the goodness of God and his marvelous work. Because the riches of grace and the clear, bright knowledge of God have opened wide the understanding [*Vernunft*] of such a person, that person will no longer weaken. Indeed, a person who has trodden the narrow path of dying to all that hinders him from God and has learned the cause of all human failing will be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood, evil and good, sweet and sour, true and false faith. Like Paul, such a person will fear nothing. Nothing will be powerful or influential enough to turn such a person away from Christ and from divine love. Such a person is strong in God, overcomes and subdues himself, accepts patiently everything laid on him as the noblest gift from God and as the necessary work through which God disciplines and prepares him. In this way good overcomes evil [Rom. 12:21]. When such a person experiences trials and tribulations [*Anfechtung*], these become lessons in the life with God for that person. As that person formerly was high in sin, so now he needs in equal measure to be made low: instead of pride humility, instead of riches poverty, instead of gluttony hunger, etc. In whatever manner and measure the person had sinned, in the same manner and measure he is to experience God's discipline; Wisd. 11[:17].<sup>20</sup>

Thus when encountering adversity, one should not rest or remain at peace until one understands what God wishes to teach or why he wishes to test one. For when one realizes that adversity has been sent by God for one's own good, then one is able to remain patient in the midst of suffering; yes, one can have joy and peace. As Christ says in Matt. 5 and 10, God comes not in vain; he encounters us in the paths through which we left him in order to liberate us through the cross of tribulation,<sup>21</sup> for suffering justifies us from the preceding lusts. If we had not strayed from God through lusts, we would not need to suffer.

Without suffering one cannot be freed from that which one has come to love. The more one has come to love the creaturely instead of God, the more painful it will be when God cuts one off from the creaturely and when one has to leave it. If God would not wrench the faithless person from the creaturely through tribulation, that person

would remain eternally lost [*ewig auss*] and would never come to God, for it is impossible for a person to leave the creaturely which has become most pleasing to that person. But with God all things are possible. If one does not wish to take account of God in this life, then God cuts one off in the next, as happened to the rich man in Luke [16:19-31]. The creaturely was no longer able to comfort the rich man in the next life. Consequently, a person who does not heed God's voice in this life will have to hear it in the fire of the second death in order to do the right thing.<sup>22</sup> All evil desires must be destroyed; our hearts must be emptied in order to become new vessels into which God's grace can be poured [Matt. 9:17]; [Eph. 4:22-24]. One must put on a new nature.

### ***The Spirit of knowledge [Kunst]*** <sup>23</sup>

In addition, it is necessary to receive the spirit of divine knowledge. To a person experienced in divine knowledge it is clear that all parts originating with and having come from God must be brought back into the whole, that is, into the origin from whence they came; Col. 2[:9-10]; Phil. 3.<sup>24</sup> All things work to the good of those who have this insight; Rom. 8[:28]; and to such persons the yoke is easy; Matt. 11[:30].

Divine knowledge is contrary [*gegentayl*] to what the world cherishes; for it is revealed in the cross and in dying. This knowledge is mastered only by following the crucified Christ.

Divine knowledge is best communicated through opposites: faith versus unbelief; love versus hate; despair versus hope in God; patiently waiting on God versus denial of righteousness; gospel versus fraud; truth versus falsehood; spirit versus flesh; Christ versus Satan; light versus darkness; good versus evil; suffering and the cross versus violence and tyranny; day versus night; summer versus winter; white versus black; sweet versus sour; rest versus labor; joy versus sorrow; life versus death; eternal versus temporal.

When David described a godly person, he did so through opposites, that is, by contrasting the godly with the ungodly. The Scriptures do this consistently and throughout. Yes, one can see it also in the creatures that the good and the evil ones are opposed to each other so that the good may be all the more readily recognized and become all the more attractive by comparison with their evil opposite. Thus one is interpreted through the other and more easily recognized through its opposite. Thus God demonstrates his wisdom wonderfully through opposites or contraries, so that through the visible the invisible and through the temporal the eternal may be perceived, desired and loved, etc.<sup>25</sup>

### ***The Spirit of Divine Blessedness***

The spirit of divine blessedness represents the highest degree of faith,<sup>26</sup> that is the believer conformed to Christ has become with Christ God-minded, and his light has been placed on the candlestick to shine for all [Matt. 5:14-16], just as the heavenly father permits the sun to shine on the good and on the evil ones and sends fruitful rain on believers and unbelievers, the grateful and ungrateful alike [Matt. 5:45]. For God wants all people to come to the truth and this will truly take place. The true meaning of this becomes clear to those who reach the highest degree of yieldedness [*gelassenheit*] towards themselves and all creatures and are ignited by the highest zeal for God in all matters so that nothing in the temporal realm satisfies them and they find themselves in constant conflict with the flesh. Yet their spirit finds rest in God, even though God hides himself from them for a while, leaves them without comfort, as if he has no concern for them, etc. Abraham stood in this high degree of yieldedness when he was prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac [Gen. 22:2-18]; similarly Moses, when he zealously interceded on behalf of Israel, wishing himself to be stricken from the book of life rather than for Israel to perish [Exod. 32:32]; so also Paul, when he desired to be cursed in place of his brothers [Rom. 9:3]; David in his flight from Absalom, when Shimei cursed him [2 Sam. 16:5-8]; Christ, when he heard them say, "If he is the king of Israel, then let him climb from the cross, he helped others, now let him help himself, then we will believe" [Matt. 27:40-42]; Job, when his friends mocked him in his suffering [Job 19:3]; Tobias, when his wife said to him, "It is clear as day that your hope in God is useless" [Tob. 2:22]; Isaiah, when during the Babylonian captivity he went into the wilderness of the desert by himself for the sake of the children of Israel [Isa. 42:1-7, 49:1-6, 53:12]; Esther, when she disobeyed the prohibition of King Xerxes in order to redeem her people [Esther 4]; Judith, when she placed herself into great danger for the salvation of God's people [Jdt. 7:12]; Daniel in the lions' den [Dan. 6:17-23; 1 Macc. 2:59]; Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace [Dan. 3:14-23; 1 Macc. 2:59]; and so on throughout Scriptures one finds examples of a high degree of yieldedness. But before true faith in God begins and is completely formed, all hindrances to proper understanding must be removed and overcome, whether one likes it or not. One arrives at the degree of blessedness only after falling and rising again and again: indeed, the righteous may fall seven times a day but will rise just as often to praise God. This process grinds

one down like a hunted deer that chased by vicious dogs ends up in a well. This is the way one is loosened from one's sinful desires and lusts and begins to call on God for grace; Ps. 41[42:2]. Our soul must thirst for righteousness until it receives it in all fullness; Matt. 5[6]; Luke 1[:28]; Ps. 41[42:3]; only then does one come to the proper understanding that the righteous lives in faith, Hab. 2[4]; Rom. 1[:17]. Here the believers and God are joined through faith, like two cherubim that kiss each other. As the power of God manifests itself in the believer, he is one with and in God; Ps. 83[84:6-8].

Faith is a blessed, pleasing and sure understanding through which we assuredly live according to the will of God, and leave all love of the creaturely things behind, knowing full well how to use them properly.

True faith is created and planted in us by the fear of God while we are still in the mother's womb, Sir. 1[:14]. Indeed, the beginnings of faith lie in us like a seed of grain in a field, and this grain of faith grows with us [Matt. 13:1-8, :18-23], for all humans, especially the chosen ones, have God's Spirit in them as a pledge that they will not despise God's goodness for ever; Rom. 8.<sup>27</sup> This is the seal with which we have been sealed unto the day of redemption, Eph. 4[:30]. This is the light through which we will see the eternal light; Ps. 35[36:10]; John 1[:4-9], 8[:12]. Thus we groan inwardly for our adoption and redemption by God; Rom. 8[:23]; John 1. God wants to be recognized, worshipped and honored. We are companions and co-beneficiaries embodying [*einleybig*] the eternal light, 2 Pet. 1[:19]. Through Christ we become one body, one fellowship and participants in the eternal light; John 1[:4], 5:9-13; 1 John 3[:7]. This is the meaning of the parables concerning the mustard seed of faith; Matt. 13[:31-32], 17[:20], the grain of wheat and the treasure in the field; John 12[:24]; Matt. 13[:44-46]. We are made in the image of God through Christ; Gen. 1[:26-27], 2[:7], 5[:3], 9[:6]; Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 11[:7-13], 15[:37-49]; Col. 1[:15-23], 3[:9-10]; Heb. 1[:3]. It is the life we have from God, and it is part of God himself, for he is life; John 1[:4], 10[:28]; Deut. 30[:15-16, :19-20]; Rom. 10[:8]; Acts 17[:27-28]. Through Christ we participate in the divine nature and become his kindred, his lineage and offspring; Acts 17[:28-29]. Through him we become heirs of all the treasures of divine wisdom; Col. 2[:2-3]. Through Christ we become capable of receiving the treasures of divine wisdom.<sup>28</sup> That is the heart of the matter<sup>29</sup> from which true life flows and leads to the life God wants us to live; Prov. 4[:4]; Deut. 6; Matt. 22[:37]; Luke 10[:27]. This is the pound which God expects the faithful servant to invest and to increase, etc, Mark 11[4:8, :20]; Luke 8[:8-15]. This is the seed in the field,

or in our heart, which brings multiple return; Mark 13[:8, :23]. This is the hundred weight entrusted to the faithful servant to be used, etc. Matt. 11. This is the new creature, the inner person, Gal. 5 and 6; the precious little pearl; the virgin bride who alone is suited to be betrothed to God's son, to be united with him by means of a wedding ring, which is a sign of faith.

God is more than all that has ever been spoken or written about him. The Scriptures warn, admonish, draw, entice and point us to the highest good which must be found in us and without which we will never be satisfied. God, the highest good, accepts nothing and no one except the Son who has proceeded from him. Only through the Son can we be united with the highest good. If God withdraws his Spirit from us, we are incapable of forming proper judgments, for it is the Spirit that leads us into all truth.

But it is the lusts of the flesh that hide the highest good from us, like a hidden, covered stream hides its water. And the lusts of the flesh, like the thorns in the field, seek to choke, smother, stifle and make fruitless the grain of wheat that is God's work in us [Matt. 13:7]. For if the grain of wheat in us is to come alive in our heart, all foreign growth, that is the weeds, must first be weeded out; John 12[:24-26]; Matt. 16[:25]; Luke 14[:33]. Thus Christ states in Matt. 7[:17] and Paul in Rom. 2[:15]; 2 Cor. 3[:3-6] that the law is written into our heart,<sup>30</sup> but that we must make room for it by weeding out the lusts of the flesh and permitting the good seed to grow up and to be recognized. All creatures witness to this truth, for God has commended them as good; Gen. 1[:26], something he would not have done had he not placed goodness in them. Since then all creatures were created for the sake of humankind and were made subject to humankind, something that is true even in terms of mere outer physical subjugation to humans, how much more certain is it then that God has placed good in the human beings created in his own image, for whose purpose all the other creatures exist [Gen. 1:26-27]. Indeed, humans have received a seed to sustain their autonomy and authority [*seines wesens selbständigkeit*] in relation to the creatures. To this end, all visible creatures serve as examples and object lessons to humankind so that humankind learn its own purpose, rank and role in the divinely order ordained of things. For just as the visible creatures are subject to humankind, so humankind needs to be subject to God. All moisture from below and all sprinkling from above would be fruitless if the seed of grain were not placed in the soil [Matt. 13:1-23]; so also would all prompting, urging, admonition and instruc-

tion of the Holy Spirit be in vain if there were not some embodiment [*einleybig*] of the divine Spirit in the human being. For the earthly cannot receive the heavenly, nor the corruptible receive the incorruptible; 1 Cor. 15[:36-49]; but just as the fruitful rains awaken what they find in the soil, so also the living waters of God's Spirit awaken in the inner human being faith as small as a mustard seed which grows a large tree.<sup>31</sup>

The Scriptures give only an outer witness of a true life, but they cannot create a new being [*wesen*] in me. For this reason one cannot rely on books or learned persons, because books do not produce Christians, for they tend to lead the reader outward rather than inward. Note that at the time of Christ and the apostles there were few books but many good Christians. Back then, divine knowledge was not stolen from books as is the practice now; back then, it was not a matter of moving from externals to internals, which is like carrying water to the well. Book learning merely puffs up and produces arrogant persons who think highly of themselves and are forever learning<sup>32</sup> but never arriving at an understanding of the truth; 1 Cor. 8[:1-3]; Matt. 23[:2-7, :13-14, :23-33]. But the true Christian life comes from God and begins in the depth of the soul [*abgrundt*], as is witnessed to by the Scriptures and the creatures.<sup>33</sup>

One should take from books only that which concerns and witnesses of a true life, and one should let the book and the teacher go once they have given witness. One must await the power of God in the heart, for all writing and preaching is in vain if God does not give understanding. This is why David said: "Lord, give me understanding; Lord, teach me your law" [Ps. 119]. The Scriptures have to be opened to us through the key of David<sup>34</sup> as was the case with all who wrote the Scriptures.

I must test the witness of the Scriptures to see if it is true in me. But if I am of a different mind and have a wrong understanding, it will hinder me and hold me back from a true, divine understanding. I must then examine what it is that I love more than God. This is where the struggle between spirit and flesh begins. If the flesh is victorious and the person falls under the sway of the creaturely, the person will be worse off than before; but if the spirit is victorious, then one truth after another will emerge for such a person [Rom. 8:5-14]. When the spiritually illuminated person reads and considers the Scriptures, they witness to him of an unchanging God, while he recognizes himself as the opposite—a changeable human being. The person cannot escape from this realization, indeed, may find himself in a situation as if there were no God. If in his unbelief such a person does not want to become blas-

phemous but accepts the truth, then that person must hold still in fear between faith and unbelief, await God's revelation and give up his unbelief. Then with truth in the heart, true faith will overcome unbelief. To this end one's own understanding must be opened and the Scriptures must be revealed as they were to all God's chosen patriarchs, prophets, evangelists and apostles; Ps. 61[62]; Job 33[:4-30].

But before this happens, the struggle between faith und unbelief creates great turmoil in the person. During this struggle I must hold still in fear and eagerly desire to do what is right and to abandon evil. That which stirs in me while I am in this state holds and overcomes me and makes itself clear to me, so that I accept it. For if I am to believe, then clear truth must first reveal my unbelief and overcome it; otherwise I am unable to surrender my intellect to the service of God. If unbelief remains victorious in this struggle, one falls away from God to the creaturely; but if faith triumphs, then God reveals himself and to such a person all things serve to the good, [are sweet in God]. Such a person no longer esteems the love of creaturely things, yes, lets go of them.

Some think that one must believe the dead letter of Scriptures without the experience of God's illuminating power, but that would mean nothing less than inventing delusionary truths. Such a person accepts the Scriptures without having the inner experience to which they witness. They accept the witness from those who are contrary to the Scriptures and hence not from God; Ps. 30[31]; John 16; Luke [24:31-32, :44-49].

Nothing on earth is more misleading than if the Scriptures are not experienced and learned in the ground of the soul. Many accept the Scriptures as if they were the essence of divine truth; but they are only a witness to divine truth which must be experienced in the inner being.<sup>35</sup>

If God is to have mercy on me, then I must be illuminated by him and led into an understanding of myself. But if he is to illumine me, he must first frighten me [*entsetzen*] in order to liberate and free me from my darkness and error. If he is to show me my unrighteousness and deliver me from it, then he must first cast me down and afflict me with pain; for it is through his holy cross, through suffering, that he justifies me [*rechtfertigt*] and removes the lusts that have estranged me from God and held up his work.<sup>36</sup> But if he is to help me through his cross, then I must carry it, suffer it and accept it. And if I agree to suffering the cross, then I must be certain that it is for my own good. In this context I must examine my whole life from my youth on and realize how unrighteous I am.

But as one searches and examines one's whole life, one finds nothing but disobedience and turning away from God, and one realizes that one lacks faith and trust in God. Consequently one is overcome by unbelief and placed into the fear of God. This fear gives birth to understanding [*erkendtnuss*], understanding gives birth to love and love gives birth to faith; 1 Cor. 13[:4-7]; 1 John 4[:7-16]; 1 Pet. 1[:7-8]; not all at once, but according to time, number and measure; 2 Esd. 4; Wisd. 11[:20-21].

Some think that the word comes from the outside, through preaching or through the Scriptures. They do not understand what the Scriptures say;<sup>37</sup> Rom. 10[:8]; Deut. 30[:2, :10, :14, :16]; namely that the word has been previously placed and hidden in our heart, and that the Scriptures show us how to find it. If however the word were to be planted from the outside, then God's kingdom would consist of talk [*rede*] and not of power, contrary to what Christ said; [Matt. 15:1-20]; Mark 7[:1-23]. But preaching and Scripture reading are merely a witness to divine truth, a witness that indicates where and how a person may come to this treasure, by what means, in what way, at what time and according to which order [*ordenung*]. A person who does not properly understand this will never be able to use the hidden treasure because the treasure will remain unused, hidden in the field [Matt. 13:44] unless it is revealed to the person and the person learns its significance, its value and how to access it for his/her benefit. This is how it is with the treasure of divine goodness and riches; may we come to know and experience it. To this end help us Jesus Christ, the crucified Son of God. Amen.

A short order of the seven degrees or stages [*staffeln*] through which one is led to perfection by the Holy Spirit:

To fear God with the whole heart gives birth to wisdom; Job 28[:28].

To shun evil brings understanding; Job 28[:28].

Understanding gives birth to love and faith. Blessed are those who act upon it; Ps. 100[111:10].<sup>38</sup>

To remain steadfast is divine counsel [*radt*].

To overcome oneself is strength.

To judge all in God and to accept all as from God is divine learning and wisdom [*kunst*]; 1 Cor. 13[:12].

To become conformed to and like-minded with Christ is divine blessedness; all is at rest; it is the true Sabbath which God requires of us but which the whole world opposes.



