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STRASBOURG'S RELIGIOUS RADICALS FROM 1525 TO 1570:
A SOCIAL HISTORY

by
John David Derksen

A thesis
presented to the University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Chapter 6

SECTARIANS IN ORDINARY LIFE, 1535-50

The story of the Melchiorites may be recounted chronologically because their story in part centered around that of their leader, and because, with their radical agenda, they were watched by the authorities. The story of the Schwenckfeldians, too, may be followed chronologically because, drawn from Strasbourg's social and intellectual elite, they were visible and their lives thoroughly chronicled. Their lives also interacted with that of their leader and they had strong secondary leadership.

But with the current state of the sources this is not possible with Strasbourg's other radical groups. These mostly clandestine sectarians were often invisible. And yet, like fish jumping out of a lake at unpredictable times and places, they emerge from time to time in various contexts. Especially after 1540 the story of Strasbourg's sectarians is a patchwork of small incidents and brief glimpses. The intent of this chapter is to relate the stories, highlight the glimpses and make some broader observations about the nature of everyday life among the sectarians. For the most part material is drawn from the

1540s. Radical responses to major issues like the Smalkald War are discussed in the following chapter.

This chapter will argue that most of Strasbourg's religious radicals were ordinary folk, lower artisans with diverse identities, diverse reasons for their nonconformity, and largely domestic interests. The majority, Swiss Brethren, experienced growth in the 1540s because of the decline of Melchioritism, the continued arrival of refugees, proselytization, the beginning of second generation nonconformity, and widespread complicity among neighbors and rural authorities. The Strasbourg magistrates' long-standing hostility toward Catholic authorities enabled Anabaptists in Catholic jurisdictions to find in them a protector.

I. Groups

The 1540s featured a number of nonconformist groups ranging from the Swiss Brethren, who insisted on certain doctrines and behavior, to others who paid little attention to doctrine. Besides the Melchiorites, a 1539 history of the church by Hedio listed twelve Anabaptist groups, of whom not all were active in Strasbourg: the "Müntzerani, Orantes, Silentes, Somniantes, Pueris similes, Synceri, Impeccabiles a baptismo, Liberi, Binderliani, Sabbatarii, Maderani, ...and nuper Circumcisi."¹ In December 1543 Johann

¹ Clasen, *Anabaptism*, 30, 443, n. 2; *TAE III*, No. 888, pp. 306-307.

Gast of Basel noted rumors of Hoffmanians, Anabaptists, followers of Jakob Kautz, followers of Ludwig Hätzer and Epicureans in Strasbourg, not to mention those influenced by Cellarius, Schwenckfeld and Servetus.² The radicals themselves recognized several groups. At a nighttime Swiss Brethren worship service in July 1545, a preacher spoke about how God would eradicate all who were not of the Anabaptist faith such as the Catholics, Lutherans, Zwinglians and another Anabaptist group, the Philippites.³ In the view of the Schwenckfeldian Latin teacher, Peter (Novesianus) Schaf in 1556, there were too many sects, one as damned as the other. Catholics, Lutherans, Zwinglians, Schwenckfeldians and Anabaptists, and among the latter, Hutterians, Hoffmanians, Swiss Brethren, Pilgramites, Sabbatarians and others all claimed to have the truth. He feared to join any of them.⁴

Some evidence of Pilgramites, followers of Pilgram Marpeck, appears in the 1540s. In December 1540 a letter was delivered from Marpeck to Anabaptists in Alsace. Ludwig Hafner, a Pilgramite, had in his travels delivered a letter from Alsatian Anabaptists to Marpeck. In return Marpeck

² *TAE IV*, No. 1330, pp. 57-58. Gast had just written a history of the Anabaptists, *De anabaptismi exordio* (1544).

³ *TAE IV*, No. 1453, pp. 143-145.

⁴ AMS, Wiedertäuferherren Minutes, I, 14 (1556), f. 2v-4r.

sent a letter and his pamphlet "Unity and the Bride of Christ" to the Anabaptists in Strasbourg, in Alsace, in the Kinzig Valley and in the Leber Valley.⁵ Another possible Pilgramite was the leader Sigmund Bosch. Bosch had been among forty-four Anabaptists imprisoned in 1529 in the city's efforts to identify the authors of slanderous pamphlets.⁶ Between 1529 and 1548 he had spent time in Moravia. Back in Strasbourg, in July 1548 he wrote a letter to fellow believers in Moravia. He pointed to the Smalkald War as a sign of the imminent end of the world, and encouraged his readers to serve God to the end with little concern for earthly goods. Still active in 1553, Bosch was a leader who worked to keep communication alive between the scattered Anabaptist congregations; his greetings to the Moravian believers came from his own congregation in Strasbourg, from the Kinzig Valley where Marpeck had worked, and from the Leber Valley.⁷ The letters of Marpeck and Bosch indicate that communication among Anabaptists across Europe continued in the 1540s.

⁵ TAE III, No. 1071, p. 442. *Von der einigkeit und der prauth Christi*, see Klassen and Klaassen, *Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*, 521-527. Traces of Marpeck's influence in Alsace, particularly at Ste.-Marie-aux-Mines, continue until 1590, and in Moravia until 1622. Gerber, "Les Anabaptistes," 314.

⁶ TAE I, No. 175, p. 230.

⁷ TAE IV, No. 1614a, 256-257.

Finally there were free thinkers, spiritualists and others who wished a minimum of restraint or doctrine, saying, "It is enough that one believe in God who made heaven and earth."⁸ In November 1537 the shipper Philips testified that he was "neither Lutheran...nor Hoffmanian; he wanted to be Nazarene and wanted to do the right."⁹

Nonconformist groups in Strasbourg in the 1540s, then, were several with the Swiss Brethren being the largest. Sometimes relations between them were strained, as between the Swiss Brethren and the Philippites. At other times, as between the Pilgramites and the Swiss Brethren, efforts were made to keep in touch with each other, even over distances as great as from Alsace to Moravia.

II. Reasons for Dissidence

In the years after 1535 radicals dissented from the official religion for a number of reasons. The most common objection to the official church concerned church discipline, hypocrisy and the unethical behavior of church members, especially regarding the eucharist. Repeatedly the radicals criticized the clergy for not applying the ban and for permitting both worthy and unworthy to the Lord's Supper. Hans Braun declared in 1535 that the magistrates' ordinance and being displeased him, and he saw nothing good

⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1668, p. 292.

⁹ *TAE III*, No. 790, p. 88.

among the preachers, for whores and knaves went to the sacrament, exactly the ones he would not have permitted. Like a doctor who made sick patients sicker, so was the church.¹⁰ Lienhard Jost said in 1539,

"Our Lord God will grant grace that the church and the Anabaptists will unite when the ban will be established in the church, and when the Lord's Supper will not be given to every gross, open sinner, but a difference will be made between them."¹¹

In January 1556 the Schwenckfeldian customs official Veit von Helffenstein protested that the St. Nicholas church had become a spiritual whorehouse. Instead of transformed lives and godly living inspired by the living Word and Spirit of God, he saw that after the sermon whorers, drunkards and the avaricious rushed headlong to eat and drink to excess.¹² Veit's fellow Schwenckfeldian, Urban Kleiber, admitted in November 1557 that he liked to attend Anabaptist meetings, for he respected these pious people more than those who passed their time at the shooting range or in the bar. It disturbed him that the preachers calumniated the Anabaptists from the pulpit.¹³

¹⁰ TAE II, No. 650, p. 442.

¹¹ TAE III, No. 907, p. 317; Adam, *Evangelische Kirchengeschichte*, 213-214.

¹² AMS, Wiedertäuferherren Minutes, I, 14, 1566, f. 1r-2v; "Disputatio habita in palatio Argentinensi a dominis doctoribus Joanne Marbachio et Ludovico Rabo cum tribus anabaptistis," AST, No. 203 (31,8) (1556).

¹³ AMS, I, 14 (I.D.G. 57), f. 23-25; Husser, "Liberté Spiritualiste," 102.

For some their objection to the eucharist was more doctrinal than ethical. In 1537 the French-speaking Melchiorite Jean Bomeronemus expected that in Strasbourg people taught and lived according to Bucer's writings. But he soon discovered that Bucer's teachings had changed in a more Lutheran direction, notably on the sacraments.¹⁴ According to the Melchiorite leader Jörg Nörlinger in 1546, although Bucer had earlier preached rightly about the sacraments, since the 1536 Wittenberg Concord he had fallen away from that truth.¹⁵ The Schwenckfeldian Urban Kleiber declared in November 1557 that he abstained from the eucharist because of confusion in the clergy's teaching on the subject.¹⁶ In Wangen in 1569 Hans Metzger's objection was that earlier the church had taught a Zwinglian symbolic interpretation of the eucharist, and then changed to the Lutheran realistic interpretation. Both could not be right.¹⁷

For many infant baptism was a key objection. In 1535 many were expelled for refusing to baptize their children.¹⁸ Fritsch Beck of Dorlisheim was a "Swiss Brother" who in 1536

¹⁴ TAE III, No. 804, p. 122; Hulshof, *Geschiednis*, 192; Balke, *Calvin*, 128.

¹⁵ TAE IV, No. 1532, p. 205.

¹⁶ AMS, I, 14 (I.D.G. 57), f. 23-25; Husser, 393.

¹⁷ Bericht des Matthäus Nägelin, Strassburg, Bez.-A., H 2713: "Wangen geschefft verrichtet anno 1569, da dan auch ein kirchenvisitation gehalten," 47-50, 76.

¹⁸ TAE II, No. 649, pp. 440-441.

described infant baptism as a devilish command and protested that Matthew Zell had openly preached against it.¹⁹ Also in 1536 Adam Slegel, the Philippite tailor who had fled to Strasbourg from persecution in Moravia, would not be shaken in a long discussion on infant baptism with Martin Bucer.²⁰ Even the Strasbourg patrician and knight, Eckhart zum Drübel, defended the late baptism of his three sons in 1538.²¹ While denying that he was an Anabaptist, he argued that Christ never punished for late baptisms and accepted all without age distinction. In fact, the rush to baptize displayed anxiety and lack of faith in God.²² In 1545 the *Schultheiss* of Wasselnheim left the church building if a child was to be baptized.²³ Also in Wasselnheim in 1545 Voelcker and his wife took no initiative to have their child baptized, and when the baptism finally was performed, Voelcker stayed away.²⁴ For Peter (Novesianus) Schaf, the Schwenckfeldian Latin teacher, the central failing in the Strasbourg church was the practice of infant baptism which could not be found in Scripture "by command or promise or

¹⁹ TAE III, No. 711, p. 24.

²⁰ TAE III, No. 731, p. 39; No. 747, pp. 51-52.

²¹ TAE III, No. 823, pp. 147-150.

²² TAE II, No. 604, pp. 382-385.

²³ TAE IV, No. 1438, p. 134.

²⁴ TAE IV, No. 1438, p. 134.

example."²⁵

Military involvement and oath swearing continued to be issues, especially for the Swiss Brethren. A ropemaker named Andres Neff was expelled for refusing the oath in 1535.²⁶ In 1536 Adam Slegel, the Philippite tailor, asserted that he would rather die than swear an oath, and declared that the sword-carrying *Schwertler* were not his brothers.²⁷ In 1538 Andreas Götz of Börsch refused to bear arms in defense of the community. Facing certain imprisonment or expulsion, he fled the town.²⁸ In Strasbourg, when the gardeners' guild leadership called for a display of military preparedness in 1544 (either to determine the military levy, or for a military review or to determine watch duty), one gardener said he did not want to carry any arms against any other Christian.²⁹ In Wangen in 1567 four Anabaptists, Beck Hans, Bentzen Simon, Georg Stroschneider and Hans Anthony, refused to swear the civic oath.³⁰ For the magistrates this refusal was not just another religious attitude. To them these attitudes represented a threat to

²⁵ AST No. 203 (31,8) (1556); also Marbach's diary, AST No. 198, (1556) f. 237.

²⁶ TAE II, No. 653, p. 444.

²⁷ TAE III, No. 731, p. 39; No. 747, pp. 51-52.

²⁸ TAE III, No. 819, p. 145; No. 824, pp. 150-151.

²⁹ TAE IV, No. 1363, p. 93.

³⁰ Reinschrift des Matthäus Nägelin, Strassburg, Bez.-A., H 2713, ad 1567.

the civil and social order, for if everyone refused to swear the civic oath or bear arms, the city would soon collapse internally and externally.³¹

For a number of radicals, it was the combination of unethical behavior, lack of church discipline, infant baptism, eucharist, oath swearing and arms bearing that sparked their dissent. Ruprecht Schwarz from Mainz, a Strasbourg citizen and suspected Anabaptist convener and treasurer, stated in October 1546 that he stayed away from church because the pastors exercised no ban, and allowed good and evil together to partake of the eucharist. Infant baptism had no meaning, for baptism was a sign of faith toward conversion and repentance. Regarding oath swearing and arms bearing, Christ had taught that in all things one should not swear, and that one should not avenge one's enemies.³²

Diebolt Hartschedel joined the Swiss Brethren in 1546 because of his abhorrence of the Smalkald War, poured his money into an Anabaptist community and left his non-Anabaptist wife begging. His criticism of the Strasbourg church twenty-two years later in 1568 was both ethical and

³¹ On the attitudes of the magistrates toward those who refused to swear the civic oath or bear arms, see the articles by M. Lienhard, "Les Autorités civiles," 196-215; "Die Obrigkeit in Strassburg und die Dissidenten 1526-1540," *Gewissen und Freiheit* 21 (1983) 69-78; "L'Eglise aux mains de l'Etat? Magistrat et Eglise évangélique à Strasbourg de la Réforme à la guerre de Trente Ans," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du Protestantisme Française* 130 (1984), 295-318. Gerber, 313.

³² *TAE IV*, No. 1529, p. 204.

doctrinal. The basis of his faith was Matthew Zell's preaching of years earlier. Although he could not justify infant baptism from Scripture, to him it was unimportant since he had no children. What bothered him was the adults. Adults were the ones who should evidence true faith, should not flout the gospel and should be baptized, even as had been done in the New Testament. The eucharist was also not right. He could not accept that the body and blood of Christ was physically eaten and drunk; rather it was instituted as a remembrance. In his view the church fell short not in teaching and preaching but in practice, for no one followed it. There were many drunkards and people who cursed and blasphemed God. Although sincere Christians could be found in the church, he would not attend until those who strove against the Word of God were put out. The Anabaptists, in his view, were the right church. There evildoers were excommunicated until they repented, and then they were reaccepted. He had identified with them since the Smalkald War when Strasbourg had warred against the emperor and he, like they, had been horrified. His other opinions had developed out of that. He would swear no oath, for it was forbidden in Scripture.³³

Another source of dissidence, particularly among spiritualists, concerned those outside the evangelical

³³ AMS, Wiedertäuferherren, I, 14, (1568), f. 43r-44r; I, 14, II, (1568), f. 6.

church. Ruprecht von Mosham (1493-1543), a doctor of theology and former dean of the cathedral chapter in Passau in Swabia, argued during the interconfessional unity talks from 1540 to 1542 that the division of Christendom into Christian groups -- Catholic, Lutheran, Zwinglian and Anabaptist -- was anti-Christian and should be abolished in favor of unity against the Turks.³⁴ He was repudiated by Catholics and Protestants alike.

In 1556 Novesianus, the Schwenckfeldian Latin teacher, affirmed that among all peoples there were some who would be saved, and among the Catholics there were many pious people.³⁵ The Schwenckfeldian Michael Grienbaum combined tolerance with curiosity, and sometimes attended Anabaptist meetings in order to learn their positions. In his view the Anabaptists were "a church of God," and God preserved God's own "also among the papists."³⁶ The Schwenckfeldian customs official Veit von Helfenstein's tolerance extended to all who had not been baptized and remained outside the official church -- including even "Turks, Jews and pagans." Unlike the church leader Johann Marbach, he could not speak damnation on unbaptized Turkish, Jewish and heathen children out-

³⁴ *TAE IV*, Nos. 966, 1043, 1044, 1049, 1051, 1055, 1118, 1119, 1123, 1140.

³⁵ *AST*, No. 203 (31,8) (1556), also Marbach's diary, *AST*, No. 198, (1556) f. 237.

³⁶ *Husser*, 104.

side the church, and he asserted that among the Turks there were some pious people.³⁷

Often religious dissidence had more to do with personality clashes, insults and personal hypocrisy than with ideology. In the early 1540s Hans Müller, a baker in Kehl, regularly missed the eucharist because of bad relations with the pastor. He hoped that with a new pastor, God would grant him grace.³⁸ With the pastor in Wasselnheim prior to 1545, the Wasselnheim *Schultheiss* never went to church and avoided the sacraments.³⁹ In 1546 Olivia, the wife of an Anabaptist joiner, Sylvester Kircheysan, had no desire to baptize their nine month old child, and she wished for no advice from the preachers, for they did not practice what they preached.⁴⁰ In 1556 Veit von Helffenstein protested that the preachers spoke with the tongues of angels but lacked Christian love. Since Ludwig Rabus had castigated the sectarians fifteen times in one sermon, he had stayed away.⁴¹ Katherine Zell denounced Rabus for the same reason.

Personal animosity was particularly evident in Wangen. Diebolt Schaffner, the former *Kapitelmeyer* of the St.

³⁷ AMS, Wiedertäuferherren, I, 14, (1556), f. 1r-2v; "Disputatio," AST, No. 203 (31,8), (1556); Husser, 102, 104.

³⁸ TAE IV, No. 1445, p. 139.

³⁹ TAE IV, No. 1438, p. 134.

⁴⁰ TAE IV, No. 1496, pp. 177-178.

⁴¹ AMS, Wiedertäuferherren, I, 14, (1556) f. 1r-2v.

Stephen Chapter, disliked the pastor intensely and was attending Anabaptist meetings. His sister had been refused baptism by the pastor.⁴² Claus Baur, one of Wangen's two *Stettmeisters*, avoided church because of a longstanding dislike for the pastor stemming from a 1565 quarrel when the pastor "stripped his father of his property."⁴³ The widow of the Anabaptist Hans Weibel missed eucharist because at her husband's funeral four weeks earlier, the pastor had publicly and to the children called him a godless and hell-bound man.⁴⁴ On the street, in the bakery and before the church, visitors people criticized the pastor and the church. Few complaints dealt with doctrine; most had to do with personal hostility, lovelessness, lack of church discipline and ethical hypocrisy.⁴⁵

Another reason for religious dissidence was economic, including reluctance to pay tithes. Claus Springer, a Wangen vine dresser, paid no tithe in 1556 and was denounced by the pastor. Diebolt Wiltzen, the *Unterschultheiss* of Wangen in 1541-42, was tried in 1567 for unpaid tithes. He had earlier gotten away with lesser payments because Stephan

⁴² Bericht des Matthäus Nägelin, Strassburg, Bez.-A., H 2713: "Wangen geschefft," 11-13.

⁴³ Ibid., 18-20, 70.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 44-47.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 83.

Schaf, the St. Stephen steward with Anabaptists sympathies, had turned a blind eye.⁴⁶

One expression of economic dissidence was the community of goods. Five Philippite refugees from Moravia interrogated in 1536 testified that their congregation of 200 had held their goods in common. Their leaders for whom they were waiting were to bring funds owned by the entire congregation.⁴⁷ In 1545 the expelled Melchiorite, Wilhelm Blum the younger, shared whatever profit he gained from the mill with his children and with the Anabaptist community.⁴⁸ In 1546 the Anabaptist Diebolt Hartschedel reduced his wife to begging by selling her annuity (*jargueter*) and donating it to the Anabaptists.⁴⁹ About the same time the landowning Anabaptist Anton Pfirlin from Jepsheim donated much of his assets to the Anabaptists. Fearing more loss for the village, the authorities took over his estate.⁵⁰

Some people were nonconformists because they had been raised to be so by their parents. Johann Weber in Wangen was a second generation nonconformist in 1568 who rarely attended church. His mother had not been in church for thirty years, and his father had died in 1555 leaving unpaid

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 37-39.

⁴⁷ *TAE III*, No. 731, p. 39.

⁴⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1513, pp. 193-194.

⁴⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1525, p. 200.

⁵⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1554, p. 222.

tithes. None of his four children went to church, for when they had been there, the pastor had treated them harshly.⁵¹ Another second generation dissident Hans Metzger had questions about the eucharist. His mother also had not attended church for thirty years.⁵²

Another reason for religious dissidence was indifference or apathy. Perhaps some of those who said, "It is enough that one believe in God who made heaven and earth,"⁵³ simply did not care about theological niceties. The *Schultheiss* of Wasselnheim in 1545 scoffed and rarely attended church. With the previous pastor he had never gone to church and had avoided the sacraments.⁵⁴ Similarly, Diebolt Moll, the *Unterschultheiss* in Wangen in 1569, had not been to church or the eucharist for two years, and his son also did not attend. He said he was not aware of things which needed correcting.⁵⁵

Religious dissidence also had to do with social and economic marginalization. For some the Anabaptists provided an alternative community which met their needs of self worth, religious guidance and community. In 1546 neither the

⁵¹ Bericht des Matthäus Nägelin, Strassburg, Bez.-A., H 2713: "Wangen geschafft," 34-36.

⁵² Ibid., 47-50, 76.

⁵³ TAE IV, No. 1668, p. 292.

⁵⁴ TAE IV, No. 1438, p. 134.

⁵⁵ TAE IV, pp. 5-7.

Anabaptist joiner Sylvester Kircheysan nor his wife Olivia were part of a guild.⁵⁶ They probably found greater acceptance in another community of marginalized people than in the official church. The Philippite purse-maker, Hans von Ölbrunn, stated that as a Catholic he had not known whether he was an animal or a human. The Anabaptists he found to be righteous, and Adam Slegel he considered a spirit-filled servant of God.⁵⁷ In 1567 the Wangen Anabaptist Bentzen Simon, testified that his pastor's denunciations of the Anabaptists drove him to investigate, and he found, to the contrary, that they did good and avoided evil.⁵⁸

Finally, there were some dissenters who turned to soothsayers and magicians because they felt established religion did not help them understand the spirit world and/or cope with life. Most Strasbourgeois believed in God and the Devil who intervened directly in their lives. Prayers and obedience to God, it was hoped, would bring both eternal salvation and God's blessings in this world. Conversely, disobedience to God would bring not only eternal damnation but also God's punishment in this world. Both magistrates and clergy "argued that God operated on a theory of collective responsibility, so that the sins of the few could

⁵⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1496, pp. 177-178.

⁵⁷ *TAE III*, No. 731, p. 39.

⁵⁸ *Reinschrift des Matthäus Nägelin*, Bez.-A. Strassburg, H 2713 ad 1567.

result in divine punishment for the whole city."⁵⁹ Crises such as the plague and the Smalkald War, therefore, issued in increased criticism of "worldly behavior" and of religious nonconformists who represented heresy and sin. When disaster threatened, the first impulse was to be toward repentance, self-improvement and removal of the offending sins or sinners.

Interest in the spirit world via prayer, Bible reading and church attendance was encouraged. A less orthodox but tolerated form of interest in the spirit world commonly practiced at year's end by spiritualists, poets and scientists (such as Otto Brunfels) was prognostications about the coming year or decade. Even less orthodox and strongly denounced was interest in magic and witchcraft, evident by the 1530s. Some Strasbourgeois willingly jeopardized their salvation by consulting these agents of the Devil who claimed knowledge about missing objects and distant or future events. The magistrates often discounted the reports and generally obstructed popular access to tales about "the Devil, witches and magic." A story about the Devil's appearance in Schiltigheim was banned in 1533,⁶⁰ but

⁵⁹ Abray, *People's Reformation*, 170.

⁶⁰ Abray, 170-172.

around 1540 the Strasbourg printer Sigmund Bund succeeded in publishing a booklet on witchcraft.⁶¹

Among the reformers, concern about witchcraft and soothsayers, of whom several had an open following, surfaced with Capito and Hedio as early as October 1534. In their view, like theft, divorce and other sins, soothsaying contributed to the suspicion citizens had for one another. By the spring of 1535 they asked the Rat to extend into the countryside the city's disciplinary measures against secretarians and such moral abuses.⁶² Since the issue of witchcraft did not become prominent until 1543, Rat action on it was slow. The first prohibition against consulting soothsayers appeared in October 1537.

The alleged soothsayer who caused the Strasbourg clergy the most disquiet was a priest named Batt Ott von Hagenau. His story is recounted by the late sixteenth-century Protestant chronicler, Daniel Specklin.

During the time of the Reform there was a Catholic priest named Beatus Ott who stayed in the monastery of St. Andres. He was a great magician (*Schwarzkünstler*) known only as Beat Warsager. For many years a large and loyal following believed that he knew for 1000 miles around where all stolen goods went and who had them, and what things happened, were said and were dealt with elsewhere. This, the learned ones pointed out, was a contract with the devil, and Christians were not to deal with the devil or to tolerate that among Christians one followed the devil more than God. Into homes which treated him poorly, Ott cast a spell of several evil

⁶¹ Jakob von Liechtenberg, edited by Johann Spreter, "Hexen Büchlein," Strassburg, c. 1540.

⁶² *TAE II*, No. 634, p. 417.

spirits through which many were cursed. He was therefore banned from the city (earlier he had come in occasionally). With his move to Hagenau, the devil and the spirits also left for there. In 1563 he died in Hagenau in an armchair, at the exact hour he had predicted he would.⁶³

Whatever Specklin's inaccuracies, in 1543 and 1544 in the Strasbourg area Batt Ott was active and popular.⁶⁴ In April 1543 he gave up his Strasbourg citizenship. In August the Rat was advised to prohibit his "lies and hazards," for a Strasbourgeois had gone to "Ott the liar." In October the clergy lamented that "the people go running to soothsayers and that soothsayers are present here."⁶⁵ In March 1544 the Rat learned that a popular soothsayer (probably Ott) had been accepted as a Strasbourg citizen. In July reports persisted that Ott was still soothsaying and that many from the countryside were running to him to blaspheme God. Finally the Rat investigated whether such activity was legal, and then prohibited Ott from preaching it "so that the devil would have no place to begin working."⁶⁶ But soothsaying continued. In September 1544 Bucer preached against soothsayers, and Ott, despite many warnings, was as busy as ever.

⁶³ *Les Collectanées de Daniel Specklin. Chronique strasbourgeoise du seizième siècle*, R. Reuss, ed., Strasbourg, 1890, No. 2364, p. 256.

⁶⁴ Perhaps some of this popularity stemmed from the failure of the church's prayers during the plague of 1541-42.

⁶⁵ *TAE IV, Beilage*, p. 537.

⁶⁶ *TAE IV, Beilage*, p. 537; *AMS XXI*, No. 22 (1544), f. 411r.

Villagers would approach him, have their fortunes told, and take little baskets with water home under the appearance that they were having their urine inspected. Since Ott was continuing this practice against a prohibition, the Rat expelled him. He moved to Hagenau where he died in 1563.⁶⁷

Although Batt Ott had moved out of the immediate limelight, suspicions of witchcraft persisted in and around Strasbourg, especially after 1550 with the turn toward stricter Lutheran orthodoxy among the second generation clergy. In Geispolsheim, a village belonging to the Cathedral Chapter, years-long accusations of witchcraft mushroomed out of control into widespread suspicion and slander known in all the neighboring villages. At the end of 1552 the Cathedral Chapter attempted to set some controls to it. The Geispolsheim *Schultheiss*, with church bells pealing, ordered all, male and female, young and old, henceforth to stop such rumormongering. Anyone who accused another of being a witch without "proof" would be subject to financial and corporal punishment. At the same time no one should hesitate, upon concrete, undeniable evidence, to report witchcraft to the *Schultheiss* who also was to watch for suspicious persons and report them to the Cathedral Chapter.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ AMS XXI, No. 22 (1544), f. 411r; TAE IV, *Beilage*, p. 537.

⁶⁸ AMS, Archiv des Domkapitels, *Missivae ad seculares* 1550-1559, f. 103r-v.

In Dossenheim in May 1554 the church visitation team learned that the wife of Andres von Wurmbesen was suspected of witchcraft.⁶⁹ In May 1556, while being informed of a house full of Anabaptists in the city, the Rat also learned of one Lumpen Barthlin who was moving around in the Krutenau district where religious dissidents were common, endeavoring to help them through witchcraft. His fate was prison.⁷⁰

In the village of Eckbolsheim the church visitors in August 1557 learned of a man named Dammert whose business affairs were dissolute and suspicious. In addition, Dammert had illicitly asked Batt Ott to ascertain the nature and future of his daughter's relationship to a mercenary soldier.⁷¹ When questioned about it, he replied that he had gone to Ott as one goes to the doctor; Ott was not one who leaned on the devil. Dammert's wife, it was said, also practiced blessings and people could verify that it was witchcraft she carried on. She denied knowing or being able to say any blessings. She did, however, practice certain "superstitions" learned from her parents such as giving her child ginger from a shingle plate (*Schindelteller*) and

⁶⁹ AST, Kirchenvisitationsbericht, No. 45 II, (1554), f. 560v.

⁷⁰ AMS, XXI, No. 34 (1556), f. 187r-189v.

⁷¹ AST, Register der Landangelegenheiten des Strassburger Thomaskapitels, No. 195, (1557), 37, 39.

drinking oak leaves from it. For this testimony Dammert was imprisoned.⁷²

All through the century, despite prohibitions on soothsaying and other forms of "illicit knowledge," Strasbourg snapped up whatever "prophecies and 'Prognostications'" hit the market. Batt Ott came to be replaced by others. After 1560 "accusations of witchcraft and sorcery" became more frequent, particularly against quarrelsome women. The Strasbourg printer Thiebolt Berger printed two songs about women possessed by evil spirits; one of them was banned. 1564 saw the first burning for witchcraft. More executions followed in the 1570s, 1580s and 1590s.⁷³

Interest in magic, soothsaying and witchcraft was a form of religious dissent. When interest in "prognostications" and astrology appeared among respected figures such as Brunfels and Melchanchthon, it was not normally considered dissent because God rather than the Devil could be named as the source of this knowledge, and it did not challenge basic Christian tenets. Although such inquiry attracted some criticism, its base among the educated classes meant that it would not likely disturb the social order. But when, as in soothsaying and witchcraft, illicit knowledge was seen to be from the Devil rather than from God, its quest implied that

⁷² AST, Register der Landangelegenheiten des Strassburger Thomaskapitels, No. 195, (1557), 39.

⁷³ Abray, 170-172.

the church's answers were inadequate. Thus it qualified as religious dissidence. Moreover, its grass roots origins made it appear to the ruling classes as a challenge to the established social and religious order.

This does not mean that dissidents such as Anabaptists turned to magic. On the whole they did not. Although, as commoners, Anabaptists may have been familiar with it, once in the Anabaptist community, they tended to pursue a narrow ethical biblicism. Spiritualists welcomed extra-biblical truth, but for them its source was the Spirit of God rather than the Devil.

Soothsaying, magic and witchcraft were not expressions of a popular religious reform which envisioned a just, new society for commoners. More likely they were reversions to traditional, extra-biblical resources in an effort to cope with daily life. In their implication that the Church's answers failed meet life's daily needs, they constituted a form of dissent. What they had in common with other dissent such as Anabaptism and spiritualism was that the authorities, especially the clergy, tried to suppress them.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ On medieval superstitions, see J. Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (N. Y.: Oxford University Press, 1985). On popular culture and its relation to the Reformation, see P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (N. Y.: Harper and Row, 1978). On spiritualist quests for extra-biblical knowledge, see A. Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1968). On magic in the sixteenth century, see H. C. E. Midelfort, "Witchcraft, Magic, and the Occult," *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*, S. Ozment, ed. (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1982), 183-209, and K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1971).

Expression of religious dissidence was passive more often than active. The most common form of dissidence was staying away from church. Others stayed away from the baptisms of their child. In July 1537 in Ottrott the Strasbourg citizen Matthis Freuder was willing to let his child be baptized, but refused to take parental responsibility for the child's baptism.⁷⁵ In Wasselnheim in 1545 the *Schultheiss* left the church building if a child was to be baptized, and his fellow dissident Voelcker stayed away when his child was baptized; only his wife was present.⁷⁶ Despite the pleas of the deacons of St. Wilhelm and the promise of a Schwenckfeldian dyer to attend his child's baptism, in the end he stayed on the bridge of St. Stephan during the baptism.⁷⁷ In 1556/57 the Schwenckfeldian Michael Grienbaum explained that he had missed the baptism of his son because he had been at the Frankfurt fair.⁷⁸ In March 1546 Wolfgang Hebsack, the schoolmaster at St. Nicholas was reprimanded by his pastor Johann Marbach for allowing students to skip catechism.⁷⁹ In 1548 Novesianus the Schwenckfeldian grammar teacher was reprimanded and then

⁷⁵ *TAE III*, No. 774, p. 77.

⁷⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1438, p. 134.

⁷⁷ Husser, 393.

⁷⁸ Husser, 96, 393.

⁷⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1497, p. 178.

dismissed for not directing his pupils to catechism classes.⁸⁰

Active dissent found expression in verbal criticism, gossip, arguments, letters, petitions, pamphlets, acted parodies, demonstrations, violent actions, alternative meetings and groups, and emigration. The following pages include some stories of such active dissent.

III. Domestic Life

The radicals gained adherents both from without and from within Strasbourg. Externally, the city continued to attract immigrants of whom many were religious dissidents. Immigrants from Switzerland arrived around 1533. A prophecy of the Melchiorite Gertrude Lorenz mentions opposition to Berners who were probably Bernese Swiss Brethren in Strasbourg.⁸¹ In the mid to late 1530s Philippite refugees arrived from Moravia.⁸² Melchiorite refugees arrived from the Netherlands, and Protestants, including some Melchiorites, arrived from France.⁸³

Internally, recruitment occurred by conversion and rebaptism and by family tradition. Second generation non-

⁸⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1595, p. 247.

⁸¹ *TAE III*, No. 799, p. 112; Hulshof, 204-205.

⁸² *TAE III*, No. 731, p. 39.

⁸³ *TAE III*, No. 865-867, pp. 295-296; L. E. Halkin, "Protestants des Pays-Bas...refugiés à Strasbourg." *Strasbourg au coeur religieux du XVIIe siècle*, 1977, 297-307; Balke, 21-22, 123.

conformists began to appear by the 1540s. In September 1544 the Rat learned of Anabaptist activity intended to ensure that a second generation of Anabaptists would continue: old women were visiting various homes to persuade daughters to be baptized. The Rat resolved to interrogate and punish all women found acting in this way.⁸⁴ The women's efforts may have found success; in November 1544 the magistrates received a warning to watch out for "new Anabaptists."⁸⁵

By the 1560s second generation Anabaptism was a definite phenomenon. The Börsch Anabaptist vine dresser Jörg Offenbach's two daughters were imprisoned and had their belongings taken from them in 1549, but they did not deny their Anabaptism. Offenbach threatened to disown them if they did.⁸⁶ In 1569 in Wangen Hans Metzger and Johann Weber were both second generation dissidents whose mothers had not attended church for thirty years. A third generation of

⁸⁴ TAE IV, No. 1394, p. 112; Gerber, 313.

⁸⁵ TAE IV, No. 1407, p. 118. The nature of this resurgence is unclear; it could refer to the success of the women with the daughters and others of the second generation. Or it could refer to Jorists or "spiritual libertines" mentioned five days earlier in a petition of Hedio and Bucer to the Rat. TAE IV, No. 1406, pp. 116-117; No. 1411, pp. 119-120. Whatever the case, renewed radical activity in late 1544 caused the authorities concern and led to a petition from Bucer, Hedio and Zell calling for stricter Rat enforcement of church and societal discipline. TAE IV, No. 1421, pp. 125-126. By August 1545, at a loss after hearing of 300 strong at a Swiss Brethren meeting, the magistrates could only suggest research toward an appropriate response. TAE IV, No. 1454, pp. 145-146.

⁸⁶ TAE IV, No. 1649, p. 278.

nonconformists was emerging; none of Weber's four children went to church.⁸⁷

Anabaptist weddings sometimes took place in Anabaptist congregations rather than in the official church. This was a problem because marriage had for centuries been a public religious celebration held in the church, and the Ecclesiastical Ordinance of 1534 had specified that weddings should not be celebrated in secret.⁸⁸ The pastoral visitation to Schiltigheim in 1535 reported the wedding of Lorenz Schuhmacher and his bride outside the official church.⁸⁹ In November 1538 Netherlander Melchiorites were reported to be conducting marriages in their homes.⁹⁰ Lienhard Jost's daughter Elizabeth married Marx Reicher outside of the official church in the spring of 1543.⁹¹

Anabaptist marriages were sometimes religiously mixed, i.e., one spouse would be a nonconformist while the other was not. The Schwenckfeldians Urban Kleiber and Veit von Helfenstein⁹² allowed their wives and children to go to church and to catechism even if they themselves rarely went.

⁸⁷ Bericht des Matthäus Nägelin, Strassburg, Bez.-A., H 2713: "Wangen geschefft," 34-36, 47-50, 76.

⁸⁸ Lienhard, "La Réforme," 482-483.

⁸⁹ TAE II, No. 680, p. 467.

⁹⁰ TAE III, No. 867, p. 295.

⁹¹ TAE IV, No. 1294 Beilage, p. 36.

⁹² Husser, 105.

If such persons were disciplined, usually only one member of a family was expelled. While more commonly it was the man who was expelled while his wife and children stayed home (e.g., Jörg Ziegler), in a number of cases it was the wife who was identified as a nonconformist. The gardener Adolph Winther's wife was cited for Anabaptist activity in 1530⁹³ and for visiting Hoffman in prison in 1543.⁹⁴ In 1539 the Strasbourg citizen Hans von Wimpfen's wife was Anabaptist, but there is no mention that he was.⁹⁵ In August 1540 Heinrich Wendling from Flexburg near Wasselnheim was imprisoned for Anabaptism. His wife did not share his views. While pleading for his release, she said she only wanted him to be a good man, and would deliver him from his Anabaptist error were it not for the tailor Hans Adam who seduced him.⁹⁶ In early 1538 the Börsch Anabaptist miller Hans Schmid fled the town rather than pay a penalty and be expelled. His wife Martha pleaded to remain with her child and property in Börsch, saying she had no relations with her expelled husband and did not want to follow or shelter him.⁹⁷

⁹³ *TAE I*, No. 224, pp. 273, 277.

⁹⁴ *TAE IV*, No. 1248, p. 9.

⁹⁵ *TAE III*, No. 918, p. 329.

⁹⁶ *TAE III*, No. 1057, pp. 429-430.

⁹⁷ The authorities allowed her to stay on condition that she have no contacts with Anabaptists and not entice her husband to return. Ten months later, however, she was revealed to be pregnant! This transgression earned a *Rat* investigation. *TAE III*, Nos. 825, 828, 829, 900.

Occasionally religiously mixed marriages fell apart because of conflicting loyalties. Barbara Kiefer, an Anabaptist baptized by the Strasbourg carpenter Lukas Hobelmacher, was married to a non-Anabaptist citizen, Barthel Kiefer.⁹⁸ She was expelled from Dorlisheim in 1536 but he was not, for the following year she recanted and asked to be readmitted, saying that she wished to live again in her house with her dear husband.⁹⁹ But over the next five years their marriage disintegrated. Barbara left him four times because of her Anabaptism, and they were separated so much that they initiated divorce proceedings. In March 1542 Barbara asked that their possessions be divided between them, and in May Barthel asked to be allowed to remarry. The Rat delegated authority to the marriage judge whether or not Barbara appeared.¹⁰⁰

Jakob Held von Tieffenau, the Schwenckfeldian notary experienced similar tension with his wife Sophia von Kalcken whose interests were more domestic than Schwenckfeldian, and who resented his long and frequent absences on Schwenckfeldian missions. In 1548 she accused him of having abandoned her in need.¹⁰¹ By October she had claimed her

⁹⁸ *TAE II*, No. 684a, pp. 470-471.

⁹⁹ *TAE III*, No. 786, pp. 85-86.

¹⁰⁰ *TAE III*, No. 1167, p. 511; No. 1187, p. 523.

¹⁰¹ *TAE IV*, Nos. 1606-1607, 1612-1613, 1618, 1623.

goods and moved to Cologne,¹⁰² thus formalizing a separation her husband apparently had not intended.¹⁰³ This separation became permanent; ten years later Sophia asked that the money which the couple had deposited in the hospital be restored to her. Since it was not known if Jakob was dead or alive, the *Ammeister* recommended that only half be sent to her.¹⁰⁴

In terms of economics, most religious nonconformists lived in families within the normal economic structures of guild, work and property. Schwenckfeldians, Swiss Brethren and Pilgramites were all involved in poor relief, and they usually had a treasury for the community. One was started as early as the days of Pilgram Marpeck to help Lukas Hackfurt and the welfare authorities cope with refugees in 1528. Hans Frisch was the Swiss Brethren treasurer, from 1532 to 1534 collecting money among the "brethren."¹⁰⁵ The Strasbourg citizen Ruprecht Schwarz, although he denied it, was described as the Anabaptists' convener and treasurer (*Büttel*) in 1546.¹⁰⁶

A few examples of community of goods appear. The five Philippites who returned to Strasbourg from Moravia in the

¹⁰² *TAE IV*, Nos. 1624-1625, pp. 261-263.

¹⁰³ *TAE IV*, No. 1665, pp. 290-291; Husser, 78, 142.

¹⁰⁴ Husser, 142.

¹⁰⁵ *TAE II*, No. 533, pp. 299.

¹⁰⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1529, p. 204; Adam, 213-215.

summer of 1536 practiced a form of community of goods. Their congregation, an offshoot from the Hutterians, had grown to about 200. The five men in Strasbourg were waiting for their leaders, and the funds they were to receive to support their brothers belonged to the 200.¹⁰⁷

The expelled Melchiorite Wilhelm Blum the younger may have been involved in an indigenous effort at community of goods around 1545. One reason why the Rat denied him entry into the city in the mid 1540s was because each time he had been in the city, whether because of his father's illness, to settle his late wife's estate or to work on the mill, he had been recalcitrant.¹⁰⁸ Not only was there a marked increase in Anabaptist activity with him about, but Blum was also involved in a kind of Anabaptist community of goods. Whatever profit he gained from the mill he shared with his children and the Anabaptist community.¹⁰⁹

A landowning Anabaptist named Anton Pfirlin behaved similarly in 1546. Expelled from Jepsheim in Upper Alsace in 1546, he and his wife moved to Strasbourg and purchased Strasbourg citizenship.¹¹⁰ Their son in Jepsheim was ordered to submit an inventory of Anton's assets to the

¹⁰⁷ *TAE III*, No. 731, p. 39.

¹⁰⁸ *TAE IV*, Nos. 1445, 1472, 1513.

¹⁰⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1513, pp. 193-194.

¹¹⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1538, p. 211, n. 1, 2, 6, 9; No. 1539, p. 213, n. 6.

local authorities even though the father was still living. When he refused, the family estate was confiscated and two other family members were imprisoned.¹¹¹ The reason, the Rat's investigators learned, was because Anton Pfirlin had earlier donated large amounts to the Anabaptists. Fearing more loss for the village, the Jepsheim authorities took over his estate and would not let the rest of it be sold.¹¹²

Diebolt Hartschedel from Riegel in Breisgau may have been involved in the same community as Anton Pfirlin. In early 1546 Hartschedel moved to Strasbourg and purchased citizenship because he wanted to "live according to the gospel." Out of loyalty to the Strasbourg gospel he skipped Riegel's Easter mass. A Riegel authority prohibited him from transferring his assets to Strasbourg. And when he returned to Riegel he was promptly imprisoned, and Count Conrad von Tübingen wished him beheaded without delay, probably because he was considered Anabaptist. Upon his wife's request, the Rat arranged for his release since he was a Strasbourg citizen.¹¹³

About this time the Smalkald War broke out. Although he favored the preaching of Matthew Zell, and although Zell preached resistance to the emperor, because of his opposi-

¹¹¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1538, pp. 211-212.

¹¹² *TAE IV*, No. 1554, p. 222.

¹¹³ *TAE IV*, No. 1515, p. 195.

tion to the war, Hartschedel joined the Anabaptists.¹¹⁴ Three months later he complained that after his release from prison his wife no longer wanted to move to Strasbourg, and her objections led von Tübingen again to freeze his assets in Riegel. This time the magistrates imprisoned Hartschedel rather than release his assets because they did not believe his story.¹¹⁵ They had learned from Hartschedel's wife and her brothers-in-law that Hartschedel had sold her annuity (*jargueter*) and it had disappeared with the Anabaptists. Now she was reduced to begging. He had also sacrificed his work, and the *Vogt* of Riegel had purchased their property at a criminally low price. She wanted the *Rat* to recover her property from the *Vogt* and ensure that Hartschedel not do any more damage, for their property had originally been hers. Although the magistrates could not force the *Vogt* to undo the purchase of the property, they did promise to ensure that she would not starve.¹¹⁶

Hartschedel's large contributions to the Anabaptist community sparked opposition by his wife, the Riegel authorities and the Strasbourg *Rat*. Whereas initially the *Rat* sided with Hartschedel against the Riegel authorities, when it learned that his funds were going to the Anabaptists

¹¹⁴ AMS, Wiedertäuferherren, I, 14, (1568), f. 43r-44r; I, 14, II, (1568), f. 6.

¹¹⁵ TAE IV, No. 1519, p. 197.

¹¹⁶ TAE IV, No. 1525, p. 200.

rather than to his own investment in the city, the Rat had him imprisoned. From the authorities' perspective, channeling funds to an Anabaptist community represented economic and religious loss to Riegel, Strasbourg and the Hartschedel family. If the examples of Blum, Pfirlin and Hartschedel do not indicate a community of goods, they point at least to a high level of economic sharing.

IV. Anabaptist Meetings and Worship

Meetings of religious nonconformists were usually small in order to avoid detection, in order to fit into homes, because they were scattered, and, especially in the Schwenckfeldians' case, because they were few in number. Occasionally larger meetings did take place, usually outdoors at night in the countryside.

Through 1550 the sources indicate the following larger meetings: 1) in August 1538 the Catholic priest of Rossheim spoke of 300 Anabaptists gathering in the forest.¹¹⁷ 2) In February 1540 a magistrate reported Anabaptist meetings of sixty and thirty participants.¹¹⁸ 3) In March 1540 ninety-nine Anabaptists in two locations were surprised by the authorities.¹¹⁹ 4) A non-Anabaptist reported in July 1541 that 350 Anabaptists would be gathering in the Brumath

¹¹⁷ TAE III, No. 843, p. 243.

¹¹⁸ TAE III, No. 993, pp. 387-388.

¹¹⁹ TAE III, No. 1003, p. 392.

forest for several days.¹²⁰ 5) An Anabaptist in 1545 spoke of a 1542 meeting with sixty participants.¹²¹ 6) In July 1545 300 persons gathered for a nighttime meeting in the Eckbolsheim Forest.¹²² 7) In October 1546 an Anabaptist reported 100 Swiss Brethren in a meeting in Strasbourg.¹²³

For meetings the Anabaptists were often called together verbally by messengers and sometimes with written notes. The following letter from around 1538 appeared in the possession of Jacob and Elizabeth Kirssner, Wasselnheim Anabaptists:

Grace and peace from God the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen. Dear Jacob and Elizabeth, I am letting you know that next Tuesday there will be a meeting in Schiltigheim in the house where we were last time. And do not come as late as last time. And let the old man in Westhofen know also. With that we commit you to God. Peace be with you and with all who seek God with all their heart. Amen.¹²⁴

Larger worship services were usually held outside the city at night. One such nighttime worship service occurred in July 1545.¹²⁵ The pastor of St. Aurelia, Johann Steinle, reported that his teenage son and a friend had followed some Anabaptists out of the city gates. By pretending that they

¹²⁰ *TAE III*, No. 1129, p. 488.

¹²¹ *TAE III*, No 1239, p. 551; *TAE IV*, no. 1455, pp. 146-147.

¹²² *TAE IV*, Nos. 1453, 1455, pp. 143-147.

¹²³ *TAE IV*, No. 1529, pp. 203-204.

¹²⁴ *TAE III*, No. 878, p. 301.

¹²⁵ *TAE IV*, No. 1453, pp. 143-145.

were regular attenders, they continued all the way to a meeting in the Eckbolsheim Forest. As they got there, others arrived until they totalled 300. The assembly included many Strasbourgeois masons, mason's apprentices, armorers and weavers, and many villagers. All brought tools such as long-pointed hammers (pickaxes), scythes, saws and pitchforks, but none came with swords or knives.¹²⁶

At 10:00 PM the meeting began. A preacher preached for about an hour on how God would deliver the Anabaptists as Israel had been delivered out of Egypt, and would eradicate those not of the Anabaptist faith such as the Catholics, Lutherans, Zwinglians and Philippites. The temple of God, he said, was not made of stone like the cathedral but was as wide as the heavens. Therefore the listeners should separate themselves from the official church and join this separate group. Here in the wilderness and the darkness God would be found. A second speaker, without much commentary, read Scripture about the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. A reading about the the tax collector Zaccheus (Luke 17) received more comment. His repentance was genuine, for it included the return of tithes, usury and other burdens he had laid upon the poor. Those who did not repent in this way were not true Christians. A third speaker argued against the Lutheran view that it was enough that Christ

¹²⁶ It is not stated whether these were for camouflage or for self-defense.

died for our sins. It was also necessary to repent, do penance and do good works.

Five or six women were candidates for baptism but were not baptized for the group was not united. A brother Bartlin was deposed from the assistant's office and a Peter¹²⁷ was named to replace him. Then, with loud cries and weeping, they began to pray for all their sisters and brothers including a brother Vixen who had been gambling, and other Anabaptists in Upper Alsace, Baden, Breisach in Breisgau and Metz. The whole time someone walked around urging the sleeping to wake up and pray. A brother Claus asked to be reaccepted into the community, but because he had gone back to the Lutherans, he was not received until the very end. When daybreak came, they had communion, spreading out a cloth and serving beer and bread. Some partook and some did not.¹²⁸

The account of Hans Hostetter from Brumath differed somewhat. He had been hosting an Anabaptist brother for eight days, and he escorted this brother to the city gate. After watching many others go through the gate, he followed far behind until he reached their meeting in the forest near the water. First there was a meeting of sixty persons.

¹²⁷ Probably Peter Walter who appears as leader in 1557 and 1576. Cf. *TAE III*, No. 1013, p. 401; *TAE IV*, No. 1496, p. 178.

¹²⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1453, pp. 143-145.

Then, when one of them beat upon a bush with his staff, out of the bushes came others until they totalled at least 300.

After 10:00 PM one man stood up, prayed earnestly and began to preach. A light was lit, another rose to preach, and a third person walked around with a stick to wake up the sleeping. The service lasted until 1:00 AM. After that they ate together. Around 2:00 AM some began to go home, but others continued to meet. As day dawned they began to leave in different directions. He returned to the city gate and watched them come in, but did not know any of them except two from the nearby village of Hördt. The preacher was tall with a hooked nose and had a Breisgau accent. Two men, a Barthel and a Peter, were nominated, and to Peter's annoyance, Barthel was elected leader.¹²⁹

These detailed accounts of nighttime worship shed light on the Swiss Brethren community and values. Almost all the worshipers were commoners from the lower classes: masons, apprentices, armorers, weavers, strawcutters and villagers. The group was autonomous and lay, for major decisions such as accepting baptismal candidates, restoring excommunicated members and electing leaders were made by the group. Unity

¹²⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1455, pp. 145-146. In March 1546 an Anabaptist woman named Ottilia, wife of the Anabaptist Sylvester Kircheysen, testified that her leader was Bastian, a strawcutter. The other leader, Peter, had not mastered the preaching office. *TAE IV*, No. 1453, pp. 144-145. Perhaps the Barthel elected leader in July 1545 is the same as Bastian, the leader in 1546. Both served as alternatives to Peter Walter.

within the group was important: baptismal candidates were not baptized because the group was not yet united, and an excommunicated brother was not readmitted for a long time -- perhaps because it took that long for the group to agree. Qualified teachers may have been lacking, for the preacher with a Breisgau accent may have been a foreigner, and the Peter they elected was young; a year later he had not measured up to expectations, and thirty years later (if he is the same Peter) he was still leading. The gathering of a smaller meeting prior to the larger meeting may point to a leadership circle within the larger community.

In terms of theology, the Swiss Brethren were exclusivistic, as seen by their call to separate from Catholics, Lutherans, Zwinglians and even their fellow Anabaptists, the Philippites, and by their hope of judgment on outsiders. Religion was legalistic; the worshipers obeyed the biblical command not to carry swords or knives, but did not hesitate to carry other weapons such as scythes and pitchforks. Worship was largely experiential rather than liturgical; long, earnest, charismatic and personal prayer was the norm. Personal ethics were important to their view of salvation, as seen in their critique of the Lutheran *sola fide*, their call for good works and their disapproval of gambling. In terms of social ethics, tithes and usury which victimized the poor continued to offend as in the Peasants' War.

This meeting also points to some evolution of Anabaptist worship patterns in Strasbourg over time. It appears that

by 1545 Anabaptist meetings had become more structured than in the 1520s. To be sure, large meetings of 300 were rare and they necessitated more centralized leadership than did the smaller, more frequent house meetings. Still, the worship structure was more formal than the house meeting reported by Jörg Tucher in late 1526 where the worshipers began with prayer and then each one explicated the Scriptures with an ethical thrust.¹³⁰ It was also more hierarchical than Marpeck's 1530 order where members met four or five times per week, prayed for each other, admonished those leading disorderly lives, spoke one at a time while the others listened and evaluated the message, and observed the Lord's Supper. Here each individual was accountable to the group for the life, discipline, ministry and worship of the group.¹³¹

This meeting does, however, resemble the structure suggested by Sattler in 1527 where the congregation elected its ministers who, in turn, would lead in worship and the eucharist, read and teach the Scriptures, and admonish and discipline the believers.¹³² Probably meetings with elected elders present followed such a structure with the elders

¹³⁰ *TAE I*, No. 67, pp. 62-63.

¹³¹ Boyd, *Marpeck*, 121-122. Fridolin Meyger denied that they held all things in common. *TAE I*, No. 179, p. 234.

¹³² Krahn, 233; cf. "Schleitheim Confession" in Yoder, ed., *Michael Sattler*, 39.

taking the lead, and smaller house meetings where elders may not have been present followed a more informal and egalitarian pattern.

To a considerable degree Strasbourg's house meetings parallel a 1527 confession of the Bernese Anabaptists:

The brothers and sisters should meet at least three or four times each week to study the teachings of Christ and His apostles and admonish one another in the Lord. When...together they should read something they believe God has laid upon their hearts. The others should remain quiet and listen so that no two or three are speaking at the same time and hinder the others from hearing. The Psalter should be read daily by all. No one should be frivolous in the church of God, whether with words or deeds.¹³³

The meeting of 300 more closely parallels a Hutterite worship service from around 1550 described by Peter Ridemann:

We come together...to walk in the Lord's sight with greater diligence...People are...encouraged...to consider why we have met...After this we give thanks...This is followed by prayer...One proceeds to proclaim God's Word faithfully...The minister commends the church to God...and lets them depart...each to his place. When, however, we come together to keep the Lord's...Supper, the people are...taught for one, two or three days...what the Lord's Supper is...and how one should prepare...to receive the same. When...the Lord's Supper has been kept, a hymn of praise is sung to the Lord. Then the people are admonished to walk [rightly],...are commended to the Lord and allowed to separate.¹³⁴

¹³³ D. L. Gratz, *Bernese Anabaptists* (Goshen, IN: The Mennonite Historical Society, 1953), 25-26. See also P. M. Miller, "Worship Among the Anabaptists," *MQR* 30 (1956), 240-241. Accounts of early Anabaptist worship are rare.

¹³⁴ Peter Ridemann, *Account of Our Religion, Doctrine and Faith* (Bridgenorth, England, 1950), trans. from the German *Rechenschaft* of 1565, and quoted by H. S. Bender, "Worship, Public," *ME* IV.

The structure of Strasbourg's larger meetings appears to have remained unchanged over one or more generations. The sources report similar nighttime meetings led by Brother Peter and a colleague in June 1557¹³⁵ with one hundred women and men present, and in July 1576 with two hundred present.¹³⁶ All three meetings proceed similarly: several groups gather, then they all assemble, Scripture is read, the elders preach, time is spent in individual prayer, opportunity is given for individuals to present reflections as they are inspired, the Lord's Supper is celebrated, believers are baptized or prepared for baptism, and church discipline is exercised.¹³⁷

Common to all worship patterns, large and small, formal and informal, is an emphasis on Scripture, preaching, ethical admonition, words of inspiration and prayer. No mention is made of singing, perhaps because of danger. The Lord's Supper was important but perhaps observed weekly rather than daily.

¹³⁵ AMS, AA 406. Also in Wencker in AST 176 (varia eccl. XI), f. 334-336. See also Hulshof, 212-216.

¹³⁶ Elias Schad, "True Account of an Anabaptist Meeting at Night in a Forest and a Debate Held There with Them," trans. by E. Bender, *MQR* 58 (1984), 292-295.

¹³⁷ Rott and Lienhard, "Frères suisses," 27. In the meetings of 1557 and 1576 non-Anabaptist visitors challenged the Anabaptists' doctrine or practice of discipline. The ensuing disputes had to be quieted by the elders.

V. Relations to Authorities

A. Policy and Practice of the Authorities

By far the most information in the sources on the religious radicals features their interaction with Strasbourg and village authorities. It was the authorities whose job it was to keep the city's peace and therefore to limit the radicals' presence and activity by promulgating and enforcing mandates against them. Their treatment of dissidents was more moderate than that in most other cities. Whereas the death penalty for Anabaptism was legal and utilized elsewhere, Strasbourg never made use of it. Two men, Melchior Hoffman and Veit Barthel, were kept in prison until their deaths. Many were expelled until such a time as they would recant, and they were readmitted upon their swearing of the Anabaptist article. For those who refused to recant, such the Melchiorite miller Wilhelm Blum the younger or the baker Barthel Zeller, this amounted to an indefinite expulsion.¹³⁸ Some, such as the tailor Jörg Zeigler, were expelled for two years or less, whether or not they repented.

Moderate treatment, however, did not necessarily mean laxity. All possible means, including spies, were used by the Rat to keep track of the radicals. One spy may have

¹³⁸ *TAE III*, Nos. 917, 955, 1040, 1052; *TAE IV*, No. 1735-1738.

been a cloth shearer named Hans von Turken, the brother-in-law of the Swiss Brethren leader Hans Schmid. In April 1540, after sixty-nine Anabaptists were arrested, Schmid claimed to the prison warden's wife that there were 800 Anabaptists in the Strasbourg area. To von Turken Schmid's wife agreed that the Anabaptists were many. Another Anabaptist, Reinhold Jacob, told von Turken of forty Anabaptists sitting together on mats with one, probably the speaker, standing in their midst.¹³⁹ The following year, in July 1541, again it was Hans von Turken who reported to a magistrate that 350 Anabaptists would be gathering for several days in the Brumath forest north of Strasbourg.¹⁴⁰

In May 1542 a ropemaker named Hans Wucher described to the *Rat* how he had been rebaptized, and how because of his Anabaptism, he had lost his property in Bühel. The magistrates agreed that since he lived in Strasbourg and had been (re)baptized by Strasbourg citizens, they would help him regain his lost goods if he would gather information about the next Anabaptist meeting.¹⁴¹ In December 1550 the *Rat* learned that many Anabaptists were gathering in Liechtenberg near Illkirch. Spies were sent to gather

¹³⁹ *TAE III*, No. 1022, p. 409.

¹⁴⁰ *TAE III*, No. 1129, p. 488.

¹⁴¹ *TAE III*, No. 1184, p. 522.

information, and, if the Anabaptists moved into Strasbourg territory, to drive them out.¹⁴²

Despite the Rat's demand for information, use of spies, and mandates against Anabaptists, the magistrates frequently made exceptions to the law. Sometimes commoners received uncommon mercy. In the summer of 1545 the Rat ordered the Dangolsheim authorities to stop harassing Attala Daul, an Anabaptist widow and Strasbourg citizen because she had been a responsible citizen and had paid her taxes.¹⁴³

But more often it was Strasbourg's social elite who could count on respectful treatment even if they supported nonconformist religion. Eckhart zum Drübel, the patrician knight with spiritualist ideas, delayed the baptism of three sons to ages seven, five and six months. Despite coming under pressure to have them baptized, there is no mention of his being disciplined.¹⁴⁴ Littelmann Bapst was a nobleman who lived in Ichtratzheim south of Strasbourg and also owned lands in Bolsenheim. As early as the 1520s Bapst had tolerated Anabaptists on his properties. Johann Schwebel, a school teacher who had been expelled for Anabaptism in 1527, served as tutor for the Bapst family from 1529 to 1531.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² *TAE IV*, No. 1731, p. 332.

¹⁴³ *TAE IV*, No. 1456, p. 147; No. 1466, p. 156.

¹⁴⁴ *TAE II*, No. 604, pp. 382-385; *TAE III*, No. 823, pp. 147-150.

¹⁴⁵ *TAE I*, No. 109, p. 132.

Throughout the 1530s magistrates tried unsuccessfully to persuade him to expel them. In November 1541, despite fresh remonstrations by the Rat, Bapst was still accomodating known Anabaptists on his land.¹⁴⁶ Abraham Held, a five term *Wiedertäuferherr*, hired Anabaptists to work his lands in the 1570s.¹⁴⁷

On the whole, because of their high social and intellectual standing, the dissidents treated most generously were the Schwenckfeldians. The nobleman Peter Scher, valued for his diplomatic contacts, and his daughters Felicitas and Elisabeth, were loyal Schwenckfeldians up to 1562 without being punished.¹⁴⁸ Katherine Zell, the popular widow of Matthew Zell, was a most outspoken critic of the clergy and a leading disseminator of Schwenckfeldian writings, but she was treated "with kid gloves."¹⁴⁹ Dr. Winther von Andernach was so valued for his medical expertise, especially in times of plague, that despite his Schwenckfeldian associations and his desire to leave after 1563, the Rat bent over backward to keep him in the city.¹⁵⁰ Michael

¹⁴⁶ TAE III, No. 1147, p. 501.

¹⁴⁷ Abray, 115.

¹⁴⁸ TAE III, Nos. 839a, 1300, 1307; TAE IV, Nos. 1279a, 1758, 1762, 1764; Husser, 76.

¹⁴⁹ Abray, 112-113; K. Zell, "Ein Brief an die gantze Burgerschaft...", 1557, extract in Bainton, *Women*, 72; M. Lienhard, "Une Strasbourgeoise du XVI siècle hors du commun: Catherine Zell," *Saisons d'Alsace* 97 (1987), 70.

¹⁵⁰ Bernays, "von Andernach," 28-57, esp. 55-57.

Theurer, a lawyer in Strasbourg since 1553, from 1588 on was promoted to magistrate and councillor despite Schwenckfeldian and alchemist activity.¹⁵¹

Lenience among the authorities was sometimes deliberate rather than due to carelessness. In order to maintain their income, the officials of Strasbourg's *Schultheiss* institution which granted lesser citizenships (*Schultheissenbürgerrecht*) to poorer immigrants, often did not bother to investigate the applicants' religious orientation.¹⁵² In Bucer's view in 1534, this indiscriminate bestowal of *Schultheissenbürgerrechts* was why Strasbourg had so many Anabaptists.¹⁵³ Ten years later magistrates complained that many women and Anabaptist women were being accepted as *Schultheissenbürger* to the disadvantage of other citizens. One magistrate commented that no week passed without six or eight *Schultheissenbürger* entering the city.¹⁵⁴ Although both *Rat* and clergy complained repeatedly about this, they could not veto it.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ Husser, 145; Abrey, 113. I am grateful to Stephen F. Nelson for information on Theurer's alchemist interests.

¹⁵² *TAE II*, No. 611, p. 390, n. 1, 4; *TAE III*, 11-12; No. 1127, p. 487, n. 1; *TAE IV*, No. 1399, p. 114, n. 1; J. S. Oyer, rev. of *TAE III* and *IV*, *MQR* 67 (1992), 102-103.

¹⁵³ *TAE II*, No. 611, p. 389.

¹⁵⁴ *TAE IV*, No. 1399, p. 114.

¹⁵⁵ Despite these complaints, the magistrates cherished the city's right of *freie Zug* and their reputation as a safe haven for religious nonconformists -- so much so that in March 1533 they rejected suggestions from Lukas

B. Dissidents in the Villages

Sometimes religious dissidents were local political leaders. One was the mayor of the hamlet of Gansau who was seen riding off to an Anabaptist meeting in 1540.¹⁵⁶ Another was the *Schultheiss* of Ottrott in 1539. An Anabaptist baker named Barthel Zeller had been expelled from Strasbourg and had moved to Ottrott. In the spring of 1539 his Anabaptist wife died and her assets were taken over in custody by the Ottrott authorities. Soon her non-Anabaptist brothers approached the Rat for their share of her estate. Messengers were sent to Ottrott to prohibit the assets from going to Zeller. But the *Schultheiss* of Ottrott, stating that as a non-citizen, Zeller had no official relationship with the village, refused to restrict the Anabaptist Zeller in this way.¹⁵⁷ The *Schultheiss* of Wasselnheim in 1545 was more blatant. He rarely attended church and scoffed. If a child was to be baptized, he left the building. With the former pastor he had never gone to church and had avoided the sacraments.¹⁵⁸

More often dissidents were ordinary people. In Wasselnheim in May 1545 the church visitation officials learned that most of the villagers, like their *Schultheiss*, were

Hackfurt, the overburdened welfare director, to make citizenship acquisition more difficult and costly. Instead, to ensure that those who entered carried their weight, a law was passed that neither full citizens nor *Schultheissenbürger* could beg or receive social assistance during their first five to six years as citizens. *TAE II*, No. 611, p. 390, n. 5, 6.

unenthusiastic about the official religion, and that local Anabaptists were strong. Some in the parish despised the word, the sacraments and absolution. Their *Schultheiss* they considered a good man and a friend.¹⁵⁹ In March 1540 the Rat ordered that since most of Wasselnheim was staying away from church, Anabaptism being prevalent, and as many Anabaptists were gathering in the Catholic church in nearby Kronthal, the Wasselnheim authorities should punish the Anabaptists and their hosts according to the Anabaptist mandate.¹⁶⁰ Two Wasselnheimers who did not appreciate the sermons and infant baptism in 1545 were Voelcker and his wife. They had a child whose time for baptism had come. When the pastor visited them and asked why they missed church, Voelcker answered that he preferred to look into the church when he wanted to. The next morning the baptism was performed but only his wife was there.

Many of the nonconformists maintained a low profile and a good reputation in the community, and their radicalism surfaced only occasionally. Michel Beck, a Strasbourg citizen, had been identified at the Synod of June 1533 as an Anabaptist in Wasselnheim. Beck had criticized the doctrine taught in Wasselnheim for it had no ban, and he had been seen with Anabaptists.¹⁶¹ But he managed to remain at home,

¹⁵⁶ TAE III, No. 1013, p. 402.

¹⁵⁷ TAE III, No. 917, p. 328.

¹⁵⁸ TAE IV, No. 1438, p. 134.

¹⁵⁹ TAE IV, No. 1438, p. 134.

evidently by compromising beliefs such as infant baptism. Twelve years later in 1545, at the baptism of his child, Beck declared godparentage to be idolatry and came alone with his wife to the baptism. And as the pastor spoke of original sin, he openly disputed him. Otherwise he too was considered a good man.¹⁶²

The large number of dissidents in Wasselnheim had an impact on neighboring villages. By the spring of 1540 Anabaptists were meeting in the Catholic village of Kronthal¹⁶³ and were complaining about an official in the Catholic village of Westhofen.¹⁶⁴ That summer the Flexburg peasant Heinrich Wendling was, to his wife's dismay, converted by Hans Adam and imprisoned by a Wasselnheim official for Anabaptism.¹⁶⁵

A decade later little had changed. Wasselnheim's pastor, Jakob Heldelin, was discouraged in March 1551 because he was confronting dissidence from both commoners and village leaders. An Anabaptist clothworker named Hans Eitel and again the *Schultheiss* were leading the way. Eitel and his wife had given birth to twins. One had died and Heldelin doubted that it had been baptized. After five weeks the other was not yet baptized. Eitel and his wife

¹⁶⁰ *TAE III* No. 1004, p. 393.

¹⁶¹ *TAE II*, No. 384, p. 71.

¹⁶² *TAE IV*, No. 1438, p. 134.

¹⁶³ *TAE III*, No. 1004, p. 393.

¹⁶⁴ *TAE IV*, No. 1028, p. 412.

rarely attended church and had not taken the sacraments for a long time. Eitel stated that they had their children baptized simply because they were forced to, and he had often challenged Heldelin about why he should do so.

Following Eitel's example, Wasselnheim's *Schultheiss* (perhaps the same one as in 1540) seldom attended church and for a long time had not come to church or to Heldelin or to the Lord's table. During the Sunday church service he would collect his guard money and, against the Rat's orders, do whatever he needed to do. Worse, the *Schultheiss* was drawing many others, including leaders, away from the church, and Anabaptists who were expelled elsewhere were sheltered in Wasselnheim. Finally, he and Eitel had revived the giving of children's gifts at infant baptism, disallowed by the Rat.¹⁶⁶ These gifts may have been a form of dissidence out of spite: if forced to baptize infants, they would push the farce to the extreme. Certainly the men were not theologically consistent. While calling infant baptism idolatry, they exaggerated the "idolatry" by bringing gifts to such baptisms.

Superstition was also a problem. To someone from Zehacker who had asked him to bless the peasants' horses, Heldelin had refused the sacraments.¹⁶⁷ He implored the Rat that for the good of the church such notions be rebuked, and

¹⁶⁵ TAE III, No. 1057, pp. 429-430.

¹⁶⁶ TAE IV, No. 1744, p. 338.

¹⁶⁷ TAE IV, No. 1745, p. 339.

he noted that these errors had developed in the absence of a church visitation the previous year.¹⁶⁸ Rather than add to the church visitors' burden, the *Rat* resolved simply to enforce the Anabaptist mandate in the country as well as in the city.¹⁶⁹

C. Tensions over *Ausbürger* Privileges

The flight of religious radicals out of Strasbourg after 1533 often resulted in their settling in neighboring villages with varying relationship to the city. In these villages sometimes dissidents found a haven, and at other times they received worse treatment than in Strasbourg. Since the *Rat* was more concerned about Catholic encroachments on Strasbourg's privileges than about sectarian gadflies, it was often helpful for dissidents to purchase Strasbourg citizenship, for then the city might come to their defense against hostile village authorities. As an imperial free city, Strasbourg enjoyed the privilege of *Freien Zug* which allowed citizens of the city (*Ausbürger*) to own property and to live in rural areas during the times of intense agricultural activity without paying rural taxes. With prudence the dissidents in the villages could live and practice their faith under the protection of the free imperial city, but beyond its direct supervision. With the increase

¹⁶⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1744, pp. 337-338.

¹⁶⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1745, p. 339.

of dissident *Ausbürger*, there appeared in the Rat ever more cases involving religious radicals from the other parts of Alsace.¹⁷⁰

These cases created constant tension between Strasbourg and its neighboring territories, for always some *Augsbürger* overstepped their privileges by settling permanently in the countryside without paying local taxes. If these *Augsbürger* were religious dissidents, they were guilty of a double crime -- of being Anabaptists and of misusing their *Augsbürger* privileges. Tension emerged when Strasbourg came to their defense.

The magistrates also experienced internal tension between civic and religious duty, and usually loyalty to the city won out. Tension emerged when the arrest or expulsion of dissident citizens resulted in victory for the village

¹⁷⁰ TAE III, 11; No. 865, p. 295; Nelson and Rott, "Strasbourg," 231. Strasbourg's privilege of *freien Zug* was based on a 1393 agreement between the city and the Cathedral chapter, (TAE IV, No. 1660, p. 285) or perhaps the Speyer *Rachtung* of 1429 between the city and the bishop (TAE IV, No. 1653, p. 283). Accordingly, a Strasbourg citizen could with his family move into the country and utilize vineyards and pasture to earn a living. This agreement was not for those whose permanent home was in the country, but for those such as military personnel whose home was in Strasbourg but to earn a living sometimes had to move away. In terms of time spent, in addition to the heavy field work (about three weeks per field), time was needed in the fall, usually from September to November, to preserve the wine. The rest of the year was to be spent in Strasbourg. If the *Augsbürger* wished to remain outside the city, they were to make do on unclaimed and uncultivated land (*failen Wurt*) (TAE IV, No. 1660, pp. 285-286). The agreement also stipulated that the citizens' main residence was to be in Strasbourg. Misuse of these privileges would result in their loss. Exceptions were made for bad weather. TAE IV, No. 1664, pp. 289-290.

authorities. In most cases the magistrates winked at religious heterodoxy rather than concede to village authorities in order to guard Strasbourg's hegemony. Frequently non-conformists were able to benefit from this. Many examples of these tensions between dissidents, magistrates and village authorities appear in the sources.

Hans Berner was an Anabaptist citizen of Börsch who refused to swear the oath and was in trouble with the authorities at least since 1529.¹⁷¹ By 1532 he had twice been expelled from Börsch.¹⁷² Sometime before 1537 he purchased citizenship in Strasbourg¹⁷³ and consequently was expelled. In August 1539 a series of discussions concerning Berner took place between the Börsch authorities, the Cathedral Chapter which owned the town, and the Strasbourg Rat.¹⁷⁴ Berner complained that since his expulsion from Strasbourg, the Börsch authorities no longer considered him a Strasbourg *Ausbürger* and were making him pay Börsch taxes. The magistrates responded that if he had not purchased citizenship elsewhere, then he was still a Strasbourg citizen and they would defend his tax exemptions, even if he was an expelled Anabaptist. As it turned out, like other dissi-

¹⁷¹ TAE IV, Beilage, Nos. 197a, 197c, 209b, 209c, 213b.

¹⁷² TAE IV, Beilage, Nos. 209b, 209c, 213b, 350b.

¹⁷³ TAE III, No. 772, p. 76.

¹⁷⁴ TAE III, No. 949, p. 363.

dents, he had become a citizen of Ottrott which was known for its tolerance, so the Rat offered him no help.¹⁷⁵ According to the chapter, Berner was an insubordinate Melchiorite deserving of punishment. Although he wanted to live in Börsch permanently, he would not swear its Anabaptist article, and he wanted to have his citizenship in Strasbourg. Even prior to acquiring Strasbourg citizenship, he had disobeyed the chapter's orders. The Rat acknowledged that Berner was an expelled Anabaptist, but in earlier days when he had been right with the church, he should have been allowed to live in Börsch at least for the seasonal work. If he had transgressed prior to purchasing Strasbourg citizenship, the chapter should specify the crime and the punishment, and the Rat would deliver him to them. But nothing should be done that would infringe on the Rat's freedom.¹⁷⁶

In these discussions the magistrates proved willing to defend the Anabaptist Berner, but their concern was neither for Berner the individual nor for religious tolerance. If he was a citizen elsewhere, they washed their hands of him. Much more their concern was legal and institutional -- to preserve Rat privileges and hegemony *vis-à-vis* the Cathedral Chapter. Questions of privilege and power were more important than questions of religious orthodoxy.

¹⁷⁵ TAE III, No. 950, p. 364.

¹⁷⁶ TAE III, No. 959, pp. 368-369.

Hans von Wimpfen was a Strasbourg citizen with land and livestock in Rossheim in the Molsheim district. His wife was an Anabaptist, and he often stayed on his rural land. Some in Rossheim tried to block his use of his own pasture land, probably because of his wife's Anabaptism or because his main residence was to be in Strasbourg. In May 1539 Von Wimpfen complained about this to the Rat who in turn reminded the Rossheim authorities about his citizen rights. At the same time the Rat warned his wife that if she did not soon swear the Anabaptist article, she would no longer be tolerated in Strasbourg and the Rat would no longer defend her husband's citizens' rights in Rossheim.¹⁷⁷

Three months later von Wimpfen and the Rossheim authorities clashed again. He claimed that they were preventing him from grazing his horses and sheep on his own pasture. And since he had come to blows with a baker named Diebolt Busch with whom he shared the sheep, they now accused him also of disturbing the peace. The Rat called for the quarrel to be settled in an orderly way, and the authorities to allow him to use his pasture land according to the agreement for Strasbourg citizens.¹⁷⁸ The Rossheim authorities denied restricting von Wimpfen's freedom, and asked that the Rat not register this episode as a violation of the Strasbourg citizen agreement. The Rat, satisfied, asked only that von

¹⁷⁷ *TAE III*, No. 918, p. 329.

¹⁷⁸ *TAE III*, No. 943, p. 360; No. 945, p. 361.

Wimpfen settle his quarrel and that the Rossheim authorities reprimand him for seeking advantage over others.¹⁷⁹

In the Catholic village of Weilertal in May 1543, the Strasbourg *Ausbürger* Heinrich Kursner and Gaudenz Wagner, both Anabaptists, gained the Rat's support against their village authorities. Their complaint was that as they came together in their own home to read the gospel and to sing psalms, the Catholic vice-bishop and the mayor of Weilertal forbade this activity and threatened a thirty pound fine. When they began again a while later, the authorities confiscated their financial savings. The *Ratsherren*, in their defense, informed the mayor that since the men had done nothing wrong, the authorities should let them go ahead with the singing.¹⁸⁰

Similarly, in Dangolsheim under Hagenau's jurisdiction,¹⁸¹ Mathis Schlosser and his wife were Anabaptists. In December 1542 Mathis bought Strasbourg citizenship¹⁸² and was promptly jailed by the Dangolsheim authorities. His wife pleaded to the Rat that his citizen's rights had been violated and he was wrongly jailed. Upon investigation the

¹⁷⁹ *TAE III*, No. 946, pp. 361-362.

¹⁸⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1285, p. 28. Cf. Nos. 1142, 1143, 1288.

¹⁸¹ For its political status, see *TAE III*, No. 1233, p. 549; No. 1235, p. 550; *TAE IV*, No. 1263, p. 18, n. 3; No. 1456, p. 147, n. 2.

¹⁸² *TAE IV*, No. 1251, p. 12.

Rat discovered that he had been jailed, not for illegal settling and citizenship questions, but for Anabaptism and non-cooperation.¹⁸³ The Rat recommended his release anyway.¹⁸⁴ Since Schlosser claimed not to know why he was imprisoned, the Rat granted him a lawyer¹⁸⁵ who learned that against the order of the Hagenau Rat, Schlosser had lodged and even joined the Anabaptists in Dangolsheim. Although Schlosser had defaulted on fines of increasing amounts, the Rat still affirmed his Strasbourg citizenship and his right to live in Dangolsheim in the hope that the Hagenau Rat would drop the matter peacefully.¹⁸⁶ Schlosser appears to have been released but with hard feelings; a year later he called for the Dangolsheim *Schultheiss*' house to go up in flames.¹⁸⁷

Another Dangolsheim resident was Attala Daul, an Anabaptist widow and nine years a Strasbourg citizen. In the summer of 1545 she was accused of lodging Anabaptists in her home and was pressured to pay property taxes to the Dangolsheim authorities. She replied that her taxes had been paid to Strasbourg. When the authorities repeated their demand, she appealed to the Rat for protection from their harassment. The Rat informed the authorities that since she had

¹⁸³ TAE IV, Nos. 1233, 1234, 1235, pp. 549-551.

¹⁸⁴ TAE IV, No. 1258, p. 15.

¹⁸⁵ TAE IV, No. 1270-1273, pp. 21-23.

¹⁸⁶ TAE IV, No. 1276, pp. 24-25.

¹⁸⁷ TAE IV, No. 1366, p. 95.

been a responsible citizen and had paid her dues, it had tolerated her Anabaptism. The authorities should end this inappropriate behavior.¹⁸⁸

When relating to foreign governments, the Strasbourg regime usually supported its citizens strongly, even if they were Anabaptists. In February 1541 the furrier and citizen Lorenz Liesch appeared before the *Rat*. In 1529 he had been one of forty-four Anabaptists apprehended in the search for authors of slanderous pamphlets. At that time he had professed peaceableness, wishing to obey the *Rat* in all that was not against God.¹⁸⁹ Now in 1541 he approached the *Rat* about an inheritance in the Palatinate. Having been expelled (probably in 1528) from the Palatinate for Anabaptism, his access to the inheritance was barred. The magistrates, clearly tolerating peaceable Anabaptists in the city, told him to lie, claiming that he had put off Anabaptism once and for all. Then they could appeal to Pfalzgraff Ludwig V on his behalf.¹⁹⁰ Liesch obliged, and within six weeks his inheritance became accessible.¹⁹¹ Since the Anabaptist Liesch was a peaceable citizen, and since his inheritance would add to the city's wealth, the magistrates gladly helped him in his relations with another regime.

¹⁸⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1456, p. 147; No. 1466, p. 156.

¹⁸⁹ *TAE I*, No. 175, p. 229.

¹⁹⁰ *TAE III*, No. 1079, pp. 449-450.

¹⁹¹ *TAE III*, No. 1090, p. 457.

Strasbourg even vouched for former citizens if they had once been Anabaptists and were now again suspected of Anabaptism. In November 1542 Jakob Gross, probably the Anabaptist furrier who appeared in 1526,¹⁹² sought the Rat's assistance regarding an inheritance. After leaving Strasbourg he had settled and had been imprisoned in Augsburg. In 1531 he recanted, returned to Strasbourg and purchased citizenship, only to move away again.¹⁹³ Now an inheritance had come to him in Baden, Switzerland, but the authorities were denying it to him because of his Anabaptism. At Gross's request, the Rat wrote to the Baden officials that as long as he had been in Strasbourg, he had been a good and obedient citizen, and it granted him a written attestation of his sworn oath.¹⁹⁴

Some authorities assumed that all dissidents or even all Protestants were Anabaptists. Simple avoidance of the Catholic mass or of Protestant church services sometimes led authorities to assume Anabaptist activity. In September 1533 Anna von Schellenberg, Abbess of the St. Stephen convent, considered reluctance to swear the civic oath as proof of Anabaptism.¹⁹⁵ In 1540 Anna's successor, Adelheid von

¹⁹² TAE I, No. 67, pp. 62-66.

¹⁹³ TAE III, No. 1226, p. 544, n. 1.

¹⁹⁴ TAE III, No. 1226, p. 544; TAE IV, No. 1280, p. 27.

¹⁹⁵ TAE IV, Beilage, No. 422a, pp. 503-504.

Andlau, declared that all who favored the evangelical movement (thus even Lutherans!) were Anabaptists.¹⁹⁶ The *Wiedertäuferherren* usually displayed greater fairness and tried to avoid "witchhunting."

Valentin Gross, for example, was a Strasbourg citizen who owned a vineyard in the Catholic village of Bergbieten in the Molsheim district. He wanted to build a residence in Bergbieten to be used during the times of intense agricultural work. In August 1546 he complained that the Bergbieten authorities forbade him to build his residence and threatened him with a stiff fine. The Rat reminded the Bergbieten authorities of the freedom of Strasbourgeois to settle in neighboring districts and asked them to let Gross build. The Dachstein Vogt replied that Gross was thus hindered because he was an Anabaptist.¹⁹⁷ With that the *Wiedertäuferherren* called on Gross to submit a written statement. He claimed not even to know what Anabaptism was, never mind have contacts with Anabaptists. He did, however, plan to miss the Catholic mass at Easter, and according to law he intended to live in Bergbieten only during the times of heavy agricultural work. Also he would not hesitate to swear the Anabaptist article. The Rat informed the Dachstein Vogt that Gross was found not to be an Anabaptist; he should be allowed to build his residence in Bergbieten. To

¹⁹⁶ TAE III, No. 998, p. 390.

¹⁹⁷ TAE IV, No. 1522-1523, pp. 198-199.

satisfy the *Vogt*, Gross was made to swear the Anabaptist article.¹⁹⁸

This kind of support of Strasbourg citizens, whether Anabaptists or not, demonstrates the magistrates' pragmatism. Loyalty to the city and to Strasbourg's jurisdiction and privileges was more important to them than religious orthodoxy, and religious nonconformists were able to benefit from this attitude.

Such support had its limits, however, for the *Ratsherren* recognized the need also to maintain good relations with neighboring governments. Hans Glaser was an Anabaptist from Barr who in April 1545 sold goods to a Strasbourg citizen named Peter Rietsch. The Barr authorities, punishing Glaser for Anabaptism, banned the sale of his goods. The sale was thus illegal and delivery of the goods to Rietsch was blocked. Rietsch, claiming that the sale had happened before the ban and that he deserved to receive the goods,¹⁹⁹ asked the *Rat* to defend his citizen rights. The *Rat* replied that since a crime was involved, it could not help him; he would have to get the goods by himself. Still, the *Rat* lawyer would speak with the Barr authorities personally.²⁰⁰

Sometimes the struggle between religious radicals, village authorities and the *Rat* dragged on for years as the

¹⁹⁸ *TAE IV*, Nos. 1523-1524, p. 199.

¹⁹⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1431, p. 131.

²⁰⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1434, p. 132.

magistrates tried to listen to all sides. Anton Pfirlin and his wife, with three sons, Hans, Apollinaris and Martin, were landowning farmers from Jepsheim in Upper Alsace. The parents were Anabaptists at least by March 1540.²⁰¹ Because of Anton's Anabaptism and inability to agree with the pastor, he had been expelled, had moved to Strasbourg, and had bought Strasbourg citizenship in 1546. In December Anton's son Appolinaris complained to the Rat that instead of letting Anton's assets follow him to Strasbourg, the Jepsheim authorities ordered the children to submit an inventory of Anton's assets to them even though he was still living. When Appolinaris refused, the authorities fined him thirty pounds, imprisoned his mother and his brother Hans, and confiscated the estate.²⁰²

According to the authorities, the issue was not that Apollinaris left his cattle on village pasture and refused to be content with unclaimed land (*faillen Wurt*) as he claimed. Rather, he had broken an oath regarding his father's assets.²⁰³ As for Anton the father, he had earlier donated his goods to the Anabaptists, possibly in an attempt at communal sharing. Fearing more loss for the village, the Jepsheim authorities had taken over the estate and would not

²⁰¹ According to the testimony of a fellow Anabaptist in Schlettstadt. *TAE IV*, No. 1538, p. 211, n. 1, 2, 6, 9; No. 1539, p. 213, n. 6.

²⁰² *TAE IV*, No. 1538, pp. 211-212.

²⁰³ *TAE IV*, No. 1546, p. 217.

let it be sold. Under pressure from the *Rat*, the Jepsheim authorities released the Pfirlins' assets,²⁰⁴ and by January 1548 Apollinaris had received a legal certificate of departure allowing him to move to Strasbourg.²⁰⁵

Meanwhile, also in December 1546, Anton's other son Hans complained to the *Rat* that soon after he had purchased Strasbourg citizenship, the Jepsheim authorities forbade him to build a residence because he had become a Strasbourg citizen. They told him either to move his assets to Strasbourg or to sell them, and they said he should not pasture his cattle on the village's common pasture. In addition, they refused him a certificate of honorable departure.²⁰⁶ The authorities viewed things differently. Using his Strasbourg citizenship as an excuse, Hans had flouted the Jepsheim civic oath as if it did not exist.²⁰⁷ The magistrate Hans Jakob Widergrien, a former *Stettmeister* and relative of the Berckheim family who owned the village, refused to intercede for him since he had disregarded the oath and thus had no legal ground for his complaint.²⁰⁸ Hans finally

²⁰⁴ *TAE IV*, No. 1554, p. 222.

²⁰⁵ *TAE IV*, No. 1578, p. 236.

²⁰⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1538, p. 211.

²⁰⁷ *TAE IV*, No. 1539, pp. 212-213.

²⁰⁸ *TAE IV*, Nos. 1538-1539; pp. 211-213; No. 1554, p. 222.

agreed to sell his property, but finding no buyers, had no choice but to earn his living from it.

Three years later, in the summer of 1549, the issue was still not resolved. According to Hans, ever since he had purchased Strasbourg citizenship, Jakob von Berckheim, an owner of the village, had pressured him to move out. When Hans said he could not, von Berckheim prohibited all Jepsheim inhabitants or horses from working for him. Consequently he had had to hire workers from another village. This proved costly; his share of the family income had dropped from thirty to four *gulden*, and he had only one profitable field.²⁰⁹ In addition, before becoming a Strasbourg citizen, Hans had bought several pastures. Now von Berckheim would not let him have them, saying that as a Strasbourg citizen, Hans legally was not permitted to own property in Jepsheim. Since the law contained no such restrictions, Hans asked the Rat to protect his right to keep the pastures and help him live there at least until the hay harvest was in. Then he would leave, and if he could not sell his property, he would try to rent it out.²¹⁰

When the Rat sought von Berckheim's perspective on the question, he was terse: he had not allowed Hans to move out, and now he would not allow him to move back in. If he returned to Jepsheim, he would be imprisoned. Hans again

²⁰⁹ TAE IV, No. 1662, pp. 287-288; No. 1670, p. 294.

²¹⁰ TAE IV, No. 1662, pp. 287-288.

asked the magistrate Widergrien to intercede for him so that he could gather his harvest before leaving.²¹¹ Widergrien, wishing neither to antagonize his von Berckheim relatives, nor to be seen as compromising the freedom of Strasbourg citizens, would not commit himself. While he assured Hans of every right to live on his Jepsheim property, he refused to challenge von Berckheim's authority. The Rat instructed Widergrien to have the prohibition annulled so that Hans could take in his harvest, sell the land and leave.²¹² But when Hans did return to Jepsheim, he was thrown in prison by von Berckheim, allegedly on Widergrien's request! While not obstructing Hans' move to Jepsheim, Widergrien, knowing that von Berckheim would imprison Hans, had done nothing. Although our information ends here, the Rat's displeasure with this treatment of a citizen, and its repeated request to Widergrien to resolve the case indicates that it dragged on even longer.²¹³

Perhaps the clearest and longest running case of wrangling between Anabaptists, village authorities and the Strasbourg Rat concerns two Anabaptist vinedressers from the town of Börsch named Diebolt Ohl and Jörg Offenbach. Ohl

²¹¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1662, p. 288; No. 1670, pp. 293-294.

²¹² *TAE IV*, No. 1670, p. 294.

²¹³ *TAE IV*, No. 1672, p. 295. In June 1550 Hans' father Anton Pfirlin reappears, released of his Strasbourg citizenship. *TAE IV*, No. 1706, p. 313. The reason is not known, but Anabaptist activity is a plausible reason.

was expelled for Anabaptism in 1535 and Offenbach briefly in 1536.²¹⁴ At the end of 1537 the Strasbourg Rat and delegates from the Cathedral Chapter which owned Börsch met to resolve conflicts concerning *Ausbürger* such as Ohl and Offenbach. By now both men had purchased Strasbourg citizenship and had sworn Strasbourg's Anabaptist oath, but they still had property in Börsch.²¹⁵ According to the chapter, both men were misusing their *Ausbürger* privileges by living in Börsch for most of the year. That they openly declared Anabaptist sympathies while enjoying Strasbourg citizenship only made things worse. The magistrates, however, decided that since they had sworn the oath, they would be defended like any other citizen.²¹⁶

In June 1538, while Offenbach was residing in Börsch, the authorities summoned him to prove his Strasbourg citizenship. When he could not produce the requisite document, he was imprisoned. Within a week, however, he was free, the *Ammeister* having ordered his release.²¹⁷ Despite more discussions between the Börsch authorities, the Cathedral Chapter and the Rat,²¹⁸ complaints about him con-

²¹⁴ *TAE IV, Beilage, No. 699a, p. 547.*

²¹⁵ *TAE III, No. 793, p. 101; No. 795, pp. 103-104; No. 1202, p. 530, n. 2.*

²¹⁶ *TAE III, No. 795, pp. 104-106.*

²¹⁷ *TAE III, No. 830, pp. 153-154; Nos. 834-835, pp. 155-156.*

²¹⁸ *TAE III, No. 949, p. 363.*

tinued through most of 1539. He would not appear when summoned, saying he was subject to other authorities. Further, against his oath to have his main residence in Strasbourg, he was staying in Börsch for long periods of time with hardly a day per month in Strasbourg. The Rat did interrogate him and emphasize to him that settling down in Börsch when he was a Strasbourg citizen was unacceptable.²¹⁹

But by April 1541 the Cathedral Chapter again named Offenbach and Ohl among *Ausbürger* and Anabaptists who had become Strasbourg citizens but were living in Börsch eleven months of the year. The Rat promised to correct the problem.²²⁰ When examined, Offenbach testified that from October to February he lived in Strasbourg with his wife and children. Occasionally, when engaged by citizens of Börsch to cut straw, he traveled to Börsch in the winter. During the summer for the times of heavy field work he lived in Börsch as in the agreement. When not in Börsch, his residence there was empty.²²¹ He was probably released.

Ohl was not even examined. Probably because the previous month he had had abjured Anabaptism and restored his citizenship, he was simply released with a warning to

²¹⁹ *TAE III*, No. 959, pp. 368-369; No. 968, pp. 373-374.

²²⁰ *TAE III*, Nos. 1097, 1105, 1107.

²²¹ *TAE III*, No. 1110, p. 473.

keep himself straight and "not cause complaints."²²² Complaints about Ohl continued, however. Although banned from Börsch for Anabaptism and although a citizen of Strasbourg, that summer (1541) he secretly moved his household goods into Börsch and attempted to settle his wife there.²²³ His explanation was that the Rat had said the move should be possible if he made his request properly to the Börsch Vogt. But when the Vogt asked him to swear the Anabaptist article, Ohl refused, saying that having already sworn before the Rat, he had no obligations to the Vogt.²²⁴ When the magistrates confronted him with these accusations, he meekly promised to behave obediently as they wished. In the end the reports of the Vogt and of Ohl did not agree and the magistrates could not tell who was right or wrong. And so it was decided to hear both sides again.²²⁵

According to the Cathedral Chapter, Ohl had broken virtually every law in the book. Prior to purchasing Strasbourg citizenship, Ohl had been imprisoned and expelled from Börsch for Anabaptism. Now, besides living in Börsch illegally, Ohl refused obeisance to Börsch authorities. In essence, Ohl was evading Strasbourg's supervision by living in Börsch and was flouting Börsch's authority by claiming

²²² *TAE III*, Nos. 1085, 1091-1092, 1110.

²²³ *TAE III*, Nos. 1115-1116, p. 476.

²²⁴ *TAE III*, No. 1117, p. 477.

²²⁵ *TAE III*, Nos. 1122, 1124, 1125, pp. 483-486.

loyalty to Strasbourg. The chapter wanted no more of him.²²⁶

Ohl, in response, declared that he abjured Anabaptism when he swore the Anabaptist article and restored his citizenship. In Strasbourg he was renting a house with another Strasbourg citizen and was living in Börsch only during the times of heavy field work. He denied speaking insolently to the Börsch authorities. Rather, when the chapter's Anabaptist article was held before him by the *Vogt*, he had not wanted to let the Börsch authorities demand something of him which the *Rat* did not command, even as some magistrates had advised him!²²⁷ Although the *Rat*'s exact verdict on this exchange is not known, Ohl found some favor with the *Rat*, and the chapter postponed further action.²²⁸

In the summer of 1542 the grievances of 1541 flared up again. According to the Börsch authorities Ohl was ignoring the town's ban and was overstaying his allotted time in Börsch. And because he was a Strasbourg citizen, he gave the Börsch authorities no respect. The *Rat* promised to enforce the law against him where necessary. But upon receipt of Ohl's written version of the conflict, the *Rat* instructed the authorities to drop the charges and just remind him to return to Strasbourg when the times of heavy

²²⁶ *TAE III*, Nos. 1120, 1122, 1130

²²⁷ *TAE III*, No. 1130, p. 490.

²²⁸ *TAE III*, No. 1131, pp. 490-491.

field work were done.²²⁹ This was not to the Cathedral Chapter's liking, and within a week Ohl was ordered to pay for his crimes or suffer the consequences. He ran to the Rat for counsel. The Rat persuaded the authorities to settle for a fine, and anxious to preserve the peace, advised him to accept it.²³⁰

This settlement was short-lived. By November complaints arose again that against their oath Ohl and Offenbach were staying in Börsch all year long. If they came into Strasbourg, say, for Christmas mass, their wives and children remained in Börsch. In all seasons they drove into the fields, worked and used the town's wood and pasture. Ohl and Offenbach claimed innocence and ignorance. They did not know that accusations of oath-breaking were being leveled against them, for they thought they were acting rightly. To this the chapter retorted that they had sworn an oath and now were not keeping it. If the authorities disciplined them for oath-breaking in Börsch, they vanished to appeal to the Rat.²³¹ When told they were breaking Strasbourg's civic oath, they simply claimed the privilege of Strasbourg citizenship and carried on. Again the men protested ignorance. Their main residence with wives, children and

²²⁹ *TAE III*, Nos. 1190-1191, pp. 524-525.

²³⁰ *TAE III*, No. 1193, p. 526; Nos. 1196-1197, pp. 527-528.

²³¹ *TAE III*, No. 1223, pp. 541-542.

servants was in Strasbourg. When the heavy field work started in February, one kind of work followed right after the other, and so they kept a servant in Börsch in order that nothing happen to the grapes.²³²

This time the Rat agreed with the chapter that by living in Börsch permanently, they were breaking the oath, for clearly the oath stipulated that their main residence had to be in Strasbourg.²³³ Deliberations began immediately (November 1542) but action on recommendations was not taken until the summer of 1543.²³⁴ And by May 1544 Ohl and Offenbach were again accused of living in chapter territory without returning to Strasbourg.²³⁵

The 1547 victory of the emperor in the Smalkald War and the imposition of the Augsburg Interim in Strasbourg not only provoked protests and unrest among the Strasbourgeois, but it also weakened the Rat's willingness to protect its Anabaptist citizens under Catholic administrations.²³⁶ Now the wrangling took place under new conditions in which the Cathedral Chapter had greater strength relative to the Rat. In 1549 the Börsch authorities again complained that Ohl and

²³² TAE III, No. 1224, p. 543.

²³³ TAE III, No. 1223, p. 542.

²³⁴ TAE III, Nos. 1224, p. 543; No. 1228, p. 546; TAE IV, No. 1278, p. 26; No. 1305, p. 44.

²³⁵ TAE IV, No. 1368, pp. 95-96.

²³⁶ TAE IV, No. 1663, pp. 288-289.

Offenbach were living in Börsch all year long. The "fire and smoke" never went out in their Börsch homes: if the man was in Strasbourg, the women and children remained in Börsch and if the women and children were in Strasbourg, the man was in Börsch. In addition, they were acclaimed Anabaptists. Both men acknowledged that in swearing the Anabaptist article they had actually sworn whatever they wished. Offenbach complained in return that the Börsch authorities had several times prevented him from establishing a residence in Börsch. He hoped the Rat might help him live in peace. After reminding Ohl and Offenbach to observe the *Ausbürger* statute, and asking the chapter to let them reside in Börsch during the times of heavy field work, the Rat's conclusion was to tell the chapter to leave its citizens alone.²³⁷ A word of warning should be enough.

For the chapter this was not good enough. The emperor had ordered this issue resolved, and in the wake of the Interim the chapter now exercised its new clout: if the magistrates did not end the misuses, the chapter would settle this matter unilaterally according to the imperial resolution.²³⁸ Now the Rat struck a different note. Within two weeks it admitted that residing in Börsch all year and not having one's main residence in Strasbourg deserved

²³⁷ TAE IV, Nos. 1651-1653, 1655, pp. 279-283.

²³⁸ TAE IV, No. 1658, p. 284; No. 1660, pp. 285-286.

punishment and loss of one's *Ausbürger* privileges. An agreement with the Cathedral Chapter was renewed with promises of punishment for citizens who violated the agreement.²³⁹ Until the emperor's dominance introduced a new factor into the situation, the Rat dallied on its commitments to the Cathedral Chapter and winked at transgressions of *Ausbürger* in villages like Börsch. The threat of imperial action drove it to negotiate in better faith.

In the fall of 1550 the old complaint of Ohl and Offenbach living permanently in Börsch arose again. This time the Rat and the chapter immediately hammered out specific regulations for them, and the Rat warned them that disobedience would cost them their protection.²⁴⁰ For all the Rat's increased strictness, the struggle between the Börsch authorities, the Cathedral Chapter, the Strasbourg Rat and Börsch Anabaptists continued for at least another five years. In 1555/56 Ohl and Offenbach appealed to the Rat that the Börsch Vogt had prohibited all Börschers from any kind of contact with them. They needed to work and they asked that the Rat grant them their freedom again. The Rat began its response by interviewing individual canons.²⁴¹

²³⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1660, pp. 285-286; No. 1664, pp. 289-290.

²⁴⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1727, p. 329.

²⁴¹ *AMS*, XXI, Nr. 34 (1556), f. 35r-36r.

The outcome of this matter is not known, but the twenty year pattern of constant tension between Strasbourg, the Cathedral Chapter and the Börsch authorities continued. The Anabaptist *Ausbürger* continued to stretch the rules regarding residence in Börsch to the breaking point in order to benefit from Strasbourg's protection while avoiding its direct supervision. The Börsch authorities and the Cathedral Chapter continued to complain to the *Rat* about such violations. And the *Rat* continued to temporize in an effort to humor the chapter without acceding to its demands.

Internal tension between civic and religious duty also existed among the magistrates. When the arrest or expulsion of dissident citizens by village authorities challenged Strasbourg's privileges in any way, the magistrates usually chose to overlook religious heterodoxy rather than concede to village authorities. In the power struggles between magistrates, religious institutions and village authorities, religious dissidents were often able to survive by playing one power off against the other.

VI. Jörg Ziegler

If anyone epitomized and provided continuity to the Anabaptist movement in Strasbourg from its origins in 1524 to the 1550s, it may have been the Schiltigheim tailor, Jörg Ziegler. A brother of the gardener-preacher Clement Ziegler, he (and/or his fellow tailor, Hans Adam) was involved in the riots of 1524, experienced the Peasants'

War, knew Bucer, Capito, Zell, Hans Denck and Michael Sattler, and throughout the 1520s hosted Anabaptist meetings in his *Steinstrasse* home.²⁴² A complex and volatile individual, at various times through the years he displayed social revolutionary tendencies, organizational and pastoral gifts, and a strident and creative anticlericalism.

Although Ziegler was an Anabaptist and his pastor Wolfgang Schultheiss was part of the clergy, they agreed on certain issues and cooperated in meeting the needs of their Schiltigheim church. An "evangelical" by 1518, Schultheiss had consistently opposed the hardening of the reform into a new institutionalism. Like the Anabaptists he affirmed the early church's congregational structure where all had the right to interpret Scripture (I Cor. 14). Calling for a constant openness to the Spirit and religious tolerance, Schultheiss had defended the freedom of conscience at the Synod of 1533 and eventually paid for his dissent with the loss of his job.²⁴³ When in early 1535 the parishioners in Schiltigheim lacked pastoral care because Schultheiss' manse was not yet built, it was Ziegler who frequently stepped in to comfort the sick and dying.²⁴⁴

²⁴² Cf. *TAE I*, No. 65, p. 65.

²⁴³ He eventually returned to the Catholic Church. *TAE I*, No. 236, p. 293; *TAE II*, No. 524, p. 295; *TAE III*, No. 1290, pp. 31-34; No. 1309, p. 46; Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 282; Deppermann, *Hoffman*, 289; Lienhard, "Les Epicuriens," 20-21.

²⁴⁴ *TAE II*, No. 680, p. 467.

In February 1539 a sharply worded pamphlet of Ziegler's declared that the clergy "did not help his poor Christ," and criticized the schools and other social institutions.²⁴⁵ Using economic pressure rather than expulsion or imprisonment, the Rat punished him by closing his business on pretext of economic restraint to prevent overflowing the market. A year later, in May 1540, just after sixty-nine Anabaptists were imprisoned and a renewed Anabaptist mandate was promulgated, he asked the Rat to allow him again to run his business so that he could feed his family and pay his debts. The Rat stuck with its decision to allow only two tailoring businesses in Schiltigheim.²⁴⁶

In February 1543, possibly in response to Schultheiss' 1542 dismissal, Ziegler pinned up a poster depicting a large fool with reference to the clergy. This earned him an interrogation but he seems to have escaped with a reprimand.²⁴⁷ Six months later reports reached the Rat that Ziegler was preaching sermons to compete with Schiltigheim's new pastor and generally being bothersome. Since he was already making himself heard and since he wanted to expound on his poster of the fool, the Rat summoned him for a more

²⁴⁵ *TAE III*, No. 896, p. 312.

²⁴⁶ *TAE III*, No. 1031, p. 414.

²⁴⁷ *TAE IV*, Nos. 1262, 1309, 1410.

thorough interrogation. Again he seems to have escaped with a warning.²⁴⁸

A year later, in December 1544, Ziegler was again cited for writing and publishing anticlerical pamphlets and songs.²⁴⁹ His work was part of a general increase in radical activity²⁵⁰ which to the alarm of the clergy, coincided with articles promulgated by Jorists.²⁵¹ In February 1545 Hedio, Bucer and Zell petitioned the *Rat* for stricter enforcement of doctrinal and ethical standards. Some, they said, openly maligned Strasbourg's church and religion, some denied the existence of the devil, and others argued that one should tolerate all citizens whether Jew, Turk or Catholic. In addition, they noted that David Joris was in the area. They also specified a long list of ethical failings to correct.²⁵² In a *Rat* committee's response to the petition, Jörg Ziegler was named together with his brother Clement Ziegler, his former pastor Wolfgang Schultheiss and a Schwenckfeldian named Wolf Weckinger as persons influential in leading people into "evil, seductive and

²⁴⁸ The *Rat*'s rationale here points to its practice of generally ignoring Anabaptists who kept quiet. *TAE IV*, No. 1309, p. 46.

²⁴⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1410, p. 119.

²⁵⁰ *TAE IV*, Nos. 1394, 1397, 1399.

²⁵¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1411, pp. 119-121.

²⁵² *TAE IV*, No. 1421, pp. 125-126.

unchristlike" sects. Catholics also were found to be freely criticizing the clergy.²⁵³

Despite this increased alertness to radical activity, in November 1545 Ziegler dared something more provocative: he dressed up as a fool, called himself Georg Narr (fool), played a violin, gathered boys around him, and in the voice of a young boy, preached, "Whoever has not stolen may steal, ...and whoever has stolen may steal more."²⁵⁴ At the same time he distributed a satirical booklet mocking the city's social, educational and economic elitism. The magistrates, he complained, would not listen to him, the barking dog, but rather threatened him with prison, even though he preached the truth and denounced vice. Since the clergy barked surreptitiously about the income of their benefices, he, with his different message and his transparent manner, must appear a fool to them. The clergy were pedantic hypocrites and fakes.²⁵⁵ Infant baptism was also a farce. Finally, since he could no longer work because of his fool-like appearance, Ziegler asked the clergy to bear his singing and speaking with patience and let him earn his living. He was raising three of his relatives' children; if

²⁵³ *TAE IV*, No. 1439, pp. 135-136; No. 1488, pp. 173-174.

²⁵⁴ *TAE IV*, No. 1480-1481, p. 165; No. 1486, p. 172.

²⁵⁵ He called them Dr. Griffel von Hohensinnen, a humanistic mock name for Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastics.

every rich person raised one, there would be no need to watch for unauthorized begging.²⁵⁶

The Rat had finally had enough. He was stuck in prison where he kept on writing, and then he was expelled for two years.²⁵⁷ In this Ziegler was not alone; a colleague named Martin der Glaser was also imprisoned. To tackle the larger problem that citizens were interacting with Anabaptists, that Anabaptist pamphlets continued to appear, and that publishers were illegally publishing such works, the Rat launched an investigation of all printers, publishers, ship-pers and others involved in Ziegler's booklet.²⁵⁸

Ziegler, however, had his supporters. The following summer the *Schultheiss* and other natives of Schiltigheim petitioned that he return to Schiltigheim. Hungry and losing weight, he had by now humbled himself and should be allowed home again, for both he and his business were beneficial to the Schiltigheim community. The Rat, having endured his criticisms for years, did not agree.²⁵⁹ Somehow Ziegler still managed to contact people; 1547 featured complaints that he drew people away from the eucharist.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ TAE IV, No. 1480-1481, p. 165.

²⁵⁷ TAE IV, Nos. 1480, 1481, 1486, 1514.

²⁵⁸ TAE IV, No. 1493, pp. 176-177.

²⁵⁹ TAE IV, No. 1514, p. 194.

²⁶⁰ TAE IV, No. 1547, p. 217.

When Ziegler's two year expulsion was over in December 1547, he asked to return home and also to be protected from his creditors so that he not be thrown in debtor's prison. Noting that he was still loudly unrepentant and that many nonconformists were currently settling in Strasbourg,²⁶¹ the Rat decided to readmit him to the city but not protect him from his creditors; he would have to make peace with them himself. Meanwhile, he should behave himself or expect further hardship.²⁶²

For a year and a half he kept relatively quiet, but in June 1549, after the Smalkald War had been lost and the Augsburg Interim reinstated Catholicism, Ziegler spoke out in various places against the eucharist. Worse, passionately opposed to the Interim arrangement,²⁶³ Ziegler argued and made subversive comments (probably about imperial troops and the Interim) in the presence of mercenaries to a merchant with strong political opinions.²⁶⁴ Such talk bordering on sedition the Rat did not take lightly; both the *Ammeister* and the *Stettmeister* lectured him thoroughly about

²⁶¹ Perhaps because of the Smalkald War.

²⁶² *TAE IV*, No. 1572, pp. 233-234.

²⁶³ *TAE IV*, No. 1758, p. 345.

²⁶⁴ The merchant, Blesy Nessel, a friend of the recanted Melchiorite, Peter Tasch, had been imprisoned in 1547 for "unhelpful talk" against Strasbourg's treaty with the emperor. *TAE IV*, No. 1600, p. 249.

such remarks.²⁶⁵ For a time Ziegler kept a low profile, but in November 1551, with loud cursing and scolding, he created an uproar first in the cathedral where the Catholic mass was again being celebrated, and then in front of the pillory. The Rat first imprisoned him so that the Catholics could not molest him, and then investigated the reason for his outburst.²⁶⁶ His reason found to be unjustified, he was banned from the city for a second time.²⁶⁷

Four months later, in March 1552 Jörg Ziegler's brother, the gardener-preacher Clement Ziegler, pleaded for his return home.²⁶⁸ War was again on the horizon. Reports had arrived in December 1551 of France's Henri II marching toward Alsace. An anti-Hapsburg alliance in January 1552 between Henri II and Duke Maurice, the new Elector of Saxony, strengthened the likelihood of war. In March Henri II declared himself the defender of German princes locked in the emperor's prisons. With Protestant princes to the east, French forces to the west, and word of 80,000 French troops

²⁶⁵ TAE IV, No. 1669, pp. 292-293.

²⁶⁶ TAE IV, No. 1758, p. 345.

²⁶⁷ TAE IV, No. 1770, p. 350.

²⁶⁸ TAE IV, No. 1770, p. 350. Clement Ziegler, the Peasants' War social activist had, after the Synod of 1533, submitted to the authorities and turned to spiritualism. In May 1552 he published and presented to the Rat his last known writing, *Dreim und Gesicht*, an exposition of his visions and an exhortation to stricter discipline of morals. TAE IV, No. 1773, pp. 352-369.

and 12,000 horses advancing on Strasbourg, the city began extraordinary defensive measures.²⁶⁹

In this time of crisis, Clement argued, Jörg should come home to his wife and children. He was always "sleepwalking," never quite aware of what he was doing. If the danger of war should pass, the magistrates could expel him again.²⁷⁰ The Rat, however, evidently judging the situation too grave for a dissident to disrupt the city's resolve, thought otherwise. Two months later Jörg's wife died. For her funeral he was granted one week's entry into the city on condition that he keep his words and actions to himself.²⁷¹

After this Jörg Ziegler appears no more. He is one of few Anabaptists whose dissidence spanned the entire first generation of the reform. While the socio-economic and political character of his radicalism was prominent from 1524 to 1551, his framework was religious. His vision coincided with the pre-Peasants' War gospel-based vision of a transformed society with justice and equality for the poor, and in his view the clergy were as much to blame for social injustice as the magistrates. An idealist rather than a tactician, he chose to pursue his vision in the Anabaptist alternate community. Aware that his vision had little chance of actualization, he was left with critiques of the

²⁶⁹ Reuss, *Histoire de Strasbourg*, 147-149.

²⁷⁰ TAE IV, No. 1770, p. 350.

²⁷¹ TAE IV, No. 1772, p. 351.

political and religious establishment and of social conditions.

As for the authorities, if the larger radical movement was not too threatening, their most frequent response approached an exasperated tolerance. Unlike other dissidents who were expelled immediately and permanently or at least until they recanted, it took twenty years for Ziegler to be expelled, and then after only two years he was readmitted even though he had not recanted. Only when his dissidence was unusually provocative and part of a greater danger was he expelled. To a large extent this tolerance may be because he was a Schiltigheim native. The magistrates' pragmatism emerges here; clearly they were prepared to live with dissent if it did not spell a threat and if they could preserve the peace of the city.

VII. Conclusion

Diversity and ordinariness might best describe Strasbourg's nonconformists in daily life between 1536 and 1550. There is diversity because the nonconformist groups were diverse, and because individuals within those groups were diverse. Some were women and some were men. Some lived in the city while more lived in the country. Some were landowners while others were penniless. Some were leaders and others were followers. Some were confrontational while others were conciliatory. Some were principled while others did not hesitate to twist the truth in order to manipulate

the authorities. Some dissented for theological reasons while others dissented for personal or practical reasons. Some remembered the Peasants' War and Anabaptist beginnings while others, second generation radicals, were just beginning their pilgrimage of dissent.

Daily life for Strasbourg's nonconformists was also mundane, concerned with physical, emotional and spiritual survival. They did not travel to interconfessional theological colloquies or negotiate with the emperor to avert the Smalkald War. Nor were most of them spiritual giants. Their concerns were to work regularly, to feed their family, to build a home, to avoid expulsion by the authorities, to arrange for their inheritance, to live with a clear conscience, to worship freely, to pass the faith on to their children and to get along with their neighbors. Except for their religious life and their relationship to the authorities, Strasbourg's religious nonconformists and their neighbors were much the same.

Chapter 7

RADICAL RESPONSES TO CRISIS, 1540-52

In the 1540s Strasbourg experienced political crises. The pattern of response to these crises among Strasbourg's religious radicals points both to the nature of the issues that concerned them and to their social location. Upper class Schwenckfeldians and intellectuals with access to Strasbourg's policy-makers were immersed in the Protestant-Catholic debate and in wartime diplomacy. Anabaptists, mostly lower-class villagers far removed from high level politics and decision making, were barely involved. Those who expressed political views made no impact, and probably a larger number took refuge in eschatological interpretations of the troubling events. In terms of earthly existence, it was daily routine and domestic concerns that held their attention.

I. Introduction

The plague of 1541 was one of several crises for Strasbourg in the 1540s. It brought tremendous loss to individuals and to the church as commoners, politicians and church leaders died or lost family members. The *Hochschule* was transferred to Weissenburg and Gengenbach, and many citizens

fled to the countryside. Not even the reformers were exempt. Bucer lost his wife Elisabeth Pallass (Silbereisen) after an almost twenty year marriage and five children. Wolfgang Capito succumbed as did one of his four children. His wife, Wibrandis Rosenblatt, widowed for the third time,¹ married Bucer in June 1542. Hedio and his wife saw five of their seven children die of the plague. Commoners suffered equally if not more. In many weeks over 150 persons were carried to their graves.²

These deaths were often accepted with resignation or were interpreted by the faithful as God's judgment for sin.³ For the reformers, this sin was usually the sins of immorality, of non-commitment to God, of heresy and of sectarian influence. Consequently catastrophes such as plagues led to stronger denunciations of carousers and dissidents from the pulpit, more calls for repentance, and intensified efforts to rid the church of unorthodoxy. At the same time it was a dissident physician, Dr. Winther d'Andernach, who led the medical fight against the plague.

¹ Earlier she had been married to Ludwig Keller (Cellarius) and Oecolampadius.

² The next plague struck in 1563-64. Lienhard and Willer, *Strassburg und die Reformation*, 264; Adam, *Evangelische Kirchengeschichte*, 197.

³ Kaspar Hedio, *Ein auszerleszne Chronick von anfang der welt bis auff das iar nach Christi nsers eynigen Heylands Geburt*. Strassburg, 1543.

Politically there loomed the resurgent Catholic Church and the imperial threat to the Protestant states and cities. It was this potential conflict that led to discussions in 1540-42 between Protestant and Catholic theologians where Bucer was involved. Their failure moved the Catholic Church toward the Council of Trent. The refusal of the Protestant States to attend the Council led to the 1546-47 Smalkald War, the defeat of the Smalkald League, the exile of Bucer and the establishment of the 1548 Augsburg Interim in Strasbourg. This had consequences for Strasbourg society: the clergy and large numbers of artisans clashed with the city's rulers over the war and the Interim, and in the face of this threat to their position, many aristocrats emigrated.⁴

Strasbourg's relations with France and the empire were complicated by the fact that Germany's religious quarrels served to strengthen Francis I and weaken Charles V. German Protestants tended to support France, for a complete victory by Charles V would render their own situation precarious. Catholic princes also favored *rapprochement* with the Protestants, for if the emperor defeated the Protestant princes, their own position would also be weakened. They hoped a reconciliation with the Smalkald League would help curb the emperor's power.⁵

⁴ Brady, *Ruling Class* 259-290.

⁵ Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings*, 30; Reuss, *Histoire de Strasbourg*, 133.

Charles V's last diplomatic effort to unify the empire was a series of theological colloquies involving Catholic and Protestant theologians at Hagenau (1540), Worms (1540-41) and Regensburg (1541).⁶ Although the negotiations reached agreement on many questions, political rivalries and Luther's hostility prevented any reunion from being effected. By demonstrating that an easy solution was illusory, the colloquies helped turn the Catholic church toward the Council of Trent. Although the emperor managed briefly to rally both parties against the Turks, he was unable to unite Germany.⁷

In the midst of these discussions came the death in June 1541 of Wilhelm von Honstein, bishop of Strasbourg (1506-1541). Always hostile to the Reform, Wilhelm had not had good relations with the *Magistrat* or the reformers. The *Magistrat*, promising to recognize the new bishop's election and to observe all traditional election ceremonies, asked the Cathedral Chapter to name a conciliatory bishop. In electing the moderate Erasmus Schenk of Limburg, the canons obliged. A former student of Strasbourg's academic rector, Jean Sturm, he remained Sturm's friend to his death in 1568. This eased relations with Strasbourg's Protestant regime.⁸

⁶ The Schwenckfeld sympathizer, Katherine Zell, helped host the thirty member Protestant delegation to the Hagenau Colloquy. Bainton, *Women*, 64-65.

⁷ Steinmetz, 41; "Ratisbonne, The Conference of (1541)," *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1974 ed.; Reuss, 134.

⁸ Reuss, 135.

II. Ruprecht von Mosham

Into this context of interconfessional discussions stepped a religious maverick named Ruprecht von Mosham (1493-1543). A doctor of theology, Mosham was the former dean of the cathedral chapter in Passau in Swabia. Just as discussions toward Protestant-Catholic unity were commencing in 1539, he was dismissed for criticizing the Catholic church and even urging the abolition of all Christian groups (Catholicism, Lutheranism, Zwinglianism and Anabaptism) for the sake of unity against the Turks. Following his dismissal he embarked on a one-man campaign throughout Germany for his vision of Christian unity against the Turks.⁹ He visited religious leaders in Nürnberg, Ulm, Worms, Mainz, Basel, Berne and at the interconfessional colloquies.¹⁰

In July 1540 Ruprecht came to the interconfessional talks in Hagenau, where to the emperor, princes and Catholic and Protestant delegates he submitted an appeal to unite against the Turks.¹¹ His reputation preceded him. Most delegates considered him a cultured and educated but somewhat misguided man.¹² To the Strasbourg delegates he pre-

⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 966, p. 372, n. 1; No. 1043, p. 421.

¹⁰ *TAE IV*, Nos. 966, 1043, 1140.

¹¹ *TAE IV*, No. 966, p. 372, n. 1; No. 1119, pp. 479-481.

¹² *TAE IV*, No. 1043, pp. 420-421.

sented two books on how the quarreling Christians could come to unity.¹³ He asked that they be reviewed by the Rat, and having lost his benefice, asked for financial support for his printing costs.¹⁴ Strasbourg's theologians, Jakob Bedrot and Caspar Hedio, reported that Ruprecht called both the Catholics and the Lutherans anti-christs, considered the Lutheran doctrine of *Sola fide* erroneous for faith and works belonged together, and presented a doctrine of perfection.¹⁵ After an appearance in Strasbourg, Ruprecht attended the interconfessional colloquy in Worms at the turn of 1540-41 and there was discredited by Calvin in a debate.¹⁶

In July 1541 he submitted a circular letter and a memorandum to the Strasbourg Rat. In his view God desired, and all of Christendom needed, a genuine peace, but Christians rejected the gracious will of God. For Christians and Jews to unite in a true Christian unity, the Catholic and Lutheran anti-christs would have to be abolished.¹⁷ Lutheranism, he declared, was just as false as Catholicism and the doctrine of justification by faith was

¹³ Probably his 1539 *Memoriale microsynodi Norinbergensis* and the *Microsynodus Moguntina*. He also published *Microsynodus Ratisbonensis Romana non Germanica* in 1542. Gerber, "Les Anabaptistes," 317.

¹⁴ TAE IV, No. 1043, pp. 420-421.

¹⁵ TAE IV, Nos. 1043, 1044, 1049, 1051, 1055.

¹⁶ According to Jean Sturm. TAE III, No. 1055 Beilage, p. 428.

¹⁷ TAE IV, No. 1118, pp. 478-479.

an ungodly abomination. He asked the magistrates to arrange an audience for him at the upcoming colloquy in Regensburg, and again requested support for his printing efforts; in the long run this investment would save them much costly error and disunity.¹⁸ Although the magistrates cherished their Lutheran theology, they still recommended that he be received in Regensburg and gave him twelve *gulden*.¹⁹ Before the Cathedral Chapter a week later, Ruprecht made a similar pitch and was offered ten *gulden*. Regarding the election of a new bishop, Ruprecht advised the canons to vote not for the papacy nor for the empire but for the praise of God.²⁰

Strasbourg's theologians denounced Ruprecht, calling him a messenger of Satan and a blasphemer of the true Christian doctrine.²¹ With this cue, the magistrates informed him that his views would not be tolerated in Strasbourg, and whether or not he confessed error, he would be expelled.²²

In Speyer in March 1542, at the request of the archbishop of Cologne,²³ Bucer again heard Ruprecht's proposals for Christian unification, but declined to arrange an address for him to the Protestant delegates at the Collo-

¹⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1119, pp. 479-481.

¹⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1121, pp. 482-483.

²⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1123, p. 485.

²¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1140, p. 496.

²² *TAE IV*, No. 1126, pp. 486-487.

²³ *TAE IV*, No. 1160, p. 508.

quy of Regensburg.²⁴ Ultimately, having placed Luther and the pope in the same boat, Ruprecht received no support from either camp, was declared insane and died in prison in 1543.²⁵

III. The Smalkald War and the Imposition of the Interim

Since Strasbourg always desired good relations with both France and the empire, when the two powers were at odds, it walked a political tightrope. In order not to alienate the emperor, with France in the 1530s it sought to focus on commercial affairs, and as a member of the Diet, it promised support for the emperor should the Diet call for it.²⁶

The 1538 Peace of Nice temporarily halted the struggle between France and the emperor. 1540 to 1542 featured Charles V's effort to close the religious schism through interconfessional colloquies. When these failed and momentum accelerated toward the Council of Trent and toward conflict, Strasbourg's relations with France began to chill. At the 1544 Diet of Speyer, for various reasons the German princes and the free cities capitulated to the emperor, who now claimed the support of the whole empire for a new war against France. Strasbourg's magistrates, under great pressure to support Charles V's war effort, feared that their

²⁴ TAE IV, No. 1163, pp. 508-509.

²⁵ Gerber, 317.

²⁶ Reuss, 133-134.

city and Alsace would, as often before, be the battleground for the two powers, and that France could punish them later for complicity with the emperor. They managed to ward off a garrison of imperial soldiers by supplying the emperor with munitions which they urged be used against the Turks rather than against France. Francis I, meanwhile, militarily and economically exhausted, and irritated by the Protestants' capitulation to Charles V, gave up his wooing of Strasbourg. The rupture between the Protestant leaders and Francis I was complete.²⁷

Charles V, knowing that the exhausted Francis I would not take up arms, decided the moment had come to move against the Protestant states. While Pope Paul III convoked the Council of Trent on March 15, 1545, a Diet at Worms deliberated the sending of Protestant princes to Trent in the hope that they would submit to its decisions. But Smalkald League's representatives could hardly attend the Council when their demand was to abolish the papacy. When the Protestants refused to recognize the Council's authority, Charles V launched the Smalkald War.²⁸

Even before the emperor's victory at Mühlberg on April 24, 1547, the war had turned to his advantage in southern Germany, and Strasbourg had to respond to him. In January 1547 the *Schöffen* were polled on whether to deal with the

²⁷ Reuss, 134-138.

²⁸ Reuss, 138-139.

emperor or prepare for a siege. A wide range of opinions emerged. The majority of the *Schöffen* preferred to negotiate if the emperor would guarantee the city's liberty and religion. Among the wealthy guilds the will to negotiate was most pronounced. Within the poorer guilds pressure for military resistance was greater. Most of the clergy, particularly Bucer, Fagius and Zell considered any treaty a compromise of the gospel, and to the dismay of the *Rat*, ceaselessly preached resistance from the pulpit. Finally, however, the *Schöffen* authorized the *Rat* to begin negotiations.²⁹ On March 21, 1547 Charles V accepted the *Rat*'s request for pardon, and Jakob Sturm knelt in obeisance before the emperor. Strasbourg was ordered to leave the Smalkald League, abandon any support for the emperor's enemies, furnish funds and munitions for his army and swear allegiance. These relatively favorable conditions were accepted.³⁰

More difficult, perhaps, than military victory was the emperor's task of getting the Catholic Church to concede certain reforms, of imposing upon the Protestants a return to Catholic traditions, and of forcing Protestant princes to return to the Church the ecclesiastical domains they had appropriated. When the Diet of Augsburg (1547-48) could not

²⁹ Lienhard, "La Réforme, 413. See Brady, 259-290, for detailed analysis of this inquest.

³⁰ Reuss, 139-140; Lienhard, 413.

reach an agreement, it was left to two reforming Catholics and one Lutheran³¹ to compose, in twenty-six articles, the doctrinal compromise known as the "Augsburg Interim." This became the provisional basis of settlement between Catholics and Protestants until the Council of Trent should finish its task. Essentially the edict was a return to softened Catholic doctrines. Although it conceded to the Protestants communion in both kinds and the marriage of priests, it instituted Catholic worship, restored the jurisdictional and doctrinal power of the bishops and paid little attention to Protestant views of "justification by faith."³²

For the Strasbourgeois these stipulations meant the re-establishment of Catholicism which, at least for the clergy, constituted a contradiction of the "gospel." For the *Rat* this posed a dilemma: the emperor had shown himself to be intractable.³³ At the same time Strasbourg's population was divided on the issue. Although a large majority were committed to Protestantism, few were prepared to be martyrs for it. The lower and middle levels of society leaned toward

³¹ Jules Pflug, bishop of Naumburg, Michel Helding, suffragan bishop of Mainz, and Johann Agricola.

³² Since the pope and the hard-line Catholic princes refused to accept the Interim, Charles V had to declare it binding only for the empire's Protestants. Some parts of Germany opted for the less Catholic "Leipzig Interim" propounded in December 1548 by the Elector Maurice. Lienhard, 413-414; Reuss, 141; "Augsburg, The Interim of," *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1974 ed.

³³ Constance had lost its freedom and religion by resisting.

resistance, and in a vote of the *Schöffen* on August 27, 1548, the Rat's recommendation to accept the Interim was narrowly (134-132 votes) rejected.³⁴ This rejection of peace triggered among the upper class merchants and patricians a mass emigration in August and September 1548. Of 109 known *emigrés*, ninety (82%) belonged to the ruling classes.³⁵ Consequently the *Schöffen* changed their minds and approved the Interim.³⁶

According to Thomas Brady, these events had a great effect on Strasbourg society. Unlike in the Peasants' War, Strasbourg's ruling classes suffered heavily. In the Peasants' War, although the old religious system and much that was dear to the aristocrats collapsed, by making concessions to popular pressure, the ruling classes retained their will and ability to rule. But in 1547-48, not only did many in the artisan classes themselves agitate against the regime's submission to the emperor and Interim, but the ruling classes themselves were divided into war and peace parties. The consequent emigration of aristocratic families in the face of internal and external hostility "brought the entire structure of aristocratic hegemony...to the brink of collapse."³⁷ Thus the Smalkald War and the Interim "pro-

³⁴ Lienhard, 414.

³⁵ Brady, 280-282.

³⁶ Lienhard, 414; Brady, 259-290.

³⁷ Brady, 198.

duced what the onset of the Reformation had failed to: a substantial modification of the patriciate."³⁸

These developments escalated anxiety for some religious radicals and permitted a brief respite for others. The dominance of the emperor weakened the Rat's willingness to protect its Anabaptist citizens who were living under Catholic administrations. When some Anabaptist women in Borsch rejected the Interim and the Cathedral Chapter's regulations, they were imprisoned until further instructions from the chapter.³⁹ The Rat did not intervene on their behalf.

At the same time, the clergy, already without Capito since 1541, lost Matthew Zell to death in 1548 and Bucer to exile in early 1549. Not only were the clergy weakened; they and the *Magistrat* were also distracted. The Catholic resurgence, the war, the Interim, the popular unrest and the loss of the patriciate so preoccupied Strasbourg's leaders that the sectarian threat was somewhat overlooked. The Schwenckfeldian Alexander Berner, for example, was able to return in 1548 after a twelve year exile.⁴⁰ The Interim also drove some of Strasbourg's Protestants into a relative

³⁸ Dickens and Tonkin, *The Reformation in Historical Thought* (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press, 1985), 302.

³⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1649, p. 278.

⁴⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1636, p. 269; Adam, 216-217; Husser, "Liberté Spiritualiste," 54.

solidarity with the radicals, for now both the Strasbourg church and the radicals were dissidents. *Stettmeister* Jakob Sturm, for example, who for twenty years had sympathized with Schwenckfeld on the eucharist, sought the latter's views on the role of the magistracy in 1548, and Schwenckfeld responded in detail.⁴¹

IV. Christlichen Gemeinschaften

Besides the external crises of the Smalkald War and the Interim, the Strasbourg church also suffered internal tensions which grew to crisis proportions by 1547. After Strasbourg became Protestant in 1529, the reformers' agenda, including schools, synods, church visitations and mandates against sectarians, was to build a church community which would believe and live in line with the evangelical gospel. When they could not manage the task, they called on the Rat for help. Out of this cooperation came the marriage ordinance of 1529, the Synod of 1533, the Ecclesiastical ordinance of 1534 and the disciplinary ordinances of 1535. The following years saw numerous initiatives and petitions to the Rat from the clergy. In August 1535 and in March 1536 the clergy bemoaned the city's depraved morals and the poor church attendance of the magistrates and the youth. In *On Pastoral Care and the Cure of Souls* (1538), Bucer pleaded

⁴¹ TAE IV, No. 1615, p. 257; Brady, 241-242; T. A. Brady, Jr., "Architect of Persecution: Jakob Sturm and the Fall of the Sects at Strasbourg," ARG 79 (1988), 264-265; Adam, 216-217; Husser, 54.

for greater church autonomy to exercise discipline as an integral part of pastoral care. The Synod of 1539 moved to solidify standards for the church: parents should be exacting in their choice of godparents, baptisms should be held on holidays before the entire church and confession should take place before the eucharist.⁴² The Rat, in response, promulgated new or renewed mandates, exhorted magistrates to attend church, and resisted "worldly" indulgences such as construction of a brothel. But many magistrates believed one could not legislate "works of faith," and they feared a return to "papism." So the Rat refused to establish a commission of church censors (*Zuchtherren*) or to confer the exercise of discipline to the clergy or independent church elders.⁴³

The clergy's quest for effective church discipline, however, did not flag, not least because the Anabaptists and the Schwenckfeldians continued to criticize the church for being impure. For the youth they instituted confirmation and a public confession of faith prior to their first eucharist. In 1544 they replaced meetings of the *Konvent* and *Kirchenpfleger* with a fully independent ecclesiastical *Konvent*.⁴⁴ In 1545 Hedio, Bucer and Zell reminded the magistrates that many were slandering not only the preachers

⁴² Lienhard, 411-412.

⁴³ Lienhard, 412.

⁴⁴ Lienhard, 412, 414.

but also the true gospel. Sects and errors such as the denial of a devil or hell were being introduced, and many simple folk were being seduced. Leading "seducers" included the Schwenckfeldian Wolff Weckinger, the Epicurean former pastor, Wolfgang Schultheiss, the gardener-preacher Clement Ziegler and the tailor Jörg Ziegler.⁴⁵

A major clerical initiative was the 1547 creation within the parishes of *christlichen Gemeinschaften*, self-disciplining conventicles which, it was hoped, would gradually grow to include the whole church. These communities became active particularly in the parishes of St. Nicholas, St. Thomas, St. Wilhelm and Young St. Peter, and included some former Anabaptists. Modeled after the New Testament church, people could enter them freely after confessing their faith. They met during free hours to encourage each other "toward a genuine penitence and a betterment of life." A more effective discipline exercised by church leaders was thus made possible independent of the *Rat*.⁴⁶

Several influences combined to push Bucer in this direction. Despite his recent movement toward Lutheranism, as an Alsatian, he was influenced by the tradition of Alsatian

⁴⁵ The *Rat* responded with another committee. *TAE* IV, No. 1439, pp. 135-136; No. 1421, pp. 125-126.

⁴⁶ Spener, the founder of Pietism, would revive the idea in 1670 in Frankfurt. Lienhard, 412. For a full account of the *christliche Gemeinschaften*, see W. Bellardi, *Die Geschichte des "Christlichen Gemeinshaften" in Strassburg (1546/1550). Der Versuch einer "zweiten Reformation"* (Leipzig: M. Heinsius Nachfolger, 1934).

spiritualism dating back to Meister Eckhart, and he had always taught the importance of the Holy Spirit and sanctification. Bucer also knew of Luther's *ecclesiola*, the church of true believers within the church of the community.⁴⁷ Further, he had noticed that through the exercise of church discipline Calvin had attracted numerous Anabaptists. Finally, in his debate with Anabaptists in Hesse in 1538, he had accepted their criticisms and had yielded to them on ethical questions in exchange for their acceptance of the official church.⁴⁸ So when nonconformists criticized Bucer and the Strasbourg church for ethical fruitlessness and an impure eucharist, these were criticisms of which he was already aware. In part, then, the *christlichen Gemeinschaften* were Bucer's attempt to remedy ethical failings and silence the radicals' critiques without resorting to a sectarian ecclesiology. When the *Rat* refused to legislate his vision of Christian living, he felt obligated to create the *christlichen Gemeinschaften* without *Rat* assistance.

In light of the clergy's opposition to the treaty with the emperor and acceptance of the Interim, to the magistrates this move appeared seditious -- as if the clergy no longer trusted the regime. With their private associations of "saints," complete with power of excommunication which the regime had always vetoed, this attempt to realize

⁴⁷ Bellardi, 10-15.

⁴⁸ Littell, "What Butzer Debated," 256-276.

a "second Reformation" with popular support independent of the *Rat* appeared subversive. Although the clergy split five to four in November 1547 over the question of obedience to the regime, the movement continued until 1549 when it was suppressed by the *Rat*.⁴⁹ To mollify the clergy, in January 1548 the *Rat* promulgated a new disciplinary ordinance.⁵⁰

Popular support for this short-lived experiment came largely from the artisan class parishes of St. Nicholas and Young St. Peter. Many were probably the same artisans who opposed the treaty with the emperor and the acceptance of the Interim.⁵¹ A number of religious radicals participated in the *christlichen Gemeinschaften*. Jörg Faber, the assistant in Young St. Peter, earlier known as the Anabaptist Jörg Schmid,⁵² was still zealous for a dedicated Christianity. By August 1549 he was teaching catechism at a joint session of all the *Gemeinschaften*. In this discussion the Melchiorite Lienhard Jost, who had rejoined the Strasbourg church, took part.⁵³ Faber served as assistant in Young St. Peter until his death.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ See Bellardi, ch. 4; Brady, *Ruling Class*, 274-275.

⁵⁰ Lienhard, 412.

⁵¹ Chrisman, *Strasbourg*, 293; Bellardi, 50-51; Brady, *Ruling Class*, 274-275.

⁵² *TAE II*, No. 649, pp. 440-441.

⁵³ *TAE IV*, No. 1676, p. 297.

⁵⁴ *TAE IV*, No. 1678, pp. 297-298.

Catholics also saw the clergy's opposition to the Interim and the Rat as sectarian and subversive, and Anabaptist Münster served as a barometer for their criticism. Wolfgang Schultheiss, the former Schiltigheim pastor who had by now returned to the Catholic church, published *Ein bedencken und erinnerung auff die Predigen* (1548) against the clergy. He charged that like the Münster Anabaptists, they provoked their subjects to rebellion and secession. They taught that government and subjects were obliged to sacrifice city, life, honor and fortune for the salvation of their souls and the sake of the Gospel. For their teaching and actions they used the Holy Scriptures to the exclusion of the Holy Spirit. They sought to change not only the human heart but also church buildings, worship services and the government. Such external trappings were less important than that all, whether Jews, Turks, Catholics or Lutherans, be able to experience true religion.⁵⁵ The clergy's kind of Reformation produced only violence. Governments, rulers and subjects should learn from Münster how dangerous it was to trust biblical scholars, theologians and preachers, especially regarding religious changes without the government's approval.⁵⁶ Bucer's response in the name of the clergy was his most mature and complete apology for Strasbourg Protestantism, *Ein Summarischer vergriff der Chistlichen lehre und Religion...* (1548).⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Adam, 216; Lienhard, 525.

⁵⁶ Adam, 216.

V. Religious Radicals in the Political Crises of the 1540s

In the sources only a few instances appear of religious radicals caught up in the Smalkald War and Interim crises. While Anabaptists tended to denounce involvement in the Smalkald War, a number of Schwenckfeldians participated, particularly in diplomacy. In the prelude to the war, Michael Han, Strasbourg's Schwenckfeldian city secretary in the 1530s, became a diplomatic work horse. Despite his protests of inability and lack of authority, by 1541 he not only accompanied magistrates on missions but even represented the city by himself. By 1543 it was he who attended meetings of the Smalkald League and the imperial diet with Jakob Sturm, and usually it was he who was left to draft reports.⁵⁸

During the war the Schwenckfeldian notary and long time secretary for the city's poor relief program, Hans Zimprecht Barter, served as the Rat's eyes and ears in Swabia. Having moved with his wife to a new position in Swabia in October 1545, from there Barter provided the Rat with information on external affairs and the war in particular.⁵⁹ The physician Dr. Winther von Andernach, a Schwenckfeldian sympathizer, offered room and board to the oldest son of Philip of Hesse

⁵⁷ Lienhard, 525.

⁵⁸ Brady, *Ruling Class*, 255-256; *TAE IV*, No. 1511, pp. 192-193.

⁵⁹ *TAE IV*, *Beilage*, p. 540; No. 1475, p. 162; No. 1540, p. 214.

during the war.⁶⁰ Dr. Michael (Toxites) Schütz, another physician (and poet) with Schwenckfeldian sympathies, travelled with Jean Sturm on a diplomatic mission to France in 1546. Then he carried out an assignment for the Smalkald League in Germany. While he worked for the Rat in 1546, in 1548 he agitated against the Interim and the regime, and for this spent some time in prison. When released, he left the city.⁶¹

Deeply entangled in the war was the Schwenckfeldian nobleman Peter Scher. With lands in imperial territory and a residence in Strasbourg, he received criticism from both sides. In May 1547, suspected of being an imperial spy, he was accused of treason to Strasbourg. He was also falsely accused of discussing a plot to assassinate an Augsburg diplomat staying in Strasbourg.⁶² Towards the end of the war Scher's upper Alsatian village of Nambenheim was seized by imperial forces,⁶³ probably because imperial agents believed he had advised the Protestants during the war. He

⁶⁰ Bernays, "Andernach," 38-39; TAE IV, No. 1743, p. 337.

⁶¹ J. Ficker and O. Winckelmann, *Handschriftproben des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts. nach Strassburger Originalien* (Strasbourg: Karl J. Trübner, 1905), No. 81.

⁶² TAE IV, No. 1553, p. 221.

⁶³ TAE IV, No. 1581, p. 237.

asked the *Rat* officially to assure the emperor that he had not done so.⁶⁴

Anabaptist responses to the Smalkald War were more negative. In April 1544 the gardeners' guild leadership called for a display of military preparedness, either to determine the military levy, or to schedule watch duty or for a military review. One gardener stated that he did not want to carry any arms against any other Christian.⁶⁵ A stronger statement was made by Diebolt Hartschedel. Although he considered the preaching of Matthew Zell the basis of his faith, he differed with Zell on military involvement. While Zell, to the dismay of the *Rat*, preached resistance to imperial troops and the Interim,⁶⁶ Hartschedel in 1546 left the Strasbourg church in favor of the pacifist Swiss Brethren. His other opinions regarding the need for worthy participation at the eucharist and the need for the ban grew out of this move. For the rest of his life he would swear no oath for it was forbidden in Scripture.⁶⁷

The Pilgramite church leader, Sigmund Bosch, had a more eschatological response. In Strasbourg in 1548 after time in Moravia, he wrote a letter to the congregation in Auster-

⁶⁴ *TAE IV*, No. 1591, pp. 244-245.

⁶⁵ *TAE IV*, No. 1363, p. 93.

⁶⁶ Brady, *Ruling Class*, 274.

⁶⁷ AMS, Wiedertäuferherren Minutes, I, 14, (1568), f. 43r-44r; I, 14, II, (1568), f. 6.

litz and more broadly to Moravian Anabaptists. For him the Smalkald War was a sign of the imminent end of the world and the coming of Christ. He encouraged his readers "not to try save things from the burning house," but to serve God faithfully to the end. What was important to Bosch was to keep communication alive between the scattered Anabaptist congregations in Strasbourg, Alsace and Moravia, and to help keep their minds on the next world.⁶⁸ Another apocalyptic response came in July 1550 from a prophet named Sebastian Schweinenbach who sent the *Rat* his interpretation of the book of Daniel. He argued that according to Daniel's prophecy, Emperor Charles V would be the last emperor. He asked the *Rat* to send a copy to Graff Wilhelm von Fürstenberg and to his military leader. The *Rat*, holding a different interpretation, did not comply.⁶⁹

A more earthly and political response came from Hans Schlemer, the Melchiorite butcher and Strasbourg citizen whose wife had visited Hoffman in 1543. In January 1547 together with two others he was punished by the *Rat* for subversive comments regarding the Smalkald War.⁷⁰ Similarly Veltin Rul, the butcher and disciple of the visionary prophet, Martin Steinbach, campaigned against the Interim in

⁶⁸ He would still be active in 1553. TAE IV, No. 1614a, 256-257.

⁶⁹ *Auslegung über die gesicht des Propheten Daniels*. TAE IV, No. 1707, p. 313.

⁷⁰ TAE IV, No. 1541, p. 214.

1548.⁷¹ Rul's protest was part of a larger swell of Strasbourg-
bourgeois opposition. While the imposition of the Interim
provoked unrest among the masses, in some places it also
emboldened Anabaptists to make themselves more visible.
Reports that Anabaptists were again on the increase reached
the *Rat* at least in the spring of 1549⁷² and again in the
summer of 1551.⁷³

In the spring of 1549 the Cathedral Chapter apprehended
a number of Anabaptist women after seizing an Anabaptist
writing. Among them one Ottilia and two daughters of the
Börsch vinedresser, Jörg Offenbach, held fast to their
Anabaptism. Ottilia was imprisoned in Geispolsheim, the
official seat of the Cathedral Chapter. Offenbach's
daughters were placed in separate cells and all their
belongings registered. When they still rejected the Interim
and the chapter's regulations, they were imprisoned until
further instructions from the chapter. Their father Jörg
Offenbach declared that had they recanted, he would have
disowned them.⁷⁴ The *Rat*, now more fearful of the emperor,
did not intervene on their behalf as it often had in the
past.

⁷¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1536, p. 207.

⁷² *TAE IV*, No. 1663, pp. 288-289.

⁷³ *TAE IV*, No. 1748, pp. 340-341.

⁷⁴ *TAE IV*, No. 1649, p. 278.

The tailor Jörg Ziegler made both religious and political protests against the Interim. In 1549 he spoke out against the Catholic eucharist, and then, in the presence of mercenaries, said "unhelpful things," probably about imperial troops and the Interim.⁷⁵ Such dangerous talk earned him a lecture from both the *Ammeister* and the *Stettmeister*, and a threat of severe punishment.⁷⁶ For a time Ziegler held his tongue, but late in 1551 he shouted denunciations first in the cathedral where the mass was being celebrated, and then in front of the pillory. The *Rat*, finding his reason for the uproar to be unjustified, banned him from the city.⁷⁷ Barely was he expelled when reports arrived of France's Henri II marching toward Alsace, and of an anti-Hapsburg alliance between Henri II and Duke Maurice, the new Elector of Saxony. With Protestant forces to the east, and word of 80,000 French troops and 12,000 horses advancing on Strasbourg from the west, Strasbourg began frantic defensive measures.⁷⁸ In this crisis, in March 1552 Jörg Ziegler's brother, Clement Ziegler, pleaded for Jörg's return to his wife and children.⁷⁹ The *Rat*,

⁷⁵ *TAE IV*, No. 1758, p. 345; No. 1600, p. 249.

⁷⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1669, pp. 292-293.

⁷⁷ *TAE IV*, No. 1758, p. 345; No. 1770, p. 350.

⁷⁸ Reuss, 147-149.

⁷⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1770, p. 350.

however, judging this no time for a dissident to disturb the city's focus, left him outside.⁸⁰

Alexander Berner, the Schwenckfeldian former alms assistant, was judged more useful. Although during the Interim he had met with the Anabaptists and had criticized the clergy and the church's trend toward Lutheranism,⁸¹ in the summer of 1552, to negotiate an alliance with Ulm, a city replete with Schwenckfeldian magistrates, the Rat called on him.⁸²

The dissident perhaps most deeply embroiled in the Interim controversy was the scholar and spiritualist, Justus Velsius (c. 1510-1581). Born in The Hague, Velsius was a philologist, physician, mathematician and philosopher who had studied in Bologna and Paris⁸³ and had taught and published in the Netherlands.⁸⁴ He came to Strasbourg in the spring of 1544 to teach philosophy at the *Hochschule*.

⁸⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1772, p. 351.

⁸¹ *TAE IV*, Nos. 1636, 1656, 1747; Husser, 131, 136, 190-191; Winckelmann, *Fürsorgenwesen*, Vol. I, 92, and Vol. II, 184.

⁸² *TAE IV*, No. 1776, p. 372; Husser, 77, 129. Winckelmann, Vol. I, 92; Vol. II, 184.

⁸³ *TAE IV*, No. 1374, p. 98, n. 1; Philippe Denis, "L'envoyé de l'Esprit et les hommes d'Eglise: Justus Velsius à Francfort et Londres (1556-1563)." *Divers Aspects de la Réforme au XVIe et XVIIe siècles. Etudes et documents*. Paris: Société de l'histoire du protestantisme français, 1975, 184; Gerber, 317.

⁸⁴ Ficker and Winckelmann, No. 83.

Despite initial financial strains,⁸⁵ by November 1545 Velsius received a benefice through the Chapter of St. Thomas.⁸⁶ With a stream of philological and philosophical publications in the following years, he earned an excellent academic reputation.⁸⁷

Despite friendship with the main reformers, Velsius never officially joined the reform.⁸⁸ Doctrinal issues he viewed through a humanist-based perspective of the "true universal church."⁸⁹ After the Smalkald War, when Strasbourg's interests were bound up with those of the Lutheran states, Velsius' spiritualism and anti-confessionalism brought him into growing conflict with Bucer. 1547-48 saw Bucer defending the *Tetrapolitana* against Velsius, and Bucer's public attacks drove the latter to view the Interim agreement positively.⁹⁰ Dismayed that the clergy were stirring up the populace against the Interim, Velsius' disagreement with them sharpened.⁹¹ Although he still enjoyed the support of the Rat who in October 1548 vouched to Dutch

⁸⁵ *TAE IV*, Nos. 1386, 1465, 1479.

⁸⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1482, pp. 166-170.

⁸⁷ *TAE IV*, No. 1614, p. 256; Gerber, 317; Ficker and Winckelmann, No. 83.

⁸⁸ *TAE IV*, Nos. 1374-1376, pp. 98-102; Denis, 184.

⁸⁹ Ficker and Winckelmann, No. 83.

⁹⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1577, p. 236; Ficker and Winckelmann, No. 83.

⁹¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1614, p. 256; Gerber, 317.

authorities for his wife's permanent residency in Strasbourg,⁹² his contact with nonconformists, even if he did not join them, hurt his reputation with the church.⁹³

In February 1549, shortly before Bucer left for exile in England, Velsius created a storm around himself. Although all the canons of the St. Thomas Chapter were Protestant, Velsius and another canon, Beatus Felix Pfeffinger, decided to support the Interim and join the Catholic church. When the chapter demanded that they resign their benefices, they refused. By the summer the disagreement had grown into a full-fledged controversy involving the St. Thomas Chapter, the clergy, the Rat and the Catholic bishop, with Velsius calling the clergy worse than heretics.⁹⁴ Not even Jakob Sturm, Strasbourg's greatest conciliator, could satisfy Velsius.⁹⁵ In March 1550 Velsius was granted a two month leave to let things cool down, but by the summer he had decided to leave permanently.⁹⁶ The income from his benefice was temporarily reallocated to French refugees.⁹⁷

⁹² *TAE IV*, No. 1628, p. 264.

⁹³ Gerber, 317.

⁹⁴ *TAE IV*, Nos. 1643, 1644, 1646, 1647, 1648, 1671, 1675.

⁹⁵ *TAE IV*, No. 1685, p. 301.

⁹⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1697, p. 309; No. 1710, p. 318.

⁹⁷ *TAE IV*, No. 1718, pp. 323-324.

From Strasbourg Velsius went to Cologne where he taught ancient philosophy, and then to Louvain where he specialized in languages and ancient literature. But things changed quickly. By 1554 further difficulties were transforming him from an esteemed professor to an ever more rejected, rootless and individualistic visionary dissenter.⁹⁸ The publication of his visions and his declaration against church ceremonies led to time in prison in Cologne in 1555. Released the following year, he moved to Frankfurt where he defended free will against Calvin. An attempt to return to Strasbourg was rebuffed. Further activities included correspondence with Schwenckfeld and strife with two Strasbourg pastors.⁹⁹ His last trace appears in 1581.¹⁰⁰

The pattern of response to the political crises of the 1540s among Strasbourg's religious radicals points both to the nature of the issues important to them and to their social location. The two nonconformists with a noticeable place in the Protestant-Catholic debate, Ruprecht von Mosham and Velsius, were non-Anabaptist intellectuals, and the nonconformists involved in diplomacy were Schwenckfeldians. To upper class Schwenckfeldians and intellectuals with access

⁹⁸ Denis, 184.

⁹⁹ Ficker and Winckelmann, No. 83.

¹⁰⁰ TAE IV, No. 1374, p. 98, n. 1. See also Philippe Denis, "Justus Velsius," *Bibliotheca Dissidentium*, I, Baden-Baden: Editions Valentin Koerner, 1980), 49-51.

to Strasbourg's policy-makers, political peace and stability were important issues, and so a sizeable percentage of them were involved.

But for most radicals after 1535, the compelling issues were domestic. Most complaints were about local authorities and the freedom to graze livestock, to cultivate vineyards, to build residences, to worship and to raise children a certain way. This is in keeping with their social location. These radicals were not among Strasbourg's decision-making elite whose opinion on Protestant-Catholic relations counted. On the whole they were lower-class villagers, far removed from the power politics of interconfessional discussions, the Smalkald War and the Interim. Some Anabaptists like Hartschedel and Ziegler responded politically to these crises, and although these responses changed their own lives, on others they had little impact. More common, perhaps, were eschatological responses such as those of Bosch. When political power was out of reach and events were beyond their control, for marginalized sectarians refuge and hope could be found in the next world. Finally, it appears that the sectarians' most common response to the large scale crises was simply to carry on in their daily efforts to meet their physical, social and religious needs.

Chapter 8

RELIGIOUS RADICALS: THE CASE OF WANGEN, 1532-69

Strasbourg's rural area included districts and villages owned directly by the city, areas owned jointly with the bishop, and villages around Strasbourg which belonged to a patrician citizen or to a Strasbourg religious institution. The village of Wangen in the Molsheim district east of Strasbourg belonged to the Convent of St. Stephen whose abess was a citizen of Strasbourg.¹

This chapter seeks to trace the story of the religious dissidents in Wangen from 1532 to 1569. Here religious radicalism was not a minority phenomenon. It pervaded the entire village and dominated the village's political agenda. Before 1545, when Wangen was Catholic, the *Rat*, worried about Catholic encroachments on its jurisdiction, came to the Anabaptists' defense against local authorities. After 1545, when Wangen was Protestant, Strasbourg's magistrates were antagonistic toward the radicals. Reasons for dissent were diverse, but most often they reflected hostility to specific religious authorities, whether Catholic or Protestant. The case of Wangen also illustrates that silence in the sources

¹ *TAE III*, p. 13; *TAE IV*, No. 1350, p. 81, n. 1.

about religious dissent does not mean it did not exist. In Wangen discontent simmered under the surface for two decades before bursting into the open.

I. Wangen Radicals up to 1550

Sometimes Wangen natives moved to Strasbourg. Among them were the Anabaptists Veltin Northeim and Diebolt Soldner who were interrogated in 1534. Northeim and his wife, baptized by a Swiss brother in the forest near Benfeld, were among ten Anabaptists, including a preacher from Moravia, at the Zum Haspel inn of the wheelwright, Rudolfs Claus. Soldner lodged seven Anabaptists, four men and three women, in his Strasbourg home. Although (re)baptized, he would not say who had baptized him, nor would he swear the oath.²

Not only were Wangen natives found in Strasbourg. Wangen itself was caught up in a long-running struggle for religious and political control between the Strasbourg Rat and Anna von Schellenberg, Abbess (1531-1539) of St. Stephen to which the town belonged.³ A number of Anabaptists and other dissidents, caught up in this struggle, used it to gain the Rat's protection against the Wangen authorities and to agitate for religious reform. For the most part the dissidents, dissatisfied with Wangen's Latin Catholic mass, agitated for evangelical worship and German services and

² TAE II, No. 529, pp. 296-297; No. 539, p. 303.

³ TAE IV, No. 1358, p. 91, n. 10.

baptisms. Often the agitators were inclined toward Strasbourg's Protestantism but sometimes they also held to Anabaptism. The Abbess seems not to have distinguished greatly between the two kinds of dissidents, since in her eyes both were rebellious and both quarreled with her over baptism. The Anabaptists, for their part, unhappy with the religious policies of both Strasbourg and Wangen (the Rat and the Abbess), and unwilling to swear oaths of loyalty to either one, played one off against the other.

In December 1532 the Rat heard from Simon Fritsch, a farmer and Strasbourg citizen, that Abbess Anna von Schellenberg had punished him for seeking to have his child baptized in a German-language baptism in near-by Scharrachbergheim rather than in Wangen's Latin Catholic service. She had ordered him to pay a twenty pound fine or else be expelled from the village. Fritsch now wanted the Rat to defend his civic rights.⁴

Two magistrates from the Council of XV ordered the abbess to rescind the punishment for Fritsch's "Christian" action. The abbess agreed to readmit him temporarily, but argued that she and the Rat should be on the same side, for he was an Anabaptist (something he had not confessed). The councilors cared little for her insinuations. They simply told Fritsch to get a letter of release from her and go home to his family. And should anyone ever wish to take some-

⁴ TAE IV, Beilage, No. 350a, p. 473.

thing else from him, he should simply appeal to the Rat again.⁵

Within days, however, Fritsch was expelled again with a demand for fifteen pounds to re-enter the village. His brother Michel Fritsch, who had not been expelled, joined him in exile. The two councilors, with the brothers in tow, ordered the abbess to readmit Fritsch unpunished. A vigorous debate ensued over whether, as a Strasbourg citizen, the abbess was always obliged to obey the Rat's orders, whether Strasbourg's authority overruled her authority on behalf of the church, and whether Anabaptists should be tolerated in Strasbourg territory. The abbess castigated the Rat for contravening the imperial mandate against Anabaptists. The councilors insisted that she was subject to the city, and eventually Fritsch was re-allowed into the city. He took his child to be baptized in Wasselnheim where German Protestant services were in place, but when the Wasselnheim pastor would not baptize it, he took it to neighboring Zehenacker where it was baptized. The Rat, meanwhile, recommended that Protestant German baptism and worship be established in Wangen.⁶

⁵ *TAE IV, Beilage, No. 350a, p. 473.*

⁶ Earlier there had been a Hans Scherd from Wangen who had also carried his child from place to place to have it baptized; the child died from the ordeal. *TAE IV, Beilage, No. 352a, pp. 475-476.*

In January 1533 the bishop of Strasbourg, Wilhelm von Honstein, got involved on behalf of the abbess. He argued that the abbess should be able to trust the Rat to punish Anabaptists rather than have to do it herself. Moreover, since the city did not tolerate Anabaptists within its walls, it should not force other locales like Wangen to put up with them.⁷ While Anna von Schellenberg insisted that her suspects in Wangen really were Anabaptists and that the Rat was wrong in resisting her stand,⁸ the Rat replied to the bishop that 1) the abbess had misinformed the bishop and this untruth disturbed them greatly; 2) Simon Fritsch was not an Anabaptist, for both he and Michael had denied it in the presence of both the abbess and the Ratsherren; and 3) the Rat would never consider baptizing a child in German wrong and punishable.⁹ The abbess, upset at the charge of untruthfulness, protested that Fritsch did not want his child baptized at all, but out of fear of arrest went hither and yon until he could have the child baptized according to the Lutheran sect and his own will.¹⁰

By the summer of 1533 fear of Anabaptists in Wangen was widespread. In May the abbess's complaints to the bishop

⁷ TAE IV, *Beilage*, No. 352b, p. 478; No. 354aa, p. 481.

⁸ TAE IV, *Beilage*, No. 353a, pp. 480-481.

⁹ TAE IV, *Beilage*, No. 353a, p. 479; No. 354c, pp. 482-483.

¹⁰ TAE IV, *Beilage*, No. 355a, p. 484.

about the Wangen inhabitants' general unco-operativeness became more sweeping: "...they give nothing [to the church], they appeal to the Strasbourg Rat, they have Anabaptists, and they do as they please...."¹¹ In June, while the Synod was in session in Strasbourg, the bishop's secretary noted that the Anabaptists in Wangen were increasing phenomonally, and if they did not take care, the entire vil-
lage would become Anabaptist.¹²

By September the abbess had imprisoned several Anabaptists in the episcopal prison overlooking Saverne. They, in turn, appealed against her to the Strasbourg Rat. In addition, the abbess sought to appoint an *Oberschultheiss* for Wangen who was not a Strasbourg citizen. This evoked the Rat's disapproval, for it would represent a loss of influence for Strasbourg, and the Wangen *Oberschultheiss* had always been a citizen. The bishop recommended both compromise and firmness. Regarding the imprisoned Anabaptists, it would be best quietly to drop the issue for the Rat would never give in. Regarding the *Oberschultheiss*, the abbess should remind the Rat that she was not bound to choose a citizen.¹³

These two moves, the abbess confessed to the bishop, had been made in a desperate attempt to keep control over her

¹¹ TAE IV, *Beilage*, No. 361b, p. 491.

¹² TAE IV, *Beilage*, No. 383a, p. 497.

¹³ TAE IV, *Beilage*, No. 421a, pp. 502-503.

jurisdiction. First, in Wangen Anabaptists were avoiding the Catholic order. Secondly, unidentified Wangen inhabitants, possibly Lutherans, had desecrated the sacraments and mistreated the priests. Thirdly, they had gotten the pastor from nearby Irmstett to preach and lead the vespers. Fourthly, the inhabitants were in solidarity with the dissidents; when the authorities had investigated which people were Anabaptists, no one yielded information. Finally, the Wangen inhabitants no longer wanted to make offerings to the church. Under such conditions she could no longer run the convent. The bishop cautioned that Anabaptists should be disciplined only if their heresy were confirmed with solid evidence, for false charges were counterproductive. For the abbess the evidence was solid enough: although no one admitted to being an Anabaptist, four people had refused to swear the oath.¹⁴

Anna von Schellenberg got her way; a non-citizen, Samson von Ratsamhausen, was named as the new Wangen *Oberschultheiss*. On the following *Schwörtag* in September 1534, some Anabaptists refused to swear the oath of loyalty to him because he was not a Strasbourg citizen,¹⁵ and were promptly imprisoned. This prompted a delegation from Wangen to inform the *Rat* that they were expected to swear loyalty

¹⁴ TAE IV, *Beilage*, No. 422a, pp. 503-504.

¹⁵ Over the years this would proved to be a useful pretext for the Wangen Anabaptists not to swear the oath. TAE IV, *Beilage*, No. 612a, p. 532, fn. 3.

to the new *Oberschultheiss*, that they would welcome an evangelical service in Wangen, and that several Anabaptists had been imprisoned, including the abbess's steward.¹⁶ The Rat launched its own investigation of the affair, invited the imprisoned Anabaptists to seek its protection, and threatened to depose the abbess if she did not cooperate.¹⁷

At the same time, in the wake of the Synod of 1533 and Münster, the Rat was trying to eliminate religious radicalism in all its territories. The decrees of early 1535 forbidding people to shelter or help Anabaptists in any way were extended to Strasbourg's rural territories.¹⁸ In Wangen this decree was ignored. Popular solidarity with the dissidents continued, whether against the abbess or the Rat.¹⁹

Agitation against the mass in Wangen continued for several years. For example, in March 1538 a delegation led by an evangelical named Diebolt Wiltzen petitioned the Rat for freedom to choose between Protestant and Catholic wor-

¹⁶ *TAE IV, Beilage*, No. 606a, p. 530. This steward may have been Stephan Schaf, brother of the Anabaptist Johann Schaf and the Schwenckfeldian teacher Peter (Novesianus) Schaf. He is identified as steward in 1555 and before 1567. *TAE III*, No. 899, p. 313, n. 2; *AMS XXI*, No. 33 (1555), f. 472v-474v; *Bericht des Matthäus Nägelin, Strassburg, Bez.-A., H 2713*: "Wangen geschefft verrichtet anno 1569....," 39.

¹⁷ *TAE IV, Beilage*, No. 606a, p. 530; No. 612a, pp. 532-533.

¹⁸ *TAE II*, No. 657, pp. 446-449.

¹⁹ *TAE IV, Beilage*, No. 703b, p. 548.

ship and baptism.²⁰ But movement in this regard did not come until Anna von Schellenberg's death in November 1539.²¹ The new abbess, Adelheid von Andlau (1539-1545), was as determined as her predecessor to hold the line. In early 1540 the evangelically minded canons of St. Stephen opened discussions with her concerning the "reformation" of the convent, a new oath of obeisance for Wangen and evangelical worship in Wangen. Adelheid von Andlau quickly made it clear that in her view all who favored the evangelical movement were Anabaptists.²² An evangelical church in Wangen had to wait until 1545,²³ but tension between the abbess and the *Rat* grew so sharp that by 1541 she had to name the Protestant Diebolt Wiltzen as Wangen's *Schultheiss*. In 1569 Wiltzen would turn out to be an Anabaptist!²⁴

The *Rat*'s offensive continued to be fought against the radicals as well as the Catholics. The arrest in April 1540 of sixty-nine Anabaptists in Strasbourg,²⁵ and the consequent Anabaptist mandate had consequences for Wangen. With threats of prison and expulsion, in June 1540 the *Rat* issued a mandate specifically concerning Wangen's Anabap-

²⁰ *TAE III*, No. 815, pp. 138-139.

²¹ *TAE III*, No. 998, p. 390.

²² *TAE III*, No. 998, p. 390.

²³ *TAE II*, No. 384, p. 73, n. 16.

²⁴ *TAE III*, No. 998, p. 390.

²⁵ *TAE III*, Nos. 1002, 1003, 1014.

tists, and called on others to report them, especially those slipping into Wangen from Strasbourg.²⁶

Reports of dissident activity in Wangen are silent until April 1544 when the Rat heard of Anabaptists in Wangen who undermined the church, stayed away from services and separated themselves religiously. The Rat urged Wangen's authorities to enforce the Anabaptist mandate,²⁷ and sent three canons of St. Stephen to proclaim the mandate in Wangen. The canons received some hostile responses, particularly from three Anabaptists.²⁸ Nine dissidents were already in court (six favoring Anabaptism and three opposed). After much discussion regarding relations with the abbess, the *Schultheiss* and the nine dissidents, the Rat imprisoned and interrogated two of the three Anabaptists who had protested in Wangen.²⁹

While they were awaiting the third, a vine-dresser named Georg Reiss who had served as *Schultheiss* of Balbronn, asked the *Ammeister* to release an Anabaptist named Hans Kiefer from prison on 1000 *gulden* bail. While *Schultheiss*, Reiss had quarreled with his villagers and an outside official regarding his wines, perhaps over hiring Anabaptists such as Kiefer to work in his vineyards. He may also have been per-

²⁶ TAE III, No. 1036, pp. 416-417.

²⁷ TAE IV, No. 1350, p. 81.

²⁸ TAE IV, No. 1354, pp. 83-88; No. 1355, p. 88.

²⁹ TAE IV, No. 1358, pp. 90-91.

sonally sympathetic to Anabaptism. His case was passed on to the St. Stephen canons.³⁰

In August 1544, with the Anabaptists on the increase and an evangelical service in Wangen not yet instituted, the canons of St. Stephen arranged for a "church visitation" accompanied by some magistrates, perhaps to give the visitation more respect.³¹ As leader of the church visitation, Caspar Hedio reported that Wangen was deeply divided over the struggle for authority between the abbess and the Rat. And within this situation the Anabaptists and the Epicureans were tearing the inhabitants apart further. He saw little hope for improvement. The magistrate and *Oberschultheiss* for Wangen, Martin Betscholt, said the Anabaptists had not been unruly, but during house calls, people had complained of being harassed, of lacking an authority, and of not knowing which way to go.³² By the following year (1545) an evangelical church was established in Wangen with Leonhard Volk, formerly pastor in Kehl, as pastor until his death in 1551.³³

³⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1364, pp. 93-94.

³¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1391, p. 110.

³² *TAE IV*, No. 1392, pp. 110-111.

³³ *TAE II*, No. 384, p. 73, n. 16.

II. Wangen Dissidents, 1567-1569

For the next twenty two years the sources about Wangen are silent about religious dissidence. The lone exception concerns an Anabaptist who fled from Wasselnheim in 1551 after placing his wife in the care of a friend. The Wasselnheim authorities thought he might be in Wangen, and the Rat resolved to arrest him if he surfaced there or in Strasbourg.³⁴ This long silence about radicals in Wangen does not mean that with the establishment of an evangelical church in 1545, all religious discontent disappeared. Reports from 1567 and 1569 indicate that dissidence, though perhaps submerged, was very much alive.

Schwörtag in Wangen, September 2-5, 1567, coincided with the installation of a new abbess of the St. Stephen Convent, Ottilia von Durmentz, to succeed Kunigond Wetzel von Marsilius (1559-1567). A number of dignitaries from Strasbourg rode out to Wangen for the occasion. Matthäus Negelin, pastor of St. Wilhelm and canon of St. Stephen, delivered a sermon from I Timothy 2:2 on the role of government and its subjects.³⁵ Government, he preached, is established by God to oppose Satan and evil. The Anabaptists, in denying

³⁴ TAE IV, No. 1754, p. 343.

³⁵ Negelin also reported on the events. This account is taken from his *Reinschrift des Matthäus Nægelin*, Strassburg, Bez.-A., H 2713, ad 1567. Since 1534 the convent of St. Stephen had been incorporated into the parish of St. Wilhelm. Nelson and Rott, 237.

governmental participation, acquiesce to Satan. Government is ordained from God to provide peace, mercy and blessedness. Therefore all should obey it. The Anabaptists' desire not to bear and use arms is a great deception. The preaching office exists also to oppose Satan and evil. The Anabaptists and sects, in slandering the preachers, give way to Satan and evil.

The anti-Anabaptist polemic throughout the sermon indicates that Anabaptists were a force to be reckoned with, and that they were probably of the sectarian Swiss Brethren type.

After the sermon was over, the people were called on to swear the oath of allegiance to the town government. Four Anabaptists, two Strasbourg citizens, Hans Beck and Simon Bentzen, and two non-citizens, Georg Stroschneider and Hans Anthony, refused to swear the oath. A fifth dissenter, Adam Dechanpful, also considered an Anabaptist, missed *Schörntag* allegedly because of illness. The next morning the four dissenters were urged by several dignitaries, including Steffan Sturm, *Stettmeister* of Strasbourg and *Oberschultheiss* of Wangen, to change their minds. The Anabaptists insisted they could not, based on Jesus's words in Matthew 5:33-37. Despite a five point, biblically-based defense of the oath by the *Kirchenpfleger*, the Anabaptists remained insistent. Their sentence was expulsion from Wangen and its environs, but to enable the newly installed

abbess to begin things on a harmonious note, they would be given grace until Christmas (almost four months) in which to change their minds. In the meantime, they were to remain silent about their views, were not to seduce others into their error, and were not to cause unrest.

While the four Anabaptists gratefully accepted this gracious judgment, they also seized the opportunity to complain about the Wangen pastor, Johann Mertelius. In virtually every sermon he denounced them, calling them heretics and ascribing to them unheard of things. The youngest Anabaptist, Simon Bentzen, confessed that it was the pastor's denunciations that drove him to investigate the Anabaptists to see if they were as evil as described. He found, to the contrary, that they did good and avoided evil. Earlier he had been godless but in their circle he now sought to do good and be pious.

The Anabaptists' complaints had effect. Sturm encouraged both Johann Mertelius and Matthäus Negelin in their sermons more to encourage the good than denounce the bad, and to distinguish between leaders who seduce and followers who are seduced so as not to rail against sincere but misled followers. The pastors replied that like Ezekiel their responsibility was to prevent and warn against error. The Anabaptists only grew more defiant when tolerated. That their preaching should drive someone to investigate and join the Anabaptists was merely an unfortunate chance. Mertelius

did seek assistance; he requested and received two *Kirchenpfleger* to accompany, assist and advise him, to witness his teaching and management in the church, and over time to suggest improvements.

The new abbess, meanwhile, quickly tackled items that demanded attention. Regarding Anabaptists, there was need for a sermon to refute them on oath-swearing, and to explain why the four Anabaptists should not be tolerated in Wangen or in other towns. There was also need to deliver medical supplies to a new barber-surgeon who had just received citizenship, so that the Anabaptist Hans Anthony would not hinder him. The elderly Anthony having served as doctor until now, the new barber-surgeon was finding it difficult to get his practice established. When Steffan Sturm set out to tell Anthony that from now on he would have to abandon medicine, the latter could not be found.³⁶

Another issue involved social assistance to Anabaptists. For many years St. Stephen's had received requests from certain Anabaptists for money and wine to which they were not entitled because they were not Strasbourg citizens. Their requests were to go directly to the Strasbourg authorities. But these Anabaptists had wrongly been registered at St. Stephen's, and the offending officials were to be

³⁶ *Reinschrift des Matthäus Nägelin, Strassburg, Bez.-A., H 2713 ad 1567.* Negelin has his own bibliographical note: from the report of the Abbess Ottilia von Drumentz, and the St. Stephen convent and chapter, in the fall, 1567, p. 51.

punished. Although the St. Stephen officials protested that nothing was wrongly allocated, for relief and wine were distributed equally to all, the *Unterschultheiss* of Wangen opposed this equal treatment for non-citizens. After some discussion agreement was reached.

The official most guilty of this was the former steward Stephan Schaf, brother of the Anabaptist Johann Schaf and the Schwenckfeldian Latin teacher Peter (Novesianus) Schaf. Stephan Schaf had supported the Anabaptists in this way according to his own inclinations. The other citizens were thus shortchanged in that poor relief became scarcer for them. Hans Anthony may have been one of these recipients. He testified that every year he gave to St. Stephen his tithe of seven pounds and one ohmen of wine, and he hoped to continue doing so. He now requested relief funds, but since he had been sentenced the month before, the officials refused his request.

Steffan Sturm urged the Wangen inhabitants to obey the two *Kirchenpflegern*, and in the guildhalls announced a policy regarding church attendance: under penalty of one pound, no one was to be found on the street or doing other business during the church service. In addition, during the next Sunday sermon the people would receive an especially important teaching on oath swearing.

Later that month, October 1567, the mandate in Wangen against Anabaptists and "other bands and sects" was renewed as follows:

...At this time there are found many seducers, especially the Anabaptists...who tear apart the unity of the church, disrupt daily tasks, in public policy stir up unrest and outrage in opposition to...God's Holy Scripture that government authority is there to protect the good and punish the evil, do not want to be tied to the oath and civic duty, consider infant baptism a crime, despise the entire preaching office, leave their designated occupation and seize a fresh office, i.e., want to be teachers of that which they do not understand and have not learned, and because they allegedly have been better taught and instructed from God's Word, they persist in their stiff-necked ways and do not accept any instruction.³⁷

To remedy this the inhabitants of Wangen were urged to shun the Anabaptists and their followers. They were not to shelter or lodge Anabaptists, nor were they to attend any of their meetings. Those caught associating with them would be fined five pounds. No one was to borrow from an expelled Anabaptist, be it fruit, money or other things, on pain of punishment equal to the amount borrowed. This was to free inhabitants from being legally bound to Anabaptists, and to keep expelled Anabaptists from claiming a legal right to the use of the borrower's field or property. Finally, all inhabitants of Wangen were to denounce them, both in secret and in public. Failure to comply would result in punishment.³⁸

The effect of the October 1567 mandate seems to have been slight. In February 1568, among the many Anabaptists

³⁷ Repeated in the 1646 Ordinance of the "Statutenbuch der Stadt Wangen," Strassburg, Bibliothek des Grand Séminars, Ms. 166, f. 24r-26r. *Reinschrift des Matthäus Nägelin*, Strassburg, Bez.-A., H 2713 ad 1567.

³⁸ Ibid.

in Strasbourg, four from Wangen (probably Georg Stroschneider, Hans Anthony, Hans Beck and Simon Bentzen) were expelled until Shrove Tuesday. (They had returned prematurely).³⁹ And in September 1569, in a long report of the *Kirchenvisitation*, the church visitors found that a large portion of the Wangen inhabitants were infused with Anabaptist and other nonconformist opinions.⁴⁰

Key issues for the *Kirchenpfleger* were Anabaptism and immoral living.⁴¹ The Peasants' War, in which Wangen inhabitants had been involved, was invoked as evidence of the need to obey the authorities.⁴² The Epicureans continued to be a force a generation after their appearance at the Synod of 1533, for the major rivals to the established church were the Anabaptists, the Epicureans and the Catholics.⁴³

Religious dissidents were prominent at Wangen's highest levels. Diebolt Moll, the *Unterschultheiss*, seems not to have been religious. He had not been to church or the eucharist for two years. His son also did not attend church. He said he was not aware of things which needed

³⁹ AMS, XXI, No. 46 (1568), f. 37.

⁴⁰ Bericht des Matthäus Nägelin, Strassburg, Bez.-A., H 2713: "Wangen geschefft," f. 1-85v.

⁴¹ Ibid., 2.

⁴² Ibid., 3.

⁴³ Ibid., 4.

correcting. As for other dissidents, he refused to speak about them, saying they could speak for themselves.⁴⁴

Another high official was Diebolt Schaffner, the former *Kapitelmeyer* of St. Stephen. He disliked the pastor intensely and had attended Anabaptist meetings for six months. His sister had been refused baptism by the pastor.⁴⁵

Another prominent dissident was the *Unterschultheiss* of 1541-42, Diebolt Wiltzen. Around 1540 he had led a delegation agitating against the Catholic mass for an evangelical service, but now he was unhappy with the evangelical church and particularly with the pastor. In October 1567 he had been tried for unpaid tithes; earlier he had gotten away with a lesser payment because Stephan Schaf, the St. Stephen steward, had turned a blind eye.⁴⁶ Wiltzen admitted to having attended Anabaptist meetings and to having found them good. He agreed to accept the Word of God when preached but refused to support the pastor's hypocrisy and judgment on nonconformists, saying he would rather follow the Word of God and his common sense. When threatened with expulsion, he retorted that as a Wangen native loyal to the *Oberschultheiss* Steffan Sturm, he could not be expelled just as he could not be forced into church. Later he was jailed

⁴⁴ Ibid., 5-7.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 11-13.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 39.

for insubordination.⁴⁷ Wiltzen's wife, equally feisty, said that the Anabaptists had a teacher and so did not need the teaching of the church. She called for a public debate between the pastor and the Anabaptists.⁴⁸

Both of Wangen's *Stettmeisters*, Steffan Bene and Claus Baur, were dissidents suspected of Anabaptism. Steffan was the brother of Hans Bene, a *Kirchenpfleger* since 1567. He claimed that he attended church faithfully, but had visited an Anabaptist meeting in order to dispute with them. For this he was strongly reprimanded.⁴⁹ Bene may, however, have been more deeply involved than he let on. Steffan von Eych testified that while he was eating together with some friends, one of them, Simon Bittel, began to sing Anabaptist songs, and then others, especially Stephan Bene, joined in the singing. He had been to the Anabaptist meeting at night and to church in the morning.⁵⁰

Claus Baur had earlier been married to the Anabaptist Georg Stroschneider's daughter, and was in debt to him. His second wife was the widow of an Anabaptist. His child also did not attend church. Occasionally he went to an Anabaptist meeting. A longstanding dislike for the pastor stemmed from a 1565 quarrel when the pastor "stripped his father of

⁴⁷ Ibid., 40-44.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 40-41.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 14-17.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 84.

his property." His stated reason for not attending church was that he was usually out of town.⁵¹ As for Stroschneider and the other Anabaptist Hans Beck, the authorities complained that they claimed the protection of Strasbourg citizens but would not pay tithes or bear other financial responsibilities.⁵²

Commoners also disliked the Wangen church. The church visitors listed twenty-eight people who, against the law, had been seen on the street or elsewhere during the Sunday morning church service. Three were women, one of them a maid.⁵³ The penalty was one pound for each time seen outside during church.⁵⁴ Assuming an equal or larger number of more discreet dissidents who stayed indoors during church or even attended church on Sunday morning (some after attending an Anabaptist meeting Saturday night!),⁵⁵ and adding other family members, Wangen may have had over 100 religious dissidents. This is confirmed by Jörg Helmstetter who mentioned that citizens of Wangen were everywhere considered Anabaptists. Similarly, the visitation officials stated that half of the court cases in Wangen had to do with

⁵¹ Ibid., 18-20, 70.

⁵² Ibid., 71.

⁵³ Ibid., 59.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 79.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 84.

Anabaptism.⁵⁶ Not only were dissidents numerous; they were also vocal. On the street, in the bakery and before the church visitors there was a great deal of criticism of Pastor Johann Mertelius and the church. Little of this dealt with doctrine; most of it had to do with personal animosity, lovelessness, lack of church discipline and ethical hypocrisy. The *Kirchenpfleger* Lorentz Weibel whose own brother, Hans Weibel, had been an Anabaptist said that if he received as much criticism as did the pastor, he too would be harsh and violent.⁵⁷

Less prominent dissidents included the Anabaptist Hans Weibel's widow. She was also the daughter of *Kirchenpfleger* Hans Bene. She claimed to be uneducated and so could not make religious judgments. She did not take the eucharist, partly, she said, because she felt spiritually unprepared, but mostly because when her husband had died four weeks earlier, at the funeral the pastor had publicly and to the children called him a godless and hell-bound man. His proof was that Weibels had not taken the eucharist.⁵⁸ This action of the pastor had alienated her from the church.

Another was Adam Dechanpful who in 1567 did not swear the oath because of alleged illness. Although he claimed he had attended only one Anabaptist meeting in twenty years,

⁵⁶ Ibid., 56.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 83.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 40-47.

his wife had been a committed Anabaptist for sixteen years. He did criticize the church for being too open, allowing blatant sinners to the eucharist, and for the discrepancy between its words and its deeds. Because he and his wife were elderly, they escaped punishment.⁵⁹

Hans Hagenawer was a supervisor (*Vogt*) for the mayor's children. With his brother Claus from Hagenau and his sister Frawel, he did not attend church and went to Anabaptist meetings. He claimed naivité, not knowing if Anabaptism was good or bad, for he only tried to follow the Word of God.⁶⁰ His views of the church, however, were clear: people lived unethical lives, and the pastor slandered people rather than preaching the Word of God, punished the pious and ignored blatant sinners.⁶¹ The mayor and especially his wife were unhappy that their children from age four on were receiving Anabaptist teachings and they wanted to dismiss him. But he owed them money. He had paid them a three year debt, but had an additional three year debt outstanding. He had intended to pay it this year, but the war in the Netherlands had made payment impossible.⁶²

Christman Baur was an outspoken baker. With his wife and other women in his bakery, he castigated the author-

⁵⁹ Ibid., 30-33.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 20-24.

⁶¹ Ibid., 51-54.

⁶² Ibid., 73-74.

ities. His wife had been banned from the church, and he himself had not attended worship or the eucharist for twelve weeks. His rationale that he was too "worldly" to receive the Lord's Supper implied that in his view, for the eucharist, the church should hold high ethical standards.⁶³

Johann Weber was a second generation nonconformist who rarely attended church. His mother had not been in church for thirty years, and his father, Ciliox, a landowner, had died in 1555 leaving unpaid tithes. None of his four children went to church, for when they had been there, the pastor had treated them harshly. His children had earlier been baptized in Dorlisheim. In Wangen about eight years, he admitted occasionally attending the Catholic church.⁶⁴

Another second generation dissident was the theologically thoughtful Hans Metzger. His mother also had not attended church for thirty years. His objection was that earlier the church had taught a Zwinglian symbolic interpretation of the eucharist, and then changed to the Lutheran realistic interpretation. Both could not be right. After hearing why the mature Lutheran interpretation was more truthful than the immature symbolic interpretation, he readily agreed that the Bible was the Word of God, but would not commit himself to accepting that Word literally as

⁶³ Ibid., 25-29.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 34-36.

preached by the pastor. Nor would he promise to avoid Anabaptists entirely.⁶⁵

Claus Springer, a vine dresser, praised the Anabaptists and their good works, and argued that in terms of religion, each should listen to her/his own voice. In 1566 he had paid no tithe and for that was denounced by the pastor.⁶⁶

Jörg Helmstetter, the son of an Anabaptist father and a church-going mother, apparently had been heard to say, "The authorities persecute the pious and leave the godless." He claimed not to remember making the statement, and apologized for any offensive word or behavior.⁶⁷

IV. Conclusion

The case of Wangen illustrates that before the establishment of evangelical worship in 1545, the Rat was more concerned about its struggle against the Catholics for control of villages and institutions than about individual Anabaptists. It was not about to let Anabaptist heresy become the pretext for Catholic encroachments on its jurisdiction.⁶⁸ It also illustrates how broadly and with Münsterite connotations the word "Anabaptist" came to be interpreted. Any appearance of discontent or rebellion

⁶⁵ Ibid., 47-50, 76.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 37-39.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 55.

⁶⁸ *TAE IV*, Beilage, No. 606a, pp. 530-531; No. 612a, p. 532-533.

against church or governmental authority came to be called "Anabaptist." The Catholic Abbess Adelheid von Andlau even called Strasbourg evangelicals Anabaptists.⁶⁹ People who simply stayed home from church even without attending Anabaptist meetings were also called Anabaptists. This unofficial usage of the word Anabaptist corresponds somewhat with the official criteria used by the church visitors in their evaluation of the church. For them the issues were doctrine, authority and ethics. Wrong doctrine, rebellious attitudes toward authority and/or unethical behavior were all sufficient reason to consider someone an Anabaptist.⁷⁰

Wangen also illustrates that in some rural areas religious dissidence simmered beneath the surface over long periods of time. A crisis or change in conditions brought it to light, and official measures against it had little effect. Dissent developed for a number of reasons. For some the reason was theological; the church's change in teaching from a Zwinglian symbolic eucharist to Lutheran realism raised questions about the church's truthfulness. For others it was ethical; in real life the church members and the pastor did not measure up to the ethical standards to which they gave lip service. More seriously, for some the church's admission of drinkers, dancers, gamblers and

⁶⁹ *TAE III*, No. 998, p. 390.

⁷⁰ Bericht des Matthäus Nägelin, Strassburg, Bez.-A., H 2713: "Wangen geschefft," 57.

carousers to the Lord's Supper was blasphemous. For many the reason for dissent was personal; the pastor had alienated them through public and personal insults. For still others the Anabaptist meetings provided an alternative community in which they felt accepted and affirmed, or where stricter ethical standards were maintained. Finally, for some religious dissent was a question of freedom of conscience; they were not necessarily convinced Anabaptists, but they defended the right to think and believe freely.

Chapter 9

THE SCHWENCKFELDIANS IN STRASBOURG, 1535-62

After Caspar Schwenckfeld's departure from Strasbourg in 1533, his followers continued throughout the century relatively unmolested, largely because of their low numbers and high social and intellectual status. The Schwenckfeldians were a mixed blessing for both the city and the other non-conformists. While they buttressed the sectarians' call for tolerance and criticized the church's deficiencies, they refused to identify with them. As for the city, while the Schwenckfeldians offered valued financial, intellectual and diplomatic gifts, they infiltrated the ruling classes with their thinking and threatened its religious unity. As such they acted as a wedge between the Rat who valued them and the clergy who resented them.

I. Schwenckfeld and Strasbourg after his departure, 1533-61

A. From Schwenckfeld's departure to 1548

Caspar Schwenckfeld, the Silesian spiritualist who left Strasbourg after being accused at the Synod of 1533 of drawing people away from the Strasbourg church, continued to exercise an influence in Strasbourg long after his depar-

ture.¹ At the May 1535 Tübingen Colloquy, Bucer agreed no longer to call Schwenckfeld a destroyer of the church in exchange for Schwenckfeld's promise not to condemn the Strasbourg church as long as the clergy remained true the Gospel. The result for Schwenckfeld was considerable freedom to pursue his spiritualist activities in southwestern Germany.²

It did not take long for the accord to be violated. Bucer and Ambrosius Blaurer, geographically removed from Schwenckfeld, were relieved. But Martin Frecht, the pastor in Ulm where Schwenckfeld was staying, encountered Schwenckfeld's teaching regularly and within months lashed out against his challenger. Before long Schwenckfeld was campaigning against the Wittenberg Concord of May 26, 1536, which Bucer and Melancthon had written and which Frecht and other German pastors had signed. The Ulm *Magistrat* signed it only after some delay and with reservations, possibly because of Schwenckfeld's criticisms.³ By September Capito

¹ The early history of the Schwenckfeldian movement in Strasbourg can be seen to fall broadly into three periods: 1) 1529 (Schwenckfeld's arrival) to 1561/1562 (deaths of Schwenckfeld and Katherine Zell); 2) 1562 to 1594; and 3) 1594 to 1631 (the period of Daniel Sudermann's Schwenckfeldian involvement). Only the first period will be considered here. See Husser, "Liberté Spiritualiste," 82.

² Harrison, "Tübingen Colloquy," 237-247. For Jakob Held's report of the debates, see CS V, No. 195, pp. 326-341. Husser, 51-53, 187; TAE II, No. 670, p. 457.

³ Harrison, 246-247; Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 456.

complained of Schwenckfeld's influence which led Strasbourg's Paul Volz, pastor in St. Nicholas, to reject the Wittenberg Concord.⁴ In the following two years he denounced the harmful effects of Franck, Schwenckfeld, Katherine Zell and their followers on the Strasbourg church.⁵

In 1538, on Frecht's initiative, the Ulm *Magistrat* conducted an investigation of Schwenckfeld's teaching. He was exonerated, but the following year, after he and Frecht debated the nature of Christ before the *Magistrat*, the Ulm clergy rallied behind Frecht with a threat to resign if this lay Silesian continued to enjoy unwarranted freedom. Warned of this by his friend, the mayor, Schwenckfeld left Ulm.⁶ In March 1540 at the Conference of Smalkald, Frecht obtained the condemnation of Schwenckfeld and of Sebastian Franck who had also been living in Ulm. Bucer signed the condemnations. Schwenckfeld moved to the estate of his friend Georg von Freyburg in Justingen where he stayed for seven years.⁷

B. From 1548 to 1561

The Catholic resurgence, the Smalkald War, the Interim, the popular unrest, the emigration of Strasbourg's

⁴ *TAE III*, No. 736, p. 42; Husser, 53.

⁵ *TAE III*, Nos. 752, 754, 777, 814; Husser, 54.

⁶ Williams, 456-457.

⁷ Williams, 457.

patriciate, the death of Zell and the exile of Bucer so preoccupied Strasbourg's leaders that Schwenckfeldians were able to enjoy a brief respite. Thus Alexander Berner was able to return in 1548 after a twelve year exile.⁸ By marginalizing the Protestants, the Interim drove some of them into a relative solidarity with the radicals. *Stettmeister* Jakob Sturm, long a Schwenckfeldian sympathizer on the eucharist, sought the latter's views on the role of the magistracy in 1548, and Schwenckfeld responded in detail.⁹

In the 1550s, however, with the accession to church leadership of strongly Lutheran pastors¹⁰ who maligned Schwenckfeld from the pulpit, the situation worsened for Schwenckfeld's friends. With the deaths of Hedio in 1552 and Jakob Sturm in 1553, the clergy initiated a strong offensive against Schwenckfeld and his ideas even though he lived far away. Feeling unjustly maligned, Schwenckfeld complained to Katherine Zell¹¹ and others, and in July 1553 asked the *Rat* for an opportunity to answer the clergy

⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1636, p. 269; Adam, *Evangelische Kirchengeschichte*, 216-217; Husser, 54.

⁹ Since 1529 Sturm had not taken the sacraments because of the theological infighting. *TAE IV*, No. 1615, p. 257; Brady, *Ruling Class*, 241-242; Brady, "Architect of Persecution," 264-265; Adam, 216-217; Husser, 54.

¹⁰ Johann Marbach, Ludwig Rabus, Johann Flinner and Melchior Specker.

¹¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1757, pp. 344-345.

publicly in Strasbourg. The *Rat* instead asked pastors Marbach, Rabus and Lenglin to respond to his complaints. Supposing that he got biased reports from Katherine Zell, they insisted that the magistrates did not hear them utter such attacks, and rejected Schwenckfeld's idea of a new colloquy. The *Rat*, increasingly under the clergy's influence, appointed someone to monitor Schwenckfeld's every movement.¹²

The clergy combatted Schwenckfeld's influence by preaching against the Schwenckfeldians, by interrupting Schwenckfeldian activities inside and outside the city,¹³ by raising the specter of another Münster, by urging the magistrates not to tolerate sectarians,¹⁴ and by refusing to preach funeral sermons for Schwenckfeldians. Schwenckfeld, pained by the clergy's hostility and aware of their goal to create a unified Lutheran orthodoxy, abandoned further discussion. With an allusion to Michael Servetus, he wrote to Elisabeth Höcklin in April 1554:

If they did not have the temporal sword to protect them, we would have dealt well with each other. But since the executioner is the best doctor, as they have also demonstrated in Geneva, it is not good to dispute.¹⁵

¹² Husser, 55; Bernays, "von Andernach," 47.

¹³ *TAE IV*, No. 1470, pp. 158-160; Husser, 101.

¹⁴ Husser, 101, 382.

¹⁵ *CS XIII*, No. 886, p. 719.

1554 to 1556 saw written polemic added to verbal attacks. During these years Schwenckfeld and some of the pastors exchanged strongly worded accusations and rebuttals in published form.¹⁶ They culminated in an open letter of warning to Strasbourg's magistrates and citizens about their young pastors. With their rigid orthodoxy and selfish cunning, so different from their learned predecessors who evidenced "honor, humility and fear of God," the new leaders were, in his view, harming the great and renown city of Strasbourg.¹⁷

Schwenckfeld's disciples in Strasbourg joined the war of words against their critics. Despite warnings, prohibitions, searches and fines, Schwenckfeldian books continued to be printed and sold in Strasbourg, even by Katherine Zell.¹⁸ The journeyman printer Augustin Fried, active in Strasbourg from 1550 to 1556, was threatened with prison if he should be found printing Schwenckfeldian books.¹⁹ In March 1556 Johann Schwintzer illegally published

¹⁶ Schwenckfeld's replies include *Vom Worte Gottes* (1554) and *Vom Ursprung des fleisches Christi* (1555). Husser, 56-57, 182.

¹⁷ "An alle ehrliebende Christgleubige und guthertzige Menschen der löblichen Burgerschafft zu Strassburg...", CS, XIV, No. 950, pp. 638-642. In 1557 from outside the city Flacius Illyricus dedicated to the Rat his *Rigorous Refutation of all the Harmful Speculations of Stenckfeld....* Husser, 57, 73.

¹⁸ Husser, 132.

¹⁹ Husser, 73, 182, 191.

Schwenckfeld's books because, he explained, the authorities having denied Schwenckfeld an occasion to answer his critics, he hoped to enable both parties to hear each other in public.²⁰

The drive against nonconformity was carried over to the rural parishes. In August 1554 the pastors' *Konvent* instructed the parish visitors to guard against Johann Schwintzer, Jakob Held and Alexander Berner who spread their doctrine and "dispersed the sheep."²¹ The parish visitors were also instructed to identify and try to win over those who were staying away from church and encouraging others to do so.²² The fact that the Schwenckfeldians were singled out ahead of the Anabaptists and the Melchiorites, suggests that Schwenckfeld's influence was perceived to be pervasive.²³

C. Conclusion regarding Schwenckfeld and Strasbourg

For all Schwenckfeld's peaceable bearing, most of his thirty year relationship with the Strasbourg authorities was one of tension, sometimes with and sometimes without dialogue. When he arrived in 1529 he was welcomed by the

²⁰ CS XIII, No. 950, p. 639; Husser, 105.

²¹ AST, No. 45, (23, 1) (1554) f. 571-576.

²² Husser, 56.

²³ Husser, 131. It also indicates that the Melchiorite movement was still alive eleven years after Hoffman's death.

reformers whose own theology was still in flux. By 1531 Bucer's need to establish a unified institutional church strained his relationship with the anti-institutional Schwenckfeld. By the Synod of 1533 this strain had affected most of the clergy. Although the more pragmatic Rat did not consider the soft-spoken aristocrat a danger, by 1534 pressure from the clergy resulted in his permanent departure. Although the Tübingen Colloquy of 1535 somewhat eased the strain with the clergy, Schwenckfeld's opposition to the Wittenberg Concord again raised tensions which led to his 1540 condemnation at Smalkald.

During the 1540s when interconfessional colloquies, the Council of Trent, the Smalkald War, the Augsburg Interim and the departure of Bucer held people's attention, the issue of Schwenckfeld's influence remained secondary. As long as the sympathetic Jakob Sturm and the veteran Caspar Hedio were still active, the new generation of Lutheran pastors led by Johann Marbach and Ludwig Rabus bided their time and softened their agenda. But upon their ascension to church leadership, they wasted little time in introducing Lutheran orthodoxy to the church and the city. This resulted in the sharpest polemic yet against Schwenckfeld's influence, and the latter abandoned dialogue as futile. By the time of his death in 1561, his only remaining connection with Strasbourg was with his followers. But through these disciples his thought and influence lived on.

II. The Followers of Schwenckfeld in Strasbourg, 1533-62

A. Overview

Although Schwenckfeld never returned to Strasbourg after 1534, his departure did not mean the end of his influence, for through his followers Strasbourg continued to be a center of Schwenckfeldian ideas. Schwenckfeld never intended to establish a church. Repeatedly he insisted that he did not wish to compete with the clergy, assemble a community around himself or found a new sect; he sought merely to exchange ideas with friends on the subject of Christ.²⁴

Shortly after his departure from Strasbourg, he wrote:

I neither know nor acknowledge a Crautwaldian or Schwenckfeldian. We do not preside, we do not use the sacraments...Nor, thank God, do we have earthly protection. The Hoffmanians I consider Anabaptists. Consequently I know no more than four parties (Catholics, Lutherans, Zwinglians, Anabaptists). The names of their founders do not make a church but a gathering of people (*collectio populi*).²⁵

In his view, the absence of a hierarchy, sacraments, official recognition, and a gathered people (*collectio populi*) meant that his circle of friends did not constitute a church.²⁶ To the Rat he denied having or seeking a group of followers, and claimed to have only six intimate friends in the entire city. Others pointed to a substantial

²⁴ Husser, 116.

²⁵ CS IV, No. 143, p. 831.

²⁶ Husser, 51, 70.

Schwenckfeldian following. In 1535 Capito and Bucer, to suit their purposes, alternatively portrayed a large number of followers or pretended that only one or two persons were interested in him.²⁷

Despite Schwenckfeld's instructions not to form a sect around his name, his sympathizers could hardly avoid doing so. By distinguishing themselves from their fellow citizens with their views and religious life, they brought the name of Schwenckfeldian upon themselves.²⁸ It was natural that people attracted to Schwenckfeld's ideas and dissatisfied with the church would meet to discuss their views, enjoy each other's company and support each other against criticism. Most of Schwenckfeld's followers admitted their participation in such informal meetings. They appear to have gathered in two kinds of meetings: frequent meetings under a form of family worship to which friends and neighbors were invited, and less frequent gatherings of small groups of women and men in various homes. The varying locales for assembly frustrated the authorities who would have liked to monitor and disperse the meetings.²⁹

²⁷ Husser, 71.

²⁸ Schwenckfeld preferred to call his friends "*Die Guthertzigen*," (1540), "*die unsern*" (1540), or "*die waren Christen*" (1556). Husser, 72, 200, n. 407; *TAE II*, No. 703, p. 493.

²⁹ Husser, 116-118.

To a great degree Schwenckfeld's attitudes were accepted and perpetuated by his followers. In these Schwenckfeldian meetings, the people prayed, read the Scriptures and listened to oral or written explanations on the subject of discussion.³⁰ Personal piety was cultivated largely through the reading of Scripture and Schwenckfeld's writings. A catalogue of Schwenckfeld's works from 1534-35 compiled in 1558/1559 demonstrates Schwenckfeld's orientation toward individual piety and personal edification. Chapter titles include "The new man", "On man's conversion", "The new birth...."³¹ Regarding church attendance they were flexible, coming when they wished and feeling free to stay away.³² On the eucharist they more firmly protested the fitness of unbelievers to share in the body, blood and Spirit of Christ fearing that they would incur God's punishment by taking the bread and wine unworthily. Also problematic to them was the disunity among theologians on the eucharist's significance. Until Christ would grant the true understanding of this mystery, most thought it better to take the sacrament "in spirit" rather than participate in the church ceremonies.³³

³⁰ Husser, 120.

³¹ Compiled by Anna Elisabeth Landschädin, the mother-in-law of the Schwenckfeldian pastor, Johann-Georg Schied, and eventually published in 1594. Husser, 114-115.

³² Husser, 92.

³³ Husser, 98.

Until 1562 seven friends dominated the Schwenckfeldian movement in Strasbourg: Katherine Zell, the noblewomen Felicitas Scher Andernach, Elizabeth Scher Höcklin and Margarita Engelmann, and the civil servants Alexander Berner, Johann Schwintzer and Jacob Held von Tieffenau. With these closest adherents Schwenckfeld corresponded extensively. Other sympathizers to varying degrees included *Stettmeister* Jakob Sturm, pastors Wolfgang Schultheiss and Paul Volz, the physicians Michael (Toxites) Schütz and Johann Winther von Andernach, the nobleman Peter Scher the Elder, his children, Margarethe Scher and Peter Scher the Younger, the noblewoman Elizabeth Pfersfelder, the Latin teacher Peter (Novesianus) Schaf, the customs official Veit von Helffenstein, the notary Hans-Zimprecht Barter, the *Rat* secretary Michael Han, the Epicurean scholar Jakob Ziegler, the lawyer Michael Theurer, Wolfgang Weckinger and Johannes Christmann.³⁴

Although people like Novesianus and Berner denied leadership, informal leadership was exercised by some. Katherine Zell often spoke for Schwenckfeld and defended religious nonconformists in public. Jakob Held led Schwenckfeldian meetings in several cities and Johann Schwinter encouraged Schwenckfeldians in Landau. Alexander Berner was described in 1551 by his opponents as a

³⁴ Husser, 82; Gerber, "Recherches," 26; *TAE III*, p. 11.

"reader"³⁵ and in 1556 as a "prophet." Veit von Helffenstein in 1556 pointed to Berner and Schwintzer as leaders.³⁶ Novesianus was also called a "reader" but he denied it. In 1571, he would be identified as "one of the most dangerous among the leaders of the sectarians."³⁷ Wolf Weckinger was identified by clergy and Rat as one who led people into false sects and opinions.³⁸

Four of Schwenckfeld's seven closest followers in Strasbourg were women. Despite trusted male colleagues such as Jakob Held, his correspondence with women was particularly deep and abundant, especially with Margareta Engelmann with whom he had stayed from 1532 to 1534. This involvement at times bred gossip and jokes that Schwenckfeld was the preacher for women. In "...*Ein Trostbriefflein von wegen des übelredens der Welt...*" (1533) to Margareta Engelmann, Schwenckfeld extolled the patience of her husband, Jakob Engelmann, who never distrusted the friendship between his wife and Schwenckfeld.³⁹

³⁵ TAE IV, No. 1747, p. 340.

³⁶ AMS, Wiedertäuferherren Minutes, I, 14, (1556) f. 1r-2v.

³⁷ Husser, 119-120.

³⁸ TAE IV, No. 1439, p. 136; No. 1488, p. 173.

³⁹ After the death of Margareta Engelmann, the noblewoman Sybilla Eisler of Augsburg became Schwenckfeld's favorite correspondent. CS XI, No. 633, p. 212 and *passim*. Husser, 74-75.

B. Correspondence

Few in number and relatively isolated in their conventicles, Schwenckfeld's friends throughout Germany sought ties which gave them a sense of belonging to a broader church community. These ties were woven by a network of correspondence which increased in volume until Schwenckfeld's death. A January 1544 letter from Schwenckfeld to Johannes Bader, pastor in Landau, illustrates this:

I have also written you a short letter on circumcision, and have sent it to our N. (Johann Schwintzer) by M.N. (Hans von Sperberseck) for you to pass on further. Meanwhile, "H. noster" (Jakob Held) has brought me your little book which you wrote to K. (Katherine Zell) in S. (Strasbourg), which I have reread and considered most carefully, and from which I have clarified your views and opinions also to H. (Jakob Held).⁴⁰

This correspondence was more than the exchange of news and trivia. Schwenckfeld's correspondents and their acquaintances asked his views on doctrine, ethics, personal problems and even dreams, and his letters were essentially essays on theological questions such as the sacraments, the church and the nature of Christ. In 1537 Alexander Berner received four letters on the passion of Christ. By the mid 1540's Schwenckfeld could no longer cope with the volume of correspondence, so colleagues such as Berner were asked to

⁴⁰ CS VIII, No. 432, p. 856.

respond for him.⁴¹ Others were also encouraged to write Schwenckfeld. Katherine Zell convinced Elisabeth Höcklin to write and even passed Marbach's questions on to Schwenckfeld who responded to them.⁴² His books and theological letters were recopied and circulated, and almost all the letters were preserved.⁴³ The letters gained added importance after Schwenckfeld's condemnation by the 1540 Conference of Smalkald and by Luther in 1543, when printers would no longer publish his works.

Also contributing to the Schwenckfeldian network of writings was the Silesian spiritualist, tutor and friend of Schwenckfeld and Schwintzer, Valentin Crautwald (1470-1545). From Liegnitz between 1537 and 1542 Crautwald wrote letters and theological works to Schwenckfeld's followers in Strasbourg, dealing mostly with the eucharist and Christology. Other topics included the oath, soul sleep, evil, exegesis of biblical passages, and personal experiences.⁴⁴ This correspondence and propensity to philosophize, possible more among the educated and leisure classes, points to the social constitution of Schwenckfeld's followers.

⁴¹ Husser, 123.

⁴² Husser, 114, 124, 125.

⁴³ Husser, 124. *The Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* comprises nineteen volumes.

⁴⁴ Crautwald's letters are *TAE III*, Nos. 769, 791, 807, 850-852, 868, 1061, 1062, 1231. *TAE III*, 7, 11. Husser, 180.

C. Social Location of Schwenckfeld's Followers

Unlike the Anabaptists, Schwenckfeld's sympathizers were found mostly among the upper classes. Although Schwenckfeld did not deliberately exclude any from his fellowship, and although he emphasized the diversity of his sympathizers, claiming preachers, citizens, peasants, women, young girls, men and youth among them,⁴⁵ the Schwenckfeldian message found acceptance primarily among Strasbourg's social and intellectual elite.⁴⁶ One reason for this was Schwenckfeld's own aristocratic origin and his consequent ease among aristocrats and intellectuals. Secondly, Schwenckfeld attached great value to reading and written communication. This effectively precluded illiterates attracted by sermons which Schwenckfeld valued less. Finally, the non-institutional, spiritualist and ethical Christianity advocated by Schwenckfeld narrowed the scope of his adherents.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ CS VIII, No. 412, p. 608.

⁴⁶ A similar pattern appears in other cities. In Augsburg a list of fifty five persons accused in 1533 of possessing Schwenckfeldian books included eleven aristocrats, nineteen artisans and small merchants, two laborers and apprentices, and twenty-three without their profession indicated. In Ulm Schwenckfeld attracted mostly the educated and leading strata of society, even though followers from all strata were found. Husser, 79-80.

⁴⁷ Husser, 81.

Unlike the Anabaptists whose threat to the official church lay in winning over the populous lower strata, the Schwenckfeldian threat lay in its ability to touch people with decision-making power. Even *Stettmeister* Jakob Sturm had sympathies for Schwenckfeld.⁴⁸ Not only did Schwenckfeld challenge church doctrine; he also diverted a part of the social elite. Marbach wrote in 1558, "This sect of blasphemers grows,...is praised and [gains] the adherence of people of considerable importance."⁴⁹ Eroded at the base by Anabaptists and infiltrated at the top by Schwenckfeldians, it is not surprising that church leaders felt the church in peril.⁵⁰

Of nineteen Schwenckfeldians whose social location is known, seven (37%) were educated civil servants and five (26%) were intellectuals. The remaining seven (37%) were all aristocrats. More distant sympathizers included two intellectuals, Wolfgang Schultheiss and Jakob Ziegler, and the city's most powerful politician, Jakob Sturm.

Since the Schwenckfeldians were so few and prominent, biographical sketches may be provided for most of them. Among Strasbourg's known Schwenckfeldians, only Wolfgang Weckinger's occupation is not known. He appears to have

⁴⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1615, p. 257; Husser, 81; Brady, *Ruling Class*, 241-242; Brady, "Architect of Persecution," 264.

⁴⁹ AST No. 76, fol. 34 (1558), quoted by Adam, 324.

⁵⁰ Husser, 81.

lived in Augsburg in 1527-28, in Memmingen in 1531-35 and in Strasbourg from 1540 on.⁵¹ A *Rat* committee struck in 1545 to consider stricter enforcement of doctrine and morals, twice identified Weckinger as a Schwenckfeldian. Along with Wolfgang Schultheiss, Clement Ziegler and Jörg Ziegler, he was considered a leading deceiver, introducing seductive sects and opinions which destroyed the simple-minded.⁵²

1. Schwenckfeldians in the Civil Service

a. Jakob Held von Tieffenau

Seven Schwenckfeldians served in Strasbourg's civil service. Jakob Held von Tieffenau, a notary and Strasbourg citizen since 1528,⁵³ was Schwenckfeld's most trusted associate. A gifted diplomat, he often served as intermediary between Schwenckfeld, his followers and the leading political and theological personalities of the time. He was present at the Colloquy of Tübingen (1535), the Conference of Smalkald (1540) and the colloquy of the Swiss reformers in Basel (1545). He also was a proselytizer in his own right. To Bucer's displeasure, in 1545 he spent time with Johann

⁵¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1412, p. 121, n. 1.

⁵² *TAE IV*, No. 1439, p. 136; No. 1488, p. 173. See also *CS XI*, 650, No. 674.

⁵³ *CS V*, No. 183, p. 270; *TAE IV*, No. 1148, p. 501, n. 2.

Schwintzer in Landau encouraging the Schwenckfeldians there.⁵⁴

In December 1534 the authorities confronted Held over the baptism of his child. On Schwenckfeld's advice, he explained that he could not consider infant baptism the true baptism of Christ, but if they insisted on baptizing the child on their own, they could do so. Although the Rat had little sympathy for his explanations, his expulsion was delayed until the following spring.⁵⁵ His exile was brief; with the May 1535 entente between Schwenckfeld and Bucer at the Colloquy of Tübingen, Held re-entered Strasbourg.⁵⁶

Within three months the authorities tried to halt Held's hosting of illicit meetings and heretics. He replied:

Until now I have been in the practice on Sundays, holidays and generally, from Scripture to admonish my household to the fear of God and love of the neighbor. If, by chance, a guest or a friend happened to be there and wished to listen in, I have not driven him away.⁵⁷

Regarding heretics, he declared:

"...Until now I have welcomed into my house everyone and all kinds of people without exception: priests, monks, students, Anabaptists and whoever has sought refuge with me, without letting myself be led into error by them. If I did not entirely approve of him beforehand, I met

⁵⁴ TAE IV, No. 1461, pp. 152-153; No. 1470, pp. 158-160.

⁵⁵ CS V, No. 183, pp. 269-271; TAE II, No. 645a, p. 438; Husser, 95, 392.

⁵⁶ Husser, 95.

⁵⁷ CS XVIII, No. 1191, p. 205.

his need for the good with the hope that he would be bettered for it.⁵⁸

This low-key nonconformity did not earn him another expulsion, but the continual surveillance by the authorities and pressure to conform caused him to consider moving elsewhere. Ten years later, while at the 1545 colloquy of Swiss reformers in Basel, he expressed hopes to flee to Switzerland. Oswald Myconius the pastor in Basel dissuaded him.⁵⁹

Held's long and frequent absences on Schwenckfeldian missions created resentment in his wife Sophia von Kalcken whose interests were more domestic than Schwenckfeldian. In 1548 she accused him of having abandoned her in need.⁶⁰ Eventually (October 1548) she claimed her goods and moved to Cologne, thus formalizing a separation which he apparently had not intended.⁶¹ Johann Schwintzer, the Rat's Schwenckfeldian lawyer and Held's friend, carried out the Rat's instructions in this case.⁶² This separation became permanent; ten years later Sophia asked that the money they had deposited in the hospital be restored to her. The Rat

⁵⁸ CS XVIII, No. 1191, p. 205.

⁵⁹ TAE IV No. 1487, p. 172.

⁶⁰ TAE IV, Nos. 1606-1607, 1612-1613, 1618, 1623-1624.

⁶¹ TAE IV, Nos. 1624-1625, pp. 261-263; No. 1665, pp. 290-291; Husser, 78, 142.

⁶² TAE IV, No. 1625, pp. 262-263.

instead sent her only half, leaving the rest for Jakob should he request it.⁶³

Of all Schwenckfeld's Strasbourg colleagues, Held may have been the closest. He was the one appointed to classify and edit Schwenckfeld's manuscripts when he died in 1561.⁶⁴ Held's relationship to Strasbourg appears to have been ever ambivalent. While the clergy no doubt would have approved his expulsion, the Rat thought it not necessary. As a middle level civil servant with interests more theological than political, he was useful to the city, but lacking great political influence, he made little difference to the city's peace. Neither high enough to be left in peace, nor low enough to be ignored, nor influential enough to be expelled, he appears regularly to have been watched and pressured while being allowed to remain in Strasbourg. Held was significant for the Strasbourg radicals because he provided leadership among the Schwenckfeldians, he defended Schwenckfeld and his ideas at theological colloquies, and for a generation in Strasbourg he spread Schwenckfeldian influence in the civil service.

b. Johann Schwintzer

Held's counterpart in the literary domain was Johann Schwintzer. Educated by Crautwald, Schwintzer had been a

⁶³ Husser, 142.

⁶⁴ Husser, 206.

proofreader in Silesia where he had known Schwenckfeld. A Strasbourg citizen since January 1526 through marriage to Apolonia, the widow of a proofreader, he worked as printer and editor.⁶⁵ For a time he worked in Worms with the spiritualists Peter Schöffler and Jakob Kautz before setting up his own printing establishment in Strasbourg.⁶⁶ While printing works of reformers such as Bucer and Osiander,⁶⁷ despite threats against him, he also published unconventional works such as the Erasmian Juan Luis Vives's work on the community of goods in 1536.⁶⁸ His editions of the works of Schwenckfeld and Crautwald helped make Strasbourg a disseminator of Schwenckfeldian thought.⁶⁹ Schwintzer was also a hymn writer. Although the clergy criticized the appearance of his hymns in 1537, four of them became included in the church's 1545 and 1560 collections, but only after first appearing in the hymn collection of the Constance church.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ *TAE I*, No. 94, p. 123, n. 1; Husser, 78, 142.

⁶⁶ *TAE I*, No. 185, pp. 238-239.

⁶⁷ *TAE III*, No. 1153a, pp. 504-505.

⁶⁸ "Von der gemeynschaft aller dingen," through the printer Jakob Cammerlander. *TAE III*, No. 751, pp. 55-61.

⁶⁹ *TAE I*, No. 217, p. 216; No. 260, pp. 340-341; Husser, 142.

⁷⁰ Like Schwenckfeld's writings, Schwenckfeldian hymns (a collection appeared in Strasbourg in 1561) were generally oriented more toward personal edification and individual piety than were Lutheran songs. Husser, 120.

Also skilled as a notary, Schwintzer served as Strasbourg's clerk of the court (*Stadtgerichtsschreiber*) from 1533 to 1539.⁷¹ His work was good; his resignation in 1539 in order to work for Count Albert von Mansfeld was accepted with regret. He returned to the civil service two years later as counsel for the thirty member small Rat⁷² and eventually became respectably wealthy.⁷³ His sympathies for Schwenckfeld were known. When Schwenckfeld sent a letter and a book to the Council of XXI in June 1542, he was the one designated to deliver the XXI's response.⁷⁴

In 1543, 1544 and 1545 Schwintzer frequently asked for vacations to take care of "personal matters."⁷⁵ The magistrates eventually became suspicious with good reason; during one of his "holidays" in August 1545, Bucer and the *Magistrat's* lawyer found Schwintzer in Landau with Jakob Held, counselling the Schwenckfeldians there.⁷⁶ These efforts bore fruit. In 1558 Marbach reported lively protests from nine nonconformists in Landau who, typically,

⁷¹ *TAE I*, No. 94, p. 123, n.1; No. 198, pp. 250-251; *TAE III*, No. 933, p. 350; No. 958, p. 368.

⁷² *Redner des kleinen Rats*, *TAE III*, No. 1128, p. 487; Husser, 78, 143.

⁷³ Worth 300 gulden by 1547. *TAE IV*, No. 1728, p. 329, n. 1.

⁷⁴ *TAE III*, No. 1188, pp. 523-524; No. 1195, pp. 526-527; Husser, 143.

⁷⁵ *TAE IV*, Nos. 1277, 1286, 1336, 1463, 1477.

⁷⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1461, p. 152; No. 1470, pp. 158-160.

refused to be called "Schwenckfeldians."⁷⁷ From then on Schwintzer was watched more closely. In August 1546 the Rat received complaints about him for having criticized the clergy and sown religious division.⁷⁸

In June 1552 Schwintzer fell into a quarrel in which he antagonized both a military captain named Langhans and the Rat. Langhans, who had hired Schwintzer as his lawyer, had seen hard times since the Smalkald War. When Langhans would not pay Schwintzer an additional fifty *gulden*, Schwintzer became disgruntled with him. When another client sought to hire Schwintzer in a case against Langhans, the latter objected. After much discussion and argument the Rat finally decided in favor of Langhans that Schwintzer should stay out of this case, and threatened Schwintzer with punishment should he try anything behind their backs.⁷⁹

Schwintzer was well aware of his competence. In 1543 he and two fellow lawyers asked the Rat for a raise.⁸⁰ In 1549 he laid several financial conditions on the *kleinen Rat* before he would agree to serve again as their lawyer. They included a guaranteed income, financial parity between the Rat secretary and the Rat lawyer, attention to any deficien-

⁷⁷ Husser, 116.

⁷⁸ TAE IV, No. 1521, p. 198.

⁷⁹ TAE IV, Nos. 1774-1775, pp. 369-372.

⁸⁰ TAE IV, No. 1255, p. 14.

cies he should point out, and pay for miscellaneous items.⁸¹ The Rat met his conditions. By 1553 he was succeeded by another Schwenckfeldian, Michael Theurer.

With Held and Alexander Berner, the Schwenckfeldians considered Schwintzer a leader.⁸² His strong personality and his awareness of his skills emboldened him to risk on behalf of Schwenckfeld and other religious nonconformists. In 1553 he interceded for Sigmund Bund, a Hagenau printer who had printed in Strasbourg from 1539-45, and now was being accused of connections to Anabaptists and other sectarians.⁸³ Then in March 1556, with the Peace of Augsburg and the increasing Lutherization of the church, and in the face of a rising polemic against Schwenckfeld, Schwintzer published Schwenckfeld's books illegally because the authorities had refused Schwenckfeld a chance to answer their charges. He hoped to enable both parties to hear each other in public.⁸⁴ Arrested, he declared in court "that he had found many good things in Schwenckfeld's books." In matters of faith he could admit no constraint. He would not hinder anyone from holding an opinion different from his own, but only asked that they allow him his faith, which he knew was founded on Jesus Christ. He also confessed that he had not

⁸¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1681, p. 299.

⁸² *AMS*, Wiedertäuferherren, I, 14, (1556) f. 1r-2v.

⁸³ *TAE III*, No. 1076, p. 445, n. 2.

⁸⁴ *CS XIII*, No. 950, p. 639; Husser, 105.

received the sacrament since 1531 when he first met Schwenckfeld.⁸⁵ Schwintzer was expelled that summer together with Veit von Helfenstein and the Latin teacher, Peter (Novesianus) Schaf. Nothing more is known of him.⁸⁶

Schwintzer's strength proved to be his undoing in Strasbourg. While his strong personality, multiple skills, self-confidence and willingness to challenge opponents made him a valuable ally in the city's service, they also made him a danger to the clergy's vision of a unified, orthodox Lutheran church in Strasbourg. Schwintzer's career reflects the differing viewpoints of the magistrates and the clergy. While the former gladly employed him as their lawyer, the latter agitated for his expulsion. When, after two decades, the clergy were finally able to persuade the *Rat* that the negative influence of his Schwenckfeldianism outweighed his positive contributions, his days in Strasbourg were numbered. He was significant for the Strasbourg radicals mainly because he served as leader among the Schwenckfeldians, through his publications Schwenckfeld's ideas and rejoinders to the clergy were opened to the public, and through his service for the *Rat*, Schwenckfeldian influence was spread among the city's rulers.

⁸⁵ Husser, 98, 102, 105, 394.

⁸⁶ *TAE I*, No. 94, p. 123, n. 1; Husser, 144.

c. Alexander Berner

The third Schwenckfeldian leader among the civil servants was Alexander Berner, a well educated bookbinder and citizen since 1524 through marriage with a Strasbourgeoise. Like several other Schwenckfeldians, Berner became involved in assistance to the needy. His administrative and diplomatic skills were soon recognized. In 1528 he was hired as chief assistant to Lukas Hackfurt, the director of Strasbourg's alms administration. In 1530, as "deacon of the poor," he was mandated to learn about their needs and to take measures in their favor. In the summer of 1531, with recommendations from Hackfurt and Capito, he studied the organization of poor relief in cities of South Germany and Switzerland.⁸⁷ His observations upon his return concerned attitudes toward social assistance as much as organizational techniques. Having observed that Constance, despite poor organization, cared well for its poor, whereas Zurich, for all its regulations, cared badly for its poor, Berner, like Schwenckfeld, emphasized the importance of a right spirit.⁸⁸

Since the clergy considered Berner a leading Schwenckfeldian who also taught, Bucer proposed, without

⁸⁷ *TAE I*, No. 256, pp. 337-338, n. 2.; Husser, 136, 190-191.

⁸⁸ Winckelmann, *Fürsorgewesen*, Vol. II, 279; Husser, 136. Schwenckfeld recommended liberal and voluntary giving without fixing rules.

success, to have Berner examined along with Schwenckfeld at the Synod of 1533.⁸⁹ After more clerical complaints about his pro-Schwenckfeldian publications, he was dismissed from his post and the city in May 1535.⁹⁰ But when Bucer wished to press his case further against Berner, he met resistance not only from Anabaptists, Schwenckfeldians and the *Rat*, but also from Matthew and Katherine Zell who had supported Schwenckfeld and his followers during the proceedings.⁹¹

Thirteen years later, with Bucer's departure imminent and the authorities distracted by the Interim, Berner returned to Strasbourg in late 1548. This return corresponds with the brief rehabilitation Schwenckfeldians enjoyed under Jakob Sturm now that Bucer was gone. Neither Berner's courage nor his status had diminished. By April 1549 he was criticizing the clergy and the trend toward Lutheranism, and was meeting with the Anabaptists.⁹² With Schwintzer, the Schwenckfeldians considered him a leader.⁹³ In September 1552, in a published defense of Schwenckfeld concerning preaching, the sacraments and the incarnation of

⁸⁹ *TAE II*, No. 370, p. 23; Husser, 77.

⁹⁰ *TAE II*, No. 628, p. 413; No. 634, p. 417; No. 660, p. 449.

⁹¹ *TAE II*, No. 672, p. 458; No. 678, p. 466.

⁹² *TAE IV*, No. 1636, p. 269; No. 1656, p. 283; No. 1747, p. 340; Husser, 131, 136, 190-191; Winckelmann, Vol. I, 92, and Vol. II, 184.

⁹³ *AMS*, Wiedertäuferherren, I, 14, (1556) f. 1r-2v.

Christ, he declared, "I have known Schwenckfeld for more than twenty years, I lived with him much, have read his books assiduously, and have found them right and true."⁹⁴ With the Rat his stature was such that in the summer of 1552 he was called on to negotiate an alliance with Ulm.⁹⁵ But with the clergy, especially after Sturm's death in 1553, he was viewed differently. Described by his opponents as a "reader"⁹⁶ and as a "prophet,"⁹⁷ by March 1554, like other Schwenckfeldians, Berner, came under clerical censure for despising the Strasbourg church and its teaching.

It is an indication of Berner's commitment and influence that while other Schwenckfeldians managed to avoid expulsion from Strasbourg during the 1530s and 1540s, Berner did not. Although his gifts of administration and diplomacy were of value to the city, in the clergy's eyes at least, his strength, charisma and outspokenness for Schwenckfeld made him a greater threat to Strasbourg's religious peace than the positive gifts he could bring. And so he spent more years outside the city than within. Berner was significant for Strasbourg's radicals because he provided leadership

⁹⁴ "Verantwortung für Herrn Caspar Schwenckfelden...", *CS IV*, No. 821, p. 208.

⁹⁵ *TAE IV*, No. 1776, p. 372; Husser, 77, 129. Winckelmann, Vol. I, 92; Vol. II, 184.

⁹⁶ In 1551. *TAE IV*, No. 1747, p. 340.

⁹⁷ In 1556. *AMS, Wiedertäuferherren*, I, 14, (1556) f. 1r-2v.

among the Schwenckfeldians, he spread Schwenckfeldian influence within the city's welfare system, verbally and in writing he defended Schwenckfeld against criticism, and with his personal and social stature he strengthened the Schwenckfeldians' morale.

d. Michael Han

Michael Han was Strasbourg's city secretary, records keeper and finally diplomat in the 1530s and 1540s. The son-in-law of a magistrate, he was of respectable social standing, familiar with the inner workings of the Rat⁹⁸ and sympathetic to Schwenckfeld. The Synod of 1533 whose proceedings he recorded must have been painful for him, for his mentor Schwenckfeld was not always kindly treated.⁹⁹ Like Berner and Katherine Zell, Han gave himself to deeds of compassion. In December 1540 and March 1544 (at least) he visited the long-time dissident prisoner, Veit Barthel, and he was the one most regularly commissioned by the Rat to see to Barthel's needs.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ City secretaries such as Lazarus Spengler in Nuremberg and Jorg Vogeli in Constance were often important as lay leaders of the Reformation because of their connections to the decision makers, and because many of them were lawyers with insights about the ramifications of reform. Scribner, *German Reformation*, 29; *TAE II*, No. 577, p. 361; *TAE IV*, No. 1349, p. 81, n.3; No. 1511, pp. 192-193; Brady, *Ruling Class*, 255.

⁹⁹ *TAE II*, No. 577, p. 361.

¹⁰⁰ *TAE III*, No. 1066, p. 440; *TAE IV*, No. 1349, p. 81, n. 3.

By 1540, Han was no longer only a secretary or records keeper. As reliable successors to Strasbourg's aging and dying veteran diplomats could not be found, his responsibilities increased. The younger aristocrats, lacking skills and experience, and refusing to sacrifice for the city's service as men like Jakob Sturm had done, were neither willing nor able to represent the city in an increasingly volatile political atmosphere. More and more the magistrates came to depend on civil servants, and Han, more familiar with diplomacy than most, received much of the work. By 1541, despite his protests of inability and lack of authority, he not only accompanied magistrates on missions but even represented the city by himself. By 1543 it was he who attended meetings of the Smalkald League and the imperial diet with Jakob Sturm. The work of drafting reports was usually left in his hands.¹⁰¹

In the spring of 1542 Han became caught up in a larger Schwenckfeldian resistance to the bigamy of Philip of Hesse and to Bucer's efforts to justify it. An anonymous dialogue on bigamy called the *Dialogus Neoboli* was published in the summer of 1541 by a Schwenckfeldian pastor in Hesse. Unabashedly it accused Philip of having two wives at once. Bucer complained to the Rat that the Schwenckfeldians sought to shove this *Dialogus Neoboli* down his throat, and the Rat

¹⁰¹ Brady, *Ruling Class*, 250-256; TAE IV, No. 1511, pp. 192-193.

ordered the book banned.¹⁰² Han, the *Rat* secretary, became involved in this cause.¹⁰³ Even though he was not a *Ratsherr*, he angered Bucer with his vehement arguments in the *Rat* that Bucer should not be allowed to refute the *Dialogus Neoboli*.¹⁰⁴ In cooperation with a Schwenckfeldian secretary in Hesse, he delivered additional "Dialogues" from Speyer into Strasbourg.¹⁰⁵ He also wrote a sarcastic poem attacking Bucer and the theologians.¹⁰⁶ To Bucer's distress, Han gained quite a following, including *Ammeister* Matthäus Geiger's daughter who became his wife.¹⁰⁷ It was not until two years later that Bucer and Han were reconciled.¹⁰⁸

Although neither a magistrate nor an aristocrat, Michael Han was an invulnerable Schwenckfeldian. His familiarity with the inner workings of the *Rat*, his family connections with an *Ammeister*, his wide range of administrative and diplomatic skills, and his many personal contacts within the *Rat* made him indispensable to the regime. In the magistrates' view probably no amount of religious non-

¹⁰² *TAE III*, No. 1168, pp. 511-512.

¹⁰³ *TAE III*, No. 1169, p. 512; No. 1172, p. 513.

¹⁰⁴ *TAE III*, No. 1173, p. 514; No. 1178, p. 516; Kobelt-Groch, rev. of *TAE III* and *IV* in *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* 46 (1989), 162.

¹⁰⁵ *TAE III*, No. 1177, p. 515.

¹⁰⁶ *TAE III*, No. 1178 *Beilage*, pp. 516-519.

¹⁰⁷ *TAE IV*, No. 1178, p. 516.

¹⁰⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1338, p. 63.

conformity could offset his value to the effectiveness of the Rat and the consequent peace of the city. To Strasbourg's radicals Han was significant primarily because through him Schwenckfeldian influence permeated the Rat over a number of years.

e. Hans Zimprecht Barter

Another Schwenckfeldian civil servant was Hans Zimprecht Barter, for ten years a notary public and secretary for the city's poor relief program.¹⁰⁹ Hired in May 1532, he was thus a colleague of Hackfurt and Berner, and a co-worker with Katherine Zell. His connections to Schwenckfeld were known; after the Synod of 1533 Capito and Bucer asked him to look after Schwenckfeld for them, and in April 1535 Barter testified concerning his relations to Schwenckfeld.¹¹⁰ His testimony did not result in dismissal, and he continued with the municipal social assistance until May 1542.

Barter left his job in search of other administrative positions in Strasbourg or elsewhere. Careful not to favor Schwenckfeldians but trying to avoid discrimination, the Rat refused to make special arrangements for him but encouraged him to apply for whatever positions should come open.¹¹¹ In

¹⁰⁹ *TAE IV, Beilage*, p. 540.

¹¹⁰ *TAE II*, No. 656, p. 445.

¹¹¹ *TAE III*, No. 1185, p. 522; *TAE IV*, No. 1333, p. 61.

early 1544 he signed on with the morals police office,¹¹² and in June 1544, through marriage to Judith Heugel, daughter of the cathedral assistant, Dr. Christoph Heugel, he became a Strasbourg citizen.¹¹³

In October 1545 Barter and his wife moved to a new position in Swabia while maintaining their Strasbourg citizenship.¹¹⁴ Despite his Schwenckfeldian sympathies the *Rat* issued for him a glowing letter of recommendation.¹¹⁵ From Swabia Barter provided the *Rat* with information on external affairs, particularly regarding the Smalkald War.¹¹⁶ By the summer of 1550, partly because of his wife's family ties, he was back in Strasbourg in search of an administrative post with the civil service.¹¹⁷ When Barter died in August 1552, his relations with the regime were good enough that a magistrate assumed responsibility to procure for his children some inheritance money in Württemberg.¹¹⁸

Although Barter was close enough to Schwenckfeld to care for him, and although his Schwenckfeldianism was well known

¹¹² *TAE IV*, No. 1475, p. 162.

¹¹³ *TAE IV*, No. 1373, p. 98.

¹¹⁴ *TAE IV*, No. 1475, p. 162.

¹¹⁵ *TAE IV*, No. 1478, pp. 163-164.

¹¹⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1540, p. 214.

¹¹⁷ *TAE IV*, No. 1708, p. 317.

¹¹⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1777, p. 373; No. 1787, pp. 377-

by the clergy in 1533, it did not constitute a major stumbling-block for the authorities. Probably he was soft-spoken enough to avoid offense, his profile was low enough so as to present little influence, and his services were valuable enough that his quiet nonconformity could be overlooked. In any case, conflict with the clergymen is not reported, and relations between Barter and the city appear always to have been cordial. Barter's significance to the radicals is that he helped provide the Schwenckfeldians with stability and continuity in Strasbourg.

f. Veit von Helfenstein

Veit von Helfenstein spoke at length about his beliefs in 1556, but little is known about his life. From Sarrburg, he became a Strasbourg citizen in November 1544, joined the *Zur Blumen* butchers' guild and worked as a customs official. He married the widow of Hanns Eneckher, a Strasbourg citizen and shoemaker's son.¹¹⁹

In January 1556 Veit was examined once by the *Wiedert-äufferherren* and twice by the clergy Johann Marbach and Ludwig Rabus. He protested that the preachers spoke with the tongues of angels but lacked Christian love. Since Rabus had castigated the sectarians fifteen times in one sermon, he had stayed home from church. He would seek the Kingdom of God within himself. The St. Nicholas church had become a

¹¹⁹ TAE IV, No. 1404, p. 116; Husser, 84; Gerber, "Recherches," 38.

spiritual whorehouse. Instead of contrite hearts, transformed lives, godly living and discipline inspired by the living Word and Spirit of God, he saw that after the sermon whorers, drunkards and the avaricious (*hurer, trunkenbölz, gitzwenst*) rushed headlong to eat and drink to excess.¹²⁰

Baptized infants, in Veit's view, were not Christians; to be a Christian, one had to be born again. There was also no commandment to baptize infants. The church's distinction between the baptism of adults and children was not in the Bible, and the washing away of sins in baptism was not analogous to Old Testament circumcision. Baptism, in his view, was more like marriage where the children could choose to be baptized after due consideration. In this, Veit said, he was influenced by the writings of Franck and Schwenckfeld. Johann Schwintzer and Alexander Berner could better give answers than he. His tolerance extended to all who had not been baptized and remained outside the official church -- including not only Christians of other confessions but also "Turks, Jews and pagans." Unlike Marbach, he could not speak damnation on unbaptized Turkish, Jewish and heathen children outside the church, and he asserted that among the Turks there were some pious people.¹²¹

¹²⁰ AMS, *Wiedertäuferherren*, I, 14, 1566, f. 1r-2v; "Disputatio...cum tribus anabaptistis," AST No. 203 (31,8), (1556).

¹²¹ AMS, *Wiedertäuferherren*, I, 14, (1556), f. 1r-2v; "Disputatio," AST No. 203 (31,8), (1556); Husser, 102, 104.

Veit was granted a temporary reprieve but when the threat of expulsion became certain, he left before it could be enforced. He does not surface again until 1577.¹²²

Veit von Helfenstein was a lower official who was useful to the city but wielded little political influence. Thus, despite radical ideas, he posed little threat to the city's peace and could be tolerated. Only when a more aggressive clergy sought him out in the 1550s and he candidly expressed his views was his fate sealed. His significance to the radicals is that over the years he was able to provide continuity and stability to Schwenckfeldian meetings, and he was able to elaborate dissident ideas articulately.

g. Michael Theurer

Perhaps the most distinguished Schwenckfeldian civil servant was Michael Theurer, a notary from Herrenberg in Württemberg who toward the end of the century became recognized as the city's best lawyer, served as councilor in a variety of responsibilities, and brought Schwenckfeldian influence to the highest levels of government.¹²³ He appeared in Strasbourg in the early 1550s, purchased citizenship and obtained the post of counsel for the *kleinen*

¹²² *TAE IV*, No. 1404, p. 116; Husser, 84; Gerber, "Recherches," 38.

¹²³ Abray, *People's Reformation*, 113, 153; Husser, 145.

Rat in 1553. From October 1556 on he also served as clerk of the matrimonial court (*Ehegericht*).¹²⁴

Like Johann Schwintzer, several times in 1560, 1562, and 1575 Theurer requested vacations to "continue his studies." At least partially, these "vacations" were connected with pro-Schwenckfeldian activities. The extent of his Schwenckfeldian involvement and of his influence became visible with the death of his brother Gall in 1572. Contrary to the *Konvent's* instructions, Gall's pastor spoke his eulogy without condemning Schwenckfeldian errors. The *Konvent* regretted this negligence, for around 200 esteemed persons (*stattliche leute*) attended the funeral.¹²⁵

In 1588 Theurer was elected member of the Council of XXI, something exceptional for persons not originally from the city. He served as councilor responsible for printing (1590), councilor on the XV in 1594 and councilor responsible for fairs (1602).¹²⁶ This rise disturbed the *Konvent*, which warned the Council of XXI in 1592: "...It is well known...that he is a Schwenckfeldian who attaches no importance to and despises the pastoral ministry."¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Husser, 144.

¹²⁵ Husser, 144.

¹²⁶ Husser, 145.

¹²⁷ BNUS, Ms. 988, (1592) pp. 38-39, fol. 129b, "*Sententiae pastorum*", quoted by Husser, 145.

Over the years Theurer assembled a most impressive collection of Schwenckfeldian works. An inventory of his library after his 1603 death revealed 50 books by Schwenckfeld, others by Schwenckfeldian authors, and nearly 400 copies of Schwenckfeldian books!¹²⁸ If there had been uncertainty about Theurer's Schwenckfeldian orientation before his death, there now was no doubt. Theurer's library not only served his personal edification, but was also a clandestine center for the spread of Schwenckfeldian literature. This center was sheltered from investigation because of his social position and great abilities.¹²⁹ Not only did Theurer contribute to the spread of Schwenckfeldian literature; through his Rat and council positions, he was able to spread Schwenckfeldian influence through the city's highest echelons.

2. Schwenckfeldian Intellectuals

a. Paul Volz

Two pastors with Schwenckfeldian sympathies were Wolfgang Schultheiss in Schiltigheim and Paul Volz (1473-1544) of the St. Nicholas Church. Although not a Schwenckfeldian, Schultheiss considered himself a

¹²⁸ Husser, 125-127.

¹²⁹ Later in his career it also became known that Theurer also secretly practiced alchemy. A connection between Schwenckfeldian spiritualists and those who practiced alchemy was not uncommon. I am grateful to Stephen F. Nelson for this information.

spiritualist and shared Schwenckfeld's views on church-state relations. Like Schwenckfeld he too was disgusted at the clergy's preached polemic against nonconformists at the expense of essentials such as salvation and new life.¹³⁰ With Anton Engelbrecht and Paul Volz, he refused to sign the 1536 Wittenberg Concord which unified the Saxons and the south German reformers on the eucharist, baptism and confession. In October 1538 or soon thereafter he was dismissed from his post.¹³¹

The elderly and beloved Paul Volz embraced Schwenckfeld's ideas even more than Schultheiss did. A friend of Erasmus, the former abbot of Hugshofen had moved into Strasbourg during the Peasants' War, switched to the evangelical church, and accepted the pastorate of St. Nicholas in 1531. Increasingly under Schwenckfeld's influence, he attracted large audiences partly because of his nonconformist sympathies.¹³²

In May 1536 the Strasbourg theologians concluded the Wittenberg Concord with the Lutherans and demanded a written agreement of all pastors. Schwenckfeld, meanwhile, had been

¹³⁰ Bellardi, *Wolfgang Schultheiss*, 36-37, 55. See also W. Bellardi, "Wolfgang Schultheiss," *Bibliotheca Dissidentium III* (Baden-Baden: Editions Valentin Koerner, 1982), 43-69; *TAE IV*, Nos. 1557, 1688.

¹³¹ *TAE III*, No. 716, p. 27; No. 721, p. 29; Bellardi, *Wolfgang Schultheiss*, 42-43; Husser, 193-194.

¹³² *TAE III*, No. 721, p. 29, n. 2; No. 736, p. 42.

speaking out in Ulm against the agreement.¹³³ Volz, together with Engelbrecht and Schultheiss, refused to sign because of reservations about baptism and the admittance of the unworthy to the eucharist,¹³⁴ and he feared that the concord would divide the Strasbourg clergy.¹³⁵ Given a choice to sign the document or resign his position, he stuck with his refusal and so was dismissed with a pension in January 1537, ostensibly because of his Schwenckfeldian and Anabaptist tendencies.¹³⁶

Through the influence of Calvin who conceived of the Lord's Supper more spiritually and insisted on ethical worthiness to receive it, Volz returned to the Strasbourg church. In July 1539 he read a detailed retraction dealing mostly with the eucharist before the gathered community in Young St. Peter's church. He declared that Christ's body and blood are not received through fleshly eating but in the heart and soul. This does not mean the external eating should be despised; it was instituted by Christ, and the

¹³³ Williams, 456.

¹³⁴ For some time he abstained from the Lord's Supper. *TAE III*, No. 736, p. 42; Husser, 53.

¹³⁵ *TAE IV*, *Beilage*, No. 727a, p. 550.

¹³⁶ Capito's account indicates that Volz had been more under the influence of Schwenckfeld than the Anabaptists. *TAE III*, Nos. 716, 719, 736, 755, 803, 1029; Balke, *Calvin*, 142-143; R. Stupperich, "Calvin und die Konfession des Paul Volz," *Colloque de Calvin* (Strasbourg, 1964), 19-20; Husser, 76, 193-194.; Gerber, "Recherches," 26; Bel-lardi, *Schultheiss*, 42-43.

first apostles ate the Lord's Supper daily. The outward receiving points to the inner. In receiving the eucharist the Christian confesses her/his faith. Had his sympathies been more Anabaptist, baptism would probably have received greater emphasis.¹³⁷

Volz's confession opened the way for a reintegration into the pastoral corps so complete that during the plague of 1541, when Capito, Bucer's wife and five children, and five children of Hedio's were mortally ill, it was Volz who was asked by the other clergy to preach in the cathedral.¹³⁸ He died three years later.

The Wittenberg Concord was signed by Strasbourg's reformers largely because of the city's political and military need to be at one with the Smalkald League against the emperor. At the time Bucer insisted that this Lutheran confession was fully compatible with Strasbourg's more "sacramentarian" *Tetrapolitana* Confession of 1531. The case of Paul Volz and Calvin illustrates Bucer's effort to affirm both confessions at once, and reveals the range of his flexibility on the sacraments in the late 1530s. If Catholic "realism" on the one hand and Zwinglian/Schwenckfeldian "spiritualism" on the other were too extreme, the more moderate "realism" of the Lutherans

¹³⁷ *TAE III*, No. 938, pp. 353-358; Stupperich, 20-25; Balke, 142-143; Hulshof, *Geschiednis*, 197-198.

¹³⁸ *TAE III*, No. 1137, pp. 494-495.

and "spiritualism" of Calvin were acceptable. Calvin, part-way between Bucer and the Zwinglian/Schwenckfeldian spiritualists, marked the limit of Bucer's flexibility, and formed a bridge from Schwenckfeld to Bucer over which Volz could cross. In the 1550s, under the leadership of new pastors, Strasbourg's position would further approach Lutheranism until the *Augustana* Confession would be imposed even on Strasbourg's French-speaking Calvinist church.

b. Katherine Zell

Also from ecclesiastical circles came Katherine Schütz Zell (1497-1562), since 1523 the wife and co-worker of Matthew Zell. Raised in a well-to-do artisan family, well educated and articulate, for over forty years Katherine proved to be a fiery, compassionate and capable reformer's wife and a dissident reformer in her own right. Benefitting from personal abilities and her husband's stature, she stood as a defender of tolerance and religious freedom for Schwenckfeld and other nonconformists.¹³⁹

Involvement in ecclesiastical affairs came early. When the bishop excommunicated Matthew Zell and six other priests for clerical marriage in 1524, Katherine fired off one let-

¹³⁹ *TAE I*, no. 248, p. 332, n. 1; Husser, 75; Gerber, "Recherches," 26. Biographies of Zell include B. Becker-Cantarino, "Frauen in den Glaubekämpfen: Öffentliche Briefe, Lieder und Gelegenheitsschriften," *Deutsche Literatur von Frauen*, G. Brinker-Gabler, ed. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1988), 153; and Lienhard, "Une Strasbourgeoise, 67-68.

ter of protest to the bishop and another to the *Rat*. When Zwingli and Oecolampadius stopped in Strasbourg en route to the Marburg Colloquy of 1529, she hosted them. And when Luther refused communion with the Zwinglians, she chided him for lack of love. She joined Matthew in visits to Luther, Melanchthon and various cities in Switzerland and Germany in 1538, and she hosted Protestant delegates to the inter-confessional discussions in Hagenau in 1540.¹⁴⁰ Bucer praised her abilities and compassion but disliked her ready tongue and domineering manner.¹⁴¹

Childless, Katherine devoted herself day and night to deeds of mercy. When 150 Protestant refugees from Kensingen appeared in Strasbourg in 1524, she hosted eighty and found food and shelter for the rest.¹⁴² During the Peasants' War, with the reformers, she implored the peasants to avoid violence. When 3000 refugees streamed into the city after the war, she worked at Lukas Hackfurt's side to shelter and feed them.¹⁴³ With especially the poor in mind, she published a hymnbook of translated Bohemian-Moravian hymns

¹⁴⁰ Becker-Cantarino, 153-154; Bainton, *Women*, 57, 64-65; Lienhard, "Une Strasbourgeoise," 67-68.

¹⁴¹ Adam, 198.

¹⁴² Bainton, 59, 61, 63; Becker-Cantarino, 153.

¹⁴³ Bainton, 63; Lienhard, "Une Strasbourgeoise", 68.

(1534) intended also as "a lesson book of prayer and praise."¹⁴⁴

While especially Bucer felt the need to repel the religious radicals, Capito and the Zells welcomed all to their table. In November 1533 the latter visited Hoffman in prison,¹⁴⁵ and for an Anabaptist baker's apprentice Katherine found work.¹⁴⁶ The dissident with whom Katherine sympathized most was Schwenckfeld. During the Synod of 1533 the Zells provided him with support for which he was grateful.¹⁴⁷ After Schwenckfeld left Strasbourg, until his death Katherine corresponded with him, defended him and served as his representative when his followers would meet.¹⁴⁸ This stance proved awkward for those clergy who, while honoring Katherine's husband and acknowledging her deeds of mercy, denounced Schwenckfeld.¹⁴⁹

The January 1548 funeral of Matthew Zell, Strasbourg's most beloved pastor, drew over 3000 people. After eulogies by Bucer, Katherine delivered an address which later appeared in print as "*Klagred und Ermahnung Katharina Zellen*"

¹⁴⁴ Bainton, 71-72; Adam, 198; Becker-Cantarino, 155; Lienhard, "Une Strasbourgeoise," 69.

¹⁴⁵ *TAE II*, No. 451, p. 203; Bainton, 65-66.

¹⁴⁶ *TAE II*, No. 529, p. 297.

¹⁴⁷ *TAE II*, No. 406, p. 119; No. 502, p. 271; No. 678, p. 466; Bainton, 66.

¹⁴⁸ Husser, 118; Bainton, 66.

¹⁴⁹ Husser, 137-138, 140.

zum Volk by dem Grab M. Matheus Zellen." This fueled suspicions, which she denied, of ambitions to be "Doctor Katrina."¹⁵⁰ Instead, she threw herself even more into caring for the suffering. Zell's lament over Matthew's death was soon followed by lament over the Augsburg Interim which brought the Catholic mass back to the cathedral and forced her to vacate the cathedral parsonage in 1550.¹⁵¹

In the 1550s Zell began to suffer from dropsy (watery swelling of joints and cavities) but her service to others did not lapse. In 1558 she visited the leprosy-stricken magistrate Felix Armbruster and wrote him expositions of Psalm 51 and the Lord's Prayer.¹⁵² Her impact was particularly great in Strasbourg's syphilis hospital (*Blatterhus*) which held some forty long-term patients. In 1555 she moved in as a kind of hospital chaplain, and then joined her syphilitic nephew there in 1557.¹⁵³ Appalled by the hospital's decrepit conditions, she sent the *Rat* a scathing critique:

The manager and his wife lie in luxury and neglect the patients. Beds rot. Water is not heated for baths.

¹⁵⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1580, p. 237; Bainton, 66-67; Adam, 198-199.

¹⁵¹ Bainton, 67-68; Becker-Cantarino, 153. See also J. Adam, "Ein unbeachtete Schrift der Katharina Zell aus Strassburg," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins*, N.F. 31 (1916), 451-455.

¹⁵² Bainton, 68-69; Becker-Cantarino, 155; Leinhard, "Une Strasbourgeoise," 70.

¹⁵³ Becker-Cantarino, 154; Bainton, 71.

Tough and sometimes wormy meat is served...There is no religious instruction and some patients do not know the Lord's Prayer. The manager mumbles a grace so that one cannot tell whether he may not be swearing. The mercury cure martyrs the patients. There should be a dedicated couple in charge. The number of maids should be reduced. The fewer, the less quarreling. Get rid of the savage dog which mangles all the cats. Give up swine and goats in favor of a hundred hens. Have religious instruction every morning when the heart is fresh. For medication use only guyac.¹⁵⁴

Except for the two most important recommendations to change the administrative structure and improve the medical care, almost all her ideas were adopted.¹⁵⁵

Zell's last years were filled with strife. Not only the Interim but also the Protestant church's drift toward Lutheranism distressed her, and she distanced herself from it. In 1553 when accused of not attending church, she replied that she opposed mandatory church attendance without intending a complete break with the church.¹⁵⁶ She denounced the execution of Servetus in Geneva even if she did not endorse his theology,¹⁵⁷ and feared a similar intolerance developing in Strasbourg.

The most outspoken of the new pastors was Matthew Zell's successor, Ludwig Rabus (1524-1592). Earlier Rabus had resided in the Zell's home, had sought out Katherine's

¹⁵⁴ Winckelmann, Vol. 1, 172-173; Vol. 2, *Urkunden*, Nos. 33 and 34, quoted by Bainton, 71.

¹⁵⁵ Becker-Cantarino, 154; Bainton, 71.

¹⁵⁶ Bainton, 72; Husser, 55-57, 73, 182, 191; AST No. 76 (45, 2), (1553), f. 46.

¹⁵⁷ Bainton, 65-66.

spiritual guidance, and had served as Matthew's assistant before succeeding him.¹⁵⁸ In his Christmas sermon of 1556 and subsequent writings he called Schwenckfeld "Stenckfeld, that emissary of Satan." He accused Katherine of being devil-inspired and of disturbing the church's peace. As a Schwenckfeldian, she missed church and despised the sacraments. In deserting the clergy, she dishonored her husband's memory. She was arrogant and fixated on leadership.¹⁵⁹ Rabus also raised the specter of another Münster in Strasbourg because of complacency about "sectarians and Schwenckfeldians."¹⁶⁰ Reprimanded by the Rat who felt his polemic too incendiary, he soon left for Ulm.¹⁶¹

Zell's first letter of response Rabus returned unopened. Her second letter he answered with "Your heathen, unchristian, stinking and untruthful writing...."¹⁶² Zell retorted with "*Ein Brieff an die gantze Burgerschafft...*", a 170 page public letter to the citizens of Strasbourg in defense of her ministry, of religious tolerance and of Schwenckfeld.

¹⁵⁸ Bainton, 72; Adam, *Evangelische Kirchengeschichte*, 317; Husser, 205.

¹⁵⁹ Becker-Cantarino, 154; Bainton, 72; Husser, 138.

¹⁶⁰ Husser, 73.

¹⁶¹ Becker-Cantarino, 154, 523; Adam, 317; Husser, 73, 205.

¹⁶² Becker-Cantarino, 523-524.

A disturber of the peace am I? Yes indeed, of my own peace...I have visited the plague infested and carried out the dead...I have visited those in prison and under sentence of death. Often for three days and nights I have neither eaten nor slept...Is this disturbing the peace of the church?¹⁶³

She yearned for freedom of conscience.

Why do you rail at Schwenckfeld? You talk as if you would have him burned like poor Servetus at Geneva...You pursue the Anabaptists as a hunter with dogs chasing wild boars. Yet the Anabaptists accept Christ in all essentials as we do. They have borne witness to their faith in misery, prison, fire, and water. You young fellows tread on the graves of the first fathers of this church in Strasbourg and punish all who disagree with you, but faith cannot be forced....¹⁶⁴

Luther, Zwingli, the Strasbourg reformers, Schwenckfeld and the Anabaptists all shared the essentials of the Christian faith as defined in the Apostles' Creed. Many pious people could be found among the Anabaptists, and baptism should be made free. Differences on church discipline and organization were hardly reason to "be sent to the Devil." Also, because faith could not be forced, the toleration of Jews was right and just.¹⁶⁵

While defending Schwenckfeld, Zell denied being Schwenckfeldian: if the reading of books meant being a disciple, then the clergy would be disciples of Aristotle,

¹⁶³ K. Zell, "Ein Brief an die gantze Burgerschaft...", 1557; reprinted in J. C. Füsslin, *Beyträge zur Erläuterung der Kirchen-Reformationsgeschichte des Schweitzerlandes*, V (1753), 191-354, quoted by Bainton, 72.

¹⁶⁴ "Ein Brief," quoted by Bainton, 73; Rott and Lienhard, "Frères suisses," 30, n. 6.

¹⁶⁵ Husser, 106.

Virgil, Plato, Cicero, the Pope, the Turks and Mohammed. She did not want to be named after anyone, whether Luther, Zwingli or Schwenckfeld. Her husband had appreciated Schwenckfeld even if they differed at places, and she found no heresy in his books. On the night of his death, Matthew had asked his assistants, including Rabus, to leave Schwenckfeld and the Anabaptists in peace and learn to preach Christ.¹⁶⁶ This passionate, public treatise sparked an unresolved debate in the *Rat* on how to respond.¹⁶⁷

Zell's final service was to the Schwenckfeldian sisters, Felicitas Scher Andernach and Elisabeth Scher Höcklin, both of whom died in 1562. When the clergy refused to preach their eulogy, it was Zell who, unable to walk, had herself carried to their graves and performed the funeral service. The *Rat* resolved to reprimand her should she recover, but the reprimand was never spoken; she died later that year.¹⁶⁸ Her devotion to Schwenckfeldian friends appears in her will written before the Schwenckfeldian lawyer, Michael Theurer. Beneficiaries included Elisabeth Höcklin, Peter Scher and Dr. Andernach, the husband of the deceased Felicitas, all Schwenckfeldians.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Husser, 138-139.

¹⁶⁷ Husser, 137-138.

¹⁶⁸ Bainton, 73; Husser, 141; Bernays, 49-50.

¹⁶⁹ M. Lienhard, "Catherine Zell," *Bibliotheca Dissidentium*, I (Baden-Baden: Editions Valentin Koerner, 1980), 181; Husser, 206.

Although Zell denied being "Schwenckfeldian," she did share Schwenckfeld's ideas and she played a leading role among his followers. For twenty-four years she corresponded with him. With vigor she defended his person and thought against attacks. She shared his insistence on regeneration, and on a Christianity more spiritual than ritualistic and more intentional than cultural. This sympathy was no secret; after sermons of Rabus and Lenglin against Schwenckfeld, some citizens asked her for his books.¹⁷⁰

The survival, cohesion and vigor of the small group of first Schwenckfeldians can, to a large degree, be attributed to Zell's activity. At a time when others such as Held, Berner and Schwintzer could be silenced by banishment or imprisonment, Katherine Zell, benefitting to the end from her grass-roots popularity and her husband's legacy, could defend Schwenckfeld and his thought undeterred. It is primarily due to her that Schwenckfeld's influence continued in Strasbourg after his departure and even after his death in 1561.¹⁷¹

c. Peter (Novesianus) Schaf

Strasbourg's independent Latin schools founded by Otto Brunfels and Lukas Hackfurt saw many changes since their inception in the early 1520s. By 1538 the two Latin schools

¹⁷⁰ Lienhard, "Une Strasbourgeoise," 70; Husser, 139-140.

¹⁷¹ Husser, 140-141.

had been combined to form the secondary level *Gymnasium*, and then merged with the adult lectures, the *Paedagogium*, to form the *Hochschule* with Johann Sturm as rector.¹⁷² In the 1540s the *Gymnasium* was directed by Johann Schwebel (1499-1566), a former Anabaptist.¹⁷³

Joining Schwebel by 1539 was a Latin grammar teacher named Peter (Novesianus) Schaf von Neuss (near Düsseldorf) who eventually taught in Strasbourg for seventeen years. At first welfare director Lukas Hackfurt had to ask Schwebel to increase Novesianus' wages, but by 1541 things were better. In May the Cathedral Chapter appointed him as their schoolmaster, and by December he was awarded a prebend in the chapter of St. Thomas.¹⁷⁴ Novesianus' hiring may have been controversial for his religious nonconformity was known virtually from the beginning. Some were so concerned that by 1542 his successor had been named in case he should be dismissed.¹⁷⁵ But support for him remained strong. When earnings ran low because of illness that year, the *Scholar-*

¹⁷² Chrisman, *Strasbourg*, 265, 270-271.

¹⁷³ After having been expelled in 1527, he recanted in 1529 and was readmitted to Strasbourg. After three years as tutor for the Bapst noble family in Ichtratzheim, south of Strasbourg, in 1532 he resumed his teaching career in Strasbourg. *TAE I*, No. 109, pp. 131-132; No. 145, pp. 178-179.

¹⁷⁴ *TAE III*, No. 898, p. 313; No. 1155, p. 506; No. 1112, p. 474; Nos. 1155-1156, p. 506.

¹⁷⁵ *TAE III*, No. 1155-1156, p. 506.

chen supplemented his income.¹⁷⁶ It was probably the quality of his teaching and the demand for his classes that kept him in Strasbourg until 1556. By April 1542 he had 112 students in his eighth level classes. High numbers of students and too much work were a continuing problem, and he appealed repeatedly for help.¹⁷⁷

Although Novesianus was known for Schwenckfeldian sympathies and criticism of infant baptism, the authorities looked the other way until it became evident that his views were affecting his pupils. Warned in March 1548 about not directing his students into the church, his suspension the next month¹⁷⁸ suggests that this issue had been brewing for some time. Good will continued to be shown, however; when funds ran low at the end of the year, the St. Thomas chapter guaranteed his wife continuing support.¹⁷⁹

A ban by the Strasbourg church only hardened Novesianus in his views. A child born to him in September 1550 was after five months not yet baptized. Besides his theological objections, he now had no desire to baptize a child in the church that had banned him. When even *Ammeister Mathis*

¹⁷⁶ *TAE III*, No. 1174, p. 514.

¹⁷⁷ Novesianus' eighth level class counted 82 students in June 1544, 80 in November 1544, 77 in January 1545, 82 in June 1545, 80 in October 1545, 91 in March 1546, and 74 in January 1548. *TAE IV*, No. 1174, p. 514; No. 1378, p. 103.

¹⁷⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1596, p. 247; No. 1598, p. 248.

¹⁷⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1638, p. 270.

Pfarrer's appeal could not persuade him, he was dismissed as principal of the *Gymnasium* and deprived of his teachers' housing.¹⁸⁰ To earn a living he resorted to private tutoring without permission of the *Scholarchen*. Complaints about this from other teachers¹⁸¹ led to his interrogation along with other dissidents in January 1556.

Interrogated by both the *Wiedertäuferherren* and the clergy Johann Marbach and Ludwig Rabus, he claimed he taught school at home simply to earn a living, and taught nothing more than practical reading and writing, all in line with the common good. As for the Lutheran Augsburg confession, he had never read it and he had no other confession than the New Testament. To the degree that the Augsburg confession conformed to the New Testament, he would accept it. The *Wiedertäuferherren* marvelled that as an educated man he had never read the Augsburg confession, and they doubted that he never taught religion, for it was known that he was a reader among the Schwenckfeldians. Novesianus denied being Schwenckfeldian and knowing of Schwenckfeldian meetings. If reading the New Testament was being Schwenckfeldian, then there were a great number of sectarians in the city. But he would call none his "brother." There were so many sects, one as damned as the other. Catholics, Lutherans,

¹⁸⁰ TAE IV, No. 1739, p. 335; No. 1742, p. 336. AST, Scholarchenprotokoll, No. 372V, (1553) f. 17r.

¹⁸¹ AMS, XXI, No. 33 (1555), f. 472v-474v.

Zwinglians, Schwenckfeldians and Anabaptists, and among the latter, Hutterians, Hoffmanians, Swiss Brethren, Pilgrimites, Sabbatarians and others all claimed to have the truth. He feared to join any of them. Rather, he prayed in his closet.¹⁸² Despite Novesianus' reluctance to join a group, he did converse with other nonconformists. His own brother Johann Schaf was a Swiss Brethren,¹⁸³ and in the 1550s he lodged a Friesian printer who was printing Melchiorite booklets and other Anabaptist writings. While he perhaps did not embrace their teaching, he did not judge their printer.¹⁸⁴

Novesianus felt the accusations against him were unfair: Pastor Lenglin of St. Nicholas had publicly criticized him without ever coming to see his students. When it was suggested that he had banned himself from the church, he replied that to lose his job and prebend, and to have conversation with certain friends prohibited -- that was done to him by others. In fact, he wished to remain in the

¹⁸² AMS, Wiedertäuferherren, I, 14, (1556), f. 2v-4r.

¹⁸³ Marbach's diary, AST, No. 198, (1556), f. 237. Novesianus' other brother, Stephan Schaf, steward of the St. Stephen Convent in the 1550s and 1560s, also favored Anabaptist clients. *TAE III*, No. 898, p. 313, n. 2; AMS, XXI, No. 33 (1555), f. 472-474; *Reinschrift des Matthäus Nägelin*, Strassburg, Bez.-A., H 2713 ad 1567. See also AMS, XXI, (1564), f. 178r.

¹⁸⁴ AMS, XXI, No. 38, (1560), f. 176r-177r.

church; he asked only for a clean conscience.¹⁸⁵ But his conscience could not be clean as long as the Strasbourg church practiced infant baptism which, in his view, was not supported in Scripture. While regarding infant baptism his view of the church was narrower than that of the clergy, in other ways it was broader. He affirmed that among all peoples there were some who would be saved, and among the Catholics there were many pious people. This breadth did not, however, include salvation for Turks who did not acknowledge Christ.¹⁸⁶

Novesianus' opinions were not new; in the homes of pastors Bucer, Konrad Hubert, Marbach and Johannes Lenglin, in the larger church and when he was banned, his views had been heard, all without agreement.¹⁸⁷ In June 1556 Novesianus was expelled with Johann Schwintzer, Viet von Helfenstein, and his Swiss Brethren brother, Johann Schaf, for being a Schwenckfeldian in open disregard for the official church.¹⁸⁸ He returned and within two years was imprisoned again. Although expelled again, by 1564 he was secretly reentering the city from time to time and encourag-

¹⁸⁵ AMS, Wiedertäuferherren, I, 14, (1556), f. 2v-4r.

¹⁸⁶ AST, No. 203 (31,8); also Marbach's diary, AST, No. 198, f. 237.

¹⁸⁷ AMS, Wiedertäuferherren, I, 14, (1556), f. 2v-4r; AST, No. 203 (31,8); also Marbach's diary, AST, No. 198, f. 237.

¹⁸⁸ Marbach's diary, AST, No. 198 (1556), f. 237.

ing people such as his brother-in-law, a tailor, to resist the official church.¹⁸⁹ In 1572 he was still alive,¹⁹⁰ but where he lived the rest of his life is unknown.

Although Novesianus denied being part of any group, his views on baptism and the church resembled those of the Anabaptists and the Schwenckfeldians, and he was known as a reader in Schwenckfeldian meetings. His stay in Strasbourg was filled with controversy, but for a decade both magistrates and clergy came to his support because of the demand for his teaching. Only when the clergy determined that his views were having adverse effects on his pupils was he expelled. Novesianus' significance for the Strasbourg radicals lay in the leadership he provided among the Schwenckfeldians, in his strong critique of infant baptism, and in his influence upon the hundreds of students who passed through his classes.

d. Johann Winther von Andernach

Johann Winther von Andernach (1497-1574) was Strasbourg's most renowned physician and anatomist in the mid sixteenth century. An accomplished humanist, he worked simultaneously in literature, philosophy and medicine, and was the first to describe the trajectory and distribution of the humeral artery. The battle against the plague occupied

¹⁸⁹ Husser, 132.

¹⁹⁰ Husser, 84.

him all his life. Anticipating epidemiology, he emphasized collective hygiene, public health and the education of medical specialists. Both a practitioner and a popularizer, his publications of 1542, 1547 and 1563 on how to combat the plague were the most advanced of his day and were widely followed.¹⁹¹

Before coming to Strasbourg in 1544, Andernach taught in the faculty of medicine at the University of Paris and then served as physician for King Francis I in 1536. On behalf of Cardinal Jean du Bellay he made a trip to Wittenberg, and perhaps there began his movement towards Protestantism. Aware that Protestants were not welcome in the French court, he moved to Metz where by 1542 he had sided firmly with the Protestants. There he lost his first wife, and in 1543 married Felicitas Scher, the widow of the Strasbourg city lawyer, Franz Frosch.¹⁹²

On Bucer's recommendation Andernach was invited to teach in Strasbourg.¹⁹³ His medical services were soon in great demand in Strasbourg and in neighbouring regions. Classes began with Greek literature in 1544, medicine in 1549 and both at once in 1566. He enjoyed a good relationship with

¹⁹¹ Robert Steegmann, "Andernach," *Nouveau Dictionnaire de Biographie Alsacienne*, Vol. 1 (Strasbourg: Fédération des Sociétés d'Histoire et d'Archéologie d'Alsace, 1982), 39; Bernays, 53.

¹⁹² Bernays, 28-31, 33; Steegmann, 39.

¹⁹³ Bernays 33-34; TAE III, No. 894, p. 311.

the *Gymnasium* director Johann Sturm, who, like him, favored the *Tetrapolitana* confession and resisted the drift toward Lutheran orthodoxy.¹⁹⁴ In 1558, after Andernach received a substantial inheritance from his father-in-law, the late Peter Scher, the *Scholarchen* closed the faculty of medicine because of low enrollment. His practice of medicine and his medically related travels, however, did not abate.¹⁹⁵

As son-in-law of the nobleman Peter Scher, Andernach lived until 1557 in a large house formerly owned by a noble family. During the Smalkald War Philip of Hesse's oldest son boarded with him until April 1547, as did two sons of Thomas Blaurer, mayor of Constance, in the early 1550s.¹⁹⁶ In September 1557 he moved into a house he purchased from the financially strapped Peter Tasch.¹⁹⁷ According to Marbach's church visitation report of 1554, another house owned by Andernach in the Krutenau district was full of Anabaptists.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ Abray, 127-128; Bernays, 46-48.

¹⁹⁵ Bernays, 42-46; Steegmann, 39.

¹⁹⁶ Bernays, 38-39; *TAE IV*, No. 1743, p. 337.

¹⁹⁷ Peter Tasch, converted from Melchiorite Anabaptism by Bucer in 1538 in Hesse and successful in bringing many Melchiorites back to the official church, had established himself as a merchant. In the second half of the 1550s, debts led him to sell his house to Andernach for 800 *gulden* and led to his bankruptcy in 1560. *TAE IV*, No. 1600, p. 249; Bernays, "Andernach," 41.

¹⁹⁸ Bernays, 41.

Although an elder in the French speaking church started by Calvin, Andernach also came under Schwenckfeld's influence. The clergy's Lutheran offensive of the 1550s against both the French-speaking congregation and the Schwenckfeldians caused him pain. Already in January 1545 he had represented the congregation in its difficult change of pastors from Valerand Poullain to Jean Garnier. In March 1554 he represented the congregation (which was Calvinist and favored the *Tetrapolitana*) when Marbach announced that the Lutheran Augustana confession of 1555 would henceforth be taught. Andernach's Schwenckfeldian sympathies also caused concern. The *Scholarchen* had long and heated discussions about him in 1553/54,¹⁹⁹ and in April 1554 Ambrosius Blaurer warned his brother Thomas against letting his two sons continue in Andernach's home.²⁰⁰

What bothered the clergy was his indifferent attitude toward the Strasbourg church and his hospitality to Anabaptists and the Schwenckfeldians. Konrad Hubert, pastor at St. Thomas, stated in April 1554, "Dr. Andernach, otherwise a fine man, is rather strongly contaminated by Schwenckfeld's doctrine."²⁰¹ Denunciations of Andernach as a heretic and a sectarian by some Strasbourg clergy became

¹⁹⁹ Bernays, 48.

²⁰⁰ They did not stay there much longer. Bernays, 48; Husser, 76.

²⁰¹ T. Schiess, *Briefwechsel Blaurer*, Vol. III, p. 251, quoted by Husser, 76.

so intense that on his sickbed he called them together and confronted them with the issue in February 1556. According to Marbach,

he estranged himself from us not a little, and...we knew well that both he and his wife for several years have avoided our church entirely, and...also opened their house and yard to Anabaptists and Schwenckfeldians, when it would have been reasonable, where he saw failings among us and our church, that he should have warned us and discussed them with us, particularly since he was an elder of the *Welsch* church.²⁰²

Although Andernach offered to discuss religion with them further, he probably remained a Schwenckfeld sympathizer to the end.²⁰³ Not as intimately involved with Schwenckfeld as his wife, Andernach's attitude resembled that of the Epicurean intellectuals who disagreed with the clergy regarding constraint in matters of faith.²⁰⁴

Certainly the two Scher sisters, Felicitas and Elisabeth, remained loyal to Schwenckfeld to their death. On Felicitas' death Andernach asked one of the pastors to conduct the funeral. He replied that Marbach would allow him only on condition that after lauding her virtues, he should then condemn her Schwenckfeldianism. Andernach declined and scheduled the funeral at 6:00 AM before many would notice. Katherine Zell was carried to the grave to conduct the funeral service. When Elizabeth died a few

²⁰² Marbach's diary, f. 238v-239r. and CS, XIV, pp. 639-640, quoted by Bernays, 49.

²⁰³ Bernays, 50-51.

²⁰⁴ Husser, 77.

months later in June 1562, to the Rat's displeasure, Zell did the same. Three months later she herself was dead.²⁰⁵

Not only did Andernach probably remain a Schwenckfeld sympathizer; he also contemplated leaving the city after the clergy and the Rat closed the French-speaking church in 1563. But that fall another plague broke out in Strasbourg, and he was asked again to write a manual of instructions to combat the plague. This he did, and the Rat, with offers of a richer pension and promises not to hinder his life and medical practice in any way, persuaded him to stay.²⁰⁶ He remained in Strasbourg and remarried. Active until his death, he died in 1574 while on medical duty.²⁰⁷

Andernach was a less controversial Schwenckfeldian than Zell or Novesianus, and his medical value to the city and to Jakob Sturm in particular far surpassed any fears about religious unorthodoxy. With Andernach the difference between the priorities of Rat and the clergy emerges; while the clergy resented his religious dissidence, the Rat begged him to stay for the good of the city. His primary significance for the Strasbourg radicals may be that he hosted or lodged nonconformists of all types, and as the city's premier physician, he offered Schwenckfeldians greater respectability.

²⁰⁵ Bainton, 73; Bernays, 49-50.

²⁰⁶ Bernays, 51-55.

²⁰⁷ Bernays, 55-57.

e. Toxites

A more controversial humanist poet and physician with Schwenckfeldian sympathies was Dr. Michael Schütz known as Toxites (1515-1581). Born in the Tyrol, Toxites studied in Tübingen, Pavia and Wittenberg, and taught school in Urach in Württemberg. False accusations of libelous writings against the town's chief pastor in 1540 led to his dismissal.²⁰⁸

He came to Strasbourg in 1542 on the recommendation of Caspar Hedio and Jean Sturm to teach literature at the *Gymnasium*.²⁰⁹ He established contact with spiritualists in the city, and in July 1544 he married Veronica, the widow of Martin Stör who in 1533 had been a disciple of Clement Ziegler.²¹⁰ Also in 1544 he was honored by emperor Charles V for his poetry. Although dismissed from his teaching post in 1545 for drunkenness, he remained in the city supported by Jean Sturm. In 1546, with war clouds looming, he travelled with Sturm on a diplomatic mission to France and he carried out an assignment for the Smalkald League. After

²⁰⁸ Ficker and Winckelmann, *Handschriftproben*, No. 81. The most complete study of Toxites is C. S. Schmidt, *Michael Schutz genannt Toxites* (Strasbourg: C. F. Schmidt's Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1888).

²⁰⁹ AST, Scholarchenprotokoll, 372 II (1542), f. 1r.

²¹⁰ AMS N 25, p. 19.

some time in prison because of his agitation against the Interim, he left the city in 1548.

By 1551 Toxites was again in Strasbourg, publishing the lectures of Jean Sturm and again teaching for a while in the *Gymnasium*. From 1551 to 1553 he also studied medicine, especially with Dr. Winther von Andernach. After a stint as professor of poetry in Tübingen, by 1560 he dedicated himself to medicine. He settled again in Strasbourg as a registered physician and from 1564 on published numerous works of Paracelsus whose theories and methods he endorsed.²¹¹ Like Michael Theurer and some other spiritualists, he was also involved in the illicit practice of alchemy.²¹² In 1572 he moved to Hagenau where he died in 1581.²¹³

Whether with drunkenness, Schwenckfeldianism or alchemy, Toxites often courted controversy while in Strasbourg and no doubt sparked calls for his dismissal. While his creative and wide-ranging scholarship qualified him to teach in the

²¹¹ Ficker and Winckelmann, No. 81. Paracelsus (Theophrastus von Hohenheim), the father of physicians, alchemists and natural philosophy in Strasbourg, spent three months in Strasbourg in 1526. *TAE IV*, No. 60a, pp. 388-389.

²¹² I am grateful to Stephen R. Nelson for this information. In 1567 Toxites became embroiled in a dispute with a shipper and his wife concerning his stepdaughter, Agnes Stör, who was accused of having lost her virginity. He dropped his complaint when the opposing party attributed their slanderous words to alcohol. *AMS, Kontrakt Stube No. 138, II, f. 82v.*

²¹³ Ficker and Winckelmann, No. 81.

Gymnasium and enabled him to publish in several areas, it may well have been his friends in high places, especially Jean Sturm, who assured his continuance in the city. His primary significance to Strasbourg's radicals and to the world lay in his scholarly prowess and in his publications.

3. Nobility

Besides civil servants and intellectuals, Schwenckfeldians in Strasbourg included members of the nobility.

a. Elisabeth Pfersfelder

A perhaps unexpected Schwenckfeldian was Elizabeth Pfersfelder, the visionary noblewoman and partner of Claus Frey who was drowned for bigamy and blasphemy in 1534.²¹⁴ Within a month of his death she became contrite, publicly asked for forgiveness,²¹⁵ and decided to remain in Strasbourg rather than return to her family near Nürnberg. For having robbed Claus Frey's wife of her husband, she suffered suicidal guilt feelings so severe that she was hospitalized in the summer of 1534.²¹⁶ There she became attached to a girl who in some way took the place of a child and cared for her.²¹⁷ In 1535 she purchased Strasbourg citizenship,

²¹⁴ *TAE II*, No. 564, pp. 321-342.

²¹⁵ *TAE II*, No. 573, p. 345; No. 575, p. 346.

²¹⁶ *TAE II*, No. 606, p. 386.

²¹⁷ *TAE IV*, *Beilage*, No. 591a, p. 521.

claiming only that she sought to serve to the praise of God.²¹⁸ Pfersfelder found new religious orientation in Schwenckfeld's teaching and before long she was in Schwenckfeld's epistolary circle. In 1540 she received from him a letter on the incarnation and birth of Christ,²¹⁹ and from Crautwald a letter on justification and Christology.²²⁰

Late in 1551 she died, and Jakob Held was called on to be executor of her estate. With his fellow Schwenckfeldian notary, Johann Schwintzer, he supervised the inventory of her estate and reported their findings to the public records office.²²¹ Held, however, did not wish to make decisions about remaining cash and valuables nor about the affairs of a son who had died earlier. So her brother, Georg Pfersfelder in Nürnberg, an Anabaptist nobleman and friend of Schwenckfeld's, became involved.²²² He not only made decisions about existing properties; he also asked the Rat to compensate him and his co-inheritors for the months Elizabeth had spent unjustly imprisoned for her faith in 1533. The magistrates reconsidered the reasons for her imprisonment and also contacted the Nürnberg Rat regarding

²¹⁸ *TAE II*, No. 650, p. 442; *TAE IV*, No. 1227, p. 545.

²¹⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1047, p. 423.

²²⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1062, pp. 433-437.

²²¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1148, pp. 501-502.

²²² *TAE IV*, No. 1150, pp. 502-503.

Georg Pfersfelder's standing.²²³ The Rat's eventual answer was that after her imprisonment she had in 1535 become a citizen and had died a citizen in good standing.²²⁴ No compensation was required.

While at first glance surprising, Elisabeth's Pfersfelder's turn towards Schwenckfeldianism was natural; she was from a noble family, her brother was a friend of Schwenckfeld's, she had spiritualist inclinations, and Schwenckfeld was willing to respond to her questions. She was probably welcomed in Strasbourg because she was wealthy and she in no way threatened the city's peace.

b. The Scher Family

Prominent among the Strasbourg Schwenckfeldians was the family of Peter Scher the elder (d. 1557), a nobleman who had served in several princely courts including that of King Ferdinand I in the 1530s. Although he owned land in Swabia, he often stopped in Strasbourg and lived in the city from 1543 to 1551 under a special agreement as "protected citizen." After November 1551 he remained in Strasbourg as a non-citizen on condition that he pay an annual fee and

²²³ TAE IV, No. 1192, p. 525.

²²⁴ TAE IV, No. 1227, p. 545.

swear the civic oath.²²⁵ A friend of Capito's, he also had close ties with the Strasbourg church.²²⁶

Because of his good relations with Ferdinand I, he was used several times by the Rat to negotiate agreements with the Hapsburgs. In the summer of 1543 he mediated in a grievance involving the nobleman Hans von Sickingen.²²⁷ In the fall he negotiated with the Habsburg government in Ensisheim regarding the imprisonment of a French lord who supported the Waldensians.²²⁸

With lands in imperial territory and a residence in Strasbourg, Scher suffered criticism from both sides during the Smalkald War. In May 1547, suspected of being a spy, he was accused of treason against Strasbourg. He was also falsely accused of discussing a plot to assassinate an Augsburg diplomat.²²⁹ Towards the end of the war Scher's upper Alsatian village of Nambenheim was seized by imperial forces,²³⁰ probably because imperial agents believed he had advised the Protestants against the emperor. He asked the

²²⁵ *TAE IV*, No. 1279a, p. 26; No. 1758, pp. 345-346; Bernays, 35-36; Husser, 190.

²²⁶ *TAE III*, No. 839a, p. 241.

²²⁷ *TAE IV*, No. 1300, p. 40.

²²⁸ *TAE III*, No. 1307, pp. 44-45.

²²⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1553, p. 221.

²³⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1581, p. 237.

Rat to send the emperor an official statement that he had not done so.²³¹

From 1539 to 1542 Scher was involved in a long court battle over tax money owing to the imperial vice-chancellor, Dr. Mathias Held. Jakob Schor von Hasel, the Palatinate-Zweibrücken chancellor, owed forty-eight *gulden* to the imperial chancelry for his charters of nobility and armaments in 1537. Held gave the tax statement to Scher who in turn passed it on to Schor. Held's probable expectation was that Scher would immediately pay the money to the chancelry and later be reimbursed by Schor. Scher, however, would not pay the chancelry until he had received the money from Schor. When Schor failed to pay the amount owing for over a year, Held, increasingly impatient, sent missive after missive to Scher and the Strasbourg Rat, threatening court action against Scher for nonpayment.²³² The Rat sided with Scher, and Johann Schwintzer, the Rat's Schwenckfeldian lawyer, found himself enmeshed in the dispute.²³³

This suit was followed by another over a debt of 1500 gallons of wine involving Scher, Schwintzer, Held's nephew, Michel Gillis, and others. During the proceedings Gillis called Scher a cunning liar, and in October 1550 Scher sued

²³¹ TAE IV, No. 1591, pp. 244-245.

²³² TAE III, Nos. 963, 997, 1077, 1078, 1081, 1089, 1093, 1164, 1183.

²³³ TAE III, No. 1164, p. 509.

Gillis for libel. During the libel hearings, Held labeled Scher and his family heretics who had abandoned their knowledge of God's Word gained from Bucer, and for years had disseminated heretical books. Scher defended his and his family's Christianity, and admitted only that to close friends he had sent a wholesome and Christian exposition of the Lord's Prayer written by the Augsburg Schwenckfeldian, Eitelhans Langenmantel.²³⁴

Scher's daughters were well-known Schwenckfeldians. Felicitas, married to Franz Frosch, the city lawyer until his death in 1540, became the wife of the physician Johann Winther von Andernach.²³⁵ She and her family received rebukes from Marbach for their hospitality to travelers, refugees and nonconformists.²³⁶ Her sister Elisabeth married the nobleman Hans Christoph Höcklin von Steineck and purchased citizenship in July 1539.²³⁷ Upon her husband's death in 1551, she moved in with her father.²³⁸ She tried to persuade her brother-in-law Jakob Höcklin, the *Landvogt* of Mömpelgard and his wife as well as the duchess of

²³⁴ *TAE III*, No. 1728, pp. 329-330; *ME III*, p. 290.

²³⁵ *TAE III*, No. 894, p. 311. Husser, 76.

²³⁶ Husser, 134, 396.

²³⁷ *TAE III*, No. 894, p. 311; No. 935, p. 351; *TAE IV*, No. 1743, p. 337.

²³⁸ Bernays, 47.

Württemberg to accept Schwenckfeld's views.²³⁹ From Schwenckfeld she received writings on the eucharistic *Stillstand* and a daily spiritual Lord's Supper (1551), and answers to her questions (1552).²⁴⁰ In the fall of 1553, as part of the clergy's offensive against Schwenckfeldians, Marbach remonstrated with Elizabeth but she remained adamant in her views. While Schwenckfeld praised her for this courage and constancy,²⁴¹ Marbach and pastor Konrad Hubert described both Elizabeth and Felicitas as convinced Schwenckfeldians.²⁴² Both sisters died in 1562. When the clergy would not preach their eulogy without also condemning their Schwenckfeldianism, it was Katherine Zell who conducted the funeral.²⁴³

Another sister, Margareta Scher, was married to the Württemberg Vogt Nikolaus von Gravenneck.²⁴⁴ Margareta Engelman with whom Schwenckfeld stayed from 1531 to 1534 and who was his closest correspondent, was the Schers' half-sister.²⁴⁵ A brother, Peter Scher the Younger, married the niece of Thomas Blaurer, mayor of Constance. Blaurer's

²³⁹ Husser, 131.

²⁴⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1762, p. 347; No. 1764, p. 348.

²⁴¹ Husser, 129.

²⁴² Bernays, 47.

²⁴³ Bainton, 73; Bernays, 49-50.

²⁴⁴ *TAE III*, No. 894, p. 311; No. 935, p. 351.

²⁴⁵ Husser, 76.

sons, Albert and Diethelm, boarded in Andernach's home in the early 1550s.²⁴⁶ The Schwenckfeldian influence there would eventually cause Blaurer to move his sons elsewhere.²⁴⁷

With its prestigious social position and far-reaching alliances, the Scher family's loyalty to Schwenckfeld caused the clergy dismay. Peter Scher, less devoted than his daughters, displayed a faith more moderate and private, and he did not proselytize. Because of his lower religious profile and his diplomatic benefit to the *Rat*, he was welcomed in Strasbourg and caused little religious concern. His more avid daughters could remain in the city their life long with only occasional reprimands from the clergy because of their aristocratic privileges, and because, as women, they did not wield the political influence that the patricians did. For the religious radicals of Strasbourg, the Scher family gave the Schwenckfeldians social stature and a high level of commitment which would contribute to the movement's durability.

III. Conclusion

Why did Caspar Schwenckfeld's Silesian spiritualism take root in Strasbourg and perdure through the century? One reason may lie in the people's search for a non-legalistic Christianity which bore fruit in ethical living. A second

²⁴⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1743, p. 337; Bernays, 38-39.

²⁴⁷ Bernays, 48; Husser, 76.

reason may be seen in Strasbourg's long tradition of spiritualism tracing back at least to Meister Eckhart and Johann Tauler; Schwenckfeld's seed was sown in fertile territory. In this Schwenckfeld and his Alsatian rival, Martin Bucer, shared a common tradition. Bucer too stressed the work of the Holy Spirit and sought a spiritual church that bore fruit in ethical living. His 1547 *christlichen Gemeinschaften*, like Luther's *ecclesiola en ecclesia*, resembled Schwenckfeld's ideas of the Christian church. Their combined influence under another Alsatian, Jakob Spener, would reappear in 1670 as the Pietist movement.²⁴⁸

For all its endurance, Strasbourg's Schwenckfeldian community remained small. This is because Schwenckfeld never pursued large numbers and never set up a church structure to accommodate them. In addition his disciples were found primarily among Strasbourg's social and intellectual elite. Schwenckfeld's own aristocratic origin, his ease among aristocrats and intellectuals, and the value he attached to reading and written communication precluded the illiterate masses from his movement and limited the number of his adherents. Finally, the spiritualist and ethical Christianity he advocated also narrowed the scope of his adherents.

²⁴⁸ On Bucer and the Pietest movement, see G. Hammann, "De Bucer à Spener: A la recherche des communautés confessantes," *Positions Luthériennes* 33 (1985), 265-283.

It was precisely the Schwenckfeldian movement's small size and aristocratic origin that enabled it to carry on in Strasbourg with less persecution than other sects like the Anabaptists. While the Schwenckfeldians were usually too few and too concerned with the inner life to disturb the city's peace, the movement's aristocratic origin provided some immunity from arrest. This aristocratic immunity brought to light the difference between the Rat's priorities and the clergy's. On the whole the Rat appreciated the Schwenckfeldians' presence and was willing to overlook their religious idiosyncrasies, for their wealth and education contributed to "the common good." For the clergy, however, with influence at Strasbourg's highest levels, they threatened the unity of the Strasbourg church. And so, for example, while the Rat bent over backwards to please Johann Schwintzer and Dr. Andernach, the clergy criticized them.

For Strasbourg's religious radicals the Schwenckfeldian movement was significant because it provided a peaceful spiritualist alternative to revolutionary apocalypticism. At the same time it stood in solidarity with other non-conformist groups. While Schwenckfeld and his followers refused to identify with and even criticized sects like the Anabaptists, they did reiterate the latter's call for worthy participation in the eucharist, their critique of infant baptism, and especially their call for toleration and freedom of conscience.

Schwenckfeldians provided the city of Strasbourg with valuable lawyers such as Johann Schwintzer and Michael Theurer, intellectuals such as Novesianus and Andernach, diplomats such as Michael Han and Peter Scher, and relief workers such as Katherine Zell and Alexander Berner. Through the Schwenckfeldians the Strasbourg church was kept on its toes regarding baptism, the eucharist, discipline and ethics. They were one factor in Bucer's constant efforts to realize stricter church discipline.

On a broader scale, through the Alsatian Jakob Spener, the Schwenckfeldian movement contributed to the birth of Pietism which continues to influence Protestant denominations of the twentieth century. Despite Schwenckfeld's and his followers' rejection of a "Schwenckfeldian" church, their movement eventually resulted in the Schwenckfelder church which continues to this day. In science, by the seventeenth century Schwenckfeldian spiritualists were often connected with philosophers, physicians, alchemists and astronomers who sought to discover the mind of God behind the order of the universe.²⁴⁹ Because of the ongoing strength of the Schwenckfeldian movement within its walls, Strasbourg played a role in all these contributions.

²⁴⁹ Cf. A. Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1968.) I am grateful to Stephen F. Nelson for information on Schwenckfeldians and science.

Chapter 10

REFLECTIONS ON THE RELIGIOUS RADICALS IN STRASBOURG

For a number of reasons religious nonconformists found their way to Strasbourg in the sixteenth century, and Strasbourg, long known for its tolerance and hospitality, received them. The evidence of *Elsass III. & IV. Teil* and of archival materials after 1552 indicates that far from fading away after 1535, these radicals carried on to 1570 and beyond with diversity and even vigor.

A number of milestones or turning points in their history stand out. 1525 marked the end of the Peasants' War and the suppression of social-revolutionary dreams. 1526 saw the emergence of sectarian, spiritualist and apocalyptic alternatives in Strasbourg. In 1528-29, while some leaders were lost, new leaders and a flood of artisan refugees gave the movement a new dynamic. 1531 saw the crystallization of sectarian, spiritualist and apocalyptic streams and the expulsion of key leaders. In 1539 Melchiorites began in large numbers to turn to the official church or to the Swiss Brethren. 1544 saw the beginning of second generation dissent, of Peter Walter's thirty year ministry with the Swiss Brethren, and of the Steinbachian movement. In 1554-57,

with new orthodox Lutheran clergy, an offensive was launched against nonconformists in which even upper-class Schwenckfeldians suffered. During the same years the Swiss Brethren hosted three "international" Anabaptist conferences to deal with doctrinal differences. Schwenckfeld, the Scher sisters and Katherine Zell died in 1561-62. 1568 featured another significant Anabaptist conference and the appearance of third generation dissent.

The radicals' most significant turning point, however, was the events of 1533-35 -- the Synod of 1533, the apocalyptic expectations in Strasbourg, the Münster revolution, the Ecclesiastical Ordinance of 1534, and disciplinary measures in 1535. After growing to perhaps one fifth of the city's adults behind leaders such as Pilgram Marpeck and Melchior Hoffman, suddenly, decimated and dispersed, they had to reconstitute themselves in new environments and with new leadership. With exceptions, the changes were enormous: from relatively tolerated to outcast, from numerous to few, from fairly visible to clandestine, from concentrated to dispersed, from largely urban to rural, from mostly immigrants to settlers, from educated leaders to uneducated leaders, from all social strata to mostly lower artisans, and from influential to almost insignificant. Numbers fell off from around 2000 to perhaps 1000 scattered through the countryside. For the most part the Schwenckfeldian civil servants, lawyers, aristocrats and intellectuals maintained

their place among the city's elite. But among sectarians and apocalypticists, the wide range of artisans and intellectuals in the late 1520s narrowed to middle and lower artisans, among whom tailors, weavers, butchers, vinedressers, masons, gardeners and laborers were found most frequently. Meeting places moved from homes, craft centers, inns or guild halls in the city to farms and forests outside the city at night.

Despite these losses, by the 1540s a recovery was becoming visible. Settled radicals became landowners and began to be accepted as indigenous citizens. Anabaptist meetings were reported more frequently, second generation dissidents began to arise, 300 Swiss Brethren could gather at a single meeting, and a second wave of social-revolutionary apocalypticism around Martin Steinbach in the Krutenau grew to a mass following by 1550.

Since the majority of the religious radicals after 1535 represented the artisan and lower classes, glimpses into their lives offer glimpses into the rural and urban popular culture of the day. Vinedressers and laborers moved household goods from city to village as they worked the fields in rhythm with the agricultural year. Farmers fought to keep their property and dealers haggled over prices. Rural dissidents evaded punishment by playing local authorities off against Strasbourg officials. Peasants visiting soothsayers carried jars of water in covered baskets under

the pretense that they were urine samples. Some Anabaptists lay on their backs reading prayer books, while others, armed with hoes and scythes but no knives or spears, preached, prayed and slept during all-night worship services. Women went from house to house urging daughters to become baptized. Dissidents critical of the clergy printed posters of fools or even dressed up like clowns to imitate them. Gossip and complaints about the authorities and foreign mercenaries occurred at the markets, in the bakeries and, of course, in the inns. Except for their religious life and their relationship with the authorities, these glimpses suggest that most radicals were ordinary people, much like their non-radical neighbors.

Not only did Strasbourg's religious radicals survive and recover, but through the changes they maintained considerable ideological continuity. Although mavericks continued to appear, for over four decades the radicals carried roughly the same religious orientations that emerged in 1526. While in 1524-25 religious radicalism was tied to the peasants' social-revolutionary thrust, the crushing of that cause drove the radicals to alternative dissident expressions. By the end of 1526 three main alternatives had been articulated: congregational sectarianism by Michael Sattler, spiritualism by Hans Denck and apocalypticism by Hans Wolff. While in the following decades these three orientations waxed and waned and were modified by new lead-

ers in new situations, their general orientation remained the same.

Congregational sectarianism grew rapidly under Sattler, Reublin, Marpeck and Scharnschlager, suffered a great fall in 1534-35, and then reemerged in clandestine rural communities under the leadership of poorly educated artisans, the best known of whom is the armorer Peter Walter. Especially the Swiss Brethren perdured, holding gatherings of several hundred in 1545, 1557 and 1576, and in 1554, 1555, 1557, 1568, 1592 and 1607 hosting Anabaptist delegates from Alsace, the Rhine valley, Switzerland, South Germany, the Netherlands and Moravia to resolve doctrinal and ethical disputes.¹

The spiritualist Anabaptism of Hans Denck faded from view but found new life in modified form in the Schwenckfeldian movement. For many Schwenckfeldians, as for Denck, infant baptism and unethical living in the church were serious complaints. Furthered after Schwenckfeld's departure by Katherine Zell and educated civil servants like Michael Theurer, the movement continued to the end of the century when Daniel Suderman picked up Schwenckfeld's mantle for an entire generation. In the meantime the Lutheran mystic Johann Arndt (1555-1621) studied in Strasbourg, no doubt contacting Schwenckfeldians. A century later Arndt's

¹ Rott and Lienhard, "Frères suisses," 27. On the conferences, see Oyer, "Strasbourg Conferences" 218-229; Hulshof, 218-232.

ideas, under the Alsatian Philip Jakob Spener (1635-1705) who also spent time in Strasbourg, would blossom in the Pietist movement.

Apocalyptic hopes, preached in 1526 by Hans Wolff, found full expression in the Melchiorite movement which continued with vigor at least up to 1538, and persisted among a few up to 1560. It also took new forms in new situations. While Hoffman was still alive, the barrelmaker Martin Steinbach attracted a following in nearby Schlettstadt. Within a year of Hoffman's death, Steinbach's *Lichtseher* movement had taken hold among apocalyptically inclined gardeners and other artisans in Strasbourg's Krutenau district where radicalism was recurrent. As late as 1566 Steinbachians identified Steinbach with the apocalyptic Elijah and even the Holy Spirit, and testified to seeing visions of light. The wedding of a Steinbachian's step-daughter to a gardener's son in 1568 points to the possibility of revolutionary apocalypticism to the end of the century. Thus, the radical movement's three main streams -- the sectarian, the spiritualist and the apocalyptic -- carried on to 1570 and beyond.

The presence of social-revolutionaries in the Krutenau as late as 1568 suggests that the impact of Clement Ziegler, the Peasants' War gardener-preacher, has been underestimated in histories of Strasbourg's radicals. The first Strasbourg preacher to criticize infant baptism (1524), he drew large

crowds during the Peasants' War. It was his influence together with that of Karlstadt in 1524 that prepared the ground for Strasbourg's Anabaptist community. Thus the Swiss Brethren who came in 1526 did not introduce Anabaptism afresh as several have suggested, but rather added to an already existing Anabaptist circle influenced by Ziegler. Although the gardener-preacher withdrew from the peasants' cause, conformed outwardly and turned to esoteric visions, he provided pastoral care and influence among the gardeners until his death in 1552. That the gardeners' and peasants' bitterness over the Peasants' War did not quickly fade is evidenced by the Steinbachian social-revolutionary apocalypticism after 1550, and by appeals against armed conspiracies from Wangen authorities in 1567. Ziegler understood their anger, and although he had abandoned revolutionary tactics, his later visions spoke of violence in the city and the fall of the emperor.² As Melchioritism was linked to the Steinbachian apocalypticism of the 1540s, 1550s and 1560s, Ziegler was probably a source of its social-revolutionary thrust.

Strasbourg's traditions of spiritualism and social-revolutionary activism were indigenous. But over the years the city was also a center where foreign radical traditions both mingled and continued separately. If Anabaptism in

² "Neue Dreim und Gesicht," *TAE IV*, No. 1773, pp. 352-369; Peter, "Le Maraîcher," 275.

Europe arose in three main hearths -- Switzerland, South Germany and the Netherlands -- Strasbourg may be seen as a place where all three traditions pursued their separate course and also found their commonality.³ The Swiss Anabaptists through Conrad Grebel and Sattler emphasized the free church and baptism; the South Germans through Denck and Hans Hut emphasized free will, mysticism and social revolution; and the Netherlanders emphasized a spiritual eucharist, a celestial flesh Christology and apocalypticism. In Strasbourg all three traditions continued separately in sectarian, spiritualist and apocalyptic streams. They also mingled and discovered a commonality which they sought to solidify in the Anabaptist conferences of the 1550s.

Although the Swiss Brethren and the South German Marpeck circle were separate, they were theologically close and relations between them were good. Further, while the South Germans influenced by Hut and the Melchiorites were separate communities, many of the former joined the latter. And while Ziegler, Hans Wolff and the Strasbourg Prophets spawned an indigenous Strasbourgeois apocalyptic and monophysite tradition, under Hoffman it merged with the Netherlander tradition and seized the stage.

³ G. H. Williams, "Studies in the Radical Reformation (1517-1618): A Bibliographical Survey of Research since 1539," *CH* 27 (1958), 58-60; Deppermann, Packull and Stayer, "Polygenesis," 83-121.

After 1535 the patterns of mingling and separateness changed somewhat. Netherlander Melchiorites, South German spiritualists, Pilgramites and the Swiss Brethren each continued separately at least into the 1540s. But by 1544 former Melchiorites found common ground with Strasbourg's own apocalypticists in the Steinbachian movement. At the same time the Swiss Brethren were absorbing former Pilgramites and Melchiorites like Jörg Nörlinger who retained a celestial flesh Christology. These disparate traditions did not mingle without tension. Among other things, the Anabaptist conferences of the 1550s discussing Christology, the ban and legalism were efforts to resolve tensions between the Swiss Brethren, the South German and the Netherlander traditions. Even if tensions between were not fully resolved, the discussions indicate that among the three traditions commonality had been found.

The challenge of the religious radicals revealed the limits of the Strasbourg reform's tolerance. For the clergy that limit was whether nonconformity threatened the integrity of the church, and for the magistrates it was whether it threatened the peace of the city. On the whole, in every decade, the clergy were more hostile toward the radicals than the magistrates. To be sure, compared to most sixteenth-century cities, Strasbourg's reformers displayed unusual tolerance, especially in the early years before their views had crystallized. Even Bucer, passionate about

church unity and anxious to secure the new church's doctrinal and institutional footings, was flexible on baptism until 1527. As late as 1533 Capito and the Zells hosted nonconformists of all kinds and debated their views. But at the same time, with the flood of refugees eroding their fragile church's doctrine and numbers, by 1528 the clergy's hostility toward nonconformists was on the rise.

The greatest reason that the magistrates' hostility did not increase correspondingly was their differing vision for the city. While both clergy and magistrates shared a common desire for a Christian city where all would be members of an evangelical *Volkskirche*, the clergy placed greater emphasis on the church while the magistrates placed greater emphasis on the city. While for the most part the clergy were ideologically motivated, the magistrates operated more pragmatically. While for the clergy uniform belief and practice evidenced by attendance at church and the sacraments were of greatest import, for the magistrates the peace of the city was primary. For the clergy nonconformists were dangerous by definition, for by their very existence, challenging church doctrine, institutions and practice and siphoning off its members, they destroyed church unity. For the magistrates the dissident danger was merely proportional to how greatly they threatened the city's peace. Moreover, having gotten rid of a Catholic papacy, they did not want in the next breath to install a Protestant one. Nor were most

magistrates as religious as the clergy. Working within a centuries long tradition of religious tolerance, a number of them believed faith could not be coerced. So if the non-conformists kept the peace, why harass them? Only when a crisis appeared did the magistrates join with the clergy to suppress the radicals: in 1527 with Hans Denck, in 1529 with the flood of refugees and Catholic unrest over the abolition of the mass, in 1533-35 with the apocalyptic scare, in 1538 with the Melchiorite tracts from Speyer, and in 1540 with the arrest of sixty-nine Anabaptists.

The magistrates did, however, have criteria by which they evaluated dissidents. The danger of social unrest was unacceptable, and so the Melchiorites consistently received harsh treatment. Wealth and social status enhanced tolerance. The patrician Eckhart zum Drübel was only admonished despite delaying his oldest son's baptism for seven years and his overt spiritualism. The Rat's patience with the abrasive Hans Adam demonstrates that native Strasbourg bourgeois were treated more tolerantly than immigrants and non-citizens. Finally, times of crisis warranted greater attention to nonconformity than times of normalcy. In 1533-35 wealthy as well as poor nonconformists were pressured to conform, but within a year surveillance was slacker. Although the clergy also made such allowances, they were more likely to criticize the wealthy or native Strasbourg bourgeois who weakened the church by their absence or their unsettling influence on others.

In the second half of the century, when in Protestant states an era of confessionalism replaced the breadth and openness of the Reformation's first generation, limits of tolerance narrowed as magistrates gradually adopted a more Lutheran worldview. After the deaths of Hedio and Jakob Sturm in 1552/53, with the coming of stricter Lutheran clergy, even esteemed Schwenckfeldians such as Johann Schwintzer, Novesianus and Katherine Zell were castigated or hounded out of the city. Within a few years Strasbourg's Calvinists also came under attack.

Commoners were usually more accepting of the radicals than either the clergy or the magistrates. Many considered them pious and harmless folk. Certain dissidents such as Katherine Zell were even considered heroes or saints. Others counted the radicals among their neighbors, friends or colleagues. Still others quietly shared the radicals' discontent. In Wasselheim and Wangen, for example, almost everyone seemed to be an Anabaptist sympathizer. Faced with such widespread sympathy for the nonconformists, the Rat felt it futile to harass them if they kept the peace.

The radicals themselves displayed varying levels of tolerance. The fact that the less tolerant sectarians and apocalypticists were drawn mostly from the artisan and the lower classes, whereas the more tolerant spiritualists came largely from the educated classes suggests that education sometimes contributed to a distaste for dogma and exclu-

sivistic claims. Unlike some commoners who perhaps held no hope for a better life and so settled for survival within the *status quo*, the Anabaptists had tasted enough change to know that change was possible and the society they yearned for might be realizable. But lacking a humanist education, they tended more rigidly to follow their leaders and affirm certain dogma. Thus, some of the Anabaptists were even more intolerant than the clergy.

Reasons and motivations for religious dissent were many. In 1524-25 and during the Peasants' War the over-riding reason for radicalism was anger over social and economic oppression. The nature of the radical call -- a reversal of social and economic structures -- reflected that oppression. Religious expressions of this radicalism included the destruction of images and attacks on convents. After the war, with the suppression of social-revolutionary hopes and with alternate expressions of religious radicalism, the rejection of the official church remained constant, but reasons for dissent became more complex.

Although the reasons were interrelated, for some the offense was largely theological/ethical. Spiritualists challenged the church regarding the Spirit/Word relationship, concern for the needy, the futility of infant baptism, the sacraments, sanctification and ethical living, and the salvation of those outside the church. On the Spirit/Word relationship and the sacraments they also dif-

ferred with the sectarians. Sectarians, especially the Swiss Brethren, dissented on the nature of the church, the priority of the New Testament, and ethical standards including oath-swearing, arms-bearing, participation in government, personal morality and the ban. On church-state questions they differed not only with the authorities but also with most spiritualists. Issues crucial for apocalypticists were the imminent return of Christ, the Spirit/Word relationship, Christology and social revolution. While many agreed with the sectarians on baptism and the ungodly nature of those outside their fellowship, and while they agreed with the spiritualists on the authority of the Spirit, they differed with all parties on their apocalyptic speculations.

Perhaps the greatest number dissented for personal and practical reasons such as clashes with their pastor, perceived hypocrisy and the ineffectiveness of the church's prayers and sacraments to solve their everyday problems. While for some moral ideals were central, others such as Anabaptists who tried to live in Börsch without submitting to local authorities and paying local taxes, did not hesitate to ply the Rat and the Börsch authorities with contradictory stories.

To dissent from the official church, however, was more than just to declare a theological difference or acknowledge a personality clash. It was also to reject an ecclesiasti-

cal system which alone, and in its ties with lay rulers, had been experienced as oppressive. It was to reject a system where dignity, social and economic justice, and meaningful involvement in religion had been experienced to be lacking. To withhold a child from baptism was not only to assert that baptism needed to follow adult faith. It was also to declare that this child would not participate in a social and religious system deemed oppressive. In a small way it was a call for a society turned upside down. For all its differences, at root the separatist call of 1569 was much like the social-revolutionary call of Clement Ziegler in 1524. Thus the sectarian nonconformity of mid-century may be seen to continue the commoners' revolt in the Peasants' War.

Common to nearly all radicals in all times, places and social stations was the question of religious tolerance. Anabaptist clerics such as Sattler in 1526, villagers such as Dietrich Hartschedel in 1568, spiritualists such as Denck in 1526 and Katherine Zell in 1557, social revolutionaries such as Clement Ziegler, apocalypticists such as Hoffman in 1530 and Steinbach in 1550, anti-trinitarians such as Servetus, and "Epicurean" humanists such as Anton Engelbrecht all pleaded for tolerance and the absence of coercion in matters of faith. Some, like the Schwenckfeldians and the "Epicureans," applied their request consistently to all dissidents including those with whom they differed. Others,

especially the Swiss Brethren and the Melchiorites, damning other dissident groups as harshly as they did the state and the official church, sought toleration only for themselves.

How did the religious radicals survive amid criticism and ostracism? Visible and educated nonconformists such as the engineer Pilgram Marpeck, the alms director Lukas Hackfurt, the physician Winther von Andernach, the Rat lawyer Johann Schwintzer, the Rat secretary Michael Han, the Latin teacher Novesianus and Katherine Zell survived by being valuable to the city. In the eyes of the Rat their contribution to the city's welfare was greater than the danger their nonconformity posed. And so, unabashed about their dissidence, they stayed and served the city. Less esteemed nonconformists survived by keeping a low profile. Generally, if they kept the city's peace, the city left them in peace. When expelled, many survived by settling in neighboring villages. Sometimes the village authorities were sympathetic but more often they were not. Some rural dissidents harassed for their faith survived by purchasing Strasbourg citizenship and appealing to the Rat for protection. While the magistrates cared little for the individual dissident, they were prepared to resist any encroachments of rival authorities on Strasbourg's privileges, even at the price of protecting rural Anabaptists. In this way prudent nonconformists could enjoy Strasbourg's protection while living beyond its direct supervision. Strasbourg's

jealousy for its autonomy *vis-à-vis* France and the empire also helped the radicals survive. When the imperial edict of 1528 ordered the automatic execution of all Anabaptists, evangelical Strasbourg ignored the edict.

Besides external persecution, Strasbourg's radicals had to guard against internal disintegration. This was done by meeting regularly in an organized way. Groups unable to do so, such as the Denck/Kautz group, died out or were absorbed by other groups. It was probably their congregational structure that enabled the Pilgramites and especially the Swiss Brethren to carry on for decades. Even the Schwenckfeldians, for all their spiritualist individualism, met regularly in conventicles and recognized certain persons as leaders. Another means of defense against isolation was contact with Anabaptists from other lands. Letters from Schwenckfeld, Crautwald, Marpeck, Menno Simons and lesser leaders in distant lands provided encouragement and a sense of belonging to a larger community. The four Anabaptist conferences between 1554 and 1568 brought Dutch Melchiorites, Hutterites and South Germans together with the Swiss Brethren. While the conferences did not dissolve the tensions between them, they indicate a determination to remain part of a larger Anabaptist community.

What was Strasbourg's significance for religious radicalism in Europe? Strasbourg served as a center where non-conformist ideas were enriched, and from where they radiated

across Europe and through the centuries. It was in Strasbourg that Sattler forged his Schleithem Confession that crystallized thinking for Anabaptists throughout Europe. In Strasbourg Schwenckfeld, Bänderlin, Entfelder, Franck and others enriched each others' spiritualist inclinations with which they would criss-cross the continent. In Strasbourg Hoffman acquired and published much of his theology that transformed the Netherlands. It was in Strasbourg that divergent Anabaptists from across Europe recognized their commonality and worked at their differences in the 1550s. In Strasbourg religious radicals were able to test, debate, hone and publish their ideas, and to form nonconformist communities that would carry on into the following centuries.

As for the radicals, their impact was multi-faceted. Except for a small number of upper class radicals, their contributions to the city's social conditions, political life, science and technology were negligible. At local and village levels dissident commoners occasionally made a difference if their numbers were large enough as in Wangen. Certain individuals made a valuable contribution. During Marpeck's years as *Holzmeister*, his delivery of lumber into Strasbourg from forests across the Rhine alleviated a wood shortage in the city. Into the seventeenth century his flotillas of log rafts on Strasbourg's rivers were called *Pilgerholz*. While Schwenckfeldians such as Michael Han and Peter Scher served the city as diplomats and mediators,

others like Johann Schwintzer and Michael Theurer served as Rat lawyers. Lukas Hackfurt, Alexander Berner and Hans Zimprecht Barter contributed much to the overhaul and functioning of Strasbourg's alms system. Numerous non-conformist volunteers including Fridolin Meyger, Marpeck, Wilhelm Blum the elder and Katherine Zell cared for thousands of refugees from the Peasants' War and from imperial and French persecution. Katherine Zell nearly single-handedly instigated an overhaul of Strasbourg's syphillis hospital. Dr. Winther von Andernach may have done more to contain the plague than anyone in Europe.

The Strasbourg radicals' greatest contribution was religious. They influenced some key reformers. Up to 1532 Capito was open to the Anabaptists, the spiritualists and Michael Servetus, and their influence on him was one reason why the nonconformists flourished longer in Strasbourg than in most cities. If Katherine Zell and Schwenckfeld did not shape Matthew Zell's theology, at least he was convinced with them of the need for religious tolerance which to the end of his life he preached. Even Bucer, the radicals' strongest opponent in the 1530s and 1540s, found himself influenced by them, especially in terms of church discipline. Although this had always concerned him, in his 1538 discussions with Anabaptists in Hesse, he validated their ethical critiques. At the Synod of 1539 church discipline received major emphasis, and his organization of the

christlichen Gemeinschaften in 1547 was an effort to form fellowships with greater discipline. Despite Calvin's wide-ranging polemic against the Anabaptists, he approached their thought in his view of the eucharist and in his implementation of church discipline. He managed to find common ground with them in order to attract them into his Strasbourg church. In Strasbourg he married an Anabaptist's widow, and his stepson he left in a former Melchiorite's care. Strasbourg provided him with valuable experience and ideas which he took with him to Geneva. In the formation of these ideas, Bucer, others reformers and also Strasbourg's radicals played a part.

If Strasbourg's radicals influenced the city's clergy, magistrates and commoners, and made necessary the Synod of 1533 which laid the foundations for the Strasbourg church, they also helped spread radical evangelicalism across Europe. Among the sectarians, Reublin carried his ministry to Moravia and then back to South Germany. Sattler's 1527 Schleithem Confession, first formulated and articulated in Strasbourg, not only crystallized doctrine and ethics for Anabaptists from Switzerland to Moravia to the Netherlands, but also became accepted by much of the Mennonite community in later centuries. Marpeck and Scharnschlager served as Anabaptist leaders among scattered groups in South Germany and Moravia for a quarter century. In the twentieth century Marpeck's model of Christian presence in the world has been rediscovered with appreciation in Mennonite circles.

The impact of Strasbourg's apocalypticists, especially Hoffman, was greatest in the Netherlands, where it led on the one hand to the Münster debacle, and on the other to the monophysite sectarianism of Menno Simons and ultimately to the Mennonite church. Jörg Nörlinger carried the message of Christ's celestial flesh to Moravia. This monophysite Christology of Clement Ziegler, of the Melchiorites and then of Menno's followers became the main issue dividing the Netherlander Anabaptists from Strasbourg's Swiss Brethren whose Christology was orthodox. While the Strasbourg Anabaptist conferences of 1554 to 1568 failed fully to resolve these and other differences, they did prepare the way for the 1632 Dortrecht Confession of Faith affirmed by some Mennonite groups to this day.

Among the spiritualists, Kautz's printing press published the first German translation of the Bible entirely from original languages, and Denck and Hätzer contributed to the translation of the Old Testament prophets. Bündlerlin and Entfelder carried their ideas to Silesia. As for Schwenckfeld, outside of Strasbourg his followers remained strong in Swabia, in Prussia and in Silesia where a community continued until 1826. In the United States a Schwenckfelder community continues to this day. While the Schwenckfeldians' ethical critique helped spur Bucer on to establish his self-disciplining *Christlichen Gemeinschaften* in 1547, their emphasis on the Holy Spirit, the inner life,

devotional meetings and holy living fit well into Strasbourg's long tradition of spiritualism. They continued as an informal group well into the seventeenth century. By then the Lutheran spiritualists Johann Arndt (1555-1621) and Philip Jakob Spener (1635-1705) had studied and preached in Strasbourg where they no doubt contacted Schwenckfeldians. Spener's formation of Schwenckfeldian-like conventicles designed to breathe new life into the Lutheran church grew into the Pietist movement which to this day touches most Protestant denominations. Schwenckfeldian spiritualism also found an affinity with Paracelsian thought which explored the natural sciences as microcosm in an quest to glimpse the macrocosm -- the mysteries of the universe and the mind of God. While the physicians Andernach and Toxites dabbled in alchemy in search of an elusive panacea, elsewhere Schwenckfeldian sympathizers such as Johannes Kepler propounded revolutionary models of the solar system.

As the issue common to all radicals was that of religious tolerance, so also their common contribution concerns religious tolerance. A direct connection between their particular calls and modern religious pluralism and separation of church and state probably cannot be traced. But the calls of Strasbourg's Karlstadt, Ziegler, Denck, Sattler, Marpeck, Otto Brunfels, Franck, Schwenckfeld, Servetus, Katherine Zell, Winther von Andernach and others sowed seeds and contributed to a climate of thought that would eventually bear fruit.

Thanks to Strasbourg's spiritualists whose quest for terrestrial and celestial frontiers would not be dulled by dogma, creative assaults on poverty, disease and political conflict enhanced Strasbourg's long tradition of tolerance. In the twentieth century that legacy was admirably brought to light by Strasbourg's musician, scholar, physician and spiritualist, Albert Schweitzer. Thanks to Strasbourg's sectarians who determined to pick up the pieces after the crises of 1534, Strasbourg soon became a center where Anabaptists of various traditions could labor together over how to be a peaceable community in a conflict-ridden world. Four centuries later their question is still relevant.

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