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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

Doctor of Philosophy

Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1993



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ISBN 0-315-81703-8

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A SOCIAL HISTORY

BY

JOHN DAVID DERKSEN

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

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ABSTRACT

In various ways and in changing circumstances, from 1525 to 1570 religious radicals dissented from the evangelical church in Strasbourg and its rural territories. Prior to 1525 they were largely local artisans and peasants seeking social and economic justice. When these hopes were dashed in the Peasants' War, dissident ideals found new expression in spiritualist, sectarian and apocalyptic streams which all continued their flow in the following decades.

With a flood of refugees in the late 1520s, non-conformist numbers soared and foreigners, mostly artisans, came to dominate the movement. Under Pilgram Marpeck, Caspar Schwenckfeld and Melchior Hoffman in 1531, the radicals reached their zenith. Fear for the official reform drove the authorities in 1533-35 to legislate doctrine and expel nonconformists. For the latter this was a watershed. Most fled the city, and except for the Schwenckfeldians, they became clandestine rural groups of lower artisans with uneducated leaders.

By 1540 the Melchiorite movement almost disappeared as Hoffman's prophecies were not fulfilled and many turned to the official church or other sectarian groups. Some, mostly lower artisans, found new hope in Martin Steinbach's *Lichtseher* movement which merged Peasants' War thinking with Hoffman's apocalypticism and continued at least until 1568.

The sectarians, chief among them the Swiss Brethren, carried on through the century, thanks to their congrega-

tional separatism and their links to Anabaptists in other lands. They dissented for a multitude of reasons -- theological, ethical, personal and practical. Many lived quietly and respectably in the villages surrounding Strasbourg, but others played the Rat off against hostile local authorities in order to escape disciplinary measures. In Wangen the radicals dominated the village's political agenda in the 1560s, mainly because of bitterness toward the pastor.

The issues occupying lower class nonconformists were mostly domestic. Larger issues such as the Smalkald War involved the Schwenckfeldians and other educated spiritualists. Throughout the century the Schwenckfeldians -- civil servants, intellectuals and aristocrats -- were a mixed blessing. The other radicals appreciated their calls for tolerance, but resented their criticisms. The magistrates appreciated their diplomatic and commercial gifts, but the clergy resented their religious divisiveness.

Thus, despite the catastrophe of 1533-35, the sectarian, spiritualist and apocalyptic movements begun as alternative expressions of commoners' discontent in the Peasants' War continued uninterrupted into the 1550s and beyond. Strasbourg served as a center where nonconformist ideas were enriched and from where they radiated to other regions. The radicals made necessary the Synod of 1533 which laid the foundations of the Strasbourg Church, and they contributed to the spread of Anabaptism and spiritualism across Europe.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many persons to whom I am very grateful helped with the writing of this paper. Thanks go first of all to Dr. Henry Heller who introduced me to social history and then supervised the writing of this paper. I am grateful to Dr. Werner Packull who suggested the topic to me. In Strasbourg Mr. Stephen Nelson made available reams of his research from two decades in the archives and made helpful suggestions. Dr. Jean Rott lent me research papers of the late Johann Adam. Dr. Marc Lienhard contributed his own writings as well as unpublished theses stored in Strasbourg's GRENEP library, and welcomed me into his graduate seminar. In North America Dr. John Roth and the staff at the Mennonite Historical Library in Goshen, Indiana granted me ready access to materials there. Mrs. Alice Krahn made available the research papers of her late husband, Dr. Henry Krahn. Dr. Stephen Boyd granted me his manuscript on Pilgram Marpeck which has since come to press. Dr. L. Jane Abrey shared some of her unpublished research. For countless hours Mr. Henry Visch helped me through Abraham Hulshof's Dutch text. Thanks also go to Cynthia Reimer who efficiently "keyboarded" successive drafts of the paper.

Financial support came from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Commission of Canada and from University of Manitoba's Graduate Fellowship. Mr. Larry Miller arranged for my accommodations in Strasbourg and offered the unlimited use of the Mennonite World Conference photocopy machine. In Winnipeg the administrators of Concord College offered a place to work, and the directors of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Association helped with the printing.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to my mother and father who provided physical, emotional and spiritual sustenance from the beginning of the project to its end. To them I dedicate this work.

ABBREVIATIONS

- AMS Archives municipales de Strasbourg
- ARG *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*
- AST Archives du Chapitre St. Thomas, AMS
- BNUS Bibliothéque nationale et universitaire de
Strasbourg
- CH *Church History*
- CS *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum*
- MQR *Mennonite Quarterly Review*
- SAW *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*. Library of
Christian Classics. G. H. Williams and A. M.
Mergal, eds. Philadelphia: Westminster Press,
1957.
- TAE Täuferakten, Elsass. *Quellen zur Geschichte der
Täufer. Elsass. Stadt Strassburg*, ed. by M.
Krebs and H. G. Rott (Vols. I & II), and M.
Lienhard, S. F. Nelson, and H. G. Rott (Vols.
III & IV). Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus
Gerd Mohn, 1959, 1960, 1986, 1988.
- XXI Minutes of the Rat and XXI, AMS

INTRODUCTION

The appearance in 1986 and 1988 of volumes XV and XVI of *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer, Elsass III. & IV. Teil, Stadt Strassburg 1536-1552*¹ has opened a new window on the sixteenth century religious radicals in Strasbourg. This collection of pamphlets, sermons, letters, business transactions, court testimonies, minutes of various commissions and especially Rat minutes sheds light on a wide range of religious radicals in Strasbourg and its environs from 1536 to 1552. Also included are materials from 1522 to 1535 not found in the 1959 and 1960 editions of *Elsass I. & II. Teil, Stadt Strassburg 1522-1535*.² Especially for the years after 1535, these volumes add much new material to the impressive

¹ *Elsass III. Teil, Stadt Strassburg, 1536-1542*, M. Lienhard, S. F. Nelson and H. G. Rott, eds. *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, Vol. XV (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1986); *Elsass IV. Teil, Stadt Strassburg, 1543-1552*, M. Lienhard, S. F. Nelson and H. G. Rott, eds. *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, Vol. XVI (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1988), henceforth cited as TAE III and IV.

² *Elsass I. Teil, Stadt Strassburg, 1522-1532*, M. Krebs and H. G. Rott, eds. *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, Vol. VII (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1959); *Elsass II. Teil, Stadt Strassburg, 1533-1535*, M. Krebs and H. G. Rott, eds. *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, Vol. VIII (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1960).

studies already written by a number of scholars.³

Unpublished similar materials for the years after 1552 are found in the Strasbourg archives where the late Johann Adam, Jean Rott and Stephen Nelson have done much work.⁴

The purpose of this study is, with the benefit of these sources, to retell the story of Strasbourg's sixteenth-century religious radicals from 1524 to 1569. Who were these radicals or nonconformists? Contrary to the view of Strasbourg authorities who called all troublemakers Anabap-

³ T. W. Röhrich, "Zur Geschichte der Strassbürgischen Wiedertäufer in den Jahren 1527 bis 1543," *Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie* 30 (1860), 3-121; Camill Gerbert, *Geschichte der Strassburger Sectenbewegung zur Zeit der Reformation, 1524-1534* (Strassburg: Heitz und Mündel, 1889); A. Hulshof, *Geschiednis van de Doopsgesinden te Straatsburg van 1525 tot 1557* (Amsterdam: J. Clausen, 1905); J. Adam, *Evangelische Kirchengeschichte der Stadt Strassburg* (Strassburg: J. H. Ed. Heitz, 1922); R. Kreider, "Anabaptists and the Civil Authorities of Strasbourg, 1525-1548," *CH* 24 (1955) 99-117; C. B. Mitchell, "Martin Bucer and Sectarian Dissent: A Confrontation of the Magisterial Reformers with Anabaptists and Spiritualists," diss. Yale University, 1961; G. H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962); G. H. Krahn, "An Analysis of the Conflict between the Clergy of the Reformed Church and the Leaders of the Anabaptist Movement in Strasbourg, 1524-1534," diss. U. of Washington, 1969; K. Deppermann, *Melchior Hoffmann: Soziale Unruhen und apokalyptische Visionen im Zeitalter der Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979), E. T. by M. Wren, *Melchior Hoffman* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987); D. Husser, "Liberté Spiritualiste et Structures Socio-religieuses: Caspar Schwenckfeld et les "Schwenckfeldiens" entre Eglises, Sectes et Autorités à Strasbourg (1529-1631)." diss. University of Strasbourg, 1980; S. Boyd, *Pilgram Marpeck: His Life and Social Theology* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989). Pagination for Dr. Boyd's book is from his pre-publication manuscript for which I am grateful.

⁴ I am grateful to Stephen Nelson and Jean Rott for making Johann Adam's and their own research available to me.

tists, or of Abbess Adelheid von Andlau of St. Stephen who called all evangelicals (even Lutherans!) Anabaptists, Strasbourg's religious radicals were not simply one's enemies. Nor were they exclusively Anabaptists or any other single group. They were the multi-faceted conglomeration of those who dissented from Strasbourg's evangelical church without joining the Catholic or Calvinist churches. These included Anabaptists, spiritualists, apocalypticists, mystics, prophets, "Epicureans," libertines, social revolutionaries and unitarians.

Strasbourg's religious radicals were part of a larger conglomeration of dissident movements in sixteenth-century Europe. The recent study of these groups has featured debate centering on four inter-related issues: intellectual roots, geographic origin, commonality and categorization as to which groups should and should not be considered radical or Anabaptist.⁵

Called *Schwärmer* by Luther and *Wiedertäufer* by the Swiss reformers, from the sixteenth into the twentieth centuries, for the most part histories of these nonconformists were confessionally written and hostile. The few sympathetic treatments were also confessional in approach. It was Ernst Troeltsch who most helped break historians out their con-

⁵ J. R. Coggins, "Toward a Definition of Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism: Twentieth Century Historiography of the Radical Reformers," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 4 (1986), 183.

fessional deadlocks. By positing "church type" and "sect type" religious communities which grew logically out of the gospel and the primitive church, and by casting the Swiss Anabaptists sympathetically as a pure example of the "sect" type, Troeltsch diminished the "heretical" nature of the Anabaptists and prepared the ground for a favorable interpretation of the Anabaptists by "free church historians."⁶ By separating the peaceful Anabaptists from the revolutionary Thomas Müntzer, and by depicting the spiritualists as a distinct stream of the sect type, Troeltsch offered a nuanced perspective on movements that to this point had been painted with a single brush.⁷

Headed by Harold S. Bender, free church historians viewed the first Anabaptists as pious Protestants in Zurich who insisted on obeying the Word of God rather than compromise with the city council as Zwingli did. In 1525 the Anabaptists began baptizing adult believers in an effort to create a voluntary church community free from governmental

⁶ The term is from J. M. Stayer, "The Anabaptists," *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*, Ozment, Steven, ed. (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1982), 135-159; Deppermann, 3.

⁷ *Protestantisches Christentum und Kirche in der Neuzeit*, 1909, and *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*, 1912; E. T. *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, 2 Vols. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1931), I, 329-343; II, 691-706, 729-771; H. S. Bender, "The Historiography of the Anabaptists," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 31 (1957), 99; H.-J. Goertz, "Introduction," *Profiles of Radical Reformers*, H.-J. Goertz, ed. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1982, 12-13.

pressure. Citing the Sermon on the Mount, they refused public office and rejected violence. They were marked by a vision to restore the pure New Testament church⁸ and by discipleship (*Nachfolge Jesu*).⁹ In this return to the biblical roots of the church, the Anabaptists were the true Christians of the Reformation who, unlike the mainline reformers, carried the reform to its consistent conclusion.¹⁰ Setting up small congregations of peaceful Bible readers, they spread from Zurich throughout Europe, ever persecuted by Catholics and Protestants alike because their refusal to conform to the official church was seen as divisive and treasonous.¹¹ Revolutionary movements and sexual antinomianism, condemned by the "evangelical Anabaptists,"¹² soon died away, and it was the latter -- the Swiss Brethren, the Hutterites and the Dutch Mennonites -- who survived. Thus free church historians isolated the peace-

⁸ F. H. Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Starr King Press, 1958).

⁹ H. S. Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision," *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*, G. F. Hershberger, ed. (Scottsdale: Herald, 1957), 29-54.

¹⁰ H. J. Hillerbrand, "Radicalism in the Early Reformation: Varieties of Reformation in Church and Society," *Radical Tendencies in the Reformation: Divergent Responses*, H. J. Hillerbrand, ed. (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1988), 36.

¹¹ Stayer, "The Anabaptists," 136-137.

¹² Other terms used include "peaceful Anabaptists," "soundly biblical Anabaptists," "genuine Anabaptists," "normative Anabaptists," or "Anabaptism proper."

ful, biblicist Anabaptists from the variety of other non-conformists.¹³

Since Bender's death in 1962, scholars have sought to escape confessionalism, to recognize the radicals' diversity, to trace their medieval roots, to identify historical connections between various radical streams as well as between radical and mainline reformers, to explore second generation radicalism, and to develop an appropriate way to write social history for the radicals.¹⁴ With this revision has come criticisms of free church historiography: 1) the Anabaptist movement should not be restricted only to the "evangelical Anabaptists;" 2) the various radical groups were interconnected; 3) free church historians retrojected developments of 1527 or even of the 1530s to periods as early as 1523; 4) the idealization of "evangelical Anabaptism" has led to normative theology and has blunted historical inquiry; 5) the marginalization of social-revolutionary Anabaptists has worked unfairly to stigmatize the authorities' responses.¹⁵ George H. Williams' primary source anthology, *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (1957) and his panoramic *The Radical Reformation* (1962) constituted large first steps toward ending the idealization of the Anabaptists and toward integrating Anabaptist studies with

¹³ Stayer, 137-138; Deppermann, 2-3.

¹⁴ Stayer, 135-136; Goertz, 15.

¹⁵ Deppermann, 4-5.

other areas of Reformation research.¹⁶ Since then alternative hypotheses have emerged regarding the radicals' roots, origins and commonality.

Concerning roots, against the "Bender school's" assertion that the Anabaptists arose purely out of the Zurich reform, many scholars have posited medieval mystical and ascetic roots for the Anabaptists, spiritualists and other radicals.¹⁷

As for origins, the debate over whether the Anabaptists were born in Zurich around Zwingli or among the Saxon radicals that confronted Luther, for the most part assumed a single rather than a plural origin for Anabaptism. In agreement with Sebastian Franck in 1536, recent studies have noted at least six major Anabaptist groupings and have posited three points of origin for Anabaptist movements:

¹⁶ *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writings*, Williams, G. H. and A. M. Mergal, eds. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957); Williams, *Radical Reformation*; Stayer, 135, 138.

¹⁷ For example, H. J. Hillerbrand, "Anabaptism and the Reformation: Another Look," *CH* 29 (1960), 404-424; S. Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent: Religious Ideology and Social Protest in the Sixteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1973); K. R. Davis, *Anabaptism and Asceticism* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1974); K. R. Davis, "Vision and Revision in Anabaptist Historiography: Perceptual Tensions in a Broadening Synthesis or Alien Idealization?" *MQR* 53 (1979), 200-208; W. O. Packull, *Mysticism and the Early South German-Austrian Anabaptist Movement 1525-1531* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1977); A. Friesen, "Thomas Müntzer and the Anabaptists," *JMSt* 4 (1986), 143-61; Hans-Jürgen Goertz, "Thomas Müntzer: Revolutionary between the Middle Ages and Modernity," *MQR* 64 (1990), 23-31; K. Deppermann, W. O. Packull and J. M. Stayer, "From Monogenesis to Polygenesis. The Historical Discussion of Anabaptist Origins," *MQR* 49 (1975), 103-111; Deppermann, *Hoffman*, 6-8.

Switzerland (1525), South Germany (1526) and the Netherlands (1530).¹⁸

Regarding Switzerland and the Swiss Brethren, scholars such as Robert Walton and James Stayer have argued that the tension between Zwingli and the radicals was not originally a question of obedience to the Word of God *versus* cooperation with the city council.¹⁹ Rather, it was over the freedom of congregations to choose their own pastor, abolish clerical abuses, eliminate images, institute the evangelical Lord's Supper, and especially reallocate the tithe to meet their own needs. Some of these aims, especially those to bring agriculture, the minister and the judge under community rule, coincided with Peasants' War aims. Anabaptism, then, was grounded in anti-clericalism, and joined the peasants' movement in an assault on the authorities' long established grip on benefices and tithes. Its early goal was not to establish a separatist, pacifist church but rather, with the magistrates' support, to establish "autonomous churches of the community." The concept of a separated, suffering and pure church developed in Zurich

¹⁸ Groupings include the Swiss Brethren, adherents of Hans Hut, Central German Anabaptists, the Hutterians in Moravia, the Marpeck circle and the Melchiorite tradition. The Central Germans, Hutterians and Marpeck circle appear as "mutations" from Hut's movement. Deppermann, Packull and Stayer, "Polygenesis," 83-86; 110-111; Packull, *Mysticism*, 127.

¹⁹ R. Walton, "Was There a Turning Point of the Zwinglian Reformation?" *MQR* 42 (1968), 45-56.

only after this "community Anabaptism" failed, and in the countryside after the defeat of the peasants.²⁰

In early South German Anabaptism, the pivotal figures are Hans Hut and Hans Denck. Scholars such as Werner Packull have have argued that after the Peasants' War, Müntzer's influence on Hut was not replaced by a chiliastic pacifism but continued. Also, the major source of his Anabaptism was not Zwingli or Luther as with the Swiss Brethren, but the "late medieval German mystical-spiritual and apocalyptical tradition" transmitted chiefly by Müntzer. Thus Hut's Anabaptism was unique.²¹ Denck too is seen to have connections to Müntzer and Hut, but his many differences from Müntzer and Hut suggest a common tradition of late medieval mysticism rather than direct influence.²² With this hypothesis, the Hutterites and the Marpeck circle may be seen as "mutations" of Hut-Denck Anabaptism rather than the fruit of Swiss Brethren proselytization. The Hutterites, disappointed with the failure of Hut's chiliasm, with influence from Swiss Brethren refugees, reorganized into a disciplined, nonresistant "sectarian communitarianism." The Marpeck circle, uneasy with the Hutterites' rigid sepa-

²⁰ Stayer, "Polygenesis," 93-99; Deppermann, 5-6.

²¹ Stayer, "Polygenesis," 100-105; Packull, *Mysticism*; S. Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent*, 98-115.

²² Stayer, "Polygenesis," 105-110; Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent*, 116-136; Packull, *Mysticism*, 35-61, 176-180.

ratism, developed into a more socially involved and theologically nuanced group.²³

As for Anabaptism in the Netherlands, scholars agree that it was brought from Strasbourg by Melchior Hoffman, and there it won unprecedented popular support.²⁴ Gary K. Waite has shown that this Anabaptism and earlier non-Anabaptist (Sacramentarian) popular reform, found in the same centers and pursuing the same radical or iconoclastic lines, were closely tied. The Anabaptists steered these impulses "in a more radical direction."²⁵ The common "ideological thread" between the two streams was anticlericalism.²⁶ A "socioeconomic crisis in the 1520s and 1530s which [severely] affected Dutch artisans" accelerated this radicalization process. These burdened artisans "formed the bulk of Anabaptist membership," and in part their embrace of apocalyptic and other Anabaptism was an effort to cope.²⁷ Hoffman's apocalypticism drew Anabaptism into its most

²³ Stayer, "Polygenesis," 110-111; Packull, *Mysticism*, 127, 151-154, 182-184.

²⁴ Stayer, "Polygenesis," 111-112.

²⁵ In this regard Amsterdam was paradigmatic for numerous other centers which followed a similar pattern. G. K. Waite, *David Joris and Dutch Anabaptism, 1524-1543* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), 28; G. K. Waite, "The Anabaptist Movement in Amsterdam and the Netherlands, 1531-1535. An Initial Investigation into its Genesis and Social Dynamics," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18 (1987), 249.

²⁶ Waite, *Joris*, 32.

²⁷ Waite, "Anabaptist Movement," 249.

serious crisis, Münster, 1534-35. Although Menno Simons and his followers repudiated Münster's violent apocalypticism, continuity exists between the Melchiorites and Menno's followers. The latter adopted Hoffman's Christology, congregational polity and view of governmental authority, and these distinguished them from the similarly sectarian Swiss Brethren and Hutterians.²⁸

The polygenetic origins and pluriform nature of Anabaptism have driven scholars into a new search for its unity. Bernard Lohse, finding no positive unity, settles for a negative commonality, that of "societal misfits." What the many diverse radicals had in common was that they could not fit into the societal and value structures of the closely-knit sixteenth century. Only later, through the efforts of leaders such as Menno Simons, did a certain uniformity result.²⁹ H.-J. Goertz finds the Anabaptists' commonality in anticlericalism.³⁰ H. J. Hillerbrand counters that despite criticisms of the church, the tone of most early writings was positive. The Anabaptism of 1524-25 finds its beginning and unity in "the 'crisis' of 1523-24," as the

²⁸ Stayer, "Polygenesis," 111-112.

²⁹ B. Lohse, "Die Stellung der 'Schwärmer' und Täufer in der Reformationsgeschichte." *ARG* 60 (1969), 18-19, 25-26; A. Friesen, "Social Revolution or Religious Reform?" *Umstrittenes Täufertum: 1525-1975. Neue Forschungen*, H.-J. Goertz, ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 235-236.

³⁰ H.-J. Goertz, *Die Täufer. Geschichte und Deutung* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1980), 40-48.

slow pace and partial nature of the reform spawned in some a need to "complete" the reform. Thus all radicals in some way saw themselves as bringing the reform of Luther and Zwingli to completion. Throughout, "the common denominator" and "ordering principle" was the Word of God.³¹ Abraham Friesen suggests that the radicals' pluriform shape is their response to the disparity between the ideal and the real in the *corpus christianum*. Unhappy with the medieval separation of "spiritual" monasteries from sinful society, and with Luther's internalization of the disparity in his two kingdoms doctrine, the radicals hoped to resolve the tension. While Müntzer sought to establish God's rule through armed revolt, the Swiss Brethren left Zwingli's model of the tares with the wheat in favor of a pure church, and Menno Simons moved from the violence of Münster toward a consistent pacifism.³²

For all the difficulties of identifying the essence of the Reformation's radicals, there is general agreement that the sixteenth century did see a collection of movements that displayed both Protestant and Catholic characteristics in different configurations. Negatively, most frequently there appears anger against social, economic and religious abuses, or anticlericalism, particularly among commoners, but by

³¹ Hillerbrand, "Radicalism," 31-32, 36.

³² A. Friesen, "The Radical Reformation Revisited," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 2 (1984), 125-134, 138-152, 156, 169-171.

1525 responses to this discontent varied widely. Positively, the "Word of God" served as a rallying point for all radicals, but again differences quickly emerged over how it was understood and used. Before 1526 and even through their first decade, diversity was perhaps their main characteristic. While revolutionary, Anabaptist, spiritualist and unitarian trends could be seen, their directions crystallized only after initial years of flux. A growing uniformity toward sectarianism as seen in the Anabaptists of Switzerland, Southwest Germany, Moravia and the Netherlands developed especially after Münster in 1534.³³

On church-state relations, James Stayer, among others, challenges the denial of the free church historians and even of C.-P. Clasen, of any significant involvement of Anabaptists in the Peasants' War. Recent studies have drawn numerous direct and indirect connections between Anabaptists and the Peasants' War.³⁴ Stayer also challenges the view that the Anabaptists after 1525 agreed on the use of force and the acceptance of public office. Hubmaier's *Realpolitik*, he argues, resembled Zwingli's. Denck and Marpeck

³³ Coggins, 201-202.

³⁴ J. M. Stayer, "Anabaptists and Future Anabaptists in the Peasants' War," *MQR* 62 (1988), 99, 132. For a list of Anabaptists so involved, see J. M. Stayer, *The German Peasant's War and Anabaptist Community of Goods* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1991), 165-167. Cf. C.-P. Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History 1525-1618* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972), 21, 152-157, 458-459.

in South Germany and Hoffman and Menno in the Netherlands permitted acceptance of public office while rejecting force in an "apolitical" way. Hut in South Germany and the Münsterites hoped to establish God's rule by force. After the Peasants' War, angry ex-Müntzerites in Central Germany practiced banditry, as also did the Batenburgers after the fall of Münster. Only Grebel, Sattler and the Hutterites renounced both the use of force and public office.³⁵ Movement toward a unified Anabaptist teaching on the sword came with time as Hubmaier's *Realpolitik*, Hut's chiliasm and Denck's irenic apoliticism all failed, and as in the Netherlands Menno's followers gradually adopted Swiss Brethren traditions. This enabled the separatistic nonresistance of the Swiss Brethren and the Hutterites to take hold.³⁶ These conclusions of polygenesis and multiform ideologies among the radicals are assumed in this study.

In Reformation studies the vocabulary used to designate our protagonists has come under considerable debate in recent years.³⁷ In this study "radicals," "dissidents" and

³⁵ J. M. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword*, 2nd ed. (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1976); J. M. Stayer, "Anabaptists and the Sword," *MQR* 44 (1970), 371-375; Depermann, 9-10.

³⁶ Stayer, "Anabaptists and the Sword," 374-75.

³⁷ See for example, R. H. Bainton, "The Left Wing of the Reformation." *Journal of Religion*, 21 (1941), 124-34; Williams, *Radical Reformation*; H. J. Hillerbrand, "The Origin of Sixteenth Century Anabaptism: Another Look." *ARG* 53 (1962), 152-80; B. Lohse, "Die Stellung," 5-26; Depermann, Packull and Stayer, "Polygenesis," 100-105; J. M. Stayer, "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom and Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend." *MQR* 53 (1979), 211-218;

"nonconformists" will be used broadly and interchangeably to designate those dissenting from the official reform.³⁸

"Anabaptists," "sectarians," "spiritualists" and "apocalypticists" refer more narrowly to specific kinds of non-conformity. "Anabaptists," of whom there were several kinds, refers to all those for whom rebaptism or believer's baptism was central. "Sectarians" includes all those, mostly Anabaptists, who held a separatistic view of the church. "Spiritualists" refers to those for whom the Spirit was more important than dogma or the written Word. Some were Anabaptists and some were not. "Apocalypticists" includes all who expected an imminent cosmic cataclysm. Some were Anabaptists, others were spiritualists, and many were both. Other terms such as "anti-trinitarians" or "Swiss Brethren," we hope, will become clear in the story.

For the most part accounts of Strasbourg's religious radicals have focused largely on theological and/or political factors.³⁹ This study seeks to be a social history.

Stayer, "The Anabaptists," 138; Goertz, "Introduction," 12-20; Coggins, "Definition of Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism," 189-190; Hillerbrand, "Radicalism," 25-41.

³⁸ If the words must be nuanced, "radical" might connote a willingness to use drastic means to attain a goal. "Dissident" might imply someone who complains about the *status quo* without necessarily specifying a better alternative. "Nonconformist" might suggest a continuous alternative lifestyle.

³⁹ The treatments by Deppermann and Boyd include thorough social analysis.

The ultimate aim of the social historian is to write a total history, including not only political, economic, cultural and intellectual aspects of society, but also all segments of that society -- the young and the old, the poor and the rich, the illiterate and the learned, women and men, commoners and aristocrats, subjects and rulers, and losers and winners. As a relatively young discipline, social history's ultimate goal remains far out of reach. Histories of the rich, the learned, men, aristocrats, rulers and winners having been written, in the shorter term it is the stories of the poor, the unlearned, women, commoners, subjects and losers that beg to be told. Social historians may tackle this mandate either by writing a total history of a small community within a brief time period, or to write a broader history which accents normally overlooked aspects of society.⁴⁰ This study falls into the latter category. It

⁴⁰ For a survey of the field, see T. A. Brady, Jr., "Social History," *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*, Ozment, Steven, ed. (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1982), 161-181. Some pioneering works serve as outstanding models. For example, on the domestic life of a heretical medieval sect, see E. LeRoy-Ladurie, *Montaillue* (George Brazillier, 1978). On popular religion in medieval Europe, 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 religion and superstition among English commoners, see K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1971). On religious radicals in seventeenth century England, see C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London: Viking Press, 1972). On the thoughts of an illiterate Italian miller, see C. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). On the social outcasts in Paris, see B. Geremek, *The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris* (Cambridge: University Press, 1987). On

seeks to be a history of Strasbourg's religiously marginalized, the majority of whom were unlearned commoners. It aims to accent their place in society, the nature of their life, and the relation between their religious radicalism and their social location. It may be that since Strasbourg's religious radicals were largely lower class people, if they at all resembled their non-radical neighbors, a glimpse into their lives also offers a window into Strasbourg's popular culture.

The major obstacle to this kind of history, of course, is the dearth of sources, for generally it is society's literate groups that have left written materials for historians to peruse. Commoners were often too tired after a day's labor to write their memoirs, too insignificant for their contributions to be preserved for posterity, and most of all, too uneducated to write materials for historians to read. The challenge of the social historian is both to find the needle of commoner's writings in the historical

women, the poor and religious nonconformity in France, see N. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975). On artisanal movement toward evangelicalism in France, see H. Heller, *The Conquest of Poverty* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986). On methods of sixteenth-century religious propaganda for the illiterate, see R. W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Little Folk* (Cambridge: University Press, 1981). On cities and the Reformation, see B. Moeller, *Imperial Cities and the Reformation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972). On Strasbourg's sixteenth-century ruling classes, see T. A. Brady, Jr., *Ruling Class, Regime and Reformation at Strasbourg, 1520-1555* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978).

haystack, and to access the thoughts, words and works of a people who for the most part did not write.

In sixteenth-century Europe over 90% of the population was illiterate, and among the religious radicals who by 1530 had lost most of their intellectual leaders, the proportion was even higher. In addition, artisans literate in the vernacular had closer ties "to the oral world of the lower classes" than to the world of scholars literate in Latin. Often it was these artisans who led the Reformation's radical movements. Even in sophisticated cities such as Strasbourg, "the oral/vernacular medium...was the primary means of mass communication." Thus one task of the social historian is "to recreate a world organized around vernacular orality" rather than "silent literacy."⁴¹

Sources which provide entry into the sixteenth-century oral world include "sermons, ballads, songs, proverbs, sayings,...reported conversations," letters, hymns and especially for the Anabaptists, court records. In this regard the Strasbourg *Täuferakten* are particularly rich.⁴² Once the lacunae regarding histories of commoners become filled, social historians may complement these findings with more traditional histories in their quest for a total history.

⁴¹ C. A. Snyder, "Orality, Literacy, and the Study of Anabaptism," *MQR* 65 (1991), 372, 378-380, 384, 391.

⁴² Snyder, 386, 387; Scribner, *Simple Folk*, 7.

The context for this study is Strasbourg's sixteenth century evangelical reform.⁴³ The story of the reform's radicals is one of a rise to 1533, a severe fall in 1533-35, and a partial recovery and continuation for decades thereafter. Although the story spans the years from 1524 to 1569, the main focus is on the radicals between 1535 and 1550 (chapters four through nine). Chapter one offers a context, and chapters two and three survey the radicals up to 1535. Forays into the 1560s in chapters five, eight and nine appear because often the stories in the sources do not end conveniently at 1550. Although Abraham Hulshof has already disproved earlier assumptions that the radicals virtually died out after the death of Hoffman in 1543, *TAE III* and *IV* and archival materials after 1552 make clear that to 1570 and beyond, in the city and in the country, they

⁴³ For accounts of the reform, see T. W. Röhrich, *Geschichte der Reformation im Elsass und besonders in Strassburg*, 3 vols. (Strassburg: Friederich Carl Heitz, 1830-32); *Mitteilungen aus der Geschichte der Evangelischen Kirche des Elsasses*, 3 vols. (Strassburg: Treutell und Würtz, 1855); A. Baum, *Magistrat und Reformation bis 1529* (Strassburg: J. H. Ed. Heitz, 1887); Adam, *Evangelische Kirchengeschichte*; M. U. Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); W. S. Stafford, *Domesticating the Clergy: The Inception of the Reformation in Strasbourg 1522-1524*, (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976); Brady, *Ruling Class*; M. Lienhard, "La Réforme à Strasbourg," *Histoire de Strasbourg des origines à nos jours*, Vol. II, G. Livet et F. Rapp, eds. (Strasbourg: Edition des dernières nouvelles de Strasbourg, 1981), 367-540; M. Lienhard and J. Willer, *Strassburg und die Reformation. Die Hohe Zeit der Freien Reichstadt* (Kehl: Merstadt Verlag, 1981); L. J. Abray, *The People's Reformation: Magistrates, Clergy, and Commons in Strasbourg, 1500-1598* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985).

continued their dissidence, often quietly, sometimes with surprising aggression, and always with diversity. In this regard the impact of Clement Ziegler, the Peasants' War gardener-preacher, appears greater than most histories of Strasbourg's radicals have recognized.

In connection with Strasbourg's first synod and the Münster revolution, the years 1533-35, when the radicals fell from their zenith to their nadir, represent a watershed. Especially for the Anabaptists, the changes were enormous: from numerous to few, from fairly visible to clandestine, from concentrated to dispersed, from largely urban to rural, and from all social strata to mostly lower artisans. And yet, despite the changes considerable ideological continuity was maintained. Mavericks appeared here and there, but on the whole the same religious orientations that emerged in 1526 after the Peasants' War -- sectarianism, spiritualism and apocalypticism -- continued for the next forty years and beyond.

These religious streams had roots in Strasbourg, but they also reflected the presence of foreign traditions which both mingled and continued separately. While Anabaptist traditions from Switzerland, South Germany and the Netherlands pursued their separate courses in sectarian, spiritualist and apocalyptic streams, they also related to each other. In this mingling they found a commonality which enabled them to begin working toward a pan-European Anabaptist unity in the 1550s.

As the sectarian, spiritualist and apocalyptic radical streams flowed somewhat independently through the century, the approach in this study has been to trace the development of each of these streams. The apocalyptic stream, dominated by Melchiorites, can be traced relatively easily because Strasbourg's apocalypticists were carefully identified by the authorities. Similarly, the spiritualist stream, mainly Schwenckfeldians and other intellectuals, is easily traced because of their low numbers and high visibility. Broader and more difficult to trace is the sectarian stream. Scattered across the countryside, the sectarians appear as a number of ill-defined clandestine groups of whom the most prominent is the Swiss Brethren. These are all treated within a single stream.

Regarding periodization, in general we have sought to end the story of each radical stream at appropriate milestones such as the death of major figures, the end of an era, or the last appearance of extant evidence. But these end points vary with each stream. The spiritualist stream ends conveniently in 1561-62 with the deaths of Schwenckfeld, the Scher sisters and Katherine Zell. The apocalyptic stream ends in 1568 with the last available evidence of the Steinbachians who appeared on the scene just before Hoffman died. Here, as much as possible, the stories of Melchiorites and other apocalypticists who were active during Hoffman's years are recounted to the end of their lifetime rather than artificially cut off.

For several reasons the account of the sectarian stream ends at 1550. In terms of external developments, 1550 presents a suitable end point because it marks the end Strasbourg's reformation era. In 1547 Strasbourg and the German Protestant states lost the Smalkald War. Matthew Zell died and the Augsburg Interim was imposed in 1548, and Bucer went into exile the following year. Hedio, the last of the original reformers, died in 1552, and Jakob Sturm, Strasbourg's greatest statesman, died in 1553. Internally, the story ends at 1550 simply because the sources are too rich; an entire chapter could be devoted to the sectarians of 1557 alone! Apart from a few glimpses from Johann Adam, Abraham Hulshof, John Oyer, and Jean Rott and Marc Lienhard,⁴⁴ the story of Strasbourg's sectarians in the second half of the sixteenth century still remains to be told. For the village of Wangen, however, an exception has been made. In 1567-69, after a twenty-two year silence, the sources reveal a village virtually swarming with religious dissidents.

The sources shed light on the limits of the Strasbourg reform's tolerance. On the whole these limits are shown to be strict for the ideologically motivated clergy, more flexible for the more pragmatic magistrates, and even more

⁴⁴ J. Rott and M. Lienhard, "La communauté des 'frères suisses' de Strasbourg de 1557 à 1660," *Saisons d'Alsace*, No. 76, *Les Anabaptiste Mennonites d'Alsace. Destin d'une minorité.* (Strasbourg: Librairie Istra, 1981); J. S. Oyer, "The Strasbourg Conferences of the Anabaptists, 1554-1607," *MQR* 58 (1984), 218-219; Hulshof, 218-232.

tolerant for the commoners who were their neighbors. Light is also shed on how the radicals survived in the face of adversity. Four main ways emerge: by making valuable contributions to the city, by keeping a low profile, by playing the Strasbourg authorities off against rival authorities, and by creating an internal sense of community and solidarity. Finally, the sources reveal a multitude of motivations for religious dissent. Through the Peasants' War, the over-riding reason is anger over social and economic oppression. After the war, as radicalism pursues new directions, reasons for dissent become more complex, as theological, philosophical, personal and practical reasons intertwine.

For Reformation radicalism, Strasbourg is significant because it served as a center where nonconformist communities were strengthened and nonconformist ideas were enriched, and from where these ideas radiated across Europe and through the centuries. As for the radicals, while their contributions to the city's social, economic, political, scientific and technological life were limited to a few outstanding individuals, their religious and ethical significance is substantial. As the absence of religious tolerance was the complaint all Strasbourg's radicals' held in common, so also is the development of religious tolerance perhaps their greatest legacy.

Chapter 1

STRASBOURG AND THE EVANGELICAL REFORM

I. Strasbourg on the Eve of the Reformation

A. Economic, Social and Political Context

On the eve of the Reformation Strasbourg was a thriving city of about 20,000.¹ At the junction of the Rhine and Ill Rivers, and at the intersection of north-south and east-west trade routes, it was an important agricultural and commercial center. Exports of wine and grain were supplemented by the manufacture of articles such as textiles, and by newer industries such as mining and printing.²

¹ S. F. Nelson and Jean Rott, "Strasbourg: The Anabaptist City in the Sixteenth Century." *MQR* 58 (1984), 230; Chrisman, *Strasbourg*, 3, 5-6; F. L. Ford, *Strasbourg in Transition, 1648-1789* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958) suggests 30,000, but P. Benedict, "French Cities from the Sixteenth Century to the Revolution: An Overview," *Cities and Social Change in Early Modern France*, P. Benedict, ed. (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 24, places the figure at 22,000 in 1550.

² Chrisman, 3-5, 11; Brady, *Ruling Class*, 97-101, 113; Nelson and Rott, 230; S. Boyd, "Anabaptism and Social Radicalism in Strasbourg, 1528-1532: Pilgram Marpeck on Christian Social Responsibility." *MQR* 63 (1989), 67; Ford, 23-24.

As elsewhere, Strasbourg's economy fluctuated between 1480 and 1520, largely according to agricultural production, and social stability or unrest had much to do with economic conditions. Low yields and high prices from 1508 and 1523³ were exacerbated by long-standing social antagonisms due to usury and direct appropriation imposed on artisans and peasants by the lay aristocracy and the clergy. Popular resentment against these sometimes found expression in uprisings such as the *Bundschuh* in 1517 when 100 villages around Strasbourg revolted and the Peasants' War in 1525.⁴ Despite these fluctuations, Strasbourg's economy remained relatively stable at least until the expansion of the mid-sixteenth century Atlantic coast trade.⁵

With few exceptions the heart of Strasbourg's economic, political and military organization was the guild, of which there were twenty, ordered in an official hierarchy. Miriam Chrisman presents the roster lists of Strasbourg's guilds as follows:

	1444	1507	1537	1545
1. Zum Encker/Shippers	262	83	112	126
2. Zum Spiegel/Merchants	265	129	226	235
3. Zur Blume/Butchers	152	116	130	152
4. Zum Freiburg/Innkeepers	118	58	89	101
5. Tucher/Clothmakers	264	141	210	259
6. Zur Luzern/Millers	122	140	110	138
7. Zur Möhrin/Tradesmen	165	70	368	587

³ Chrisman, 11-12.

⁴ Brady, 202-203; Chrisman, 11-12.

⁵ Chrisman, 13; Ford, 24; Brady, 97.

8. Zur Steltz/Goldsmiths	142	126	136	241
9. Brotbecker/Bakers	160	214	108	102
10. Kürschner/Furriers	93	70	80	80
11. Küfer/Coopers	223	163	103	161
12. Gerber/Tanners	77	68	67	73
13. Weinsticher/Winetasters	128	75	160	190
14. Schneider/Tailors	293	235	173	280
15. Schmiede/Smiths	163	226	146	209
16. Schuhmacher/Shoemakers	222	120	87	107
17. Fischer/Fishermen	234	110	201	226
18. Zimmerleute/Carpenters	200	120	213	273
19. Gartner/Gardeners	690	?	714	803
20. Maurer/Masons	114	100	265	248 ⁶

Although wealthy merchants existed in all guilds, a rough distinction was made between the wealthier merchant guilds (numbers 1-8) and the artisan guilds (9-20). Largely self-regulating in the High Middle Ages, during the fifteenth century the city became increasingly involved in guild affairs, regulating monopolies, fixing prices and exercising quality control.⁷ As the guilds became more institutionalized, they also became less democratic, with masters wield-

⁶ The English names and figures are from Chrisman, 24, 307-308. The German names are from Brady, 175-176, cf. 112-122. On guilds the most thorough work is Friedrich Carl Heinz, *Das Zunftwesen in Strassburg* (Strasbourg, 1856). See also J. Rott, "Artisanat et mouvements sociaux à Strasbourg autour de 1525," *Artisans et ouvriers d'Alsace* (Strasbourg: Librairie Istra, 1965), 158; P. Dollinger, "Les corporations dans les villes alsaciennes," *Corporations et Artisans d'Alsace du Moyen Age à la Révolution* (Strasbourg: Paul-Albert Klein Publicité, 1973), 9-15; J.-P. Kintz, "Métiers, fonctions et emplois à Strasbourg vers 1600," *Revue d'Alsace* 106 (1980), 37-50; Ford, 10-11, 24.

⁷ Chrisman, 8, 11-13; Rott, 139.

ing more power at the expense of artisans and journeymen who became permanently subordinate.⁸

Guild members, adult males numbering about one fifth of the city's inhabitants, were citizens. All wishing to become citizens had to join a guild. Citizenship, acquired by birth, through marriage or through purchase, was renewed every January on *Schwörtag* when citizens swore loyalty to the city and promised to fulfill military and guard duties.⁹

In terms of social relations, Strasbourg's authorities visualized six main social categories: 1) "subordinate female workers" such as maids, 2) "subordinate male workers" such as day laborers, 3) common artisans and low civil servants, 4a) guild officers and lower intellectuals such as teachers and notaries, 4b) middle rank civil servants, lawyers and *Gymnasium* teachers, 5a) large merchants and scholars just below the doctorate, 5b) higher civic officials, academic doctors and families whose ancestors had been magistrates, 6) and current magistrates and nobles.¹⁰ Although wealth is difficult to measure, someone worth 100 *florins* (or *gulden*) probably lived modestly, a respected

⁸ Chrisman, 6-11; Brady, 93-97; 121-123, 162, 195, 291-292; Rhiman A. Rotz, "'Social Struggles' or the Price of Power? German Urban Uprisings in the Late Middle Ages," ARG 76 (1985), 64-95.

⁹ Ford, 10-11, 24; Krahn, "Analysis," 57.

¹⁰ Drawn from Strasbourg's Police Ordinance of 1628. Ford, 15-17.

master artisan could be worth 500 *florins*, and a lesser merchant could be worth several thousand.¹¹

Strasbourg's steady traffic of "traders, pilgrims, students, tourists and mercenary troops"¹² made it relatively easy for religious dissidents to slip into the city unnoticed. As an imperial free city¹³, Strasbourg had the right to receive all who wished to enter (*freien Zug*). Poorer immigrants unable to afford full citizenship could, for a lesser fee, purchase a "mayoral citizenship" (*Schultheissenbürgerrecht*) with reduced rights from the city's "episcopal bailiff." Since they provided him with income, he often welcomed all, including religious dissidents, indiscriminately.¹⁴ Strasbourg citizens also had the right to live on and cultivate lands outside the city (*Ausbürger*) during specified seasons without paying rural taxes. At times this arrangement enabled religious non-conformists quietly to practice their faith under the city's protection but beyond its immediate supervision. Conflicts

¹¹ Brady, 118.

¹² Ford, 17-18.

¹³ Since 1205. Chrisman, 16; Nelson and Rott, 230.

¹⁴ *TAE III*, 11-12; Nelson and Rott, 230; Ford, 17; J. S. Oyer, Rev. of *TAE III* and *TAE IV*, *MQR* 67 (1992), 102-103.

arose when they overstayed their welcome in the country.¹⁵

In the late fifteenth century inter-related wealthy merchants amalgamated in "family societies" for large scale investment and trade.¹⁶ These, together with wealthy guild masters, constituted Strasbourg's "guild aristocracy" who, together with the non-guild nobility (*Constoffler* or patricians), formed Strasbourg's ruling class. Although the former had different historical origins from the latter, by 1500 their political influence was indistinguishable.¹⁷

In 1482 Strasbourg enshrined a constitution born out of 220 years of changes, struggles and fluctuating relations between the city, the bishop, the Holy Roman Empire, the *Constoffler* and the guildsmen.¹⁸ This became the constitution operative in the sixteenth century. At the head, four *Stettmeister* of noble blood served as mayor for a two year

¹⁵ Almost all the cases concerning the village of Börsch in *TAE III* and *IV* deal with the issue of dissident citizens staying too long in Börsch without submitting to local authorities and paying local taxes. *TAE III* and *IV*, *passim*.

¹⁶ Chrisman, 10; Brady, 101-102; Ford, 24.

¹⁷ Brady, 93-123. The most thorough study of Strasbourg's ruling classes is Brady, 53-196. *Constoffler* was "the old and usual term for the portion of the aristocracy that did not belong to the guilds" (56). On the "patriciate," this study will follow Philippe Dollinger and Brady in defining them as "wealthy urban families who did not belong to the guilds, and who dominated the governments of their towns." Thus "*Constoffler*" and "patrician" may be used interchangeably (53). See also Krahn, 62-63; Ford, 17; Chrisman, 10, 21.

¹⁸ On these developments, see Chrisman, 16-25; Ford, 4, 10-16.

term on a rotating basis of three months each. Beside them stood the *Ammeister* who was elected by the guilds and presided over daily administration. The fact that *Ammeister* were usually reelected every six years resulted in the formation of a virtual oligarchy of six *Ammeister* who circulated the office between them. The Council of XIII, composed of nine guildsmen and four *Constoffler*, oversaw foreign affairs and defense while the Council of XV, with ten guildsmen and five *Constoffler*, dealt with internal affairs. The Council of XXI, with thirty two members, combined the XIII, the XV and four others from the *Rat*. This body filled the most important official posts and provided permanence amid the *Rat*'s annual elections in which half of its members changed each year. The *Rat* had thirty members, ten *Constoffler* and twenty guildsmen, one from each guild. Ultimate authority lay in the *Räte-und-XXI* -- the *Ammeister*, the XXI and the *Rat* together -- normally about fifty men, since some on the councils were also members of the *Rat*.¹⁹ Thus, for all Strasbourg's renown as a guild regime, it was an oligarchy drawn from the *Constoffler* and the guild aristocracy that

¹⁹ Ford, 10-13; Chrisman, 18-19, 22-25; Williams, 242-243. The full *Magistrat* or *Räte-und-XXI* was commonly referred to as simply the *Rat*. This study, following common usage, also will refer to the Strasbourg government in its normal proceedings as the *Rat*. *Magistrat* will be used when emphasizing the entirety of the governing body and when distinguishing the full body from the smaller elected *Rat*.

governed the city.²⁰ On very important questions the Rat consulted the 300 member *Schöffen* which featured fifteen representatives elected for life from each of the twenty guilds.²¹

Strasbourg's government worked most effectively in the decades immediately following the constitution's promulgation, and until its 1547 submission to the emperor in the Smalkald War, the city enjoyed a golden age in which political stability, power, prosperity and the Reformation came together.²² Thereafter government became more calcified as important posts were increasingly dominated by members of interrelated families, professional civil servants assumed more responsibility, and the *Schöffen* was frequently bypassed.²³

External affairs were dominated by dealings with France and especially the Holy Roman Empire. Regarding the latter,

²⁰ Chrisman, 14. Of 105 privy councillors (XVers and XIIIers) studied by Brady in *Ruling Class*, 42.9% were rentiers, living from interest, rents and dues. 35.2% were merchants and goldsmiths, and only 13.3% were artisans. 78.1%, then, of Strasbourg's privy councillors came from the rentier-mercantile elements (p. 51).

²¹ Ford, 10-11; Chrisman, 24-25; Krahn, 57.

²² Ford, 4, 13-15; Chrisman, 24; Krahn, 56-57.

²³ Brady, 255-258; Ford, 14-16. On social and political conditions after 1550, see Jean-Pierre Kintz, *La Société strasbourgeoise du milieu du XVIe siècle à la fin de la guerre de Trente Ans, 1560-1650: Essai d'histoire démographique, économique, et sociale* (Paris: Association des publications près les Universités de Strasbourg, 1984); Paul Greissler, *La Classe Politique Dirigeante à Strasbourg* (Strasbourg: Le Quai Editions, 1987.)

favorable relations which included "judicial and minting privileges" in exchange for military supplies turned sour after 1520 when the city embraced the Reformation.²⁴ Strasbourg's foreign policy became one of protecting its religious, political and economic independence while maintaining peace with the emperor. To this end the city cultivated military alliances with other Protestant cities, and submitted to the emperor when militarily necessary, as in the Smalkald War.²⁵

B. Religious and Intellectual Conditions

From the twelfth century on, the Strasbourg diocese was organized around the Cathedral and eight churches: St. Thomas, St. Stephen, St. Aurelia, St. Martin, St. Andrew, St. Nicholas, Old St. Peter and Young St. Peter.²⁶ Clashes between the clergy and the city's lay rulers harked back at least to 1262 when the *Constoffler*, aided by the emperor, ended the bishop's political authority in the city. Although administrative offices remained in Strasbourg, the

²⁴ Ford, 7; cf. H. Baron, "Religion and Politics in the German Imperial Cities during the Reformation." *English Historical Review*, 52 (1937), 405-427.

²⁵ Brady, 106, 236, 239-241; Ford, 7; R. Reuss, *Histoire de Strasbourg depuis ses origines jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1922), 157-164.

²⁶ On the geography, history and organization of Strasbourg's urban and rural territories, see G. Wunder, *Das Strassburger Gebiet* (Berlin: Duncker and Humbolt, 1965), and *Das Strassburger Landgebiet* (Berlin: Duncker and Humbolt, 1967); "Strasbourg," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 13, 1967 ed.

bishop moved to Saverne where he resided until 1681.²⁷

Around 1500 the dominant tensions between the *Rat* and the clergy were fear of the church's economic reconquest of the city and long-standing clerical immunities. By enabling ecclesiastical persons to escape both taxation and regulation by the city, and by hindering the *Rat* from governing even the laity, clerical immunities spawned and focused anticlerical sentiments.²⁸

At the same time Strasbourg had a tradition of religious tolerance, creative thought and spiritualism dating back to thinkers such as Meister Eckhart and John Tauler during the Late Middle Ages. By the late fifteenth century Strasbourg's printers willingly published unconventional materials. A number of humanists and reformers such as the great preacher Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg (1445-1510), in calling for the reform of social, economic and religious abuses, did much to prepare the way for the Reformation in Strasbourg.²⁹

In 1520, with a cathedral, "four collegiate churches, nine parish churches, nineteen religious houses and nearly

²⁷ Chrisman, 16; Stafford, 108.

²⁸ Stafford, 108-111; Reuss, 120.

²⁹ Others were the historian Jakob Wimpfeling, the satirist Sebastian Brant, Hieronymus Gebwiler and the Franciscan moralist and satirist Thomas Murner. Ford, 4-5; Chrisman, 46, 68-78; Abray, *People's Reformation*, 25. On Geiler, see D. C. Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 9-17.

two hundred chapels," great religious processions and active lay confraternities, the Strasbourg church appeared to be flourishing.³⁰ At the same time, however, vocations for religious orders and donations to them were plummeting. Commoners often lived in misery while the upper clergy enjoyed wealth and blocked the bishop's attempts to discipline them. To rectify these ills, while some brought in Geiler von Kaysersberg to upgrade religious teaching, others took to violent action in peasant revolts.³¹

L. J. Abray has noted that for the three main issues of orthodox belief, Christian discipline and clergy-laity relations, proposed solutions came from three main directions: conservative reformers, humanists and the evangelical movement. Conservative reform solutions called for greater discipline from both clergy and laity, even while defending clerical privileges. These were met with little appreciation by the laity. Humanist reform proposals hoped that by returning to the simple gospel through the spread of the Scriptures and education of the laity, people would live rightly. Since Strasbourg's humanists, on the whole, resembled the conservative reformers more than Erasmus, humanism became effective only after 1520 with the evangelical movement.

³⁰ Abray, 21-23.

³¹ Brady, 202-203; Abray, 24-25.

The successful evangelical perspective on reform appeared around 1520. While fear of violence silenced conservatives, former Erasmians such as Jacob Sturm, Wolfgang Capito, Martin Bucer and Caspar Hedio stepped in to lead the new movement. Evangelical reform proposals, taken directly to commoners rather than only to the social elite, argued that the church's doctrines and practices were obstacles to salvation and Christian living. This message was welcomed as a promise of freedom from the burdens of the old religious system,³² and as the promise of a new, more just society based on the Word of God.³³

II. Strasbourg Turns Protestant, 1518-1529

A. Early Input: Pamphlet, Preachers and New Leaders

The first hints of the Protestant Reformation in Strasbourg were probably literary. By 1520 twenty-eight of Luther's works had been reprinted, and from then on his translation of the New Testament sold well. Sporadic reactions against indulgences in 1518-20 prepared the ground for the evangelical movement and set precedents for popular

³² Brady, 28-32; see also S. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975).

³³ See P. Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

pressure on the Rat for change.³⁴ As elsewhere, the evangelical movement's earliest protagonists were clergymen, usually influenced by humanism: Nicolas Gerbel, the Cathedral Chapter's lawyer, Peter Philip Meiger (Rumpsberger), an assistant at Old St. Peter, the Augustinian monk Wolfgang Schultheiss,³⁵ and Tylman von Lyn, lector in the Carmelite Monastery.

Although Tylman's evangelical teaching managed to attract the Rat's attention,³⁶ it was Matthew Zell (1477-1548) with his sermons in the cathedral who dominated Strasbourg's evangelical movement, and it was his listeners, commoners and *Ratsherren*, who established the reform in the city. Whereas Geiler urged "the moral renewal of a basically unchanged medieval church," Zell, a reader of Luther since 1518, argued that the church's very institutions, including its wealth and clerical immunities, needed transformation.³⁷ By 1522, with huge crowds and clerics on his side, the bishop was unable to obtain his dismissal.³⁸

³⁴ H. Eells, *Martin Bucer* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), 21; Krahn, 86-87; Rott, Jean, "La Déroulement de la Réforme à Strasbourg," *Investigationes Historicae. Eglises et Société au XVIIe Siècle*, Vol. 1 (Strasbourg: Librairie Oberlin, 1986), 373.

³⁵ Schultheiss would later become a dissenter within the evangelical church.

³⁶ Lienhard, 368; Stafford, 142.

³⁷ Stafford, 7, 9, 142-145.

³⁸ Rott, 373; Abrey, 32-33; Boyd, "Social Radicalism," 59-60.

Of course the Catholic hierarchy, social elites, and moralists such as the Fransiscan satirist Thomas Murner resisted these challenges, arguing that the evangelical movement would overthrow not only the church but the entire social order.³⁹ When Conrad Treger, the provincial of the Augustinians, accused the reformers of the "Bohemian and Hussite heresy" in September 1524, 400 citizens carried him out of his monastery and before the Rat.⁴⁰ His departure five weeks later marked the end of overt opposition to the reform.⁴¹

1523 saw the arrival of new leaders: Wolfgang Capito, Martin Bucer and Caspar Hedio, all Rhineland Erasmians of artisan stock, who with Zell would lead the reform for the next generation.⁴² Capito (1478-1541), a doctor in medicine, law and theology, came to Strasbourg in March 1523 as provost of St. Thomas, but by July declared for the reform, purchased citizenship and swore the oath. The next year he moved to Young St. Peter as pastor.⁴³ Bucer (1491-1551), impressed by Luther's disputations in 1518, left monastic life, married and came to Strasbourg for protection in May

³⁹ Abray, 25, 35; Lienhard, 388; Rott, 374.

⁴⁰ Lienhard, 388; Stafford, *Domesticating*, 177-179; Boyd, 60.

⁴¹ Rott, 374.

⁴² Abray, 31; Chrisman, 83.

⁴³ Boyd, 60; Williams, 244; Chrisman, 88-90.

1523. Within months his *Das Ym Selbs, Summary seiner Predig* and the *Verantwortung* appeared outlining his reforming agenda. As pastor in St. Aurelia and then in St. Thomas, he emerged as Strasbourg's leading reformer.⁴⁴ The historian Hedio (1494-1552), Capito's protégé, arrived in October 1523 and accepted a position as cathedral preacher when the post became vacant.⁴⁵

B. Institutional Reforms: the Rat, the Clergy, Welfare and Education

From the beginning the Rat tried to maintain a prudent policy of continuity which would appease all parties -- the reform-minded populace, the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the emperor -- and keep the public peace. For example, while evangelical literature was allowed to be printed despite its ban at the Diet of Worms, the radical lay preacher Karsthans was expelled. While the Rat moved swiftly to reduce clerical privileges by pressuring clergy to purchase citizenship, it protected the evangelical clergy on condition that they preach the Word of God and avoid inflammatory statements.⁴⁶ To gain control of the momentum for change and to retain social stability, the Rat made concessions to commoners at

⁴⁴ Williams, 244; Mitchell, "Martin Bucer," 1-8; Stafford, "Anticlericalisme", 69; Chrisman, 83-85; Eells, 1-32; Boyd, 60-61.

⁴⁵ Chrisman, 92-93.

⁴⁶ Lienhard, 376-377; Rott, 374; Krahn, 85-87; 93-97.

the expense of the religious and lay aristocracy, decreeing, for example, that debtors could redeem all perpetual dues at fixed rates.⁴⁷ Split over the reform in 1523, the regime tilted toward reform after the Rat elections of January 1524, although on grounds more pragmatic than theological.⁴⁸

The reform, culminating the Rat's long struggle for control over ecclesiastical institutions, redefined the city's relations with the Catholic church. Through a series of steps, by January 1525 clergy who wished to remain in the city were obliged to become citizens, join guilds and fulfill obligations like the laity.⁴⁹ Marriage of the clergy was another change. Bucer, a former priest, arrived married, and between October 1523 and August 1524 seven clergy spoke their vows.⁵⁰ Changes in liturgy saw the mass and baptism in German and the eucharist in both kinds by February 1524. Other reforms included a simplified eucharist, more preaching from Scripture, the end of fast

⁴⁷ Brady, 205-206.

⁴⁸ Brady, 205; Krahn, 110.

⁴⁹ Stafford, 120-121, 133-138; Rott, 374-375; Lienhard, 380-381, 389; Brady, 203.

⁵⁰ Anton Firn, Matthew Zell, Lukas Hackfurt, Wolfgang Schultheiss, Symphorian Altbieser, Caspar Hedio and Wolfgang Capito. Stafford, 151-153; 164-165; Eells, 30-31; Krahn, 99, 108; Rott, 374; Chrisman, 138; Brady, 231-232.

days, most holidays, processions and war masses, and the removal of images.⁵¹

If the reforming clergy took initiative in 1523, in 1524 parishioners pressed demands of their own, including the right to choose their pastors. First, St. Aurelia's parishioners, mostly gardeners, refused tithe payments to their lord, the St. Thomas Chapter, and then, despite the Rat's reluctance, called Bucer to be their pastor.⁵² In Young St. Peter the parishioners chose Capito as pastor and threatened to kill the St. Thomas canons who resisted the move.⁵³ Other parishes met with less resistance, and by August 1524, with the *Schöffen's* support, the *Rat* assumed responsibility for pastoral placements in all city parishes.⁵⁴ Image removal and other violence against church properties by gardeners and other radicals was, however, not tolerated.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Williams, 243; Lienhard, 383.

⁵² Boyd, 60; Mitchell, 5-6; Eells, 31-32; Lienhard, 383; Krahn, 108-109, 113.

⁵³ Krahn, 114-116.

⁵⁴ With the Reform the number of Strasbourg parishes dropped from nine to seven. Williams, 243; Mitchell, 6; Lienhard, 383; Krahn, 120.

⁵⁵ H.-W. Müsing, "Karlstadt und die Entstehung der Strassburger Täufergemeinde," *The Origins and Characteristics of Anabaptism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhof, 1977), 169-195; R. Peter, "Le Maraîcher Clément Ziegler, l'homme et son oeuvre", *RHPR* (1954), 267; Rott, 374-375; Chrisman, 144; Krahn, 316-317.

Regular clergy were affected by the Reform as much as secular clergy. Inventory of monastic properties began in the spring of 1524, and conflicts between monks and citizens were placed under civil jurisdiction. Encouraged by the reformers and the Rat, most of the religious left their cloisters in 1523-25, and all but four of the religious houses were dissolved.⁵⁶

The four chapters, Old St. Peter, Young St. Peter, St. Thomas and the Cathedral Chapter, incorporated most of the parishes, represented considerable ecclesiastical power, and counted among their canons many of Strasbourg's most influential citizens. Negotiations to end the Rat's long conflict with the canons of the three secondary chapters were interrupted by a riot in connection with Capito's coming as pastor which caused most of the Young St. Peter and St. Thomas canons to flee the city. Finally in 1529, under Rat control, the canons regained administration of their properties but had to accept the redemption of perpetual incomes and Rat control of the pastors.⁵⁷

The chapters also found themselves embroiled in a long struggle over the mass. Shortly after Easter 1525, at the height of the Peasants' War, the *Magistrat* abolished all masses except those in the four chapter churches. From then

⁵⁶ Lienhard, 382-383, 389, Chrisman, 140-141. Convents that remained assumed a clandestine existence.

⁵⁷ Lienhard, 389; Rott, 374-375; Chrisman, 142; Krahn, 114-116.

on the reformers, the guilds and citizen committees campaigned to remove also the others. Against them, but less united, stood the bishop, magistrates and aristocrats, the emperor and the pope. The Rat, sensitive to its relationship to external powers and hoping to avoid the clashes seen in other cities, moved cautiously, abandoning its neutralism only when certain of majority citizen support, and when opportunities to compromise ran out.⁵⁸ By late 1528, having exhausted compromise proposals, convinced that the emperor would not come to an agreement, and anxious that further delay would goad citizens toward violence, the Rat referred the question to the *Schöffen* who in February 1529 voted decisively to abolish the mass. Strasbourg was officially Protestant.⁵⁹

Long under pressure even from clerics to organize the city's haphazard alms systems, and already involved in welfare administration, the Rat forbade convents to receive alms in 1521 and took control of poor relief in November 1522. By August 1523 an ordinance delineated how alms were to be administered, with funds coming from donations and the dissolving cloisters. Lukas Hackfurt (1483-1554), a former

⁵⁸ Krahn, 300-332; Rott, 375.

⁵⁹ The vote was 184 for immediate abolition, 89 for postponement, and 1 against abolition. Even now, though, only the St. Thomas chapter embraced the reform. The other chapters eventually agreed to relinquish authority to appoint pastors in return for the freedom to celebrate the mass in three Cathedral churches. Krahn, 324-328, 332; Adam, 149; Rott, 375.

priest at the cathedral, principal of a Latin school and early advocate of reform, was appointed director. He would later involve himself with religious radicals.⁶⁰

Education, meanwhile, had begun in 1522 with two private Latin Schools led by Hackfurt, the botanist, physician and scholar Otto Brunfels, Johann Schwebel and the humanist Johann Sapidus. All would later find themselves on the radical fringe of the reform, advocating greater religious tolerance. By 1523 Zell, Capito and Bucer were providing religious adult education in the churches.⁶¹ In 1526 all schools were placed under a single school board called the *Scholarchen* which by 1529 offered comprehensive adult education and by 1531 elementary schools in each parish.⁶²

C. External Affairs

In terms of greater Protestantism, since the 1521 Edict of Worms (banning Luther's teachings), a number of imperial free cities had declared for the Reformation. Emperor Charles V's wars with France rendered him unable to resolve the religious question, and gave the evangelical cities time to define their positions and establish alliances. The 1524

⁶⁰ Chrisman, 141, 275-280; Lienhard, 379-380; Boyd, 68-69. The most thorough study of Strasbourg's welfare system is that of Otto Winckelmann, *Das Fürsorgewesen der Stadt Strassbourg vor und nach der Reformation bis zum Ausgang der sechzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. in one, (Leipzig: Vermittungsverlag von M. Heinsius Nachfolger, 1922).

⁶¹ Chrisman, 81-82, 260-261.

⁶² Chrisman, 264-268; Rott, 375.

Diet of Nuremburg, declaring the Edict of Worms impossible to enforce, called the cities to observe it "as much as possible."⁶³ The subsequent formation of the Regensburg League by Catholic princes to enforce the edict drove the evangelical cities to move toward doctrinal agreement and political solidarity, even while professing obeissance to the emperor. At the 1526 Diet of Speyer the evangelical cities reaffirmed the Diet of Nuremburg and agreed that each city behave regarding religion as it deemed justifiable before God and the emperor. While their intent may have been "to preserve the *status quo*" until an ecumenical council should resolve the question, the evangelical cities seized on this to legitimize their reform. When the emperor, even while seeking Protestant support against the Turks, resolved in 1529 at the Diet of Speyer to enforce the Edict of Worms, the "protesting" cities were driven toward an alliance which in 1531 became the Smalkald League.⁶⁴

III. Conclusion

Dissatisfaction with the spiritual and economic conditions in the church and society produced the call for reform. The church hierarchy's inability to redress complaints left the initiative with humanists turned evangeli-

⁶³ L. W. Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation 1517-1559* (N. Y.: Harper and Row, 1985), 109-111; Lienhard, 384.

⁶⁴ Spitz, 110-111, 114-117; Lienhard, 384-385; Williams, 237-238.

cal preachers and the masses. Fed by preaching and Lutheran writings which Strasbourg's printers reprinted in great numbers,⁶⁵ the thrust for change among commoners, reformers and magistrates gathered momentum until not even the church hierarchy, the lay aristocracy and the imperial court together could stop it.

The reform involved an interplay between four forces: 1) the preachers who initiated the reform, 2) the masses who first responded to the preachers and then took initiative on their own, 3) the *Magistrat* which moved cautiously from ambivalence to open support, and 4) defenders of the *status quo*, whether church officials, the imperial court, magistrates or commoners.⁶⁶ It was the mass of the population, both artisans and wealthier citizens, who carried the weight of the movement. The preachers served mostly to galvanize or moderate their ardor. The *Magistrat*, long a defender of the old order, proceeded with innovations step by step. As guarantor of justice it encouraged the reform of religion. As defender of public order and the city's ruling class, it discouraged the reform of society and restrained radical innovators.⁶⁷ By allowing public opinion

⁶⁵ Rott, 371.

⁶⁶ Rott, 373.

⁶⁷ Rott, 372; Brady, 199-235.

and historical forces time to develop before major decisions were made, it minimized social upheaval.⁶⁸

Religion in Strasbourg was transformed: the mass was replaced by the Lord's Supper in two kinds, sacraments considered unbiblical were abolished, the liturgy was simplified, worship took place in the vernacular, and images were removed. The clergy virtually disappeared as a separate class: priests married and pastors were named by the parishioners and the *Magistrat*. Ecclesiastical goods were reallocated to support churches, pastors, schools and public assistance. Religious education and moral discipline received new emphasis.⁶⁹

The medieval church lost its institutional autonomy. 1) Benefices were no longer passed on by or to the clergy; 2) perpetual rents owed by tenants were to be redeemed, thus making the tenants proprietors; 3) ecclesiastical properties were inventoried and administered by the *Rat*; 4) these properties and tithes were reallocated for needs defined by the *Rat*, the reformers or the community; 5) ordinary titleholders could no longer be nominated for prebends; 6) parishes and the *Rat* assumed the right to call their pastors; 7) clerical immunities were eliminated; and 8) most monasteries were dissolved.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Krahn, 330-332.

⁶⁹ Rott, 371.

⁷⁰ Rott, 372.

New alternatives included 1) the reorganization of public assistance; 2) Rat-appointed *Klosterherren* for ecclesiastical establishments; 3) the opening of primary and secondary schools; 4) Rat-appointed pastors with effective charge of their parishes; 5) the allocation of St. Thomas Chapter prebends to secondary and higher level educators;⁷¹ and 6) the city's appropriation of the right to nominate persons to certain prebends, to assure proper worship and instruction, and to groom students for eventual civil service. To propagate and justify these changes, Strasbourg's reformers produced much theological writing. Initially their theology stressed openness over dogma⁷² but with the establishment of the reform after 1525, came an increased dogmatism and intolerance of differences. This surfaced as early as 1526 in debates with nonconformists such Hans Denck.

That the Strasbourg reform took root relatively peacefully and found itself mostly restricted to the religious arena, is due in large part to the Rat's caution and pragmatism, and to the concessions made by the ruling class to the commoners.⁷³ But for some the changes came too slowly

⁷¹ The Schwenckfeldian Latin teacher, Peter (Novesianus) Schaf, and the spiritualist philosophy teacher Julius Velsius were two nonconformists who held such prebends in the 1540s.

⁷² Rott, 371-373.

⁷³ Brady, 215-235.

and the concessions were too limited. Those who began to press for faster reform, deeper personal involvement in religious affairs, and/or greater social and economic restructuring have become known as Strasbourg's religious radicals.

Chapter 2

STRASBOURG'S RADICALS TO THE ABOLITION OF THE MASS, 1522-29

The thesis of this chapter is, first, that with the assistance of external stimuli, Strasbourg's religious radicals were born in 1524-25 among local commoners pushing for a faster and more thoroughgoing evangelical reform. Secondly, the Peasants' War having destroyed visions of a restructured society, those who did not conform by 1526 sublimated their vision in three alternative directions: sectarianism, spiritualism and apocalypticism. To some degree all three orientations represent a continuation of the commoners' vision of reform of 1525. Thirdly, the social composition of Strasbourg's radicals underwent major changes during the 1520s, mainly because of refugees fleeing religious persecution and famine. Initially indigenous, by 1526 there was an approximate balance of locals and foreigners, and by 1528 they were overwhelmingly foreign. In terms of social location, the original commoners were by late 1526 balanced by clerics and intellectuals who provided early leadership. But their departure and a flood of refugees resulted in the radicals by 1529 becoming almost entirely composed of artisans and those of lower class.

I. Theories on Radical Origins in Strasbourg

Theories of origin for Strasbourg's radicals tend to parallel theories of origin for radical Protestantism as a whole.¹ T. W. Röhrich suggests that Strasbourg's Anabaptists had their roots in the medieval movements known as "Gottesfreunde" and "Winkler."² While a long tradition of spiritualism and religious tolerance did flourish in Strasbourg, and while a number of radicals had spiritualist and ascetic orientations, the documentary evidence for a direct connection to medieval sects is slight. In addition, many radicals held to doctrines not observed by Strasbourg's medieval sects, such as believers' baptism and oath refusal.³

Camill Gerbert and Hastings Eells, in line with traditional Protestant thinking, find the roots of Strasbourg Anabaptism in the religious enthusiasm and economic rebellion which surfaced most clearly in the Peasant's War and

¹ Before G. H. Williams' *The Radical Reformation* (1962), focus tended to center on the Anabaptists to the exclusion of non-Anabaptist radicals. For a historiographical study of Strasbourg's Anabaptists, see Krahn, "Analysis," 129-143.

² Röhrich, "Strassbürgischen Wiedertäufer," 3, cited by Krahn, 126. For a broader presentation of this perspective, see Davis, *Anabaptism and Asceticism*.

³ *TAE I*, xii-xiii; Krahn, 129-130.

Münster.⁴ For Abraham Hulshof and after him Robert Kreider, Strasbourg Anabaptism was born out of the Zurich Anabaptists who fled from Switzerland and South Germany to Strasbourg. The opposition they encountered from Strasbourg's reformers was due to the influence of Zwingli and his colleagues.⁵

Recent scholars have focused more broadly on both Anabaptist and non-Anabaptist radicals. While M. U. Chrisman finds the origin of Strasbourg's radicalism in the "spontaneous preaching" of the gardener-preacher Clement Ziegler,⁶ G. H. Williams locates its beginning in the 1522 appearance of the lay preacher Karsthans.⁷ By pointing to Karsthans and Ziegler, Williams and Chrisman acknowledge the importance of socio-economic as well as religious issues in the origins of Strasbourg radicalism.⁸

While Karsthans and Ziegler may represent radical beginnings, neither was an Anabaptist. It may therefore be argued that Strasbourg Anabaptism had a later origin. H. G. Krahn posits a dual external origin: Wittenberg via Karlstadt and Zurich via Hubmaier. That it could take root in Strasbourg, however, was due to the fact that the ground

⁴ Gerbert, *Sectenbewegung*, 1-8; Eells, *Bucer*, 55-56; Krahn, 126-127.

⁵ Hulshof, *Geschiedenis*, 7-8; Kreider, "Anabaptists," 99; Krahn, 126-128.

⁶ Chrisman, 181.

⁷ Williams, 245.

⁸ Krahn, 127-128.

had long been prepared by the same forces that paved the way for the Reformation.⁹ Manfred Krebs and Jean Rott note that Bucer, Capito and several Anabaptists traced the origin of Strasbourg's Anabaptism to deficiencies in the evangelical Church.¹⁰

The most recent studies by H.-W. Müsing, Marc Lienhard and Stephen Boyd point to what may be an emerging consensus on radical origins in Strasbourg. They agree that religious radicalism was born locally out of discontent with the slow pace of reform, and then grew in response to both local and external stimuli.¹¹ On Anabaptism more narrowly, Müsing has given the question thorough attention. He sees the Anabaptist community emerging out of local radicals who were encouraged by Karlstadt to refuse infant baptism and to develop a group consciousness. The addition of Swiss Anabaptist refugees within a year gave this fledgling group, formed in 1525, substance and leadership.¹² To this may be added the search for an alternative community among Peasants' War radicals disappointed in the loss of their

⁹ Krahn, 141-144. Capito and Bucer offered a similar analysis.

¹⁰ *TAE I*, No. 67, pp. 62-27; No. 168, pp. 197-199; No. 182, pp. 235-237; Krahn, 129-130.

¹¹ Müsing, 169-191; M. Lienhard, "Les Autorités Civiles et les Anabaptistes: Attitudes du Magistrat de Strasbourg," *The Origins and Characteristics of Anabaptism* (The Hague: Martinus Hijhoff, 1977), 196-215; Boyd, "Social Radicalism," 58-76.

¹² Müsing, 169-191.

"new society," or disillusioned with violence as a means to achieve godly ideals.

II. The Strasbourg Radicals to the End of the Peasants' War

A. Radicalism prior to the Peasants' War

1. Urban Radicalism before the Arrival of Karlstadt

Although Strasbourg's evangelical movement at the end of 1523 was still a single movement, for some the pace of change was too slow, and from 1524 onward a more radical dissent movement emerged. Issues of difference -- image removal, tithe refusal, the social outworking of the Bible, the relationship to authorities¹³ and people of weak faith, -- may be summed up in two major concerns: the redress of socio-economic injustices and deeper personal involvement in religious affairs. The latter featured various emphases: 1) a spiritual eucharist, 2) the right to interpret and proclaim the Word of God, 3) a congregation's right to call its pastor, and 4) believers' baptism. These emphases were harbingers of a coming estrangement of the radicals from the reformers.¹⁴

One of the earliest exponents of radical action was Hans Maurer, or Karsthans, the radical lay preacher who was expelled in the summer of 1522 for lambasting the sacra-

¹³ Müsing, 170-174.

¹⁴ Boyd, 61; Stafford, 222, 225.

ments, the papacy, the church and the Rat, and for extolling *Bundschuh* ideals.¹⁵ Baptism first appears as an issue in January 1523 when Zell was accused of not baptizing children.¹⁶

Calls for more sweeping reform came mostly from society's lower levels. Prominent among them were the gardeners whose guild, with over 600 members, also included shepherds, wagoners and farm day laborers, and was the largest, "most proletarian" and most radical of the city's guilds.¹⁷ With only four members "on the Councils of XIII and XXI," and none on the Council of XV, the gardeners were politically marginalized.¹⁸ In contrast to the reformers, they called for social as well as religious reform, and

¹⁵ On Karsthans, see *TAE I*, No. 1, pp. 1-2, n. 3,; Stafford, 143-144; Williams, 244-245, 248; Krahn, 93; H. J. Cohn, "Anticlericalism in the German Peasants' War," *Past and Present* 83 (1979), 11; S. Hoyer, "Lay Preaching and Radicalism in the Early Reformation." *Radical Tendencies in the Reformation: Divergent Perspectives*. H. J. Hillerbrand, ed. Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1988, 91.; R. W. Scribner, *The German Reformation* (Atlantic Highlands, N. J.: Humanities Press, 1986), 19. As early as October 1521 the humanist and future dissident Johann Sapidus was in correspondence with the future Anabaptist Balthazar Hubmaier. *TAE I*, No. 27, Beilage, p. 40.

¹⁶ Zell answered that he delegated these matters to his assistant. *TAE IV*, No. 2a, p. 381.

¹⁷ Boyd, 67. Peter, 259; Williams, 245; Chrisman, 303-306, 308.

¹⁸ Boyd, 67; Brady, 113-114, 173-179, 181.

their denunciation of tithes, rents and usury sometimes found violent expression.¹⁹

In 1523 the gardeners of St. Aurelia refused to pay tithes and rents to their lords.²⁰ In the spring of 1524 a crowd of gardeners threatened those convents they considered most corrupt.²¹ In August the gardeners of Young St. Peter set out to clear their church of images. Unrest climaxed in September 1524 when a crowd of 400, mostly gardeners, dragged the Augustinian Konrad Treger before the Rat for his anti-reform pamphlets, and smashed statues en route.²² Among the rioters were found one or more future Anabaptists, including the tailor Jörg Ziegler or Hans Adam.²³ An invasion of the Carthusian monastery of St. Arbogast by 200 commoners a few days later²⁴ was followed by a gardeners' attack on the city treasury.²⁵ In response the Rat offered the gardeners a tax reduction, agreed with them to use the

¹⁹ Boyd, 67; Müsing, 175-176.

²⁰ Peter, 270; Brady, 204; Chrisman, 147.

²¹ Chrisman, 141-142.

²² Peter, 267; Müsing, 174-175.

²³ "*Der Schneider in der Steinstrass.*" Both men were tailors on Steinstrasse near Young St. Peter. Jörg Ziegler was the brother of the gardener-preacher Clement Ziegler. *TAE I*, Nos. 46, 63, 67; *TAE IV*, Nos. 1770, 1772. Hans Adam from nearby Mundolsheim had troubled priests and had preached Luther's ideas. *TAE I*, No. 148, p. 180, n. 1.

²⁴ Chrisman, 141-142; Müsing, "Karlstadt," 174-175; Peter, 267.

²⁵ Brady, 204; Chrisman, 146-147.

tithe to remunerate the reformers, and hired mercenaries to safeguard the city.²⁶

2. Karlstadt and Anabaptist Origins

In this volatile situation Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1477-1541) made an enormous impact during a four day visit in October 1524.²⁷ His positions in support of the laity and lower classes were well-known: iconoclasm, a spiritualistic interpretation of the sacraments, antipedobaptism and full reform in obedience to the Word without waiting for the authorities' approval or for those of weak faith.²⁸ Besides sharpening issues regarding the eucharist, baptism, the province of civil power and the gospel's social dimensions, he uncovered differing viewpoints among Strasbourg's evangelicals and strengthened radical currents. In this he influenced both commoners and prominent citizens, and prepared the soil for Anabaptism in Strasbourg.²⁹

²⁶Peter, 270-271; Chrisman, 146; Müsing, 187-188; Brady, 204.

²⁷ He was probably *en route* to Zurich where he had been invited by the Zurich radicals. Müsing, in "Karlstadt," 169-195, has given the question of Karlstadt's stay in Strasbourg thorough attention, and we follow him here.

²⁸ Müsing, "Karlstadt," 176-177.

²⁹ H.-W. Müsing, "The Anabaptist Movement in Strasbourg from Early 1526 to July 1527," *MQR* 51 (1977) 91; Boyd, 62.

Among the influential Strasbourgeois influenced by Karlstadt was the humanist, botanist, physician and teacher Otto Brunfels (1488-1534). Converted to the Reformation by 1519, in 1524 he opened a Latin school and soon hired a future Anabaptist, Johann Schwebel, to assist him.³⁰ Brunfels' early tracts accented the gospel's social implications. He urged obedience and tithe payment to secular authorities but denied it to religious authorities. Anticipating the "Twelve Articles," he argued that feudal dues should not be paid unless to help replace secular taxes, to support evangelical preachers and to assist the poor.³¹ Some of his views such as a spiritualist interpretation of the sacraments, belief in visions, "the priesthood of all believers" and a small number of elect were characteristic of Karlstadt, spiritualists and the later Anabaptists. He remained in Strasbourg until the Synod of

³⁰ TAE I, No. 18, p. 24, n. 1; Adam, 93; Williams, 199, 247; Chrisman, 81-82, 265-266; S. Weigelt, *Otto Brunfels. Seiner Wirksamkeit in der frühburgerlichen Revolution unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Flugschrift "vom Pfaffenzehnten"* (Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz, Akademischer Verlag, 1986), 25; M. Lienhard, "Prier au XVIIe siècle regards sur le biblisch Bettbüchlin du Strasbourgeois Othon Brunfels," *RHPR* 66 (1986), 44; M. Lienhard, "Les Epicureans," *Croyants et Sceptiques au XVIIe siècle* (Strasbourg: Librairie Istra, 1981), 21.

³¹ "Von dem Evangelischen Anstoss" (1523), "De ratione decimarum" (1523), "Von dem Pfaffenzehnten CXLII Schlussreden" (1524), and "Almanach ewig wehrend" (1526). TAE I, No. 18, p. 24, n. 1; H. J. Cohn "Anticlericalism in the German Peasants' War," *Past and Present* 83 (1979), 8, 22; Williams, 199, 247.

1533, when, unable to accept the constraint of conscience, he moved to Bern.³²

Capito and Bucer, preoccupied with the conflict with the Catholic church, were unprepared for the radical current within their reform. Theologically uncertain and desiring unity with the larger evangelical movement, they pleaded for moderation, minimized eucharistic differences as "externals" and sought Zwingli's counsel.³³ The Rat, anxious to maintain order, allowed images to be removed from the cathedral and St. Aurelia, ordered the preachers to avoid controversy in their sermons, confiscated Karlstadt's eucharistic writings and censored publications. To little avail: in November 1524 St. Aurelia's gardeners demolished their church's crucifix and tomb, and those in Young St. Peter stripped the altars. On December 26 images were removed and hosts desecrated in other churches. In February 1525 gardeners and barrelmakers in the Krutenau district smashed the main altar of St. Stephen's.³⁴ By this time Capito and Bucer, persuaded that Karlstadt had brought unrest and confusion, declared that reform should be orderly, with consideration for the weak and in conjunction with the authorities. On baptism they remained flexible: infant baptism is good, but

³² TAE I, No. 18, p. 24, n. 1; Williams, 199; Lienhard, "Les Epicureans," 21.

³³ TAE I, Nos. 10, 11, 13, 15; Müsing, "Karlstadt," 177-179, 181-184.

³⁴ Müsing, "Karlstadt," 180. Peter, 267.

as an external, its delay should not be ground for a rift in the church.³⁵ For the first time baptism was a live issue; some in Strasbourg, mostly "gullible commoners" were refusing infant baptism.³⁶

Bucer's mention of "Karlstadt and his crowd" is the first concrete evidence of a "Karlstadt group" within Strasbourg's evangelical movement.³⁷ By February 1525 some of his followers were criticizing the reformers, withholding tithes, refusing infant baptism and keeping the whole law including the Sabbath.³⁸ It may have been Balthazar Hubmaier, however, who gave the Karlstadt group a permanent identity. While he may briefly have appeared in person, with his *Von dem christlichen Tauff der Gläubigen* (1525) he turned Karlstadt's criticisms into an affirmation of believers' baptism and early church practices including the community of goods.³⁹ By August 1525, according to a report

³⁵ TAE I, No. 21, p. 25; For Bucer's *Grund unnd Ursach*, see TAE I, No. 22, pp. 25-29; Müsing, "Karlstadt," 184-186.

³⁶ TAE I, No. 21, p. 25; Müsing, "Karlstadt," 184-185; Deppermann, *Hoffman*, 178.

³⁷ Müsing, "Karlstadt," 185-186.

³⁸ TAE I, No. 27, p. 40; Müsing, "Karlstadt," 188-189.

³⁹ The question of Hubmaier's presence in Strasbourg is debated. Based on Daniel Specklin's *Les Collectanées* written between 1577 and 1589, it has traditionally been thought that he came in July 1525 to have his *Von dem christlichen Tauf der Gläubigen* printed, and while there rebaptized a small number of unidentified converts. Under his influence, then, the first Anabaptist congregation was organized. So TAE I, No. 35, pp. 46-47; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 93; Deppermann, 178-179; Chrisman, 183; Krahn, 186; Adam,

from Basel, an Anabaptist group existed in Strasbourg.⁴⁰

Anabaptist origins in Strasbourg, then, appear as follows: within the evangelical reform there developed by 1524 a movement carried mostly by society's lower levels who wished to accelerate the reform. Spurred by Karlstadt, key issues were images, the sacraments, biblical interpretation and the rights of the laity *vis-à-vis* the authorities. As the images controversy diminished, and as social restructuring was rejected after the Peasants' War, questions remaining were the eucharist, biblical interpretation and believers' baptism. By the summer of 1525 at the latest, a small number of artisan Strasbourgeois with roots in the Karlstadt circle and with guidance from Hubmaier's writings, formed an Anabaptist group. With the arrival of Swiss and South German Anabaptists in 1526, the group moved into the limelight and foreign radicals came to outnumber the locals. Thus, although Strasbourg's Anabaptism emerged from within the local evangelical movement, it was substantially founded and shaped by foreign persons and ideas.⁴¹

111. Against this Müsing, "Karlstadt," 189, 194, has argued that Hubmaier did not appear at all, and that his influence is entirely literary. For Müsing this adds to Karlstadt's greater relative influence in Strasbourg.

⁴⁰ Müsing, "Karlstadt," 194-195; Krahn, 189-190. In October Capito confirmed Hubmaier's influence. *TAE I*, No. 36, pp. 47-48; No. 43, p. 50; Adam, 111.

⁴¹ Müsing, "Karlstadt," 193-195.

B. Strasbourg and the Peasants' War

1. Effects of the Evangelical Movement in the Countryside

On the eve of the Peasants' War Strasbourg related to the surrounding countryside at several levels. Politically, Strasbourg had over the years accumulated a disparate rural territory which included localities dependent on the city's collegiates or patricians. Legally and economically, many Strasbourgeois and religious establishments were proprietors of lands, rents and tithes in the region. They also supplied the city's internal market and external trade with grain and wine. In terms of social relations, the Strasbourg populace included butchers, grain merchants, winetasters and gardeners in daily contact with the peasant world. Finally, with its cathedral, Strasbourg was the religious center to which villagers from all over Lower Alsace streamed at religious feasts.⁴²

Peasant ferment, growing during the previous half century and fueled in part by recurrent mediocre harvests and rising costs, led to a series of uprisings in Alsace⁴³

⁴² Jean Rott, "La Guerre des Paysans et la Ville de Strasbourg," *Investigationes Historicae. Eglises et Société au XVI siècle*, Vol. I (Strasbourg: Librairie Oberlin, 1986), 199.

⁴³ The most notable uprisings in Alsace occurred in 1493, 1502, 1511, 1514 and especially 1517 when Strasbourg was the focal point. Brady, 202; P. Dollinger, "Un aspect de la guerre des paysans en Alsace: l'organisation du soulèvement," *Paysans d'Alsace* (Strasbourg, 1959), 70; Peter, 272.

which climaxed with the Peasants' War of 1525. The infusion of Luther's ideas and the "Gospel," giving new vigor to the concepts of "ancient rights" and "divine right" extolled by the *Bundschuh*, fueled the agitation. From 1519 evangelical pamphlets from Strasbourg's presses spread throughout Alsace, and from 1521 villagers flocked to hear Matthew Zell preach. Noting that Strasbourg was actually suppressing the Catholic clergy and implementing evangelical tenets, and that Strasbourg's gardeners were obtaining their demands, peasants joined the evangelical movement with increasing enthusiasm.⁴⁴ At the same time Strasbourg artisans were criss-crossing Lower Alsace, railing against tyranny and announcing the onset of a new age.⁴⁵

Among Strasbourg's own possessions, once the mass was first said in German in Eckbolsheim, from May 1524 onward such demands and reforming measures multiplied. In neighboring seigneuries, where Strasbourg's position was more delicate, by late 1524 lay lords were complaining of unrest fomented by radical Strasbourgeois. Even in the vast holdings of the Strasbourg bishop, villagers risked imprisonment to seek the city's protection from the exactions of their lords.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Rott, 199.

⁴⁵ Dollinger, 70.

⁴⁶ Rott, 200.

Although the Rat agreed with other lords to hunt down peasant leaders and resist revolt, in its view the best solution was everywhere to institute true preaching of the Gospel; thereafter constituted powers should be obeyed. Even so, it could not always keep its citizens from joining peasant bands.⁴⁷

2. Clement Ziegler and the Peasants' War

Strasbourg's most visible early religious radical was the gardener-preacher Clement Ziegler from Strasbourg's Krutenau district.⁴⁸ Underestimated in studies of radical origins in Strasbourg, Ziegler was perhaps the most important shaper of Strasbourg's radical tradition in the sixteenth century. Besides helping to stir up peasants and Strasbourgeois towards revolt, his early preaching and writing raised three issues which came to divide the reform movement during the next decade: economics, the eucharist and baptism. These also issued in three approaches toward the problem of overly slow reform: social revolution as seen in the Peasants' War, spiritualism and Anabaptism.⁴⁹ Although a gardener, Ziegler was literate, at least in

⁴⁷ Rott, 200-201.

⁴⁸ *TAE I*, No. 6, p. 8, n. 1; Peter, 259, 275; Chrisman, 181; Stafford, 225.

⁴⁹ Unlike Anabaptism and spiritualism, his social revolutionary legacy was interrupted after the Peasants' War, but it reappeared in the 1540s in Martin Steinbach's *Lichtseher* movement. For Steinbach, see chapter 5 below.

German, and he knew the Bible well.⁵⁰ His early writings of 1524-25 exude the enthusiasm of a populist reformer. His later writings, esoteric manuscripts from 1532-52, reveal a mystic disappointed in his hopes for a new society.⁵¹

Somewhat like Thomas Müntzer and Hans Denck, Ziegler combined spiritualism, socialism and a kind of apocalyptic universalism.⁵² On obedience to the Word, images, baptism, the laity, identification with peasants, spiritualism, ethical emphasis and impatience at partial reform, Ziegler resembled Karlstadt.⁵³

In five pamphlets of 1524 and 1525 he explicated the Gospel, denounced sacramental practices, propounded christological analyses and made socio-economic declarations.⁵⁴ The Catholic clergy, the reformers, images, expen-

⁵⁰ Chrisman, 146; Mitchell, "Martin Bucer," 184. On the social implications of literacy in the vernacular as against literacy in Latin, see Snyder, "Orality," 379-381.

⁵¹ Peter, 263.

⁵² Peter, 261-263; Deppermann, 174-175.

⁵³ Müsing, "Karlstadt," 186-187; Peter, 265-266.

⁵⁴ 1) Von der vermehelung Marie vnd Josephs. 1524. On Mary's and Joseph's marriage, and Mary's perpetual virginity. 2) Ein kurtz Register vn ausszug der Bibel in welchem man findet was ab gotterey sey, vnd wo man yedes suchen sol. June, 1524. On idolatry. 3) Von der waren nyessung beyd leibs vnd bluts Christi. Summer, 1524. On eucharist and baptism. The best-known by Ziegler. 4) Ein fast schon büchlin in welche yederman findet ein hellen vnd claren verstandt von dem leib vnd blut Christi. 1524/1525. On the eucharist. The most important of Ziegler's works. 5) Ein fast schone vszlegug vnd betrachtung des Christenlichen gebetts, vff gesetzt vnd gelert von vnserem erloser Christo Jhesu Vatter vnser genant. Early 1525. On the Lord's Prayer. *TAF I*, Nos. 6, 7, 8, 24, 25; Peter, 255-257; Stafford, 225.

sive tapestries, the worship of saints and the sacraments all came under attack.⁵⁵ Although he did not recommend rebaptism, his declarations that faith precedes baptism and that infant baptism contravenes Scripture began the dissent over baptism which shook the Strasbourg Church from 1526 onward.⁵⁶ On the eucharist Ziegler argued that nothing more is needed than the Spirit and true faith.⁵⁷ Further, a new emphasis on Christ's celestial flesh rather than his eucharistic flesh would better serve mission to non-Christians.⁵⁸ In this "celestial flesh" christology, Ziegler anticipated the views of Melchior Hoffman, Menno Simons and Dutch Anabaptists.

It was on the economic implications of the gospel that Ziegler diverged from the reformers most sharply. Arguing that God's sovereignty eliminates human hierarchies, he demanded an end to exploitation, called for the reversal of economic institutions, and suggested that Christ would have

⁵⁵ Peter, 263, 266-267; Chrisman, 182; Williams, 246.

⁵⁶ In "Von der waren nyessung" (1524). *TAE I*, No. 8, pp. 11-17; Peter, 267-268; Williams, 246; Boyd, "Social Radicalism", 61-62; Mitchell, 184.

⁵⁷ "Ein fast schon büchlin," *TAE I*, No. 24, pp. 33-34; Boyd, "Social Radicalism", 61-62; Stafford, 226.

⁵⁸ "Ein kurtz Register," *TAE I*, No. 6, pp. 8-10; Von der vermehelung Marie vnd Josephs. *TAE I*, No. 7, p. 11; Williams, 245-246.

been a *Bundschuh*.⁵⁹ Thus, as preacher of the Gospel of freedom, equality and justice for the poor under God's rule, Ziegler moved out from Strasbourg into the countryside.⁶⁰

In Alsace the revolt broke out almost everywhere at once in early April, 1525. While insurgents commandeered recruits and provisions from villages, peasants from all parts joined bands (*Haufen*) who established headquarters in pillaged religious establishments. Clement Ziegler was in the band near Molsheim led by the Alsatian peasants' commander-in-chief, Erasmus Gerber.⁶¹ From February to April, to peasant crowds in various communities, he condemned economic exploitation and preached pacifism, the community of goods and Jesus' identification with the poor.⁶²

His seed needed little time to sprout. In March the inhabitants of Börsch, of whom several would later become Anabaptists, joined the farmers of the St. Leonard parish in a revolt against Strasbourg's Cathedral Chapter whose land they farmed.⁶³ In April listeners near Heiligenstein rioted

⁵⁹ *Uszlegung des Vater unser*, *TAE I*, No. 25, pp. 36-37; Stafford, 227-229; Williams, 247.

⁶⁰ Peter, 272; Dollinger, 75.

⁶¹ Dollinger, 71-72.

⁶² Williams, 247; Stafford, 225; Chrisman, 183.

⁶³ Peter, 272-273; Chrisman, 146; Jean Rott, "Guerre des paysans et anabaptisme: le cas de Boersch en Basse-Alsace," *Bibliotheca Dissidentium. Scripta et Studia*, No. 3 (Baden-Baden and Bouxwiller: Editions Valentin Koerner, 1987), 103-108.

after a sermon by Ziegler and an arrest of organizers.⁶⁴ From Maundy Thursday (April 13) on, nearly 3000 men camped together near Dorlisheim, and Ziegler was called in to explain the "Twelve Articles." On Easter Monday 2000 insurgents, including Strasbourg gardeners, ransacked the abbey of Altorf.⁶⁵ Despite the pleas of Strasbourg's magistrates and reformers, the revolt went on until May 20 when Duke Anthony of Lorraine's army, with a massacre of peasants at Saverne and Scherwiller, brought the Peasants' War in Alsace to an end.⁶⁶

Although Strasbourg's gardeners, butchers, tailors and others supported the peasant cause, within the city the revolt did not establish a foothold. Hostility did not end, in negotiating between the peasants bands and their lords, and in asking of all its subjects only that they renew their oath to the *Magistrat*, Strasbourg went to great lengths to restore peace.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *TAE I*, No. 32, p. 45; Peter, 273.

⁶⁵ *TAE I*, No. 33, pp. 45-46; Peter, 273; Dollinger, 70; Chrisman, 150.

⁶⁶ Dollinger, 74; Peter, 274; R. H. Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971), 63; Chrisman, 150-151.

⁶⁷ For examples of continued hostility, see Stafford, 223-224; Cohn, 28. Rott, "Guerre des Paysans," 201-203; Chrisman, 151-152. Despite Strasbourg's appeals for leniency, many lords, including King Ferdinand, were harsher. Dollinger, "Guerre," 70.

As for Ziegler, faced with an ultimatum from the Rat as well as the rejection of his peaceable ideals, with the sack of Altorf he left the peasant army, returned to Strasbourg,⁶⁸ and resigned himself to the *status quo*. Late in 1525 he purchased citizenship, returned to gardening with his wife Gertrude in the suburb of Ruprechtsau, and even collected tithes to support the evangelical clergy and the poor.⁶⁹ Some of his followers, he found, had left him for an Anabaptist congregation in Ruprechtsau. Although he had been the first Strasbourgeois to preach "believe first and then be baptized" (Mk. 16:16), he could not accept the Anabaptists' exclusivism, and so he never joined them.⁷⁰ Through the influence of Hans Denck, he found a new orientation in visionary spiritualism involving redemption through asceticism and universal salvation in the next world.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Peter, 273-274; Deppermann, 175; Stafford, 225; Williams, 247-248.

⁶⁹ TAE I, No. 40, pp. 49-50; Peter, 259, 275; Deppermann, 175; Chrisman, 184.

⁷⁰ TAE I, No. 346, p. 573; cf. No. 8, pp. 13-14; Deppermann, 177; Mitchell, 184; Boyd, "Social Radicalism," 61-62; Peter, 268; Chrisman, 182-184.

⁷¹ These views were expressed in five manuscripts which he dutifully submitted to the Rat: 1) Von der selickheit aller menschen selen (1532). On universal salvation. 2) Ein mercklichen verstant iber das geschriben biechlin von der selickheit aller menschen selen... (1532). On the salvation of all souls. 3) Von gesichden vnd erschinunge iber mich clementz ziegler. Eight visions between 1528 and 1533. 4) Dreim vnd gesicht. Fifteen visions between 1528 and 1551; a revised edition of "Von gesichden vnd erschinunge." Peter, 257-258, 275; Depperman, 175; Mitchell, 185.

For several years Ziegler acted almost as parish pastor in competition with the Rat-appointed pastor. With the latter's death in 1528, the parish requested Ziegler for their pastor, but the *Rat* instead sent a part-time vicar. Ziegler continued to provide pastoral care, particularly during an epidemic of 1528-29, but despite repeated endorsements by the parishioners, the *Rat* remained wary of him the rest of his life.⁷²

Ziegler's impact was greater than most histories of Strasbourg's radicals have recognized. While his preaching on economics roused crowds of commoners towards social revolution in the Peasants' War, his ideas on the eucharist and baptism prepared the ground for the spiritualist and Anabaptist communities which divided the reform during the next decade. While among his fellow gardeners he provided pastoral care and influence until his death in 1552, several of his ideas resurfaced in other contexts: his celestial flesh christology in Melchior Hoffman, Menno Simons and Dutch Anabaptists, and his social revolutionary legacy in Martin Steinbach's *Lichtseher* movement. Thus Clement Ziegler was Strasbourg's most important indigenous shaper of sixteenth-century religious radicalism.

⁷² Peter, 275; Mitchell, 185; Chrisman, 184.

3. Anabaptists and the Peasant's War: The Case of Börsch

The much sought for connection between Anabaptists and the Peasants' War appears to be verified in the Lower Alsatian town of Börsch.⁷³ Owned by Strasbourg's Cathedral Chapter, Börsch, with nearly 1000 inhabitants, was located in the area where the *Bundschuh* and the Peasants' War began in Alsace. Evangelical preaching was heard there at least since 1525.⁷⁴

As early as February 1525 residents of Börsch gathered to hear Ziegler preach⁷⁵ and in March they revolted against the Cathedral Chapter with the farmers of St. Leonard.⁷⁶ Their strongest expression of the Peasants' War was the April 17-18 pillage of the collegiate of St. Leonard.⁷⁷ The

⁷³ In this we follow Rott, "Boersch," 103-108. James Stayer in "Anabaptists and Future Anabaptists in the Peasants' War," *MQR* 42 (1988), 99-139, and "Reublin and Brötli," *Archiv Internationales d'histoire des idées* 87 (1977), 83-102, has argued this connection regarding Balthasar Hubmaier and Wilhelm Reublin among others. For a list of Anabaptists and future Anabaptists involved in the Peasants' War, see Stayer, *German Peasant's War*, 165-167. The Strasbourg notary, Fridolin Meyger, hoped at the beginning of the peasant uprising that usury incomes would finally be cleared from the countryside. *TAE I*, No. 172, p. 222.

⁷⁴ Rott, "Boersch," 103, 106.

⁷⁵ *TAE I*, No. 25, p. 38; No. 29, p. 43.

⁷⁶ Rott, "Boersch," 103-108.

⁷⁷ Situated just outside Börsch, the St. Leonard collegiate was also dependent on the Cathedral Chapter. Rott, "Boersch," 103-104, 106.

subsequent investigation revealed the names of forty-five active participants and three sympathizers, of whom the most prominent was the town's *Vogt*,⁷⁸ Diebolt Esslinger.

In later years Börsch was the home of at least twenty Anabaptists.⁷⁹ Two of these, Hans Müller and Diebolt Esslinger, appear also on the list of Peasants' War participants. The case of Hans Müller is complicated by the fact that in 1525 and again in 1545 at least three Börschers carry that name: "*Miller Hans Miller Lauwels sun*" (son of Nicholas Müller),⁸⁰ and two with the family name of Esslingers: "*Miller Hans der obermiller*" (head miller), and "*Miller Hans (der jung) der metziger*" (the butcher). The Hans Müller who pillaged St. Leonard appears as a winetaster in 1528. In 1536 there appears a Hans Müller who purchased Strasbourg citizenship between 1530 and 1533 and attended Anabaptist assemblies in 1533. In 1537 he was reported as the Anabaptists' leader, but by 1543 he recanted.⁸¹ It is not known which one attacked St. Leonard, nor who was the Anabaptist, nor whether the one of 1525 was also the one of

⁷⁸ Head of the local administration named by the Cathedral Chapter. Rott, "Boersch," 103, 106.

⁷⁹ Rott, "Boersch," 103; *TAE III & IV, passim*.

⁸⁰ From the tax records of 1525 and 1545. A fourth "*Hans Myller, filius Antheng Millers*," (son of Anthony Miller) also appears in 1545, but he seems to be of a younger generation. Rott, "Boersch," 104, 107.

⁸¹ *TAE III*, Nos. 359a, 361a, 371a, 793, *TAE IV*, No. 1301; Rott, "Boersch," 107.

1533. Jean Rott suggests that Müller Hans the Anabaptist is the butcher, Hans Esslinger, Jr., the son of the miller Hans Esslinger called "Miller".⁸²

Clearer is the case of Diebolt Esslinger, a member of one of Börsch's most influential families, and since 1517 the town's *Vogt*. He lost his position in 1525, probably because of his complicity in the Peasants' War.⁸³ He was accused 1) of leading the Lutheran party, 2) of having supported the peasants' cause, 3) of having allowed the leaders of the St. Leonard incursion to leave the town at night, 4) of having persuaded Börschers to mobilize an armed contingent, and 5) of having led the Börschers at Saverne where all but two were massacred by the Lorrainers. Like many implicated in the revolt, Esslinger purchased citizenship in Strasbourg (June 1526) but continued, as an *Ausbürger*, to farm his vineyards in Börsch. Motivated as much by social and political as by religious considerations, he died in 1534, a disappointed man.⁸⁴ The Melchiorite named Diebolt Esslinger who appears first in 1537 is his son.⁸⁵ While his

⁸² *TAE III*, Nos. 793, 795, 949, 986, 1107, 1190, 1222; *TAE IV*, No. 1278. Rott, "Boersch," 107.

⁸³ He last appears as *Vogt* in November 1525, after which he is replaced by Anthony Schreter. Rott, "Boersch," 104, 107.

⁸⁴ Rott, "Boersch," 104-105.

⁸⁵ The tax records of 1551 speak of "Diebolt Esslinger, the eldest son of the old *Vogt*, his father." Rott, "Boersch," 104, 107.

rejection of pedobaptism and his apocalypticism represent input received after the Peasants' War, his calls for justice and a societal reversal, echoing his father's, point to a direct connection between the peasant uprising and Anabaptism.⁸⁶

4. Reflections on Strasbourg and the Peasants' War

From the beginning peasant leaders had anticipated the support of the cities, for initially the reform had been welcomed with more enthusiasm in the cities than in the country, and in Alsace support was found among urban guilds such as Strasbourg's gardeners and butchers and other groups in other cities. But in the end, while most villages joined the revolt and middle-sized cities were divided, the large cities such as Strasbourg, opposed the cause and doomed it to defeat.⁸⁷

This social revolution failed because the reformers, the Rat and the ruling classes endorsed personal, ecclesiastical and religious change rather than economic or political reversal. Although Strasbourg's reformers had engineered an ecclesiastical revolution, they gave the peasant vision of a restructured society little support. While they affirmed "a better world...born in a new faith in Christ," their conception of it involved transformation within traditional social

⁸⁶ Rott, "Boersch," 105, 108

⁸⁷ Dollinger, 70-71.

structures rather than the recasting of the structures themselves. With the revolutionary thrust suppressed, the reformers could return to their primary agenda, ecclesiastical reform, while the Rat and the ruling classes could devote themselves to restoring social stability.⁸⁸

Quashed in their effort to transform all of society, the radicals were left with a choice either to abandon their radical dream by assimilating to Catholicism or the established reform, or to pursue it down alternative paths. A few lone voices determined to continue their social-revolutionary struggle. Some, like Hans Wolff, recast their revolution in apocalyptic terms. Others like Clement Ziegler opted for a more individualistic spiritualism. Still others, such as the Anabaptists, opted for a separatistic community in which to realize their radical ideals. Whatever the path, to some degree the radical movements from 1526 onward were a sublimated form of the commoners' revolt of 1525.

III. The Radical Flood, 1526-29

For Strasbourg's radicals, the years from the end of the Peasants' War to the abolition of the mass in February 1529 were years of rapid growth. During these years not only did radical currents develop within the larger reform, but the radical communities themselves underwent change. Revolu-

⁸⁸ Chrisman, 153-154; Brady, 199-203, 229-235.

tionary methods and the vision of a society turned upside-down gave way to spiritualist, sectarian, apocalyptic alternatives. The indigenous character of Strasbourg's first radicals was erased by a flood of refugees, giving Strasbourg's radical communities a predominantly foreign flavor. The lower class character of Strasbourg's "Karlstadt group" and original Anabaptists by late 1526 gave way to a balance of intellectuals and artisans who in turn were replaced by a heavy preponderance of artisans by 1528. These changes would have lasting results. The division of the radicals into spiritualist, sectarian, apocalyptic streams would continue throughout the century. Foreigners would dominate the radical agenda for the next decade, and in all but the spiritualist stream, the loss of intellectuals and the predominance of artisans would be permanent.

A. Early Arrivals

Strasbourg's Anabaptists appear to have been gaining converts even before foreigners arrived,⁸⁹ but it was the arrival in early 1526 of Anabaptists fleeing Peasants' War reprisals and religious persecution in Switzerland and South Germany that gave visibility and a new momentum to Strasbourg's radical movement. With memories of peasant disturbances, with warnings from Zwingli and with Hubmaier's

⁸⁹ In February 1526, reversing a 1524 decision to be flexible on the sacraments, the Rat decreed that all children be baptized at a specific time. *TAE I*, No. 44, p. 51; Krahn, 190.

writings in hand, reformers and magistrates alike viewed with suspicion these newcomers criticizing Strasbourg's "halfway" reform.⁹⁰

In March 1526 Wilhelm Reublin (c.1482-c.1560), the former peasants' priest and tithe resister who had baptized Hubmaier and sixty others in Waldshut, arrived in Strasbourg.⁹¹ During his brief stay with the tailor Jörg Ziegler, he conversed with the reformers but avoided public debate on baptism. Ziegler, who finally agreed to a private debate, condemned the reformers for lacking courage to carry the reform through fully.⁹²

A greater stir was caused by the April 1526 appearance of Hans Wolff, a weaver who had been expelled from Schlettstadt and Ettenheim.⁹³ He denounced the reform for

⁹⁰ Boyd, "Social Radicalism", 62; Deppermann, 179; Krahn, 184-185; Stayer, "Die Anfänge," 27-44; Müsing, "Anabaptist Movement," 91. All further citations from Müsing are from his "Anabaptist Movement." For a full account see R. Kreider, "The Relation of the Anabaptists to the Civil Authorities in Switzerland, 1525-1555," Diss., U. of Chicago, 1953, 67-100.

⁹¹ Stayer, "Die Anfänge," 30-32, 42-44; Boyd, "Social Radicalism", 62; Krahn, 193-196.

⁹² Given Ziegler's prior involvement in the Treger riots, it is not surprising that he was later described as "having been a suspicious and tumultuous man." *TAE I*, No. 67, p. 66. His hosting of Reublin, possibly at Capito's request, points also to a hospitable side. *TAE I*, No. 45, pp. 51-52; No. 46, p. 52, n. 2; Krahn, 196-198; Müsing, 92-93; Deppermann, 179; Boyd, "Social Radicalism", 62; Hulshof, 10-11. From Strasbourg Reublin went to Horb where he was joined in early 1527 by Sattler. Krahn, 230.

⁹³ *TAE I*, No. 47, pp. 52-53, n. 1; Müsing, 93.

its lack of social and ethical fruit. The reformers, he said, while railing against the mass, images and cloisters, sat in luxury, far removed from their parishioners, and doing nothing to eliminate tithes, unjust rents, usury and prostitution. Infants, he declared, were unable to receive baptism, and no Christian should ever hold office or wield the sword. Finally, when the millenium would come in seven years' time, all things would be restored and all creatures saved.⁹⁴ Expelled after three hearings, Wolff was soon back in the cathedral where he interrupted Zell's sermon: "In the power of the Spirit I command you to step down and let me say what the Spirit wills."⁹⁵ Wolff was promptly imprisoned and expelled. By 1529, disillusioned with evangelicals, Catholics and Anabaptists and trusting only God, he was back in a Strasbourg prison on a hunger strike, and then with his wife, was set to work in permanent confinement in the Barfüsser Convent.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Boyd, "Social Radicalism", 62; *TAE I*, No. 47, pp. 52-54; Deppermann, 179-180; Williams, 248; Müsing, 94-96.

⁹⁵ *TAE I*, Nos. 50, 52, 53, 55; Müsing, 95, 97. Gerbert, 19, Hulshof, 11-13, and Müsing, 94, suggest that Wolff's criticisms were "music in the ears" of Catholic loyalists, and that the latter may have pressed the Rat to allow him several hearings. Such a Catholic-radical alliance is denied by Jörg Tucher (*TAE I*, No. 67, p. 63). The idealism and anti-Catholicism of most early Anabaptists, and their willingness to suffer even for a "lost cause" makes such an alliance unlikely. If it did occur, the initiative likely came from the Catholic side.

⁹⁶ *TAE I*, No. 184, pp. 237-238. In 1533 the visionary Melchior Hoffman also fasted in a Strasbourg prison.

Wolff's thought combines several motifs: Karsthans' and Clement Ziegler's themes of social and economic justice, the Swiss emphasis on pacifism and separation from the world, the spiritualism and universalism of Hans Denck, and the apocalypticism of Hans Hut and Melchior Hoffman, each of whom also predicted the return of Christ in seven years. By preparing the ground for the "Strasbourg Prophets" and Melchior Hoffman, Wolff's early fusion of sectarian Anabaptism with apocalyptic spiritualism had an impact that far outweighed his immediate following.⁹⁷

B. Hans Denck and the Spiritualist Stream

Despite Wolff's expulsion, criticisms of infant baptism and foreign arrivals continued, resulting in the imprisonment of "many Anabaptists" by the end of 1526.⁹⁸ Among radical leaders arriving in late 1526 were four intellectuals and one artisan: the Hebraists Martin (Borrhaus) Cellarius, Hans Denck and Ludwig Hätzer, the former Benedictine prior Michael Sattler and the furrier Jakob Gross. Together with their followers, they exposed differences among the reformers, strengthened the challenge to the reform and gave greater self-consciousness to Strasbourg's radicals.⁹⁹ Cellarius (1499-1564), a spiritualist who disdained infant bap-

⁹⁷ Hut's eschatological date was 1528; Hoffman's, like Wolff's, was 1533. Williams, 248; Deppermann, 180.

⁹⁸ *TAE I*, No. 56, p. 57; No. 67, p. 66.

⁹⁹ Müsing, 98-99.

tism and had associated with the Zurich Anabaptists, impressed both Bucer and Capito. His influence on the latter later created tension between them.¹⁰⁰

The charismatic Hans Denck (c.1500-1527) arrived with a reputation as one who had been expelled from Nuremburg for unorthodox theology, who had befriended Hubmaier during the Peasants' War, and who in Augsburg had introduced believer's baptism to spiritualists disaffected with the Lutheran reform.¹⁰¹ He attracted so many sympathizers, particularly among Strasbourg's educated artisans and intellectuals, that the reformers soon felt him a threat.¹⁰² Ludwig Hätzer (c.1500-1529) had preceded Denck as leader of the sacramentarian spiritualists in Augsburg. After visiting the Grebel circle in Zurich, he had begun a translation of the Old Testament Prophets with Oecolampadius in Basel. Having fled Basel because of an affair, in Strasbourg he criticized sectarians such as Michael Sattler and lauded the

¹⁰⁰ *TAE I*, No. 59, p. 58, n. 1; "Cellarius, Martin," *ME*, I; Krahn, 332-347, 484-489; Müsing, 99.

¹⁰¹ *TAE I*, No. 60-66, pp. 58-62; Müsing, 99; Krahn, 238-247.

¹⁰² Among Denck's sympathizers were the gardener Clement Ziegler, the tailor Jörg Ziegler, the notary Fridolin Meyger, "members of the Steltz Guild (...glaziers, goldsmiths, printers, painters and other self-employed workers)," and the merchant and magistrate Friedrich Ingolt. Ingolt, an eager advocate of reform, had taken part in the first Lord's Supper in the German language. *TAE I*, Nos. 64, 65, 67; Müsing, 99, 105; Deppermann, 184; Brady, *Ruling Class*, 114-115, 175-176, 179.

clergy's flexibility on baptism. His friendship with Denck, however, unsettled the reformers.¹⁰³

In order to counter Denck's popularity, Bucer held a public debate without the Rat's approval. The occasion for this was a private one in Capito's home between Cellarius and Hätzer over predestination. When the latter proved unable to defend his free will position, Capito arranged to have Denck debate with Cellarius. By softening their differences, Denck gave the impression of essential agreement with Cellarius. Bucer, feeling that Denck hid his true views, determined publicly to unmask Denck's danger to the church and the city. On December 22, 1526, in the presence of two *Ratsherren* and 400 citizens, Bucer and Denck renewed the debate on predestination and debated Denck's *Vom Gesetz Gottes* (1526) in which Denck criticized Luther on the Law and justification.¹⁰⁴ For Bucer, in minimizing original sin and Christ's salvific work, and in reducing Jesus to an example, Denck's views undermined the Reformation at its core.¹⁰⁵ While Denck's conciliatory approach again impressed the listeners, Bucer's unrelenting accusations

¹⁰³ Müsing, 100-101; Krahn, 247, 251-253.

¹⁰⁴ *TAE I*, Nos. 64-66, pp. 60-62; Müsing, 100-102, 106; Krahn, 251-255, 258-266; Deppermann, 184.

¹⁰⁵ Boyd, *Marpeck*, 94; Deppermann, 187.

sparked outrage, especially among the glassworkers and even the magistrate Friedrich Ingolt.¹⁰⁶

Bucer accomplished his purpose: by Christmas Day 1526 Denck had left for Worms where with Jakob Kautz and Hätzer he continued to translate the Prophets and the *Theologia Deutsch*.¹⁰⁷ But the result of this debate was increased tension within the evangelical movement. While even Capito questioned Bucer's tactics, Denck was shown to have sympathizers in all social classes. In the following decades many would find his ethical spiritualism attractive. The Rat, with an eye on both the radicals and the clergy, and determined to keep its grip on the reforming initiative, resolved never again to let the clergy authorize a debate without its full consent.¹⁰⁸

C. The Development of the Sectarian Stream

With Denck's departure, leadership of the radicals swung to Jakob Gross, a Waldshut furrier won to Anabaptism by Grebel and baptized by Hubmaier, and to Michael Sattler. Their sectarian Anabaptism would result in two radical streams -- spiritualist and sectarian -- which would compete

¹⁰⁶ Müsing, 102; Krahn, 263.

¹⁰⁷ A year later Kautz assumed leadership of Denck's followers in Strasbourg. Boyd, *Marpeck*, 95; Deppermann, 187; Williams, 160; Krahn, 268-269.

¹⁰⁸ *TAE I*, No. 67, pp. 65-66; Müsing, 105-107.

and cooperate in their common opposition to the official reform.

Arrested immediately were Gross, the Strasbourg tailor Jörg Ziegler and three Swiss Anabaptists, a shoemaker named Wilhelm Echsel, a furrier named Mathis Hiller and a citizen through marriage named Jörg Tucher. The Rat sought information about rebaptisms, possible Catholic-radical alliances and clandestine militant bands. According to their testimonies, Anabaptists, virtually all artisans, gathered at the home of Jörg Ziegler and in Ruprechtsau.¹⁰⁹ Gross had both preached and baptized. Meetings were for worship without criminal intent. Emphasis fell on baptism following faith and mutual ethical obligations. Most held to a literalistic biblicism which included pacifism and excluded oath swearing. All were disappointed with the ethical failure of the official reform. In their willingness to lay down arms and share material possessions with the needy, their vision of a society of moral integrity and neighborly love seems at least partially to have been realized.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ At least two furriers, a potter, a tailor, a gardener, a tanner, a barrelmaker and a shoemaker. *TAE I*, No. 67, pp. 62-65; No. 112, p. 135; C.-P. Clasen, *The Anabaptists in South and Central Germany, Switzerland and Austria* (Goshen: Mennonite Quarterly Review, 1978), 93; Krahn, 204-205, 211; Müsing, 107-108.

¹¹⁰ *TAE I*, No. 67, p. 64; Müsing, 107-112; Krahn, 211-212. The degree of communal sharing here is not stated. On community of goods among the Swiss Brethren, see Stayer, *Peasants' War*, 95-106.

While the citizens Tucher and Ziegler were allowed to remain in the city, the three non-citizens Gross, Echsel and Hiller were expelled.¹¹¹ Reports of expelled Anabaptists turning up in Basel suggest that others also left. With memories of the Treger riots, the Peasants' War and Hans Denck, the decision to expel them points to the Rat's determination to nip unrest in the bud.¹¹²

More influential than Gross was Sattler (c. 1490-1527) who probably came to evangelical thinking and left St. Peter's Benedictine Monastery through the influence of Black Forest Peasants. The same "economic anticlericalism" that drew him out of the monastery probably also attracted him to Anabaptism.¹¹³ Married and expelled from Zurich, he came to Strasbourg. After failing to free his imprisoned fellow believers, and failing to persuade Strasbourg's reformers of his view of the church, he left the city in early 1527, soon to be burned at the stake in Rottenburg in May 1527.

¹¹¹ Gross and Echsel went to Augsburg; Hiller was executed with Michael Sattler five months later. Müsing, 107, 110; Deppermann, 182-184; Krahn, 225-226, 230.

¹¹² *TAE I*, No. 72, p. 71; Müsing, 110-112; Krahn, 212.

¹¹³ *TAE I*, No. 70, p. 68, n. 1; C. A. Snyder, *The Life and Thought of Michael Sattler* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984), 23-26, 46, 63-64, 76, 87; *The Legacy of Michael Sattler*, ed. and trans. by J. H. Yoder (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973), 10.

Although critical of his views, the reformers admired him as a man, calling him "a martyr for Christ."¹¹⁴

Sattler's views were summarized in his farewell letter and a few weeks later in the Schleithem Confession of February 1527. In twenty statements, Sattler made four main points: 1) faith is requisite for salvation (1-3); 2) "baptism incorporates all believers into the body of Christ" (4); 3) members of Christ's body "are to be conformed to the Head," Christ (5-7); 4) the body of Christ is separated from the world's values and power structures (8-20).¹¹⁵ No longer was the church to be a mixture of "wheat and tares," but a community of the righteous entered through baptism and separated from worldliness. For both clergy and magistrates, this negation of the unity of spiritual and civil governments, and of the city as a little "*corpus Christianum*" implied the dissolution of the existing order.¹¹⁶

Sattler's stay had significance for Strasbourg's radicals, for the Strasbourg reform and for the Anabaptist movement as a whole. For Strasbourg's radicals, first, by distinguishing his teachings from those of the reformers and

¹¹⁴ Mathis Hiller was executed with him. *TAE I*, Nos. 83-84, pp. 81-91; Snyder, *Sattler*, 89-97; Deppermann, 183-184; Krahn, 224, 229-232; Müsing, 107, 110, 112-114.

¹¹⁵ *TAE I*, No. 70, pp. 68-70. For the Schleithem Confession, see Yoder, ed., *Michael Sattler*, 34-43; Müsing, 113-114; Krahn, 227-228.

¹¹⁶ Snyder, *Sattler*, 89-95; Müsing, 114

other types of religious radicals, Sattler sharpened the Swiss Anabaptists' sense of distinctness and widened the division between spiritualists and sectarians.¹¹⁷ Secondly, as seen in the Schleithem Confession, he outlined an Anabaptist church structure that could withstand persecution. The congregation could elect its pastors, who, in turn, were to lead the flock in worship and the eucharist, teach the Scriptures, and discipline the believers. Should the minister be taken away, another should be named at once that God's people "not be destroyed."¹¹⁸ With such a structure the Swiss Brethren continued through the century. Thirdly, Sattler's insistence that theology and ethics are inseparable strengthened an ethical critique that would recur throughout the reform. Bucer and Capito acknowledged their vulnerability on this charge, and ethics would be a major reason for the Synods of 1533 and 1539 and Bucer's *Christlichen Gemeinschaften* of 1547-48.¹¹⁹ Among the reformers, while Sattler sharpened Bucer's anti-Anabaptist theology, he strengthened Capito's sympathy for religious tolerance and his growing estrangement from Bucer. In the

¹¹⁷ Such as "political realists" such as Hubmaier, Peasants' War type revolutionaries, spiritualists like Denck, and antinomians such as those in St. Gall and Appenzell. Deppermann, 182; cf. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword*, xviii; Snyder, *Sattler*, 91-92; Krahn, 234.

¹¹⁸ Krahn, 233-235; "Schleithem Confession" in Yoder, ed. *Michael Sattler*, 39.

¹¹⁹ See *TAE IV*, Nos. 1526, 1548, 1569-71, 1576, 1631, 1637; Krahn, 235.

broader Anabaptist community, Sattler's Schleithem Confession came to provide a theological fulcrum for Anabaptists from Switzerland and Moravia to the Netherlands.¹²⁰

Soon after Sattler's leaving, Felix Manz, drowned in Zurich on January 5, 1527, became the first Anabaptist executed for his faith, and Hätzer left to join Denck and Kautz in Worms.¹²¹ Despite the loss of their leaders, the radicals did not melt back into the mainstream reform. The division of Strasbourg's evangelical movement into reformers and radicals had become permanent.¹²² The radicals themselves, however, while at one in their criticisms of the reform, had begun to divide along spiritualist and sectarian lines.¹²³

D. The Anabaptist Mandate and Interrogations of 1527

After a winter of relative quiet, by the spring of 1527 antitrinitarians were expressing their views and the Anabap-

¹²⁰ J. H. Yoder, "Der Kristallisationspunkt des Täuferiums," *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter*, 29 (1972), 35-47; K. Deppermann, "Die Strassburger Reformatoren und die Krise des oberdeutschen Täuferiums im Jahre 1527," *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter*, 30 (1973), 24-41; Krahn, 232-233.

¹²¹ For responses to Manz's death, see *TAE I*, Nos. 73, 76, 82, 96, 109; Krahn, 268-269; Müsing, 114-116.

¹²² Müsing, 115-116.

¹²³ *TAE I*, No. 168, pp. 197-199; Deppermann, Hoffman, 188-190.

tists were renewing their activity.¹²⁴ Their greatest inspiration came from the spiritualist/Anabaptist movement in Worms led by Denck, Kautz and Hätzer. In June 1527 Kautz challenged the Lutheran clergy to a debate by posting seven articles on the Cathedral Church cloister. They emphasized the inward Word and sacraments over the external, opposed infant baptism, affirmed universal salvation and rendered the atonement ineffective without discipleship.¹²⁵

Bucer and Capito denounced the articles and in reply Bucer published his *Getreue Warnung*. The Anabaptists' main sin, he argued, was their separatism which destroyed the church's unity.¹²⁶ The Rat's response was, on July 27, 1527, to issue an anti-Anabaptist mandate warning the populace of Anabaptists, and ordering all, on pain of punishment, not to lodge or even contact them. More moderate and secular in tone than the clergy would have liked, it described the Anabaptists' main errors as opposing the Scriptures and government, and dividing the community through their separation. Since the decree addressed lodging foreign dissidents, the Rat was probably more concerned about foreign than local radicals. For several months as it was energetically enforced, many radicals including promi-

¹²⁴ *TAE I*, Nos. 81 & 82, p. 80; Müsing, 116; Williams, 252.

¹²⁵ *TAE I*, No. 87, p. 115; Krahn, 270-271.

¹²⁶ *TAE I*, Nos. 86-89; Mitchell, 51; Krahn, 272-276; Müsing, 119.

ment citizens were detained and even expelled.¹²⁷

The most detailed hearings are those of the Schlettstadt cloth merchant, Albrecht Wanner, and his colleagues. He had preached in Ruprechtsau and, at Lukas Hackfurt's request, at the smaller syphilis hospital. In attendance had been prominent citizens such as Hackfurt, the notary Fridolin Meyger and the Latin teacher Johann Schwebel.¹²⁸ Hackfurt, director of the city's relief program, involved himself with the radicals because they cared for the poor. 3000 refugees had poured into the city during the Peasants' War. Religious persecution and famine were adding more. Deeper structural dilemmas included high inflation, competition from immigrants, landlessness which drove peasants into the city and unemployability among unskilled youth. While pleading for appropriated church property for the poor, for master artisans to teach unskilled boys and for the evangelical

¹²⁷ *TAE I*, No. 92, pp. 122-123. Other mandates against religious dissent were proclaimed in 1530, 1534, 1535, 1538 and 1540. *TAE I*, No. 222; *TAE II*, Nos. 519, 637, 638; *TAE III*, Nos. 816, 1014; Kreider, "Anabaptists," 104-111; Krahn, 279-281.

¹²⁸ In 1557 Wanner still lived in Strasbourg, and in 1574 was mentioned as dead. *TAE I*, No. 109, pp. 131-132; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 97; C.-P. Clasen, "The Anabaptist Leaders: Their Numbers and Background Switzerland, Austria, South and Central Germany, 1525-1618." *MQR* 49 (1975), 133; Krahn, 351-352.

preachers to preach "in the syphilis hospitals," he found the radicals the most willing to help.¹²⁹

Fridolin Meyger, a notary for the episcopal chancery, joined the radicals because of his opposition to usury. As notary drawing up contracts for various rents and debts payable to the aristocracy, he had first hand exposure to economic abuses. Under the influence of Brunfels he began to protest them. The failure of the Peasants' War to clear the "devilish curse" from the countryside, and the failure of the reform to touch the "usurious practices of upper-class Strasbourgeois" apparently led to his attraction to the Anabaptists, where he experienced "sincere love of God and neighbor."¹³⁰ From 1527 on radicals met at his home, and in 1528 he was baptized by Kautz.¹³¹ Although Meyger was arrested with Kautz and twelve others in October, 1528 and then again in March, 1529,¹³² his 1529 treatise on usury

¹²⁹ TAE I, No. 109, p. 132; Boyd, "Social Radicalism," 68-69. Hackfurt's involvement with the radicals continued until July 1531 when he returned to the reformed church. TAE I, No. 252, p. 334.

¹³⁰ Meyger called Anabaptism a "middle way" between the papacy and Luther. TAE I, No. 172, pp. 222-223; No. 182, pp. 235-236; Boyd, "Social Radicalism," 67-68; Rott, "Boersch," 105-106; Krahn, 385-387; Williams, 253.

¹³¹ TAE I, No. 179, p. 228; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 97; Williams, 253; Müsing, 115. Anabaptists would meet in his home until 1533. TAE II, No. 400, p. 110.

¹³² TAE I, No. 153, pp. 184-186; Mitchell, 126; Krahn, 365. TAE I, No. 156, p. 189; No. 182, pp. 235-236.

impressed Bucer who later recommended measures against it.¹³³

Interrogated with Wanner was his host, the Latin teacher Johann Schwebel (1499-1566), who was lodging also other Anabaptists. Like Wanner, Schwebel was expelled for denouncing the civil oath.¹³⁴ Other guests included the St. Gall weavers and friends of Conrad Grebel, Lorenz Hochrütiner and his wife, and their son Jakob, an armorer. Schwebel also lodged the former priest and leading Augsburg Anabaptist, Ulrich Trechsel, Lorenz Landsperger who had eaten with Denck and claimed to have come to Anabaptism through his own reading of the Bible, a tailor named Hans from Diedenhoffen and other "good brothers and sisters."¹³⁵ Others expelled in the wake of the mandate were the citizen Diebold von Sand, a tanner who attended Anabaptist meetings

¹³³ TAE I, No. 172, pp. 218-223; No. 244, pp. 327-330.

¹³⁴ TAE I, No. 109, pp. 132-133; Adam, 119-120; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 97. In 1529, the ban lifted, he tutored a noble Strasbourg family, and in 1531 returned to the city to resume his teaching career. By 1539 he would be director of the *Gymnasium*. TAE I, No. 898, p. 313.

¹³⁵ On the interrogations, see TAE I, No. 109; pp. 131-133. On Hochrütiner, see also Clasen, "Anabaptist Leaders," 127. On Trechsel, see also TAE I, No. 67, p. 66; No. 104, p. 129, n. 8. Within a year Landsperger denied Anabaptism, perhaps to keep his steward's job in the St. Arbogast monastery where he served until 1535. TAE I, No. 115, p. 137; p. 590, *Nachteil* to No. 115; TAE IV, *Beilage*, pp. 398, 404-405; TAE III, No. 748, pp. 52-53, n. 1, 4; No. 797, p. 108; TAE IV, No. 1325, p. 55.

and wished to be baptized,¹³⁶ and Hans Huber, a saddler baptized by Gross who expressed Sattlerite views.¹³⁷ Ursula Tucher, the daughter of a civil servant and the wife of Jörg Tucher, was spared expulsion even though she was instructed by Gross and read the Bible in others' homes.¹³⁸ Similarly fortunate was Zuner Andres who confessed that he had destroyed images in the cathedral and had preached in the St. Nicholas church out of stupidity.¹³⁹

The Rat's prompt action after the Anabaptist mandate quieted the crisis, but by October citizens were again joining the radicals and foreigners were streaming into the city.¹⁴⁰ Among the arrivals were the sheathmaker Thomas Saltzmann and the shoemaker Conrad Hess who accepted the Pentateuch and affirmed one God, but rejected the Trinity and called Jesus an imposter. After three hearings Saltzmann was beheaded for blasphemy, the only person executed for heresy in Strasbourg.¹⁴¹ Capito, while distinguishing between extremists and moderates, worried about

¹³⁶ *TAE I*, No. 112, p. 135.

¹³⁷ *TAE I*, No. 117, p. 144; Adam, 118. In 1534 he would reappear on trial for Anabaptism. *TAE II*, No. 550, p. 311.

¹³⁸ *TAE I*, No. 67, pp. 62-63; No. 112, p. 135.

¹³⁹ *TAE I*, No. 115, p. 138.

¹⁴⁰ *TAE I*, No. 98, p. 126; Krahn, 282, 348-349.

¹⁴¹ *TAE I*, Nos. 110-111, pp. 133-134; Nos. 113-114, pp. 135-136; Krahn, 350-351; Williams, 252.

their proselytizing even though with their poor education they could not articulate their convictions.¹⁴²

The hearings of the second half of 1527 reveal that Anabaptist meetings were held at least in Strasbourg's two syphilis hospitals, in Meyger's home and in Ruprechtsau.¹⁴³ The sixteen radicals mentioned represent a broad social spectrum. Half were citizens and half were foreigners. Two were women. Nine were artisans, four were intellectuals and three were civil servants. The intellectuals and civil servants were more likely to be Strasbourgeois while nearly all the artisans were foreigners. At least three had destroyed images or had sympathized with the peasants' revolt. Eleven expressed Anabaptist views or had been rebaptized, while two were anti-trinitarians. All but the anti-trinitarians sought to to be a church committed to following Christ, but while the Swiss refugees emphasized separation from the world, the Strasbourgeois placed greater accent on social action. This approximate balance between Strasbourgeois and foreigners, and between intellectuals and artisans represents a change from 1525 when Strasbourg's radicals were almost all local commoners. Within two years the social profile of Strasbourg's radicals would change again.

¹⁴² *TAE I*, No. 98, p. 126; No. 108, p. 131; Krahn, 282, 349-350.

¹⁴³ *TAE I*, No. 109, pp. 131-133; Krahn, 352-353; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 97.

E. The 1528 Flood of Radicals

1. Introduction

The fastest growth of Strasbourg's religious radicals occurred in 1528-29. While hardship elsewhere drove them into Strasbourg, within the city disunity among the clergy¹⁴⁴ and lenience in enforcing the Mandate of 1527 enabled them to stay. The struggle over the mass followed by the eucharistic controversy in 1529 further diverted the authorities' attention away from the radicals.¹⁴⁵ Outside the city it was persecution that drove nonconformists to Strasbourg. The imperial court and the Swabian League in early 1528, and the Diet of Speyer in 1529, decreed death for Anabaptists without due process. Their most popular haven was Strasbourg.¹⁴⁶

Consecutive widespread crop failures coincided with persecution, especially in 1528/29. Although wages remained constant, prices of rye and wheat tripled from 1527 to 1533. Strasbourg, with large reserves, was spared the famine's

¹⁴⁴ Wolfgang Schultheiss, Anton Engelbrecht and for a time Capito did not share Bucer's vision for the reform.

¹⁴⁵ Krahn, 284-285, 352-353, 358.

¹⁴⁶ In 1528 Strasbourg granted citizenship to 260 people, or three times the average number. Hulshof, 82-83. Executions in Central and Southern Germany from 1527 to 1530 numbered 56, 200, 152 and 80 respectively. 41% of all Anabaptists executed before 1618 died in 1528-29 alone. Clasen, *Anabaptism*, 371; C.-P. Clasen, "Executions of Anabaptists 1527-1618," *MQR* 47 (1973), 115-152, esp. 119.

worst effects. From 1529 to 1531, the poorest purchased corn and meal at below market price, and in a reversal of policy, most foreign refugees were made eligible for public funds. While able-bodied men were given food and shelter in exchange for reinforcing the city's defences, "women, children, the elderly and the infirm" received care at no cost. Through 1529-31 over 4000 persons were thus accommodated in the winters, and over 41,000 persons passed through the city.¹⁴⁷ Resentment arose among Strasbourgeois when granaries became empty and the Rat raised taxes to fund these relief measures. Such feelings were exacerbated when Hackfurt and his assistant, Alexander Berner, were noted to be favouring Anabaptist refugees.¹⁴⁸

Besides famine and persecution, growing apocalypticism contributed to Strasbourg's radical movements. Since apocalyptic thinking, already articulated in Strasbourg by Hans Wolff, was widespread in the early sixteenth century, a flood of Augsburg refugees influenced by Hans Hut could color Strasbourg's religious climate in 1528, and Melchior Hoffman could draw a mass following in 1529. Among those apocalyptically inclined, the persecution and famine only heightened their expectation.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ The fullest account of these relief efforts is Winckelmann, *Fürsorgewesen*, Vol. 1, pp. 100-150 and Vol. 2, 1922, no. 85, p. 125; no. 43, p. 97. Deppermann, 270-272; Krahn, 285.

¹⁴⁸ *TAE I*, No. 153, p. 185; Deppermann, 272-273. On Berner, see *TAE I*, No. 256, pp. 337-338, n. 2.

¹⁴⁹ Deppermann, 273.

2. The Augsburg Influx

The dissidents of 1528-29 flowed into Strasbourg from Switzerland, the Palatinate, all the Habsburg territories and especially from Augsburg.¹⁵⁰ Until 1528 Augsburg, with perhaps 1000 Anabaptists, had been southern Germany's most important Anabaptist center.¹⁵¹ Augsburg's radicals were diverse and sometimes volatile. They had emerged within a society deeply divided, with the poor, frequently dyers and weavers, increasing at the expense of the middle-class, and with commoners blaming merchants for food shortages, price increases and usury.¹⁵² Although their number included patricians, merchants, guild leaders and magistrates, 73% were lower class,¹⁵³ and they could not entirely transcend these social divisions. Some of the rich, fearing appearances of conspiracy, hesitated to gather with them outside the town.¹⁵⁴

In the congregation circulated the various ideas of Denck, Hätzer, Gross and most recently the apocalyptic Hans

¹⁵⁰ Krahn, 354; Hulshof, 82-83.

¹⁵¹ F. Roth, *Augsburgs Reformationsgeschichte*, Vol. I, 1881, p. 180, counts 1,100 Anabaptists. Cited by Deppermann, 198. Clasen, *Anabaptism*, 324, more conservatively counts 300 converts between 1526 and 1529.

¹⁵² Deppermann, 198-199.

¹⁵³ In 1527-29, Clasen, *Anabaptism*, 327.

¹⁵⁴ Deppermann, 199.

Hut. Like Müntzer, he dreamed of ousting godless authorities to prepare the way for Christ's rule, but after the peasants' defeat in 1525 called the faithful to repent and wait for God to act before taking up swords.¹⁵⁵ Besides inflating the number of dissidents, Augsburg's radicals also brought their mixture of beliefs to Strasbourg. Bucer, Zell and Hedio lamented that besides spiritualist and sectarian Anabaptists in the traditions of Denck and Sattler, the authorities now also had to cope with spiritualists who rejected the divinity of Christ and biblical authority, communalists, revolutionaries and those who married outside the church.¹⁵⁶ The revolutionary and visionary element which they added to Strasbourg's largely pacifist Anabaptism created a climate in which Hoffman's ideas would flourish.¹⁵⁷

Radicals from Augsburg included Laux Fischer, the potters' guildmaster, Andres Widholz, the tailors' guildmaster, the tailors Hans Koeller and Hans Seibold, and Laux Kreler, a goldsmith. Refugees from elsewhere included Hans

¹⁵⁵ Deppermann, 198-202; Packull, *Mysticism*, 62-64, 92-99; Stayer, *Anabaptists*, 150-166; Deppermann, Packull and Stayer, "Polygenesis," 100-105; R. E. McLaughlin, "Schwenckfeld and the Strasbourg Radicals," *MQR* 59 (1985) 268.

¹⁵⁶ *TAE I*, No. 178, p. 233, quoted by Deppermann, 203.

¹⁵⁷ *TAE I*, No. 171, p. 219.

Dorfwirth, a linen weaver from Bavaria and Jakob Walch, a shoemaker from Mindelheim.¹⁵⁸

Only estimates can be made regarding the numbers of radicals in Strasbourg. In April 1528 Michael Ecker, a Tyrolean knifsmith, reported 250 Anabaptists, of whom most were foreigners.¹⁵⁹ By August, according to the Augsburg shoemaker Jakob Walch, 500 Augsburg *Brüder* had entered the city.¹⁶⁰ In March 1529, according to the Augsburg tailor Hans Seibel, Augsburg believers in Strasbourg numbered in the hundreds.¹⁶¹ At Anabaptism's height in October 1530, a non-Anabaptist reported hearing of 2000 Anabaptists in the city.¹⁶² If so, among Strasbourg's 20,000 inhabitants, over one fifth of the adults were Anabaptists. At the least, the figures point to rapid growth during and after 1528.¹⁶³

F. Responses to the Radical Influx of 1528

In response to this flood of radicals the increasingly alarmed reformers joined hard-line magistrates and the emperor in calling for harsh measures against them. But the

¹⁵⁸ TAE I, No. 148, p. 181, n. 7; C.-P. Clasen, *The Anabaptists in South and Central Germany, Switzerland and Austria* (Goshen, IN: MQR, 1978), 93-95.

¹⁵⁹ TAE I, No. 130, pp. 154-155.

¹⁶⁰ TAE I, No. 148, p. 181, n. 7.

¹⁶¹ *Vff die hundert*. TAE I, No. 176; p. 232.

¹⁶² TAE I, No. 224, p. 277.

¹⁶³ Deppermann, 274; Krahn, 354-355.

Rat continued to welcome refugees and sentenced non-conformists to nothing harsher than expulsion.¹⁶⁴ To keep track of them it ordered all residents, dissidents included, to swear the burgher oath on *Schwörtag* in January 1528. Although two weeks of instruction by Capito persuaded many of them to change their minds about oath-refusal, a large number still abstained, as evidenced by interrogations conducted in the following weeks.¹⁶⁵

In the spring of 1528 forty Anabaptists were imprisoned for oath refusal. Some were exiled while others were permitted to stay.¹⁶⁶ Michael Ecker, a Tyrolean knifsmith, testified that 250 people, mostly foreigners, gathered each Sunday at Meyger's home. Their separatism smacked of arrogance: while calling themselves "den geist gottes," they referred to outsiders as "*das stinckend fleisch*." While Ecker pronounced military service and oath-swearing unscriptural, he offered to share his visions with the Rat.¹⁶⁷ This combination of visions with Swiss separatism, and the diversity of those in Meyger's home indicates that

¹⁶⁴ TAE I, Nos. 148, 149, 154, 155; Deppermann, 203; Krahn, 355-358; Gerbert, 85.

¹⁶⁵ Krahn, 358-361. On the oath, see Edmund Pries, "The Historical Context of Anabaptist Oath Refusal in Zurich: 1525-1532." M. A. Thesis, University of Waterloo, 1988; Boyd, "Social Radicalism," 66-67.

¹⁶⁶ TAE I, No. 128, pp. 153-154; Krahn, 361-362.

¹⁶⁷ TAE I, No. 130, pp. 154-155; Boyd, "Social Radicalism," p. 64; Krahn, 362-363.

distinctions between radical streams were in 1528 not yet sharply drawn.

In August 1528 the authorities disrupted an Anabaptist assembly at "Zum Pflug," an inn near Young St. Peter. Many of those interrogated were Augsburg artisans, among them the weavers Gall Fischer and Stephan Mangolt, and Hans Craft, a knifsmith who had baptized four others. Some refused to swear the oath and others claimed to be in Christ and therefore sinless.¹⁶⁸ Also detained were Lukas Hobelmacher, a Strasbourg carpenter who had baptized others,¹⁶⁹ and the tailor Hans Adam. The fiery Adam, perhaps not sincerely, repented of his Anabaptist "misunderstanding" and promised to submit in everything.¹⁷⁰

While the clergy responded to the radical influx with alarm, and while the Rat responded with relief provisions, interrogations and restraining measures, dissident leaders responded with extra efforts to feed and house the needy. With Meyger and Hackfurt was the educated spiritualist, Alexander Berner, soon to be a disciple of Caspar Schwenckfeld. Named "deacon of the poor," in 1531 he conducted a study of alms service in several German and Swiss

¹⁶⁸ TAE I, No. 148, pp. 181; Mitchell, 125.

¹⁶⁹ TAE III, No. 723, p. 30.

¹⁷⁰ Within five years Adam would challenge the authorities openly. TAE II, Nos. 400, 477, 477a; TAE IV, Beilage, No. 475a.

cities.¹⁷¹ Foreign leaders included Wilhelm Reublin who had returned to lead the Sattlerites, and Jakob Kautz who, expelled from Worms, had assumed leadership of Denck's followers.¹⁷² A new arrival was the Tyrolean engineer, Pilgram Marpeck, who by 1531 would become Strasbourg's leading Anabaptist.¹⁷³

In October 1528 Kautz, Reublin, Hackfurt, Meyger and Marpeck were arrested in Marpeck's home while planning further refugee support. Marpeck explained that with Bucer's and Capito's knowledge, they were collecting money for Hackfurt to disperse.¹⁷⁴ The outcome of Marpeck's trial and his whereabouts the following year are not known. Meyger was set free only to be arrested and released again the following year.¹⁷⁵ Kautz and Reublin, after three months in prison, submitted a joint statement of faith to the Rat. They confessed "repentance and rebaptism" (like Sattler),

¹⁷¹ *TAE I*, No. 256, pp. 337-338, n. 2.

¹⁷² "Reublin, Wilhelm," *ME IV*.

¹⁷³ On Marpeck, see Boyd, *Marpeck*; N. Blough, *Christologie Anabaptiste: Pilgram Marpeck et l'humanité du Christ* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1984); W. Klassen, *Covenant and Community*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968); W. Klassen and W. Klaassen, *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1978); J. C. Wenger, "Pilgram Marpeck, Tyrolese Engineer and Anabaptist Leader," *CH* 9 (1940), 24-36.

¹⁷⁴ *TAE I*, No. 153, pp. 184-185; Boyd, "Social Radicalism," 68-69; Krahn, 365-366.

¹⁷⁵ *TAE I*, Nos. 153, 155, 176, 182, 193a; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 108-109; Williams, 254.

and acceptance in *Gelassenheit* (like Denck) into the body of Christ. The true church, they wrote, in its practice of believers' baptism, the Lord's Supper and the ban, is separate from the world. The lack of ethical fruit in the Strasbourg Church, they charged, brought into question the reformers' very calling.¹⁷⁶

Unlike the *Grund und Ursach* (1524) which deemphasized the value of externals, in response Bucer now attached real value to the sacraments. Infant baptism, like circumcision, is the practice by which the Christian enters the church. Since only God could separate the elect from the non-elect as the Anabaptists were trying to do, they should not separate from the church. As for ethics, despite problems, many in the Strasbourg Church did follow the Scriptures. Moreover, the Anabaptists' separation and spiritual arrogance marked not only a lack of the "fruits of the Spirit," but also a "poison" within them.¹⁷⁷

Both Reublin and Kautz were expelled. Reublin left for Moravia¹⁷⁸ and Kautz for Worms where he helped publish the Worms Bible, the first Bible in the German language translated from original texts.¹⁷⁹ His 1532 request for a public

¹⁷⁶ *TAE I*, No. 168, pp. 197-200; No. 155, pp. 188-189; Williams, 253-254; Krahn, 368-370, 373.

¹⁷⁷ *TAE I*, No. 171, pp. 201-218; Krahn, 370-376.

¹⁷⁸ *TAE I*, No. 174, p. 227.

¹⁷⁹ The Worms Bible preceded Luther's by five years. *TAE I*, No. 195a, p. 249; "Kautz, Jakob," *ME III*.

debate was denied,¹⁸⁰ but in capturing Bucer's imagination, the idea became one step toward the fateful Synod of 1533.

The abolition of the mass in February 1529 only added to the authorities' anxiety, for, in a reform that still felt tenuous, besides the flood of radical refugees they now also had embittered Catholics to deal with.¹⁸¹ This anxiety is evidenced by numerous court interrogations, polemical writings and petitions from the clergy for a public debate with the Anabaptists.¹⁸²

The mass was barely abolished when the appearance of *Schandschriften* against the authorities led to the March 1529 arrest of forty-four nonconformists suspected of having a hand in their writing. The interrogations focused primarily on whether the nonconformists practiced polygamy, were political revolutionaries, or had written the *Schandschriften*. Most were pious "moderates," not guilty of any of these crimes. Six declared themselves Anabaptists.¹⁸³ Only nine (20%) of the forty-four were declared

¹⁸⁰ *TAE I*, No. 340-343, pp. 557-562.

¹⁸¹ Krahn, 376-377.

¹⁸² *TAE I*, No. 178, p. 233; No. 187, p. 239. Records of radical presence, plentiful for the first half of 1529, fall away from June 1529 to September 1530, probably because the clergy and the Rat were preoccupied with the Marburg Colloquy and the Diet of Augsburg. Krahn, 366-368; Hulshof, 91.

¹⁸³ For accounts of these arrests and written testimonials, see *TAE I*, No. 174-182, pp. 226-236; cf. Krahn, 379-384; Chrisman, 291, n. 26.

citizens; the remaining thirty-five (80%) appear to have been foreigners. This represents a change from 1524-25 when local citizens made up Strasbourg's radicals. Only three (7%) of the total appear to have been well educated, and only five (11%) appear to have had considerable social standing.¹⁸⁴ Of the eighteen with known professions, fifteen (83%) were artisans.¹⁸⁵ With intellectual leaders having been imprisoned, exiled or executed in 1527-28, now the social profile of Strasbourg's radicals, unlike 1526, was overwhelmingly artisan.

Soon after the trials it was learned that the *Schandschriften* had been written by Catholics angered by the abolition of the mass.¹⁸⁶ Although this detainment and the expulsion of radicals resulted in the radicals becoming quieter,¹⁸⁷ it did not signify a shift in basic *Rat* policy. As did 1527, early 1529 saw a crisis to which the *Rat* responded with repression. For two years thereafter the *Rat*

¹⁸⁴ The notary Fridolin Meyger, the shipper Claus Bruch, the cleric Hans Bänderlin, the cloth dealer Hans Bartel and the carpenter Lukas Hobelmacher. The carpenter's guild, however, ranked only above the gardeners and the masons on the social scale. *TAE I*, No. 175, pp. 228-231.

¹⁸⁵ In terms of known occupations, in order of approximate social rank, there were one notary, two clerics, one shipper, one cloth dealer, two weavers, two shopkeepers, one furrier, one or two tailors, three shoemakers, one carpenter, one vine dresser, one brickmaker, and seventeen beggars. *TAE I*, No. 174-182, pp. 226-236.

¹⁸⁶ Krahn, 380; cf. Gerbert, *Sectenbewegung*, 92-94.

¹⁸⁷ To Bucer's satisfaction. *TAE I*, No. 192, p. 241.

reverted to its customary moderation and the radicals enjoyed relative freedom.¹⁸⁸

IV. Conclusion

In February 1529 the Catholic mass was abolished and Strasbourg officially became an evangelical city. But while the church experienced a revolution, economic and social structures underwent little change. By 1524 there had developed within the reform radical currents seeking faster religious change or more thoroughgoing economic and social change. Over the next five years these radical currents themselves saw change. During the Peasants' War many of the radicals like Clement Ziegler held a religiously based vision of a society turned upside-down. With the defeat of the peasants, realistic hopes for such a vision ended. For those who refused to capitulate, radical alternatives included spiritualism, sectarianism, apocalypticism or continued social revolutionary agitation. Except for some spiritualists, anti-trinitarians and Peasants' War revolutionaries who clung to their lost cause, these alternatives appeared within an Anabaptist framework which, unlike the *Volkskirche* assumed by the major religious parties, argued a different concept of church. Except for Hans Wolff, apocalyptic and social revolutionary Anabaptism had few followers before 1528 when Augsburg refugees

¹⁸⁸ Krahn, 381-382.

injected a more volatile element into Strasbourg's radical communities. The spiritualist and sectarian Anabaptist streams initiated by Hans Denck and Michael Sattler were broader. Indistinct and overlapping at first, both movements grew as Strasbourgeois were attracted to them and refugees entered the city. Under the influence of new leaders in 1529-31, these radical streams would sharpen into long-lasting distinct apocalyptic, spiritualist and sectarian orientations.

Reasons for religious radicalism after the Peasants' War included anger over the suppression of the peasants' cause, disillusionment with the slow pace of social and economic change, disgust with ethical laxity within the evangelical church, apocalyptic expectations, long-standing traditions of radicalism among groups such as Strasbourg's gardeners and butchers and Augsburg's weavers, and different views of the Bible, the teachings of Jesus and the church. For the radicals, theological issues included images, the rights of the laity *vis-à-vis* the authorities, baptism, the eucharist, oath-swearing, the state's use of the sword, the concept of the church, church discipline and the relationship of the church to the world, and authority of the written Word *vis-à-vis* that of the Spirit.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ On the social implications of the struggle over the written or spiritual Word of God, see Snyder, 381.

Of the individuals who appeared before 1529, while Hubmaier and Brunfels channeled radical impulses primarily through their writings, it was Clement Ziegler, Karlstadt, Sattler, Reublin, Denck, Kautz and Marpeck who had the greatest direct impact. Clement Ziegler not only helped mobilize Peasants' War activists, but also articulated the radical agenda for the next decade with his ideas on baptism, the eucharist and economics. Karlstadt not only sharpened issues of reform and harnessed social tensions, but also helped create a self-conscious circle of dissidents out of which the Anabaptists emerged. Sattler's vision of a biblicist and congregationalist Anabaptism articulated in the Schleithem Confession became normative for much of European Anabaptism. In Strasbourg his followers, later led by Reublin, developed into the "Swiss Brethren" whose clandestine nonconformity would persist throughout the century. The Denck/Kautz spiritualist Anabaptism would not endure like the "Swiss Brethren," but in the following decades it would re-emerge in nuanced form in several nonconformists groups including the Schwenckfeldians. Marpeck would by 1531 become Strasbourg's strongest Anabaptist leader. While for the next twenty-five years he would be a major Anabaptist voice in Southern Germany, his congregational Anabaptism would continue for a half century in locales near Strasbourg.

Between 1524 and 1529 the social profile of these religious radicals changed. In 1524-25 most of the Strasbourg

radicals were indigenous citizens with connections to Clement Ziegler or Karlstadt. By 1527, with the coming of refugees mostly from Switzerland, the composition had changed to an approximate balance of Strasbourgeois and foreigners. Through 1527, while nineteen of the thirty-two nonconformists mentioned were artisans (59%), a sizeable minority (thirteen or 41%) were intellectuals and civil servants. But with the influx of hundreds of refugees from Augsburg and elsewhere, by 1529 foreigners far outnumbered Strasbourgeois, and artisans far outnumbered intellectuals.

In response to these radical currents, the clergy, ideologically motivated, were on the whole more hostile than the magistrates whose main aim was to keep the city's peace. For the latter it was more important to control developments rather than automatically to expel. So they enforced the Anabaptist mandate of 1527 energetically after a crisis and laxly the rest of the time, and sought to monitor the radicals by having them swear the annual civic oath.¹⁹⁰ Over the next four years, however, the Rat's attitude hardened as the radicals' challenge gathered momentum, and as Strasbourg moved away from Zwinglian and sacramental tendencies toward Lutheranism.

¹⁹⁰ Krahn, 353.

Chapter 3

THE RADICALS' ZENITH AND FALL, 1529-35

For Strasbourg's religious radicals, the years 1529 to 1535 were watershed years with permanent consequences. Under leaders such as Pilgram Marpeck, Caspar Schwenckfeld and Melchior Hoffman the radicals experienced two major changes. First, the heretofore blurred divisions between sectarian, spiritualist and apocalyptic streams deepened and became crystallized. Secondly, the radicals became such a threat to the church and the city that the authorities were driven to cripple them with severe measures in 1533-35, and to force them into a whole new mode of clandestine, disenfranchised existence. Thus the events of 1533-35 became the most important turning point in the history of Strasbourg's sixteenth-century radicals. In terms of social composition, except for well-educated spiritualists, the non-conformist groups became ever more artisan in nature.

I. Strasbourg and the Reformation, 1529-35

A. The Strasbourg Church

In the history of the Reformation in Strasbourg, the abolition of the mass in 1529 begins a new period in which the reformers sought to establish the new church on solid doctrinal and organizational foundations, and sought to implement their religious vision for society. Church officials and *Magistrat* worked together, but not according to the Zurich model of a Christian *Magistrat* imposing strict moral discipline. While the reformers sought autonomy for the church in order to attain their goals, the Rat did not wish immediately to repress all clandestine Catholics, Protestant dissidents and religiously indifferent, much less embrace a new papism.¹

A number of important events gave shape to Strasbourg's reform from 1529 to 1535. 1529 saw the Rat draw up a disciplinary ordinance, create a marriage tribunal and assume authority to fill prebends on certain months. In 1530 the *Tetrapolitana* Confession of faith was adopted at the Diet of Augsburg. In 1531 remaining images were removed and church wardens (*Kirchenpfleger*) were instituted to monitor discipline in the parishes. In 1532, to solidify relations with both the Lutheran princes and the South German cities, Strasbourg signed the Augsburg Confession while continuing to affirm the *Tetrapolitana*. 1533-35 saw a church synod and

¹ Rott, "Dérroulement," 375-376.

an ecclesiastical ordinance which gave doctrinal and structural definition to the church. For the radicals who at this time were at their zenith, these measures together with a new disciplinary ordinance in 1535 spelled a disastrous fall. The following years of bare survival and recovery would see dispersion into the countryside, a more clandestine existence, a fading of apocalypticism, a crystallizing of divisions among the radicals and a decline in social status.

B. Developments in Greater Protestantism

During these years Strasbourg's reform was strongly influenced by developments outside the city, and one reason why Strasbourg's radicals flourished was because the clergy and the magistrates were preoccupied with imperial politics and controversies within greater Protestantism. After the 1529 Diet of Speyer, John, the Elector of Saxony, resolved to be reconciled with the emperor Charles V by emphasizing Lutheranism's conservatism at the expense of the Zwinglians.² This doomed the Colloquy of Marburg which was intended to find eucharistic agreement between the Lutherans and Zwinglians. The doctrinal statements intended to undergird the Smalkald League were phrased in terms so anti-Zwinglian that the cities of South Germany felt unable to

² See T. Brady, "Jakob Sturm of Strasbourg and the Lutherans at the Diet of Augsburg," *CH* 42 (1973), 183-202; Baron, "Religion and Politics," 405-427.

join the projected alliance. Strasbourg's *Rat*, fearing a Lutheran alliance with the emperor against the empire's "sacramentarians," signed a January 1530 treaty of mutual defense with Basel, Bern and Zürich. But by the spring, realizing the Zwinglians' weakness against the combined Lutheran and Catholic forces, the *Rat* began to tilt towards Lutheranism. It signed the *Tetrapolitana Confession* which described the Lord's Supper as "a sign of Christ's real presence" rather than as the memorial espoused by the Zwinglians. In a further concession to the Elector of Saxony, the *Rat* ordered the expulsion of Luther's enemy, Karlstadt, who was at the time residing in Strasbourg.³

At the Diet of Augsburg Melanchthon failed to win toleration for Lutheran ideas. Charles V insisted that all reforms be rescinded until an ecumenical council should settle the issue. Disappointed, the Elector of Saxony then urged Lutheran leaders' reconciliation with the South Germans so that he could "lead them in a defensive alliance." By August 1530 Bucer and Melanchthon reached a compromise on the eucharist. With this submission, Strasbourg was admitted to the Smalkald League on February 3, 1531.⁴

³ On Karlstadt, TAE I, No. 214, p. 263; Deppermann, 278-279; C. A. Pater, *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptist Movements: The Emergence of Lay Protestantism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 6.

⁴ Deppermann, 279-280; Spitz, 162-163.

The peace of South Germany's evangelical cities with Wittenberg left Zürich isolated, and led to the city's October 1531 defeat in the second battle of Kappel where Zwingli was slain. The repudiation of Swiss sacramentarianism also tore one of the last threads linking Strasbourg's reformers with the city's radicals. Henceforth the Rat sought counsel concerning the sects from the Lutherans.

Strasbourg's ties to Wittenberg grew stronger in 1532 because of the emperor's efforts to divide the Smalkald League. When Charles V's representatives proposed discussions toward an agreement with the signatories of the Augsburg Confession, the South Germans confessing the *Tetrapolitana* faced the prospect of losing the Lutherans' support and becoming vulnerable to imperial attack. Determined to avoid this, the Rat signed the Augsburg Confession, insisting that it was in essential agreement with the *Tetrapolitana*. This religious double-talk, upsetting to the other *Tetrapolitana* signatories, bore political fruit when, with the 'Nuremberg Truce' of 1532, alliances with both confessional parties were secured.⁵

Even Capito, who for years had displayed spiritualist and Anabaptist sympathies which had placed him in unhappy tension with Bucer, accepted Strasbourg's move towards Lutheranism. His melancholy had climaxed with the deaths of

⁵ Deppermann, 280-281.

his wife, Zwingli and Oecolampadius in late 1531. When Bucer heard that that Capito wished to marry Sabina Bader whose husband had been the executed Anabaptist Augustin Bader,⁶ he arranged for Capito's visit to reformers in several cities, and for his engagement to Wibrandis Rosenblatt, the widow of Oecolampadius. The trip not only revived Capito's spirits; it also helped him again accept "a sacramental mediation of salvation by means of an official and ordered church."⁷ The battle of the clergy to build the reformed church and weaken the religious radicals could now be waged on a united basis.

II. The Radicals at their Zenith, 1529-33

A. Basic Orientations

If since 1526 there had been among the radicals a distinction between spiritualists and sectarians, the lines were still blurred in 1529. The sectarian Reublin and the spiritualist Kautz were able to write a joint confession of faith, and Johannes Bänderlin could read his spiritualist writings at Anabaptist meetings.⁸ The arrival of new leaders, however, so sharpened distinctions that by 1531 there appear to have been seven main groupings of nonconformity:

⁶ *TAE I*, No. 308, pp. 532-533.

⁷ Deppermann, 282-283; Hulshof, *Geschiedenis*, ch. 7.

⁸ *TAE I*, No. 167, pp. 195-196; No. 176, pp. 231-232; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 116; Williams, 254.

Clement Ziegler's followers, the Sattlerite "Swiss Brethren," the Marpeck circle, the Denck-Kautz spiritualist Anabaptists, the Augsburg refugees sympathetic to Hans Hut, the apocalyptic Melchiorites and the Schwenckfeldian spiritualists.⁹ These groups aligned themselves generally along sectarian, spiritualist and apocalyptic lines. In each stream key individuals such as Pilgram Marpeck, Caspar Schwenckfeld and Melchior Hoffman played a major role.

1. The Sectarian Alternative: Pilgram Marpeck

The first of these orientations, congregational sectarianism, was represented most strongly by Pilgram Marpeck (c. 1495-1556) and the Marpeck circle. Unlike Strasbourg's other radical leaders who were artisans, clerics, or intellectuals, Marpeck was a former magistrate. Born to a family line of judges and *Ratsherren* in Rattenberg am Inn, a mining town in the Tyrol, until 1528 he held the office of mining engineer and magistrate. In 1528, after Rattenberg's Anabaptist leader Leonhard Schiemer was executed, Marpeck resigned rather than extradite Anabaptist miners to Archduke Ferdinand. After time in Bohemia where he was probably baptized and named an Anabaptist elder,¹⁰ he and his wife Anna came to Strasbourg.

⁹ Deppermann, 274-275; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 116.

¹⁰ Boyd, "Social Radicalism," 65-66.

In September 1528 Marpeck purchased citizenship and joined the gardener-wagoners' division of the gardener's guild where he no doubt learned about Strasbourg's economic and social tensions.¹¹ Within a month, his involvement with refugees led to his arrest together with Meyger, Hackfurt, Kautz and Reublin while planning additional relief measures. Probably he was either pardoned or expelled.¹² If expelled, he may have settled in the Kinzig Valley where other Tyroleans were working in silver mines.¹³ By 1530 he was contracted to work for Strasbourg's Council of XV¹⁴ who upon his recommendation, bought a forest across the Rhine to ease a chronic shortage of wood. Until 1532, under his supervision, timber was cut and floated down the Kinzig River to Kehl and then transported overland to Strasbourg.¹⁵ Absent from Anabaptist meetings in Strasbourg when involved in the timbering operations, Marpeck and his wife may have founded

¹¹ Boyd, "Social Radicalism," 67-68; Deppermann, 143; Williams, 253-254.

¹² *TAE I*, No. 153, p. 185; No. 179, p. 234; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 108-109.

¹³ In later years Marpeck would correspond with the Anabaptists in the Kinzig and Leber Valleys. Boyd, *Marpeck*, 109, 114.

¹⁴ The Council of XV, dealing with internal affairs, was responsible for guilds, the city treasury and public works. *TAE I*, No. 153, p. 186; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 109-110, 115; Chrisman, "Strasbourg," 22.

¹⁵ Into the seventeenth century Strasbourgeois called these flotillas of log rafts *Pilgerholz* or *Pilgranholz*. *TAE I*, No. 153 pp. 186-187; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 110-114.

an Anabaptist congregation in the Kinzig Valley, for Anabaptists there would correspond with him up to 1555.¹⁶

In Strasbourg Marpeck was an Anabaptist leader at least by 1531. With contacts in Zurich, South Germany, Tyrol and Moravia, with his refugee involvement and with affinities to Swiss Brethren such as Reublin, Marpeck's circle may have been composed largely of "moderate" South Germans and Swiss Brethren.¹⁷ For them he developed a congregational order, probably similar to Schiemer's in Rattenberg. If so, members met frequently to pray for each other. During meetings persons spoke in order while the others listened and evaluated the message (*Sitzerrecht*, I Cor. 14: 23ff.), and they "celebrated the Lord's Supper as a memorial." Offerings were held in common and were used to meet mutual needs. The dissolute were disciplined by the group. Each individual, then, was accountable for the group's life, worship, discipline and ministry.¹⁸ Communal holiness, however, was not to dull sensitivity to suffering. Marpeck's theological vision of a transformed Christian community and his experi-

¹⁶ Boyd, *Marpeck*, 114; Williams, 253.

¹⁷ Among those he baptized were a man in prison with him in 1528, several who were imprisoned in 1533, and Cornelius Schehe from Babenhausen who would be arrested in 1536. *TAE II*, No. 459, p. 210; *TAE III*, No. 720, p. 28. Boyd, *Marpeck*, 120-121. See J. C. Wenger, "A letter from Wilhelm Reublin to Pilgram Marpeck, 1531," *MQR* 23 (1949), 67-75.

¹⁸ Boyd, *Marpeck*, 122-123. According to Fridolin Meyger they did not hold all things in common. *TAE I*, No. 179, p. 234.

ence in positions of authority enabled him to hope for justice for the oppressed while rejecting strategies of violence.¹⁹ This quest to integrate personal transformation and communal participation with social concern proved attractive; by late 1531 Marpeck had emerged as the radicals' strongest leader.²⁰

Marpeck also helped mark out a division between Strasbourg's spiritualists and congregationalists. In his *Clare Verantwortung* and *Klarer Unterricht* (1531) against Bänderlin and Entfelder, Marpeck argued that the Spiritualists' idea of Christ's rule was "too spiritual," and they thereby overlooked the suffering and injustice that others endured.²¹ In addition, by refusing to demonize government, oath swearing and social involvement, Marpeck differentiated his position from that of the Swiss Brethren. The effect of these

¹⁹ Boyd, "Social Radicalism," 74, n. 72, argues this *contra* W. Packull, "In Search of the 'Common Man' in Early German Anabaptist Ideology," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 17 (1986), 67.

²⁰ The fact that nearly all the documents in *TAE I*, pp. 350-534 deal with Marpeck points to the seriousness of his threat to Bucer. Boyd, *Marpeck*, 124; Deppermann, 269-270.

²¹ For arguments that Marpeck was the author and that the tracts were directed primarily at Bänderlin and Entfelder, see N. Blough, "Pilgram Marpeck and Caspar Schwenckfeld: The Strasbourg Years," *Bibliotheca Dissidentium. Scripta et Studia*, No. 3 (Baden-Baden: Editions Valentin Koerner, 1987), 371-374; *Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*, 28-29; 43-67; 69-106; Klassen, *Covenant and Community*, 36-41; W. Klassen, "Pilgram Marpeck's Two Books of 1531," *MQR* 33 (1959), 18-30; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 116-118, 123-124; Packull, *Mysticism*, 158.

tracts was further to define the distinctions among the radicals.²²

While Marpeck wrote against the spiritualists, his principle challenge was against a concerned Bucer. While radical numbers were rising, Strasbourg's clergy were divided, and its churches were so empty that the preachers could hardly preach their case against the nonconformists.²³ In 1531 Bucer petitioned for a public debate with Marpeck, and for a synod to formulate a Rat-supported confession of faith and church order.²⁴ While the Rat disliked the Anabaptists' intractability, it also feared a "Protestant papacy" and persecution of Catholics. So concerned to limit the clergy's power, it instead expelled dissident leaders capable of rallying a mass movement, and denied Bucer's request for a public debate. When debates did take place in December 1531, they were before the *Ratsherren* behind closed doors. By January 12, 1532, Marpeck was expelled.²⁵

²² Marpeck swore the civil oath as well as those oaths required in daily business, and served the needs of the larger community through his work as *Holzmeister*. Boyd, *Marpeck*, 123-124; cf. Deppermann, 269, n. 8.

²³ *TAE I*, No. 244, pp. 327-330; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 129-130.

²⁴ *TAE I*, No. 244, pp. 327-330; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 130-131; H. G. Krahn, "Martin Bucer's Strategy against Sectarian Dissent in Strasbourg," *MQR* 50 (1976), 170.

²⁵ *TAE I*, Nos. 296, 301-306; Boyd, "Social Radicalism," 75.

After Marpeck's departure, it was Leonard Scharnschlager, a wealthy Tyrolean soapmaker who emerged as the Marpeck circle's leading spokesperson.²⁶ Some time after Marpeck's departure, perhaps because of schism or indiscriminate recruiting, Scharnschlager carried out the former's instructions for a moratorium on baptisms. This did not mean that Scharnschlager considered baptism superfluous. Against the spiritualists he insisted that "a covenant without water was no more valid than the water without a true covenant as in pedobaptism."²⁷ Equally clear was his stand against Hoffman's chiliasm.²⁸ Scharnschlager's emergence as leader thus coincided with the sharpening differentiation between sectarians, spiritualists and apocalypticists. Unfortunately for the Anabaptists, although he knew the arguments with which to counter Bucer and Hoffman, he lacked the personal stature needed to overcome them.²⁹ In 1534 he was expelled despite an eloquent

²⁶ "Scharnschlager, Leupold," *ME IV*; Boyd Marpeck, 121.

²⁷ In a December 1532 letter to Michael Leubel in Speyer. See Krebs, *Baden und Pfalz*, No. 409, p. 420; No. 410, p. 424; Williams, 295.

²⁸ *TAE II*, No. 368, p. 19; "Scharnschlager, Leupold," *ME IV*.

²⁹ Deppermann, 269-270.

written plea for freedom of conscience.³⁰ Congregational sectarianism, however, would continue, among the Pilgramites as late as 1590,³¹ and among the Swiss Brethren throughout the century.

2. The Spiritualist Alternative

If sectarianism represented one broad orientation among Strasbourg's radicals, spiritualism was another. One prominent spiritualist throughout the 1520s was Strasbourg's own Eckhart zum Drübel (c. 1486-1539), a wealthy patrician and knight who had fought against the Turks and in the Peasants' War. An early convert to the Reformation, in tracts he deplored indulgences, supported the city's revamped welfare system, and urged his readers "to stand...by the Gospel" (against the peasants) during the Peasants' War.³² His spiritualism emerged in a 1528 summary of his faith for his children. Faith without ethical living is meaningless. Christians must love God supremely and love their neighbors. While accepting baptism, communion and the responsibilities

³⁰ *TAE II*, No. 576, pp. 346-353; E.T. in W. Klassen, "Leupold's Farewell to the Strasbourg Council," *MQR* 42 (1968), 211-218; Williams, 295-296; "Scharnschlager, Leupold," *ME IV*.

³¹ Gerber, "Les Anabaptistes," 314.

³² *TAE III*, No. 823, pp. 147-148, n. 2, 5; *TAE II*, No. 604, p. 385, n. 1, 3; M. U. Chrisman, "Lay Response to the Protestant Reformation in Germany, 1520-1528," *Reformation Principle and Practice. Essays in Honor of A. G. Dickens*, P. N. Brooks, ed. (London: Scholars Press, 1980), 47-48.

of church membership, they should keep their "inner self free."³³ In the 1530s he castigated Luther, Zwingli and the Anabaptists for doctrinal wrangling, the clergy for their elitism and the Anabaptists for their exclusivism. The eucharist, he argued, was solely "spiritual food for his soul." Although not an Anabaptist, for years, to keep his faith free, he refused baptism for his sons.³⁴

For all zum Drübel's accent on spiritual freedom, love of God and neighbor, and care for the poor and the peasant, his aristocratic position curtailed his love. Artisans and burghers he regarded as warily as dishonest doctors, lawyers, and apothecaries.³⁵ Such suspicion characterized many of the ruling class who during the reform made religious concessions to commoners in order to retain their economic and social dominance. Zum Drübel's social position also enabled him, unlike others, to escape censure for his views.

Another spiritualist was Hans Bündlerlin, an Austrian cleric influenced by Hut and Denck. Baptized in Augsburg, he served as preacher first for a noble in Linz and then for

³³ *Ein vetterliche, gedruge, gute zucht, lere und bericht*; Chrisman, "Lay Response," 48-49.

³⁴ *De gloriam Deo -- Von dem eynigen Gott* (1534), TAE II, No. 604, pp. 382-385; Chrisman, "Lay Response," 48-49; Clasen, *Anabaptism*, 81.

³⁵ *Ein vetterliche, gedruge, gute zucht, lere und bericht*; Chrisman, "Lay Response," 50.

the Lord of Nikolsburg in Moravia.³⁶ In Strasbourg from early 1529, he served as teacher in an Anabaptist group which included Fridolin Meyger and the shipper Claus Bruch. Arrested with others in Bruch's home while reading from one of his tracts, he left at the end of the year, but not before absorbing the ideas of Schwenckfeld who had also arrived.³⁷ In the fourth of his works published in Strasbourg, Bänderlin argued that excessive biblicism was the cause of divisions and strife among Christians, and that "the time had come to abolish outer baptism and the Lord's Supper as unnecessary externals."³⁸ By provoking Marpeck in his *Clare Verantwortung* to defend congregational Anabaptism with external "ceremonies," it sharpened the differences

³⁶ There is debate over whether he was the Hans Vischer who supported the Tyrolean peasants' rebellion led by Michael Gaismair. See Stayer, *German Peasants' War*, 200, n. 198; cf. Krahn, "Analysis," 388, *MEI*, "Bänderlin, Johannes."

³⁷ *TAE I*, No. 174, pp. 226-227; No. 176, pp. 231-236. Two years later Sebastian Franck who had also arrived recommended Bänderlin highly to Johann Campanus. "A Letter to John Campanus by Sebastian Franck," *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, G. H. Williams and A. M. Mergal, eds. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 145-160, cf. *TAE I*, No. 241, pp. 301-325; Packull, *Mysticism*, 155-158; Krahn, "Analysis," 388-389; Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 255; *ME I*, "Bänderlin, Johannes;" Blough, "Marpeck and Schwenckfeld," 371-374. Years later Schwenckfeld criticized Bänderlin for excessively denying the institutional church, and for underemphasizing human depravity. McLaughlin, "Strasbourg," 271-272.

³⁸ *Erklärung durch vergleichung der Biblischen geschriefft...*, (1530); Packull, *Mysticism*, 158, 161; *TAE I*, No. 174, pp. 226-227; No. 176, pp., 231-236; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 117.

between Strasbourg's spiritualists and sectarians.³⁹

More influential than Bänderlin was the Silesian nobleman, Caspar Schwenckfeld (1489-1561), who stayed in Strasbourg from May 1529 until after the Synod of 1533. Bucer and Capito, pleased that he had broken with Luther over the eucharist, received him warmly, and with the Zells he formed a close friendship.⁴⁰ While friendly to both the evangelical church and the Anabaptists, he argued that since Christ's own could be found everywhere, he was one with all who did not condemn his spiritualist faith or "his Christ in him," and so he refused to identify with either movement.⁴¹ While this posture enabled him to critique the major contestants, in time it also alienated him from both parties.

Although Schwenckfeld's relations with Capito remained cordial, those with Bucer cooled, first because Bucer wished to maintain relations with Luther,⁴² and secondly because by 1530 Schwenckfeld was attacking Bucer's views on baptism and his attempt to establish a *Volkskirche*.⁴³ Although Schwenckfeld won Hackfurt's assistant, Alexander Berner, to

³⁹ Boyd, *Marpeck*, 117; Blough, "Marpeck and Schwenckfeld," 371-374; Packull, *Mysticism*, 158.

⁴⁰ Krahn, "Analysis," 398-399; Williams, 255-256.

⁴¹ Williams, 257-258.

⁴² He stayed with Capito until the death of Capito's wife in late 1531. Krahn, "Analysis," 398-399; Williams, 256-257.

⁴³ Mitchell, 143-146; Krahn, "Analysis," 410-411; McLaughlin, 273.

his views, by late 1531, with Capito's return to the mainstream of the reform, Schwenckfeld became marginalized. He moved into the home of the nobleman Jakob Engelmann whose wife Margaret would later become his closest correspondent.⁴⁴ Despite the tension, Schwenckfeld's relationship with the clergy remained unbroken until the fall of 1533.⁴⁵

As for the Anabaptists, although Schwenckfeld urged tolerance for them, in his view they displayed no evidence of knowing Christ truly or of being more regenerate than others. Whereas the evangelical clergy over-emphasized conformity, the Anabaptists were too much concerned with externals such as water baptism and church organization. While the evangelical clergy placed too much emphasis on education, the Anabaptists prematurely accepted uninstructed persons into the church and too quickly appointed prominent converts to leadership positions. While he opposed infant baptism, with his inward view of the sacraments he could not accept believer's baptism as significant. The Anabaptists' exclusivism and their use of the ban he considered a tyranny as great as the state's restraint of conscience. Finally Schwenckfeld felt that the apocalypticism of Hut's and Hoffman's followers distracted them from their true mission

⁴⁴ *TAE I*, No. 256, pp. 337-338; Williams, 257; Husser, 76.

⁴⁵ Krahn, "Analysis," 412.

on earth -- namely their inner life.⁴⁶ This ambivalence towards the Anabaptists, sharing their plea for tolerance while criticizing their exclusivism, would also characterize Schwenckfeld's followers in later decades.

Among the radicals, Schwenckfeld shared with Clement Ziegler a spiritualist bent, a form of the celestial flesh of Christ and a distaste for Anabaptist exclusivism. With Karlstadt, who had since fled to Strasbourg from the Netherlands, he agreed on the Lord's Supper and on religious toleration. Expelled in 1530 in order to facilitate Strasbourg's entry into the Smalkald League, Karlstadt finally landed in Zurich, where he later became Schwenckfeld's correspondent and defender.⁴⁷ When Jakob Kautz was in prison, Schwenckfeld visited him, shared with him his writings and, with Capito, even tried to convert him.⁴⁸ Although Schwenckfeld and Marpeck came to a painful separation in 1542, according to Schwenckfeld they were friends in Stras-

⁴⁶ His opinion of the Anabaptists as a whole appeared in his *Judicium de Anabaptistis* (1530). CS III, 830-834. Williams, 258-259; Krahn, 413-416; ME IV, "Schwenckfeld, Caspar."

⁴⁷ TAE I, No. 214, p. 263; Pater, 6; McLaughlin, 269-270; Gerbert, 10-11.

⁴⁸ TAE I, No. 193, pp. 241-246; No. 195, p. 249; Williams, 256-257. Kautz's Worms Bible eventually became the Bible Schwenckfeld used. McLaughlin, 272-273. In December 1529 Kautz's colleague, the printer Peter Schöffler, moved his press to Strasbourg where with Johann Schwintzer he would propagate Schwenckfeldian and spiritualist writings for several decades. TAE I, No. 185, pp. 238-239; No. 198, pp. 250-251.

bourg despite Marpeck's tracts against Bänderlin and Entfelder. For both men, their circle of followers long outlasted their stay in Strasbourg.⁴⁹

Perhaps Strasbourg's most speculative radical was the upper class Austrian and disciple of Denck, Christian Entfelder. In Moravia in 1526-27 he led an Anabaptist congregation which included a group of Schwenckfelders.⁵⁰ In Strasbourg since 1529, he published three books. In *Von den mannigfaltigen im Glauben Zerspaltungen* (1530) he criticized the divisions among the reformers and the Anabaptists. Rather than assume "apostolical ministries" such as sacraments, ordination, separation and teaching, he argued that believers should enter a *Stillstand* for Elijah and for manifestations of the Spirit.⁵¹ These criticisms of "ceremonies" provoked Marpeck's *Klarer Unterricht* which argued that as Christ's physical humanity is not spiritual-

⁴⁹ In the 1540s Marpeck and Schwenckfeld engaged in an extended written theological debate. Blough, "Marpeck and Schwenckfeld," 371-372, 379; McLaughlin, 273. For the story of Schwenckfeld's followers after 1533, see ch. 10 below.

⁵⁰ Packull, 163; "Entfelder, Christian," *ME II*; A. Séguenny, "Christian Entfelder," *Bibliotheca Dissidentium*, I (Baden-Baden: Editions Valentin Koerner, 1980), 37; Williams, 267.

⁵¹ In *Von wahrer Gottseligkeit* (1530) Entfelder described "six stages through which Christ is mystically formed in the believer." His *Von Gottes und Christi Jesu unseres Herrn Erkenntnis* (1533) developed a "mystical doctrine of the Trinity." Williams, 267-268, 321-322; Blough, "Marpeck and Schwenckfeld," 373-374; "Entfelder, Christian," *ME II*.

ized away, so external ceremonies ought also not to be spiritualized away. As with the *Klare Verantwortung* against Bänderlin, this tract helped define a division between Strasbourg's spiritualists and congregationalists.⁵²

Schwenckfeld's closest friend in Strasbourg may have been the cleric, printer and historian, Sebastian Franck (1499-1542), who stayed in Strasbourg from late 1529 to late 1531. Impressed by Luther in 1518, by 1528 he was a Lutheran chaplain near Nuremberg. While criticizing Anabaptists and spiritualists, he also attacked the Lutheran abuse of Scripture and neglect of ethics and church discipline. Opposed by the magistracy, he left the ministry to publish his *Türkenchronik* (1530) in which he contrasted the simplicity of the Muslim Turks "with the impure life, divisions and...rituals of Christians." Besides the Anabaptist, Lutheran, Zwinglian and other splits in the church, he identified an emerging spiritualist movement which would remove externals such as preaching, sacraments, ceremonies and the ban.⁵³ From Strasbourg, in a letter to Johann

⁵² *Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*, 69-106; Blough, 371-375, 378; Klassen, "Marpeck's Two Books," 18-30; Klassen, *Covenant*, 37, 40-41; Boyd, "Social Radicalism," 73-74. Entfelder appears next in 1536 at the Prussian court where Schwenckfeld had a following. Packull, *Mysticism*, 158; McLaughlin, 271.

⁵³ Williams, 264-265; "Sebastian Franck on the Anabaptists. 1536," *Sixteenth Century Anabaptism: Defences, Confessions, Refutations*, F. Friesen, trans., W. Klaassen, ed. (Waterloo, ON: Conrad Grebel College, 1982), 187-208; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 118.

Campanus, he suggested that unlike New Testament times where the Spirit taught and baptized without external trappings, the church since Constantine created the Antichrist with its marriage to temporal power. Thus both the Catholic Church and the reformers mixed the Old Testament with the New, and on this basis justified war and dealt with heresy with the sword.⁵⁴

Among the radicals Franck met in Strasbourg was Strasbourg's Anabaptist printer, Balthasar Beck, whose step-daughter, Margarethe, became Franck's second wife,⁵⁵ and who published Franck's *Chronica, Zeitbuch and Geschichtsbibel* (1531). A history of the world from creation to 1531, the *Chronica* also sheds light on the Anabaptists, many of whom Franck had met. While partial towards Denck's spiritualist Anabaptism, he described the various kinds of Anabaptists with rare nuance, and deplored the mania to create new churches which resulted in sectarian divisions.⁵⁶ Widely opposed, the *Chronica* was confiscated, its sale forbidden, and Franck was banished from the city at the end of 1531.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ "Letter to John Campanus," 145-160, cf. *TAE I*, No. 241, pp. 301-325; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 118-119; Williams, 265.

⁵⁵ *TAE I*, No. 189, p. 240; F. Ritter, *Histoire de l'Imprimerie Alsacienne aux XVe et XVIe siècles* (Strasbourg and Paris: Editions F.-X. le Roux, 1955), 228-231.

⁵⁶ *Sixteenth Century Anabaptism*, 187-208; *TAE I*, No. 262, pp. 342-343; No. 286, pp. 358-359; Williams, 266; Husser, 70; Gerbert, 111.

⁵⁷ Williams, 266-267.

Although Marpeck rejected Franck's recommendation to abandon external ceremonies, he came to value the latter's differentiation between the Testaments, and his ideas on the church's marriage to temporal power.⁵⁸ After the Synod of 1533 Franck and Schwenckfeld settled in Ulm.⁵⁹

3. The Apocalyptic Alternative: Melchior Hoffman

Besides congregational sectarianism and spiritualism, the third broad orientation found among Strasbourg's radicals was apocalypticism. Prefigured with Hans Wolff in 1526 and widespread in popular thought, apocalypticism climaxed in the furrier Melchior Hoffman (c. 1495-1543) who arrived in June 1529. Convinced that he was a prophet, Hoffman proclaimed Christ's imminent return, and his urgent cry for repentance moved many in Strasbourg and beyond, especially in the Netherlands.⁶⁰

A lay Lutheran evangelist by 1522, within three years he was modifying orthodox Lutheranism, calling for holy living

⁵⁸ Boyd, *Marpeck*, 118-119.

⁵⁹ Only in 1539 did they part ways, largely over Schwenckfeld's rejection of Franck's absolute spiritualism, his pantheism and his de-emphasis of human depravity. Franck, for his part, accused Schwenckfeld, like the popes and reformers, of striving to establish his own church. The 1540 Conference of Smalkald condemned both men. McLaughlin, 270-272.

⁶⁰ Krahn, "Analysis," 418-419; 421-422. For a list of Hoffman's writings, see *TAE I*, No. 210, pp. 258-261; Deppermann, 392-398. On chiliasm in the Reformation, see N. Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millenium*, 2nd ed. (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1961).

to accompany *sola fide* and rejecting the use of force. In 1526 he predicted Christ's return within seven years.⁶¹ In early 1529, in Flensburg, Denmark, he was condemned after a disputation with the Lutheran clergy in which he advocated a spiritualist eucharist. Thereafter one of Luther's bitterest opponents, he moved to Strasbourg to publish his account of the disputation, and stayed until April 1530.⁶² He would appear twice more -- in December 1531 and from March 1533 to his death in 1543.⁶³

a. The Strasbourg Prophets, 1529-30

Bucer's warm welcome to a fellow sacramentarian quickly cooled when Hoffman's allegorical and apocalyptic views became evident.⁶⁴ Estranged now from both the Lutherans and the "Zwinglians," Hoffman moved into a circle of visionary prophets led by the butcher Lienhard Jost, his wife Ursula

⁶¹ In his commentary, Daniel XII. *TAE II*, No. 368, p. 18; Krahn, "Analysis," 422-423, 427, 430; Williams, 259-260.

⁶² Karlstadt helped him in the writing. Although they agreed on the eucharist and on Lutheran errors, Karlstadt soon rejected Hoffman's hermeneutics and apocalyptic speculations. Krahn, 424; Williams, 262; Deppermann, 159-160.

⁶³ *TAE I*, Nos. 188, 211, 279, 280, 298, 364; Deppermann, 290, n. 83. Williams, 264, 277, posits a secret fourth visit to Strasbourg in late 1530.

⁶⁴ *TAE I*, No. 188, p. 240; Deppermann, 160; Krahn, "Analysis," 425; Williams, 262.

and Barbara Rebstock.⁶⁵ Rebstock and her husband, Hans Kropf, a weaver, were among Esslingen Anabaptists influenced by Hans Hut.⁶⁶ With Ursula Jost's death around 1530, Rebstock, renowned for her miracles, became the group's leading prophetess.⁶⁷ Until April 1530 the latter stayed in the home of Katherine Seid who, unhappy with Strasbourg's reform, awaited "more truthful" preachers such as Hoffman to lead her out of bondage to salvation.⁶⁸ Others among the "Strasbourg prophets" included Valentin Dufft, a well-to-do goldsmith and citizen who lodged many Anabaptists, a bucket-maker named Valentin Nessel, the prophetess Gertrud Lorenz and her husband, Josef, Wilhelm Blum the elder, a miller and an officer of the Lucerne Guild for millers and corn and flax merchants, and his son Wilhelm Blum the younger, also a miller. After 1531 they were joined by Lienhard Jost's sec-

⁶⁵ Whether Hoffman was himself rebaptized is not known. Against Wiswedel, Deppermann asserts that Hoffman was not baptized by Melchior Rinck in Emden in 1530, for Rinck was in a Hesse prison at the time. Perhaps he felt authorized to baptize because he saw himself as the final prophet of the last days. Deppermann, 216-218. On Lienhard Jost, see *TAE II*, No. 665, p. 453, though see *TAE II*, No. 680, p. 468 for the view that he was a shoemaker. Deppermann, 204-205; *TAE II*, No. 461, p. 213.

⁶⁶ *TAE II*, No. 362, p. 13; No. 540, p. 304; C. P. Clasen, *Die Wiedertäufer im Herzogtum Württemberg*, 1965, 69-80, cited by Deppermann, 205.

⁶⁷ Deppermann, 205; *TAE II*, No. 533, p. 300; No. 617, p. 393.

⁶⁸ Seid, the wife of Andreas Klaiber, was rebaptized in 1532 but attached little significance to the ceremony. *TAE II*, No. 547; pp. 309-310; Deppermann, 204; "Seid, Katharina," *ME IV*.

ond wife, Agnes Jost who had been baptized by Hans Wolff, her daughter Elizabeth, and a Dutch intellectual from Cologne, Johannes Eisenburg. The core of Hoffman's followers, these members would remain loyal to him for years after his imprisonment.⁶⁹

Hoffman ranked the visions of Ursula and Lienhard Jost with those of the ancient prophets. In turn, the Strasbourg Prophets ascribed to him the role of the eschatological Elijah.⁷⁰ In many of Ursula Jost's visions, God's wrath is poured out in cosmic catastrophes while Christ, at the head of a band of commoners, conquers oppressive prelates.⁷¹ Lienhard Jost's visions portray Strasbourg's reformers as Antichrists. After withstanding a siege by the emperor, Strasbourg, the "spiritual Jerusalem," would produce 144,000 "apostolic messengers" who would evangelize, establish a new covenant with God through believers' baptism, and lead the

⁶⁹ Deppermann, 205-206. On Dufft, see *TAE II*, no. 361, p. 12; on Nessel, *TAE II*, No. 491, pp. 261-262 and *TAE III*, No. 952, p. 365; on Rebstock, *TAE II*, No. 362, p. 13; No. 540, p. 304; on the Lorenz's, *TAE III*, No. 799, pp. 112-113; on Wilhelm Blum, see *TAE II*, No. 597, p. 375, and ch. 5 below. For Hoffman's list of 16 prophets, see *TAE III*, No. 800, pp. 116-117.

⁷⁰ *TAE I*, No 210, p. 259; No. 343, p. 561; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 119; Williams, 263; Deppermann, 161, 206; Krahn, 430.

⁷¹ Deppermann, 206-210. For examples of the visions and prophecies, see *Der Linke Flügel der Reformation*, H. Fast, ed. (Brennen: Carl Schüneman Verlag Brennen, 1962), 298-308.

ungodly to judgment.⁷² These visions suggest a hatred of social oppression and a yearning for judgment and liberation into a new and spiritual life through a leader graced by God.⁷³

For the Strasbourg Prophets, the 1530 appearance of Johannes Baptista Italus or Venturinus, an Italian prophet calling on Strasbourg, King Ferdinand and Luther to repent, only confirmed these expectations. The Turks, he declared, would be used by God to destroy the ungodly, especially the rulers and the Catholic hierarchy. After that a "pastor angelicus" would lead the whole world to salvation. As with the Josts, Venturinus envisioned destruction and a transformed world through the appearance of a prophet of God.⁷⁴ While Bucer passed the Italian off lightly, Lienhard Jost he considered a dangerous voice for revolution.⁷⁵

b. Hoffman's thought, 1529-30

The willingness of printers -- Balthasar Beck, Valentin Kobian in Hagenau and Jakob Cammerlander -- to print Hoffman's writings was central to the spread of his ideas.⁷⁶

⁷² *TAE II*, No. 444, pp. 184-185; Deppermann, 211.

⁷³ Deppermann, 206-210.

⁷⁴ *TAE I*, Nos. 205, 206, 206a, pp. 253-256; Deppermann, 212; Williams, 255.

⁷⁵ *TAE I*, No. 343, p. 561; *TAE II*, No. 402, p. 114; Deppermann, 212.

⁷⁶ *TAE II*, No. 462, p. 214; Deppermann, 160, 277.

In his account of the Flensburg Disputation, Hoffman wrote that God would use the magistrates to carry out God's plan for the world, and Melchiorites should wait until Christ should appear.⁷⁷ In *Auslegung der heimlichen Offenbarung Joannis* (1530) Hoffman envisioned three eras of church history: the pre-papal era when churches were ruled by God's Word and Spirit; the era of the papacy when true Christians were persecuted; and the Reformation era when the papacy would join the reformers to annihilate true Christians. Towards the end of the third era the eschatological Elijah and Enoch would be killed in Strasbourg, the spiritual city. The Turks would rule for a time, and then Christ would come to judge and to inaugurate the Kingdom.⁷⁸ This would be the "apocalyptic, political and military victory of the true" persecuted church. From Strasbourg, the New Jerusalem, the gathered 144,000 faithful (Rev. 14:1f.) would go out as "apostolic messengers" to prepare the world to receive Christ.⁷⁹ Unlike Hoffman's earlier egalitarian model of the church, this new church would be a four-tiered hierarchy in which the sinless "apostolic messengers" would hold complete

⁷⁷ *Dialogus und gründliche Berichtigung....* Krahn, "Analysis," 426-427.

⁷⁸ Krahn, 427-429.

⁷⁹ Deppermann, 161; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 119; Krahn, 430. For his claim to be Elijah, see *TAE I*, No. 368, p. 18; Williams, 263.

authority.⁸⁰

These ideas placed Hoffman and the Strasbourg Prophets in ambivalent relations with several radical traditions. In his belief in revelatory visions, the military and political triumph of true believers after tribulation, a prophet of the last days, 144,000 baptized elect and the Turks as God's agent of judgment, Hoffman shared Hut's views. But unlike Hut he eschewed the use of arms, regarded political leaders as protectors of God's people, and envisioned a revolution from above rather than from below.⁸¹ Under Denck's influence he came to counter Lutheran predestination with universal atonement, and against *sola fide* he affirmed free will "in co-operation with divine grace." Denck's mystical access to grace without Scripture or Christ's death, however, he rejected, reserving direct revelation for mature believers. And on eschatology, while Denck condemned apocalyptic speculations and eventually replaced judgment with universal forgiveness, Hoffman preached imminent and eternal judgement on the unrepentant.⁸²

Hoffman shared the Swiss Brethren's pacifism, but they rejected his ideas of "pious magistrates" and opposed

⁸⁰ TAE II, No. 368, p. 19; Depperman, 264-267.

⁸¹ Deppermann, 212-213.

⁸² Deppermann, 160, 190-192, attributes this change to Denck, while Pater, *Karlstadt*, 247, gives more credit to Karlstadt and Hubmaier.

his allegorical hermeneutics and apocalypticism.⁸³ With Schwenckfeld Hoffman taught a spiritualist eucharist, but they differed on Hoffman's chiliasm and on Christology.⁸⁴ Despite these differences, there are signs of mutual appreciation. Schwenckfeld was one of very few to visit Hoffman in prison,⁸⁵ and as late as 1537 Hoffman considered Schwenckfeld one of the sixteen prophets of the Apocalypse.⁸⁶

In April 1530 Hoffman petitioned the Rat to assign a church building for the Anabaptists. The Rat, fearful of his chiliasm and not about to grant the Anabaptists official recognition, had him arrested along with his printer Balthasar Beck. But before he could be tried, he escaped to Emden where he founded an Anabaptist congregation and planted the seed of Melchiorite Anabaptism in the Nether-

⁸³ In 1533 Hoffman, and in 1534 Hans Frisch, the Swiss Brethren's treasurer, betrayed members of the other's group to the authorities. Deppermann, 191, 263, 267; *TAE I*, No. 234, pp. 288-298; *TAE II*, Nos. 368, 370, 533.

⁸⁴ In the sixteenth century there was no consensus on Mary's immaculate conception. Hoffman, like Clement Ziegler, held that since Mary was sinful, Christ's celestial flesh must have "passed through Mary like water through a pipe." Schwenckfeld, considering Mary "a spotless virgin," held that Christ's sinless human nature was from her. Many of the Dutch Anabaptists including Menno Simons embraced Hoffman's doctrine of celestial flesh. After 1538 Schwenckfeld's view more closely approximated Hoffman's: although Christ had his flesh from the sinless Mary, he was conceived in a spiritual way, by the Holy Spirit. Deppermann, 213-216; McLaughlin, 274; *TAE II*, No. 384, p. 89.

⁸⁵ *TAE II*, No. 390, p. 94; McLaughlin, 274.

⁸⁶ *TAE III*, No. 800, p. 116; McLaughlin, 275.

lands.⁸⁷ Rapidly his ideas spread throughout the Netherlands and Flanders, leading eventually both to the Münster debacle and the pacifist sectarianism of Menno Simons. That his ideas met such acceptance is due in part to the changes he underwent in Strasbourg in 1529-30. In addition to his chiliasm, in Strasbourg he newly articulated doctrines of Monophysite Christology, of universal grace and free will, and of a voluntary church entered through believers' baptism. It was this combination of visionary spiritualism, apocalypticism and Anabaptism that captivated listeners in Strasbourg and beyond.⁸⁸

c. Conclusion

In December 1531, while Marpeck and Bucer were debating before the Rat and while Franck and Servetus were about to be expelled, Hoffman reentered Strasbourg after a successful year and a half in the Netherlands. With his return, however, came a paralyzing blow: during a trial his Dutch deputy, John Volkerts (Trijpmaker), yielded the names of more than fifty Anabaptists in Amsterdam. He and nine others were beheaded. Stunned, Hoffman revised his eschatological timetable and counseled a two year moratorium

⁸⁷ *TAE I*, No. 211, pp. 261-262; Williams, 263-264; Deppermann, 218. According to Williams, 264, later that year Hoffman returned and again departed secretly.

⁸⁸ Deppermann, 161, 219.

on baptisms.⁸⁹ Before leaving for the Netherlands in early 1532, Hoffman published three more works, the first of which abandoned traditional language on Christology.⁹⁰ The spring of 1533 saw his final return to Strasbourg where he remained until his death in 1543.

In the end, instead of calling on Hoffman to hoist "the banner of divine justice," the *Rat* held him in prison until his death. The anticipated revolution happened -- against his will -- not in Strasbourg but in Münster, and it met with disaster. In Strasbourg the turmoil sparked by Hoffman's preaching propelled the authorities more quickly to define orthodoxy at the synod of 1533 and officially to suppress nonconformity, especially that of the Melchiorites.⁹¹ Besides eschatological excitement and fear of a revolt, Hoffman helped create a Melchiorite community that would remain loyal through 1538, and an apocalypticism that would resurface in the 1540s in Martin Steinbach's Lichtseher movement. Thus in the following decades apocalyptic dissent would continue alongside that of the sectarians and the spiritualists.

⁸⁹ Hoffman thus introduced a *Stillstand* on (re)baptism much as Schwenckfeld had suggested a *Stillstand* on the eucharist. Williams, 276, 356.

⁹⁰ *Von der wahrhaftigen Menschwerdung des ewigen Worts*. Williams, 276-277.

⁹¹ Deppermann, 161.

D. 1530 Hearings

The growth of the religious radicals in the late 1520s led the Rat in 1530 to renew the Anabaptist mandate of 1527⁹² and to establish a *Wiedertäuferherren* commission to monitor them.⁹³ In the fall of 1530 the *Wiedertäuferherren* obtained thirty seven reports from eye witnesses who knew of religious radicals.⁹⁴ About fifty radicals were mentioned, most of them foreigners.⁹⁵ Of twenty-one meeting places, except for a few gardens and inns, most were homes in or near the Krutenau district near the Butcher's Gate or behind the BarfUsser Inn. Of thirty six individuals representing twenty nine professions,⁹⁶ all but three⁹⁷ were of artisan

⁹² *TAE I*, No. 222, p. 268.

⁹³ On the *Wiedertäuferherren* who remained active until 1573, see *TAE I*, No. 235, pp. 289-290.

⁹⁴ Among others, these included Diebold Schwartz, the pastor of Old St. Peter, Heinrich Jakob who had attended some Anabaptists meetings, Johann Latomus, a priest at St. Nicholas, neighbors of Anabaptists, and employees at the inns where the radicals gathered. *TAE I*, No. 222-228, pp. 268-281.

⁹⁵ Regions of origin included Upper and Lower Alsace, Palatinate, Austria, and especially the South German regions of Swabia, Baden and Wurttemberg. Cities of origin included Augsburg, Esslingen, Freiburg, Gebweiler, Horb, Landau, Lauinger, Lauterburg, Rossheim, Rottenburg, Rot-tweil, Saverne, Schaffhausen, Schlettstadt, Stuttgart and Vienna.

⁹⁶ Trapmaker, clockmaker, servant, alms administrator, shepherd, furrier, tailor, armorer, stove tilemaker, knifsmith, master boilermaker, locksmith, teacher, carpenter, butcher, tanner, mason, midwife, shoemaker, gardener, goldsmith, cloth shearer, clothmaker, pitcher-maker, weaver, journeyman weaver, journeyman clothmaker, stable-master's wife, maid, goldbeater, refugee, lathe-turner,

or lower social status. Gardeners, butchers, weavers, clothmakers and goldsmiths appeared most frequently. Of ten women mentioned, all represented the middle or lower social strata.⁹⁸ Fifteen hosts of meetings were mentioned; most appear to have been Strasbourgeois, and all were artisans. In some cases unmentioned wives probably also served with their husbands as hosts. Of the ten leaders, usually persons other than the host, all but one were artisans.⁹⁹ Of the twenty-four persons who were neither hosts nor leaders, all but the teacher represented artisan stock or lower.

According to the eye witnesses, they gathered in homes, sat outside in twos and threes, and gathered at the Zum Pflug Inn or in the baths at the Mörlin Inn. This points to an informal but well-connected structure. Some would spend several days in one house, perhaps an expression of close community. Several witnesses pointed to contempt for the religious authorities, saying that they missed church and

mason.

⁹⁷ Jörg Betschold, a patrician officer of the Zu Steltz guild, Lukas Hackfurt, the alms administrator, and a teacher. *TAE I*, No. 224, p. 276, n. 51.

⁹⁸ A midwife, a locksmith's wife, a mason's wife, a stable-master's wife, a journeyman weaver's wife, a journeyman clothmaker's wife, two gardeners' wives, an old woman from Swabia and a refugee's wife.

⁹⁹ Leaders included a furrier, an armorer, a stove tilemaker, a carpenter, a butcher, another furrier, a goldsmith, a goldbeater, one old woman and Hackfurt, the alms distributor.

slandered the pastors during Sunday worship. Others described sectarian piety, saying that they would sit, read, teach the Bible, preach, baptize and encourage each other. Some Anabaptists had unusual habits such as lying on their backs to read a prayer book. Others dissented by disobeying guild laws. These activities reflected a variety of religious and social attitudes. More than one fourth of the nonconformists expressed contempt for the religious authorities. Another fifth with pious and sectarian tendencies had brought eleven children into their circle. The few expressing social revolutionary attitudes included a butcher, a knifsmith and a gardener. Only Jörg Betschold, a patrician guild officer, and perhaps Hackfurt, protected by their office, publicly criticized the Anabaptist mandate. One propounded universalist views and one expressed dissatisfaction with all religious groups, whether evangelical, Catholic or Anabaptist.

Less hostile than some of the clergy, the eye witnesses complained mostly of disrespect toward the evangelical church and clergy. According to Diebold Schwartz, the pastor of Old St. Peter, the fact that few of his parishioners attended worship, fewer brought children for baptism, and many attended no church at all, boded ill for the future of the Strasbourg church.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ TAE I, No. 222-228, pp. 268-281; Krahn, 391-393.

Altogether these interrogations reveal great diversity among the nonconformists. Some were Strasbourgeois and more were foreigners. On the whole they represented the middle and lower social strata, with only three representing higher social levels. Within the artisan class, however, they represented a wide spectrum from wealthier goldsmiths to gardeners, servant and maids. Women are not mentioned as frequently as men, but they were actively involved, some, no doubt, together with their husbands. Others were involved despite their husbands' absence, even as hosts and leaders. Despite the adherence of most to Anabaptism, they held differing visions of church and society, and differing visions of how to achieve their ideals. While some preferred pious withdrawal, others scorned the religious leaders, still others criticized the magistrates, and a few favored social-revolutionary action. The butchers appear to have been the most militant. At their zenith Strasbourg's religious radicals displayed great variety; the closest thing to homogeneity was their overwhelming origins from within the artisan class.

Combined with the testimonies of 1529, these reports point to several conclusions about Strasbourg's religious radicals. In 1530-32, with perhaps one fifth of Strasbourg's adult population, they were a force to be considered. Although most were foreign refugees of artisan stock, some prominent citizens were included. They tended

to associate with sectarian groups in the Sattler-Reublin tradition, or with spiritualist groups in the Denck-Kautz tradition, but lines of demarcation were blurred and an apocalyptic element was growing. While most religious services were orderly, consisting of Scripture reading and a sermon, no attempt was made formally to organize an Anabaptist church. The only collective commitment was a treasury to assist the needy. Radicals did sense a kinship, if only in their common opposition to the clergy. The magistrates received more respect. A basic difference between the leading Anabaptists and the clergy was their concept of the church. While Anabaptists called for a church defined by a "convinced membership" whose commitment bore fruit in ethical living, the reformers retained the idea of a *Volkskirche*.¹⁰¹

E. 1531 "Revolutionaries" and Steps toward a Synod
1531 featured brief visits from three nonconformists, each of whom taught some form of celestial flesh Christology, and each of whom was in some way revolutionary. The theologian Bernard Rothmann (c. 1495-1535), destined for leadership in the Anabaptist kingdom of Münster, found Strasbourg's reform impressive. His conversations with Capito and Schwenckfeld helped move him away from Lutheran thinking. Later Bucer attempted, through this connection

¹⁰¹ Krahn, 392-395.

with Rothmann, to cast Schwenckfeld as one of the kingdom's spiritual founders.¹⁰²

The spiritualist Johann Campanus (c. 1500-75) surfaced in Strasbourg in late 1531, and knew of Bänderlin, Franck, Servetus and Schwenckfeld. An early follower of Luther, he diverged from his mentor over the eucharist and the Trinity. In his major publication, *Restitution göttlicher Schrift* (1532), he chastised Luther and Melanchthon for having deprived laypersons of opportunities to participate in the interpretation of Scripture. On the Godhead, he argued that unlike "God the Father and Christ [who] were two persons of one essence," the Holy Spirit was "the mutual bond of love between the Father and the Son."¹⁰³ Schwenckfeld judged this anti-Nicene binitarianism to be Arian.¹⁰⁴

Also arguing a different view of the Godhead was Michael Servetus (1511-53) who came to Strasbourg from Basel where he had known Brunfels, Paracelsus and Oecolampadius. He came to discuss the Scriptures with the reformers and to publish his *On the Errors of the Trinity*. In his view Christ was "the natural Son of God, begotten, not eternally

¹⁰² TAE I, No. 249, p. 333. Schwenckfeld's connection to Rothmann is uncertain, since he denied speaking with him. "Rothmann, Bernard," ME IV; Williams, 268-269; McLaughlin, 273-274.

¹⁰³ See "Letter to John Campanus," 145-160, cf. TAE I, No. 241, pp. 301-325; Boyd, Marpeck, 118; Williams, 265, 272-273, cf. 309-310; ME I, "Campanus, Johann."

¹⁰⁴ McLaughlin, 271.

but through...the Holy Spirit" who, in turn, was not a Person but God's seed. Concerned for sanctification, he also attacked Luther on *sola fide*.¹¹³ While some including Capito and Schwenckfeld were intrigued, Bucer refuted the work publicly, and in December 1531 Servetus was expelled.¹⁰⁵ Chastened, in his *Dialogues on the Trinity* (1532) he softened his words on justification without minimizing sanctification, and attempted to express his modalism in the historic language of three Persons. But at the Synod of 1533 his views were condemned.¹⁰⁶ Although the synod took place only in 1533, the expulsion of Marpeck, Franck, Hoffman and Servetus at the end of 1531 signaled the clergy's determination to achieve doctrinal uniformity and the Rat's resolve to prevent dissident leaders from gathering a potentially dangerous following. Together with plans for a synod, these expulsions marked the beginning of the end for Strasbourg's religious radicals.

III. The Great Collapse, 1533-35

A. The Lead-up to the Synod of 1533

During the years 1529-49 the Synod of 1533 was the most important event in the Strasbourg Reformation. For the Strasbourg Church it established doctrine, a disciplinary

¹⁰⁵ TAE I, Nos. 269, 280, 293, 331; Williams, 269-270; McLaughlin, 270-271.

¹⁰⁶ TAE II, No. 371, p. 25; Williams, 271.

ordinance and a system of visitation for the rural churches.¹⁰⁷ When, in the wake of Münster, the Rat enforced the Synod's decisions with an ecclesiastical ordinance in 1534 and a disciplinary ordinance in 1535, it spelled a drastic decline for the radicals.

Like the radicals, Bucer longed for thoroughgoing moral reform. But more passionately he longed for church unity and strength, and these he saw threatened on every side. In his view the radical threat and ecclesiastical reform were of highest priority to eliminate clerical disunity, doctrinal vagueness, moral disorderliness and poor church attendance.¹⁰⁸ Ecclesiastical unity among the city's populace and churches would have to be established over against both the radicals and the Catholics. Moreover, it would have to be formulated in a way compatible with both the Lutheran Smalkald League and Zwinglian formulations.¹⁰⁹ Basel, Bern, Ulm, Constance and Memmingen having all recast their church structures in 1530-32, Bucer also feared that Strasbourg, because of its nonconformists, might lose its place as South Germany's religious leader. In 1533 his unease turned into fear of a revolution led by Hoffman.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Rott, 376-377.

¹⁰⁸ See *TAE I*, No. 244, 327-330 for description of conditions in the church. Krahn, "Bucer's Strategy," 170; Mitchell, ii.

¹⁰⁹ Williams, 278.

¹¹⁰ *TAE II*, No. 470, p. 222; Deppermann, 283.

Thus, as perhaps nowhere else, Strasbourg's church synod was planned specifically to refute the religious radicals.¹¹¹

Bucer turned to the Rat for help. By September 1531 a twenty-one member lay committee of *Kirchenpfleger* (church wardens, three per parish) to monitor the teachings and behavior of pastors, their assistants and the laity was in place.¹¹² By 1532 preparations for a synod to work out a confession of faith, stop the radical movements and to implement a moral and ecclesiastical code for Strasbourg's urban and rural territories were well underway.¹¹³

B. Developments with Hoffman

While synod preparations were being made, Hoffman, returning from Eastern Frisia, made his third appearance in Strasbourg in March 1533, the year he expected Christ to return.¹¹⁴ After nine weeks with the Dutchman Johannes Eisenburg in the home of the goldsmith Valentin Dufft, he delivered his booklet, "Concerning the Sword," to the town

¹¹¹ Williams, 278.

¹¹² TAE I, No. 244, pp. 327-330; Boyd, "Social Radicalism," 74-75; Krahn, "Bucer's Strategy," 170-172. The account of the Synod of 1533 is told in detail by F. Wendel, *L'Eglise de Strasbourg, sa constitution et son organization, 1532-1535* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1942).

¹¹³ TAE I, Nos. 332a, 342-343, 348; Krahn, "Bucer's Strategy," 172-174; Williams, 278; Mitchell, 132-134.

¹¹⁴ Obbe Philips, "A Confession," *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writings*, G. H. Williams and A. M. Mergal, eds. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 209; Deppermann, 290-291.

hall in hopes of triggering the chain of apocalyptic events. But nothing happened to fulfill his prophecies.¹¹⁵

Events accelerated when a furrier named Claus Frey accused Hoffman to the Rat of plotting revolt. Earlier, when imprisoned for Anabaptism in Rottenburg, Frey had escaped to Nuremberg. When his wife Catherine refused to follow him with their eight children, Frey left her. While the Rottenburg-Windsheim Anabaptists excommunicated him for neglecting his marriage and for religious aberrations, the Nuremberg Anabaptists named him leader.¹¹⁶ At the home of an Anabaptist noble named Georg Gross (Pfersfelder), Frey met Pfersfelder's sister Elisabeth, who soon gave to him her "goods, honour and body." Frey, in turn, called her the "mother of all believers" and the "eternal virgin," while calling himself "Christ according to the Word" and the "head of the church."¹¹⁷ Thrown out of Pfersfelder's castle, Frey and Elisabeth sought refuge in Strasbourg with Hoffman and his colleagues. Hoffman, Dufft and Barbara Rebstock, unimpressed, ordered Frey to end his adultery and return home -- without success. Ejected from Hoffman's con-

¹¹⁵ *TAE I*, No. 362, p. 13. Against Krebs and Rott who identify Hoffman's colleague from Cologne as Poldermann, Deppermann identifies him as Eisenburg. *TAE II*, No. 364, pp. 14-15; Deppermann, 290-291.

¹¹⁶ *TAE II*, Nos. 369, 388, 564; Williams, 287-288; Deppermann, 291.

¹¹⁷ *TAE II*, No. 564, p. 324; Deppermann, 291-292; Williams, 288, differs slightly.

gregation, Frey sought revenge by informing the Rat of Hoffman's address and accused him of fomenting revolt.¹¹⁸

Frey's betrayal led to Hoffman's arrest on May 20, 1533. Convinced that the hour of Christ's return had come, and sworn until then to eat only bread and water, he joyfully went to prison.¹¹⁹ Throughout his trial, while insisting on his loyalty to the Rat,¹²⁰ he predicted rebellions the world over, and the destruction of "Babylon" with all its "priests," "servants of Baal," before the true Jerusalem would arise.¹²¹ The decision to try him at the upcoming synod he saw as a fulfillment of the prophecy of a great council which would try the eschatological Elijah and Enoch.¹²² Meanwhile, despite attacks, interrogations, imprisonment and his fast, he continued his production of books.¹²³

¹¹⁸ *TAE II*, Nos. 361, 362, pp. 12-14; cf. No. 564, p. 329; Deppermann, 292.

¹¹⁹ Obbe Philips, "A Confession," 209-210.

¹²⁰ *TAE II*, Nos. 364, 369; cf. No. 456; Williams, 288; Deppermann, 294.

¹²¹ *TAE II*, No. 368, p. 18; Deppermann, 294.

¹²² *TAE II*, No. 471, p. 224; Deppermann, 293.

¹²³ To Bucer's amazement. *TAE II*, No. 417, p. 124; Deppermann, 293-294.

C. The Preliminary Synod, June 3-6, 1533

While Hoffman and Frey were being tried, a committee of clergy and *Kirchenpfleger* drafted a confession of faith in sixteen articles.¹²⁴ To enable the urban clergy to come to the main synod united, from June 3-6 a preliminary synod was held, attended by all the city's pastors and their assistants, the *Kirchenpfleger*, all the teachers and four delegates from each guild.¹²⁵ Each of the proposed "Sixteen Articles" was discussed with all participants invited to comment. The confession repudiated believers' baptism, an autonomous church and rigorous excommunication, and approved the sacraments and preaching. Every point was geared to uphold first the unity of society, church and state, and secondly, the church as a mediator of salvation.¹²⁶

Disagreement arose over baptism (Article 8) because four of the clergy, persuaded that Scripture did not decree infant baptism, wished to leave the time question to the

¹²⁴ *TAE II*, No. 371, pp. 25-32. These were based on the *Tetrapolitana* and on twenty-two articles Bucer had drafted earlier. *TAE II*, No. 358, pp. 4-8; Williams, 279-280.

¹²⁵ By delivering the opening sermon, Capito identified himself publicly with the synod. The synod was presided by four magistrates. Krahn, "Bucer's Strategy," 175; Deppermann, 284-285; Williams, 280-281.

¹²⁶ *TAE II*, No. 373, pp. 35-55. For an analysis of the significance of the "Sixteen Articles" vis-à-vis the radicals, see Deppermann, 285-288.

parents or the baptizand.¹²⁷ Greater conflict arose over Articles 14 and 15 which gave civil authorities a positive role in church affairs. These were formulated not only against the Anabaptists but also against the "Epicureans." These "Epicureans," all humanists, espoused freedom of conscience and inquiry as a safeguard against a Protestant "popery" and persecution of nonconformists. Led by Dr. Anton Engelbrecht (1485-1558), the pastor of St. Stephen's, they included Wolfgang Schultheiss, Capito's former assistant and the pastor in Schiltigheim, Jakob Ziegler, a humanist geographer, mathematician and classicist, the Latin teacher Johann Sapidus, and the physician, botanist and teacher, Otto Brunfels.¹²⁸

Engelbrecht, who as suffragan bishop of Speyer had released Bucer from his monastic vows, argued for a separation between politics and religion. The clergy were inconsistent; having earlier demanded "the free proclamation of the gospel," they were now constraining dissidents of conscience with government authority. Such constraint by Lutherans, Zwinglians or Anabaptists was no better than that done by Jews, Muslims or Catholics. In the realm of doc-

¹²⁷ Deppermann, 288.

¹²⁸ TAE I, Nos. 236a, 353, 371, 373, 374, 392, 402, 453, 492; W. Bellardi, "Anton Engelbrecht (1485-1558)," ARG 64 (1973), 191, 197; W. Bellardi, *Wolfgang Schultheiss* (Frankfurt: Erwin von Steinbach Stiftung, 1976); M. Lienhard, "Les Epicuriens à Strasbourg," *Croyants et Sceptiques au XVIe Siècle* (Strasbourg: Librairie Istra, 1981), 17-22; Williams, 281-283; Deppermann, 288-289.

trine and conscience, coercion had no place for only God could rightly govern there.¹²⁹ Schultheiss, anxious that a "new tyranny" might replace the old, appealed for the open quest for truth and for openness to fresh revelation. Like the Anabaptists he affirmed the early church's congregational structure where all could participate in the interpretation of Scripture (I Cor. 14). To enhance the Holy Spirit's flow, he appealed for the peaceful and open discussion of the Scriptures and all things spiritual.¹³⁰

In their fear of an evangelical papacy, and in their opposition to civil involvement in questions of doctrine, the Epicurians were supported not only by the radicals but also by "liberal" patricians and humanists.¹³¹ Bucer's assurances that magistrates should not formulate doctrine, that the state should disobey if the church's orders were unjust, and that a preacher should not seek personal protection from civil authorities, did not satisfy. Only Sapidus yielded, but with reservations.¹³² A compromise not

¹²⁹ Bellardi, "Anton Engelbrecht," 191-200; *TAE II*, Nos. 373-374, pp. 36-63; Williams, 283; Lienhard, 20; Deppermann, 288-289.

¹³⁰ *TAE I*, No. 236, pp. 291-297; Williams, 282; Deppermann, 289; Lienhard, 20-21.

¹³¹ *TAE II*, Nos. 373, 374, 453; Williams, 282.

¹³² *TAE II*, No. 392, p. 95; No. 453, p. 205; Deppermann, 288-289.

forthcoming, the "Sixteen Articles" were returned for rewriting before being presented to the main synod.¹³³

The final day of the preliminary synod was devoted to a mutual evaluation of the pastors. Before the synod presidents and the *Kirchenpfleger* each pastor was invited privately to evaluate his colleagues. Complaints arose most frequently about Engelbrecht, specifically for missing *Konvent* meetings, for cavorting with disreputable folk at home and in taverns, for baptizing in homes, for poor sermon preparation, "and for allowing his maid and his serving boy to go unkempt in the alleys."¹³⁴

D. The Main Synod, June 10-14, 1533

The Main or Territorial Synod convened from June 10 to 14 in two sessions. During the first session the now revised "Sixteen Articles" were debated by the rural clergy from the twenty-three villages under Strasbourg's jurisdiction.¹³⁵ The second session (June 11-14), led by Bucer, saw an examination of selected nonconformists: the gardener-

¹³³ *TAE II*, No. 373, p. 45; Deppermann, 289.

¹³⁴ Williams, 283-284.

¹³⁵ Williams, 284. On these dependencies with their various relations to the city, see G. Wunder, *Das Strassburger Landgebiet* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1967). These villages, up to 30 kilometers away, ranged from Kehl and Nonnenweier on the East bank of the Rhine to Detweiler, Wasselnheim and Barr in the west. For the comments of the rural clergy, see *TAE II*, No. 384, pp. 70-75.

preacher Clement Ziegler, a Ziegler disciple named Martin Stör, Hoffman, Frey, and Schwenckfeld.¹³⁶

Ziegler and Stör, questioned first, were charged with denying hell, Satan and the Last Judgment, and with teaching that God could be served through violence.¹³⁷ Ziegler denounced "civil punishment for religious" convictions and affirmed universal salvation, but no longer condemned pedobaptism. Considered not dangerous, he was released.¹³⁸ Unable to articulate his views, Stör agreed to all articles except for those on baptism and the eucharist where he echoed Ziegler. Regarding the incarnation he asked to wait for "further light."¹³⁹

Hoffman was charged with erroneous teaching on the Incarnation, false prophecies regarding Strasbourg and inciting unrest.¹⁴⁰ Although the latter charge was dropped, Capito and Bucer remained certain that Hoffman's followers were eyeing an opportunity to trigger a revolt.¹⁴¹ Hoffman

¹³⁶ Williams, 284-285; Krahn, "Bucer's Strategy," 175-176.

¹³⁷ Krahn, "Bucer's Strategy," 176, n. 51; Husser, "Liberté Spiritualiste," 50.

¹³⁸ *TAE II*, No. 384, pp. 76-77; Krahn, "Bucer's Strategy," 176; Williams, 284.

¹³⁹ *TAE II*, No. 504, p. 275; Williams, 289.

¹⁴⁰ Krahn, "Bucer's Strategy," 176, n. 51; Husser, 50.

¹⁴¹ Deppermann, 294-295; *TAE II*, No. 402, pp. 113-114; No. 564, pp. 341-342.

argued five main points: 1) a celestial flesh Christology, 2) universal grace, 3) free will after illumination, 4) believer's baptism, and 5) no "forgiveness for mortal sins committed after conversion."¹⁴²

Schwenckfeld, accused of jealous ambition, erroneous teachings, and separatist activity *vis-à-vis* the church, distanced himself from Hoffman, submitted five writings for examination, and insisted that he sought only peace and unity.¹⁴³ On Christ and the atonement, he maintained against Chalcedon and Bucer that the undivided Christ suffered in both his human and divine natures.¹⁴⁴ On the sacraments he argued that like Abraham prior to circumcision, one could live by faith without signs. He granted infant baptism as long as it was not considered "the baptism of Christ," which properly was the baptism of the Spirit and fire. On church-state relations, he argued that while the magistrates might ensure the continuance of worship, non-conformists should enjoy freedom of conscience.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² *TAE II*, No. 384, pp. 79, 83, 89; No. 368, p. 19. Bucer later refuted them under four headings; see *TAE II*, Nos. 398, 402, 444; Depperman, 295; Williams, 285.

¹⁴³ Krahn, "Bucer's Strategy," 176, n. 51; Husser, 50.

¹⁴⁴ "The Protest," published in *CS IV*, 788-790. *TAE II*, No. 381, p. 81; cf. No. 384, p. 89; Williams, 285-286; Deppermann, 295.

¹⁴⁵ Williams, 289; Husser, 50.

Claus Frey, insisting on Elizabeth Pfersfelder as his wife, declared that the true church, that of which he was head, was free of externals "except for the covenant of spiritual marriage." He now disowned Anabaptism, but the clergy, by linking his bigamy to Hoffman's movement and his spiritualism to Schwenckfeld's, portrayed the ethically sensitive radicals themselves to be immoral.¹⁴⁶

With this the Synod concluded. Few clergy or radicals changed their views. At a post-Synod in October 1533 records were finalized, the ecclesiastical ordinances were formulated, Schwenckfeld's and Hoffman's writings were scrutinized, and penalties for the radicals were determined.¹⁴⁷

Why were only these five individuals examined? Hoffman's great influence and the treasonous potential of his message probably led to his selection. Schwenckfeld may have requested a hearing. In Claus Frey and Martin Stör the examiners found nonconformists who could be discredited for their strange views, immoral conduct or intellectual weakness, and thus would stigmatize the larger radical move-

¹⁴⁶ Ironically, within a few years Bucer would find abundant Scriptural evidence to justify the bigamy of Philip of Hesse. *TAE II*, Nos. 361, 369, 384, 388, 410, 456, 464; Williams, 288-289; Krahn, "Bucer's Strategy," 176-177.

¹⁴⁷ Williams, 279, 290; Deppermann, 295.

ment.¹⁴⁸ It is significant that although "the Anabaptists" were decried in the synod as a divided people who could agree only on maligning the church, their leaders such as Leopold Scharnschlager were not examined.¹⁴⁹ It is unlikely that Bucer doubted his debating ability. But aware that the Marpeck circle's theologically orthodox and socially involved congregationalism had impressed even Ratsherren, he may have feared that in comparison, the decay of the official church would cast his vision of a united Volkskirche in a bad light.¹⁵⁰

E. Results and Aftermath of the Synod

For Bucer the synod was a great personal success. But although the magistrates moved to consolidate the reform in Bucer's image, to the clergy's disappointment, they refused

¹⁴⁸ Bucer's behavior towards the radicals, especially after 1526, challenges the assertion of several historians (e.g., Eells, Chrisman) that Bucer was "an apostle of peace" who enhanced Strasbourg's renowned atmosphere of tolerance. Rather, his purpose and implementation of measures against the radicals in 1533-35 demonstrate intolerance. The breadth for which he was famous, displayed among Zwinglians and Lutherans in 1529, and Protestants and Catholics in 1540-41, presupposed a *corpus christianum* worldview, and was reserved for political heavyweights. As such it appears more a strategic tolerance rather than a tolerance of principle. Krahn, "Bucer's Strategy," 178.

¹⁴⁹ Krahn, "Bucer's Strategy," 176; Husser, 50.

¹⁵⁰ Krahn, "Bucer's Strategy," 177-178; *TAE II*, No. 577, pp. 353-361.

immediate, harsh measures to enact ecclesiastical ordinances regarding doctrine, dissenters, preaching and baptism.¹⁵¹

Ziegler and Stör were allowed to remain in Strasbourg as long as Ziegler did not preach.¹⁵² The "Epicureans" paid a heavier price. Jakob Ziegler left for Baden-Baden where he published his *Synodus*, a scathing critique laden with Old Testament texts against placing religious and political power in the same hands.¹⁵³ Brunfels moved to Bern to serve as city physician. After threats of dismissal in 1534, Schultheiss was relieved of his position in 1538 (or perhaps in 1542). He eventually returned to the Catholic Church.¹⁵⁴ Engelbrecht was not formally deposed but in December 1533 responsibility for the paupers' hospice" was given to another, and the following month his St. Stephen's church was closed.¹⁵⁵ Eventually he moved to Cologne where he returned to the Catholic Church and published works critical

¹⁵¹ *TAE II*, Nos. 384, 387, 405; Williams, 290; Deppermann, 295-296, 302-303.

¹⁵² *TAE II*, No. 453, p. 205; No. 486, pp. 257-259.

¹⁵³ The work would be refuted by Bucer. *TAE II*, Nos. 478, 504, 509, 530; Lienhard, 21-22; Deppermann, 290. In the following years Ziegler maintained a friendship with Schwenckfeld. Williams, 291.

¹⁵⁴ *TAE II*, No. 524, p. 295; No. 499, p. 269; *TAE III*, No. 1309, p. 46; Deppermann, 290.

¹⁵⁵ *TAE II*, Nos. 476, 501, 514. For Engelbrecht's views after the synod, see *TAE II*, Nos. 472, 488, 501, 515, 516; Deppermann, 290.

of Bucer.¹⁵⁶ Claus Frey, still confident of his cause, was drowned in the Ill for bigamy. Elizabeth Pfersfelder expected miracles to follow his execution,¹⁵⁷ but when they failed to materialize, she begged forgiveness for her folly and adultery.¹⁵⁸ She soon joined the Schwenckfeldians.

As for Schwenckfeld, the synod finally severed his ties with the clergy, even though Matthew and Katherine Zell still supported him. When he failed to give Bucer a clear declaration that the Strasbourg clergy preached the true Gospel, the reformers (except for the Zells) demanded his expulsion.¹⁵⁹ In September 1533 he moved to Augsburg, 177 never to return except for July 1534 when he debated with Bucer in an attempt to win over the *Rat*.¹⁶⁰ Use of the temporal sword to enforce doctrine, he argued, misconceived and violated Christian freedom. Not even Hoffman with his erroneous Christology posed a danger that necessitated government intervention and incarceration. Schwenckfeld's

¹⁵⁶ *TAE I*, p. 51, n. 1; Lienhard, 20.

¹⁵⁷ *TAE II*, Nos. 388, 409-412; Williams, 292.

¹⁵⁸ Capito, so disturbed by Frey that he wrote a booklet on true and false martyrdom, found even this repudiation insufficient. *TAE II*, No. 564, pp. 321-342; No. 650, p. 442; Williams, 292.

¹⁵⁹ *TAE II*, Nos. 418, 419, 423, 427, 435a; Husser, 50-51; Williams, 291.

¹⁶⁰ *TAE II*, Nos. 423, 583-588, 593; Williams, 292; Husser, 51.

last plea failed, and again he was asked to leave.¹⁶¹ The following spring his closest friend, the notary Jakob Held von Tieffenau, was exiled for not having his child baptized,¹⁶² and Alexander Berner, the assistant alms administrator, was expelled for propagating Schwenckfeld's views.¹⁶³

After a year of written debate, Bucer, with Ambrosius Blaurer, reformer in Constance and Martin Frecht, Lutheran pastor in Ulm, met with Schwenckfeld and Jakob Held in a colloquy on May 28, 1535 in Tübingen.¹⁶⁴ Bucer hoped to make peace by granting Schwenckfeld his view on the sacraments in exchange for the latter's admission that the Strasbourg clergy preached the true Gospel. Although differences especially on Christology and the eucharist emerged, they managed to pull together an agreement without giving up "theological points." Schwenckfeld would no longer condemn the Strasbourg church as long as the clergy held to the "true Christian faith," and the preachers would no longer call him a destroyer of the peace, of the truth and of the

¹⁶¹ Deppermann, 296; *TAE II*, No. 588, p. 368.

¹⁶² *TAE II*, No. 645a, p. 438.

¹⁶³ *TAE II*, No. 660, p. 449; Deppermann, 296.

¹⁶⁴ For an account of the colloquy, see R. L. Harrison, Jr., "Schwenckfeld and the Tübingen Colloquy May 28, 1535," *MQR*, 52 (1978) 237-247. Held left a detailed report of the debates, "Bericht vom Gespräch Caspar Schwenckfelds mit Blaurer, Butzer und Frechten zu Tübingen uffem Schloss," *CS V*, No. 195, pp. 326-341; Husser, 51-52, 187; *TAE II*, No. 670, p. 457.

church.¹⁶⁵ One reason for this relatively pro-Schwenckfeldian agreement was probably a fear of Schwenckfeld's supporters in the Württemberg court who could disrupt the spread of the Reformation in Württemberg. Another reason was that Bucer, hard at work to reconcile Lutherans and Zwinglians, wished to silence Schwenckfeld's criticism so that his concordial efforts not be disrupted. Schwenckfeld was left free to work with minimal opposition in southwestern Germany¹⁶⁶ until his condemnation at Smalkald in 1540. His followers in Strasbourg, meanwhile, continued their low-key and informal meetings at each other's homes.

Regarding Hoffman, neither the examiners' judgment of him as a dangerous blasphemer,¹⁶⁷ nor his sentence of life imprisonment intimidated him and his adherents. Every day followers gathered beneath his prison window to hear his sermons. A rumor of Melchiorites mobilized in the forest to plot an uprising led to Hoffman's transfer elsewhere, but when even here forty faithful appeared, he was moved to solitary confinement.¹⁶⁸ Undaunted, Hoffman continued to produce pamphlets which were smuggled out by his deputy,

¹⁶⁵ Harrison, 237, 242-243, 245; Husser, 52-53.

¹⁶⁶ Harrison, 237, 244-247.

¹⁶⁷ *TAE II*, No. 444, pp. 192-193; Deppermann, 304.

¹⁶⁸ *TAE II*, No. 390, p. 93-94; No. 395, p. 98; Deppermann, 297.

Cornelius Poldermann.¹⁶⁹ At the end of June 1533 the Rat demanded that he stop writing and that Schwenckfeld stop visiting him. It ordered all who had hosted an Anabaptist meeting to be arrested and it brought Lienhard Jost to trial.¹⁷⁰

Despite a prohibition on Melchiorite writings, a Melchiorite version of the synod, possibly written by Johannes Eisenburg, was published for Netherlander readers. According to this account Hoffman had won the debate with Bucer.¹⁷¹ Bucer, in turn, distributed to the Netherlands his own account of the synod and his opinion of Hoffman: with his Monophysite christology, his doctrine of free will and his denial of forgiveness for sins committed after baptism, this Hoffman represented a return of the early church's worst heretics. And with his rejection of infant baptism, he destroyed the oneness of the church.¹⁷² In Münster, meanwhile, the Melchiorite movement gathered momentum as word spread that Hoffman had converted not only the synod but the whole city.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ *TAE II*, No. 398, p. 100; Deppermann, 297.

¹⁷⁰ *TAE II*, No. 400, pp. 110-111; Deppermann, 297.

¹⁷¹ *TAE II*, No. 399, pp. 101-109; Deppermann, 297, 302.

¹⁷² "Handlung inn den offentlichen gesprech...", 1533. For excerpts, see *TAE II*, No. 402, pp. 111-117; Deppermann, 297-298, 301-302; *TAE II*, Nos. 404, 407, 408.

¹⁷³ *TAE II*, No. 452, p. 204; No. 471, pp. 222-225; Deppermann, 302.

In Strasbourg, as Hoffman's followers wondered whether Schwenckfeld might be the new Enoch to accompany their Elijah,¹⁷⁴ expectations soared toward the end of 1533 when Hoffman believed he would be released and Christ would return. His followers, led by Eisenburg, intensified their missionary activity. By December Bucer feared it was too late to prevent a revolt. But the Rat did act. Although still undecided about enforcing religious conformity in general, on December 26, 1533, it ordered all Melchiorites to recant or leave the city.¹⁷⁵

For the clergy this was not enough. One month later Capito, Bucer, Hedio and Zell presented the Rat with a near ultimatum signed by all the pastors except Schultheiss and Engelbrecht. The Rat should declare the "Sixteen Articles" and the *Tetrapolitana* as the city's official confessions, and should take charge of Christian discipline and education. It should ensure that the Sabbath be hallowed, that sermons be attended, that preachers not be slandered and that heresy be uprooted. Without action, they would broadcast their grievances from their pulpits and would consider collective resignation. Horrified, the Rat promised a quick response.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Netherlanders favored Hoffman's deputy, Cornelius Poldermann, or Jan Mathijs.

¹⁷⁵ *TAE II*, No. 470, p. 475; Deppermann, 305-306.

¹⁷⁶ *TAE II*, Nos. 498, 499, pp. 265-269; No. 503, pp. 271-273; Deppermann, 305-306.

Just then in Münster the rise to power of the Melchiorites in February 1534 created a new situation. Warnings came of fanatic Melchiorites on their way to Strasbourg to enlist "comrades of the covenant." With new alarm the Rat announced a succession of statutes against the radicals.¹⁷⁷ By March 4 the "Sixteen Articles" and the *Tetrapolitana* were Strasbourg's official doctrine.¹⁷⁸ In April it was decreed that any Anabaptist unwilling to embrace the official church should within a week quit the city with his family.¹⁷⁹ In June the Rat condemned the views of radicals such as Hoffman and Ziegler. All non-conformists were ordered, upon oath, to shun separate meetings and to perform militia service, or else, with their families, leave within two weeks. Returnees would be punished, as would citizens who sheltered them. All Anabaptist civil servants and government officials would be dismissed and expelled if they retained their errors. Children were to be baptized immediately or "within six weeks of birth." Refusal would result in forcible baptism and loss of rights for the parents.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ *TAE II*, No. 631, pp. 414-415; No. 652, pp. 443-444; Williams, 297; Deppermann, 307-308.

¹⁷⁸ *TAE II*, No. 518, pp. 285-286; Deppermann, 308.

¹⁷⁹ *TAE II*, No. 535, p. 301; Deppermann, 308.

¹⁸⁰ *TAE II*, No. 577, pp. 353-561; Hulshof, 150; Deppermann, 308; Chrisman, Strasbourg, 223-224. These decrees were reiterated to the guilds in February and March 1535. *TAE II*, No. 638, pp. 431-432; No. 645, pp. 437-438.

While these measures signaled victory for the clergy, other measures curtailed their power. First, supervision of faith matters was given to the lay *Kirchenpfleger*. Secondly, objections to the city's confession of faith would henceforth be heard by magistrates and *Kirchenpfleger*, with the *Rat* as final judge. Clergy could only observe. Thirdly, only the *Kirchenpfleger* could exercise church discipline. "All gentleness" was to be used to correct non-conformists. Recalcitrant dissidents were to be left "to the judgment of God," not excommunicated. Weekly church attendance would not be enforced. In effect, the *Rat* refused to legislate morality. Finally, to prevent the clergy from closing ranks against the *Rat*, three *Kirchenpfleger* were appointed to *Konvent* meetings with authority to arbitrate disputes and report to the *Rat*.¹⁸¹

With the measures of 1533-35, the clergy's battle against the religious radicals was won. The impact of these measures would be to stop the radicals' momentum, cripple their influence and to drive them underground. The cost of this victory, however, was the magistrates' control over the church.¹⁸² For the *Rat* these decisions to enforce conformity, driven largely by the fear of a second Münster,

¹⁸¹ *TAE II*, No. 577, pp. 353-361; Deppermann, 308-309; Chrisman, 223-224.

¹⁸² Deppermann, 309.

represented a turn from its usual tolerance.¹⁸³ Nevertheless, concern for civil peace still outweighed religious zeal, and so, to the clergy's dismay, although many left the city, 1534 and 1535 saw no relentless banishment of every dissident, and nonconformists were still tolerated if they kept quiet. By March 1535 the mandate of June 1534 had been liberalized to grant greater freedom of conscience. Anabaptists who wished to remain in the city no longer had to accept the *Tetrapolitana* and the "Sixteen Articles," but had only to swear that they would fulfill their civil duties and not criticize the city's religion in public.¹⁸⁴ Repeated appeals for greater repression from the clergy, the bishop and King Ferdinand fell on deaf ears.¹⁸⁵

Hoffman, meanwhile, plagued with dysentery, complained of bad treatment.¹⁸⁶ The Rat dared neither to free him nor to execute him because of his great following and fear of bloodshed. So he languished in prison for life without ever receiving a formal sentence.¹⁸⁷ In order that he not become a martyr, he was given a more comfortable room with

¹⁸³ Williams, 297.

¹⁸⁴ *TAE II*, No. 647, p. 439; No. 672, p. 458; Deppermann, 309-310; Hulshof, 151-152.

¹⁸⁵ *TAE II*, Nos. 667, 668, 673, 674, 676; Deppermann, 310.

¹⁸⁶ *TAE II*, No. 467, pp. 219-220; Deppermann, 304.

¹⁸⁷ Deppermann, 305.

Katharine Zell to nurse him.¹⁸⁸ Hoffman's illness notwithstanding, through 1534 his convictions did not waver. A January 1534 visit by Zell and Hedio revealed a resolve to give up neither his five theological points nor his fast nor the expectation of triumph that year. They concluded that they could no longer consider him a fellow Christian.¹⁸⁹ In April people ran to their windows to hear him chant a psalm and denounce the "godless scribes of Strasbourg."¹⁹⁰ In May he had himself sent to a dungeon with hopes that this would move God finally to "bring matters to an end."¹⁹¹

Hoffman's last major attack on the clergy came in the summer of 1534 shortly after Claus Frey's drowning. In a book against Frey, Capito had linked Frey with Hoffman and wrongly insinuated that according to Hoffman the "apostolic messengers" would be the instruments of vengeance against non-Anabaptists.¹⁹² Hoffman retorted with a pseudonymous pamphlet posted throughout the city, which spoke of an imprisoned, guiltless witness of God, of Jerusalem, of "lying Pharisees" and of "bloodhounds," "liars" and "blood suckers." Added was an explanation: "The innocent

¹⁸⁸ *TAE II*, Nos. 451, 467, 484, 485; Deppermann, 304-305; Williams, 294.

¹⁸⁹ Williams, 294; Deppermann, 305.

¹⁹⁰ *TAE II*, No. 546, p. 309; Williams, 294; Deppermann, 350.

¹⁹¹ *TAE II*, No. 551, p. 312; Deppermann, 349.

¹⁹² *TAE II*, No. 564, pp. 321-342; Deppermann, 350.

imprisoned witness is Melchior Hoffman. Jerusalem is Strasbourg. The bloodhounds are Hedio, Butzer, Capito."¹⁹³ Strasbourg's printers, ordered before the magistrates, pointed to Valentin Kobian of Hagenau as the printer.¹⁹⁴

The dissemination of the tract was badly timed, for in the second half of 1534 Hoffman made several diplomatic efforts to gain his release. To Bucer, Hedio, Zell and two *Wiedertguferherren* he promised that his flock would join the official church if he and the clergy could be reconciled. But for Hedio reconciliation was impossible as long as Hoffman clung to his doctrinal errors.¹⁹⁵ In November he tried to persuade the Rat that despite the upheaval in Münster, it was to Strasbourg that Christ would come. He would not abandon his doctrines, but if set free he would not preach until they had perceived his words to be true. The violence in Münster he repudiated.¹⁹⁶ Soon after the city's fall in June 1535 he was moved to a dungeon while the Rat searched for connections to the Münster leaders which would legitimize his execution.¹⁹⁷ Thereafter Hoffman's

¹⁹³ Deppermann, 350-352.

¹⁹⁴ *TAE II*, No. 597, pp. 372-377; Deppermann, 351.

¹⁹⁵ *TAE II*, No. 594, pp. 370-371; Williams, 294; Deppermann, 352.

¹⁹⁶ *TAE II*, No. 617, pp. 393-395; Williams, 294, 298; Deppermann, 353-354.

¹⁹⁷ *TAE II*, Nos. 684, 685, 699-700; Deppermann, 353-354.

condition worsened. In 1536, after complaining again of harsh treatment, the Rat ordered for him gentler treatment and hot meals.¹⁹⁸

Although 1533 passed without the fulfillment of Hoffman's prophecies, most of his followers remained faithful until 1539. Christ's return was rescheduled to late 1534, and then to 1535, 1537 and finally 1539, and Hoffman's followers were urged to purify themselves.¹⁹⁹ While Barbara Rebstock led one group,²⁰⁰ the home of the goldsmith Valentin Dufft served as Melchiorite headquarters.²⁰¹ One 1534 meeting in the Gertenfisch Inn was attended by half a dozen foreigners: Hieronymous from Cologne and Frantz von Hazenbrouck in Flanders, both cloth shearers in search of work, Gerhard Westerburger, a doctor of law, Heinrich Roll, a preacher from Münster, another Heinrich and Johann Krufft, the pastor in Rodenkirchen near Cologne. At this meeting Hieronymous was baptized by Roll. Perhaps surprisingly, Westerburger and Frantz, both baptized in Münster, stayed at

¹⁹⁸ Deppermann, 354.

¹⁹⁹ *TAE II*, No. 484, p. 255; No. 594, p. 371; Deppermann, 349.

²⁰⁰ *TAE II*, No. 400, p. 110.

²⁰¹ *TAE II*, No. 497, p. 265; Williams, 294.

the home of Capito!²⁰²

By late 1533 the expulsion of Melchiorites was under way. Many were non-citizen refugees. Dufft and Hoffman's other host, Katharina Seid, were gone by April 1534.²⁰³ They were soon followed by the bucket-maker Valentin Nessel,²⁰⁴ and the miller and citizen, Wilhelm Blum the younger.²⁰⁵ Some such as Lienhard Jost and Rebstock appear to have remained in Strasbourg without recanting, although Jost was disciplined.²⁰⁶ Others such as Seid and Blum the younger reentered the city secretly.²⁰⁷

In the end, both clergy and Rat profitted from Münster. While the clergy's warnings now weighed enough to spur the Rat to action, with the most fanatical Melchiorites having left for Münster, the Rat had only the more moderate to contend with.²⁰⁸ How many Melchiorites were driven out is not

²⁰² *TAE II*, No. 533, pp. 299-300. Capito's expected hosting of these Melchiorites may perhaps be explained by their earlier acquaintance, a common friendship with Bernard Rothmann, or Westerberger's family relations to Karlstadt. Hulshof, 156-157.

²⁰³ *TAE II*, No. 520, p. 291; No. 547, p. 309; Deppermann, 355-356.

²⁰⁴ *TAE II*, No. 491, pp. 261-262; No. 550, p. 311.

²⁰⁵ *TAE II*, No. 539, p. 303; No. 664, p. 452; Deppermann, 356.

²⁰⁶ *TAE II*, No. 400, p. 110; No. 540, p. 304; Deppermann, 356.

²⁰⁷ *TAE II*, No. 547, p. 310; No. 664, pp. 451-452.

²⁰⁸ Hulshof, 151; Deppermann, 308.

known, but the pressure was greatest in the spring of 1535, just as Münster was about to fall.²⁰⁹

IV. Conclusion

By 1532 Strasbourg's religious radicals, at their zenith, were very different from the radicals in 1524. In terms of numbers they had grown from a handful of Anabaptists after the Peasants' War to several hundred in 1528 and perhaps 2000 in 1530-32.²¹⁰ In terms of geographic origin, while the radicals of 1524-25 had been Strasbourgeois, by 1532 they were overwhelmingly foreign refugees. This helps explain the shifting allegiances within the movement and its rapid decline after 1534; indigenous roots were few.²¹¹

Organizationally, the radicals had grown from an undifferentiated number of dissidents to at least eight interrelated but more-or-less distinct groups. While the lines between them were still blurred in 1529,²¹² the advent of Marpeck, Bänderlin, Schwenckfeld, Entfelder, Franck and Hoffman between 1529 and 1531 crystallized distinctions. By 1532 Strasbourg's radical groupings included Clement

²⁰⁹ Deppermann, 356; *TAE II*, Nos. 637, 639, 644, 645, 649, 653, 660.

²¹⁰ *TAE I*, Nos. 130, 148, 224.

²¹¹ *TAE I*, Nos. 67, 218, 224, 234, 235; Deppermann, 276.

²¹² The sectarian Reublin and the spiritualist Kautz could still write a joint confession of faith. *TAE I*, No. 168, pp. 197-199.

Ziegler's "Gardeners," the Swiss Brethren of the Sattler/Reublin stream, the Marpeck circle, the Denck-Kautz spiritualist Anabaptists, the Augsburg refugees sympathetic to Hut, the Melchiorites, the Schwenckfeldians and the "Epicureans."²¹³

In terms of worldview, the social-revolutionary radicalism dominant before the Peasants' War was largely abandoned in favor of sectarian, spiritualist and apocalyptic orientations. Within a larger common opposition to the official reform, spiritualists such as Clement Ziegler, Eckhart zum Drübel and Schwenckfeld criticized the Anabaptists' exclusivity.²¹⁴ Attitudes toward the oath, civil responsibility and relations with the world varied. While relatively unimportant to spiritualists such as Denck and Schwenckfeld who focused on the inner life, for the Sattlerites they were crucial to Christian living. Some like Gross, in rejecting the oath but accepting civil responsibility, attempted an intermediate position. Others such as Ziegler, Meyger and Hackfurt made allowance for oath refusal by others, but refused to demonize civil authority.²¹⁵ And the Melchiorites looked less to the questions of this world or their inner life than to the imminent return of Christ.

²¹³ Deppermann, 274-277; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 116.

²¹⁴ Deppermann, 276; Boyd, *Marpeck*, 99.

²¹⁵ Boyd, *Marpeck*, 99-100.

As for of social location, the social profile of specific groups cannot be clearly defined because membership in a particular group was rarely specified. During the years 1524-34 the radicals represented a wide social spectrum. According to Klaus Deppermann, from 1526 to 1540 the occupations of 129 Strasbourg Anabaptists included

16 intellectuals (including 7 former priests and former teachers); 40 members of the textile guild (13 weavers, 10 tailors, 9 furriers, 6 drapers); 15 members of the metal-working guilds (10 smiths and 3 goldsmiths); 9 cobblers, 4 publicans and pedlars; 4 gardeners; 6 bakers, millers and butchers; 18 general artisans and 17 "beggars" (unemployed).²¹⁶

In general, dissidents of society's middle and upper levels such as intellectuals and goldsmiths leaned toward the spiritualism of Denck or Schwenckfeld. Those of lower levels tended towards the socialist-turned-spiritualist Clement Ziegler, the sectarian Swiss Brethren, or the apocalyptic Hoffman. Although the poor were exalted by Ziegler and the Strasbourg Prophets, Strasbourg's radicals displayed little "class-consciousness." Group solidarity centered more on those within one's religious group than on social class.²¹⁷

Despite these overall patterns, changes over time in social composition are evident. Before the Peasants' War the radicals were mostly social-revolutionary gardeners, butchers and peasants. After the war most were attracted to

²¹⁶ Deppermann, 275.

²¹⁷ Deppermann, 276; cf. Clasen, *Anabaptism*, 310.

Anabaptism. Although most were artisans, initially they were led by intellectuals and clerics like Denck and Settler. With the flood of refugees and the loss of intellectuals and clerics by 1530,²¹⁸ the radicals became ideologically more diverse while becoming socially more homogeneous. Although they continued to infiltrate virtually all occupations, the vast majority were from artisan and lower levels. With the large number of Augsburg refugees, textile workers were disproportionately numerous, while the gardeners, Strasbourg's largest guild, were relatively underrepresented, at least among the Anabaptists.²¹⁹ Perhaps choosing, like Clement Ziegler, to conform externally, they would not dissent again in large numbers until the 1544 appearance of the visionary prophet, Martin Steinbach.

1533-35 were watershed years. In 1531-32 Strasbourg's radicals, at their greatest strength, constituted a real threat to the young church. That threat was broken in the Synod of 1533, the Ecclesiastical Ordinance of 1534 and the disciplinary measures of 1535. Factors that contributed to this suppression of nonconformists were both internal and external. Internally, the clergy felt the church was still fragile: its clergy were divided, attendance at worship and

²¹⁸ C.-P. Clasen, "Schwenckfeld's Friends: A Social Study," *MQR* 46 (1972), 58-67.

²¹⁹ Deppermann, 275-277.

the eucharist was poor, doctrine was undefined, morals were not improved, and the radicals were drawing the faithful away. The magistrates were driven to these measures because of continued unrest in the city due to the large numbers of refugees, disgruntled Catholics and especially Hoffman's apocalyptic fervor.

These internal factors dovetailed with external factors. The on-going famine and religious persecution in the empire continued to bring radical refugees into the city and heighten unrest. The clergy's ambition to remain religious leaders among the cities of South Germany demanded an established church. The imperial threat which necessitated an alliance with the Smalkald League demanded from the city a declaration of doctrine acceptable to the Lutherans. Above all the revolution in Münster sparked panic in the authorities and caused them to suppress the radicals.

The result of these measures was the defeat of the radicals, and a greater unification of the clergy, of doctrine and of the church. For the church it also meant a greater loss of autonomy, for from now on the Rat was ever involved in questions of doctrine and morals. And fearful of an evangelical papacy, the magistrates were not prepared to give the church unreined freedom. This loss of autonomy meant that while the clergy continued to cooperate with the

regime, at least to the middle of the century their ideal of a fully evangelical city could never be attained.²²⁰

Finally, for Strasbourg's radicals the events of 1533-35 were catastrophic because they caused their dispersion, disorientation, numerical decline and loss of influence. Although Clement Ziegler's circle and the Schwenckfeldians continued quietly amid the tumult, other spiritualist and apocalyptic groups, less stable, disintegrated. The Denck/Kautz circle almost disappeared by 1533.²²¹ Many of the Augsburgers under Hut's influence appear to have joined the Melchiorites after 1529.²²² And after 1535, when chiliastic hopes were dashed, the Melchiorites too began to ebb away. Although the congregationally oriented Marpeck circle and especially the Swiss Brethren proved tenacious, they also suffered. These years became their most important turning point. Bereft of home, community and leadership, most of them, particularly the Anabaptists, began again in new surroundings and with new leadership. With exceptions, the following decades witnessed a poorer, more rural and more clandestine existence.

²²⁰ In 1547, in an effort to enhance Christian zeal free from Rat constraints, Bucer established in the parishes self-disciplining conventicles or *christlichen Gemein-schaften*. This initiative was quashed because in light of his opposition to the regime regarding the Smalkald War and the Augsburg Interim, to the Rat this move approached revolt. Brady, *Ruling Class*, 274-275.

²²¹ TAE I, No. 340-342, pp. 557-559.

²²² Deppermann, 274-275.

Chapter 4

NON-MELCHIORITE RADICALS, 1534-40

In the first half of the sixteenth century, the years 1534-40 were perhaps the most difficult for Strasbourg's religious radicals, even for non-Melchiorites. They were imprisoned, exiled and wrongly accused of Münsterite connections. The majority were Swiss Brethren artisans. Infant baptism and oath swearing formed the focus of their dissent. In new surroundings they had to begin a new and clandestine life. And with their educated leaders gone, they had to make do with uneducated leadership. Except for the Schwenckfeldian spiritualists, they suffered a social and economic decline followed by a slight recovery around 1540.

I. The Strasbourg Reformation 1535-49

A. In Strasbourg

After the Synod of 1533 and the Ecclesiastical Ordinance of 1534, the Strasbourg clergy worked to solidify the church from without and within. 1535 saw a new disciplinary ordinance and the first visitation of the rural churches. In 1536, to strengthen its ties with the Smalkald League and Lutheran theologians, the Rat signed the Wittenberg Concord.

While the *Tetrapolitana* was not denied, this agreement further alienated the sacramentarian Swiss and created decades of discord in Strasbourg over orthodox doctrine.¹ In 1538, under Jean Sturm, the *Hochschule* combining studies in the classics and theology was founded, and within a few years it boasted 600 students including many foreigners.² While perpetuating the reformed faith, the *Hochschule* would also become an arena of religious dissent. 1538 also saw the birth of a French-speaking church under John Calvin. 1539 witnessed a second synod dealing largely with disciplinary and ecclesiastical ordinances, and in its wake a weakening of the Melchiorite movement. In 1540-41, just before the plague claimed Capito and many others in Strasbourg, Bucer and Capito participated in interconfessional colloquies aimed at Protestant-Catholic reconciliation. Their failure turned the Catholic Church toward the Council of Trent and Catholic resurgence in 1545. The rejection of Trent by Protestant princes and cities led to their defeat in the 1546-47 Smalkald War, and to the beginning of the decline of Strasbourg's evangelical movement. In 1547, to the Rat's dismay, Bucer introduced his *kirchlichen Gemeinschaften*, an effort to create an autonomous, self-disciplining body of

¹ Abray, *People's Reformation*, 41; Rott, "D roulement," 375-377; Gerber, "Recherches," 4-7, 52.

² In 1566 it would become the "Academy" and in 1621 the University of Strasbourg. Reuss, *Histoire de Strasbourg*, 132-133; Chrisman, *Strasbourg*, 270-271.

Christians in the church. In 1548 Matthew Zell, ever Strasbourg's most popular pastor, died. The Augsburg Interim imposed by the emperor reestablished Catholicism in Strasbourg for a decade. Bucer and his colleague Paul Fagius departed in exile the following year.³ With this the golden age of the Strasbourg Reformation came to an end. Hedio, the last of the reformers, died in 1552 and Jakob Sturm, Strasbourg's greatest statesman, died the following year. The age of Reformation came to be replaced by an age of confessionalism.⁴ Internally Strasbourg's relative religious tolerance was replaced by an increasingly rigid Lutheran orthodoxy, and externally its influence as an leading political, economic and religious center began to decline.⁵

B. In Europe

Strasbourg also played a leading role in the Reformation's spread in Europe. Immigrant visitors to Strasbourg, often well-educated, returned to their countries influenced by the Protestantism practiced there. Strasbourg's leaders spoke and interceded for Protestants before political rulers. Bucer and Capito made many trips to help establish

³ Rott, "Déroutement," 376-377; Gerber, "Recherches," 4-7, 52.

⁴ Lienhard, "La Reforme," 416.

⁵ For social, economic and political expressions of Strasbourg's decline after 1550, see Kintz, *Société strasbourgeoise* and Greissler, *Classe Politique*.

evangelical churches in various cities, and for the same cause published many writings.

In Switzerland, while Capito contributed to the synod of Bern in 1532, the first Swiss confession in 1536 and the faculty of theology in Basel in 1539, Bucer mediated a dispute in Zurich in 1533, and provided ideas for Ambrosius Blaurer in Constance. In Germany Strasbourg contributed to the reconquest of Württemberg by Protestant Duke Ulrich after which Württemberg entered the Reformation. In Hesse, as Landgraff Philip's most trusted religious counsellor, Bucer helped draft a disciplinary ordinance and recruited Peter Tasch to dissolve Hesse's Melchiorite community. In Cologne and in the Palatinate Bucer helped initiate religious reform.

Regarding France, in addition to Strasbourg's literary contribution, in the 1520s the city provided refuge for reformers such as Lefèvre d'Étaples who, upon their return, used the Strasbourg church as an inspiration and a model for French evangelical groups. From Strasbourg Calvin kept in touch with French evangelicals in the late 1530s.⁶ Between 1535 and 1545 Strasbourg's leaders interceded before the king for French evangelicals, especially the Waldensians, and between 1539 and 1542 they attempted to advance the Reformation in Metz. More broadly, Waldensians in Italy

⁶ H. Heller, *The Conquest of Poverty: The Calvinist Revolt in Sixteenth Century France* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), ix, 56, 64, 132.

consulted Bucer before leading their communities to the Reformation in 1532. In 1540 the "Bohemian Brethren" sought Bucer's response to their confession of faith and ordinances. In England some of Bucer's writings were even translated into English and used in editing the *Common Prayer Book*.⁷

II. Overview of Religious Radicals, 1535-50

A. Introduction

After the devastating events of 1533-35, 1536 marked a fragile new beginning for Strasbourg's radicals. Although the apocalyptic, spiritualist and sectarian streams were all crippled in the catastrophe of 1533-35, their directions would continue to run in relatively separate lines. Certainly, cross-fertilization and inter-group communication were present. For example, Melchiorites and Swiss Brethren attended a joint meeting in 1535. Swiss Brethren, Schwenckfeldians and Melchiorites all supported Lukas Hackfurt's municipal welfare program. The tailors Jörg Ziegler and Hans Adam combined social revolutionary and sectarian impulses. The Melchiorite Wilhelm Blum contributed to a Hutterian-type community of goods effort. Dr. Winther von Andernach combined Calvinist, Schwenckfeldian and Epicurean influences. The Latin teacher Peter (Novesianus) Schaf knew

⁷ Lienhard, "La Réforme," 404-406.

Melchiorites and displayed Swiss Brethren, Schwenckfeldian and Epicurean characteristics.

But despite these cross currents, from 1536 on the apocalypticists, the spiritualists and the sectarians flowed in largely separate directions. Therefore they receive separate treatment in the following chapters. The Melchiorite and the Schwenckfeldian streams emerge most distinctly because they were most clearly identified. The Melchiorites were watched because of the fear they engendered. The Schwenckfeldians were known because of their low numbers and high social and intellectual profile. Each of these receive a separate chapter. The sectarian congregationalist stream is harder to identify because it included several clandestine groups whose members could be found almost everywhere. Therefore the sectarians are treated together with all other forms of religious nonconformity. The treatment of this, the broadest stream, comprises three chapters.

Despite the increased restrictions on religious nonconformists, Strasbourg continued to be a haven for dissidents for a number of reasons. First, Strasbourg being a commercial center, the constant traffic of foreigners made nonconformists hard to detect. Secondly, dissenters were confident at least of survival, for Strasbourg preferred to exile rather than execute them. Thirdly, the dueling between Strasbourg's clergy and magistrates for control of religious discipline made for uneven application in which

dissidents were often overlooked.⁸ Fourthly, as a free city, Strasbourg had the right to receive anyone and everyone as citizen (*freien Zug*), and with the reform, it received outsiders more liberally than before. Fifthly, nonconformists were attracted by the right of citizens to live on and work rural properties as *Ausbürger* during specified agricultural seasons. If prudent, for much of the year they could practice their faith in the country under the Strasbourg's protection but beyond its direct supervision.⁹ Finally, nonconformists were also attracted through the continued, indiscriminate distribution of *Schultheisenbürgerrechts* (lesser "mayoral citizenships") which offered protection to poorer immigrants.¹⁰ This, said Bucer in 1534, was why Strasbourg had so many Anabaptists.¹¹

B. Social Profile

The religious radicals in the late 1530s and 1540s were much fewer than the approximately 2000 in 1532, but their number is difficult to gauge. The frequent appearance of the words "Anabaptist" and "sects" in the sources, confirms their continuing presence and their importance to the

⁸ Oyer, Rev. of *TAE III* and *TAE IV*, 102-103.

⁹ *TAE III*, p. 11; Oyer, 102-103.

¹⁰ *TAE III*, pp. 11-12; No. 1127, p. 487, n. 1; Oyer, 102-103. *TAE IV*, No. 1399, p. 114, n. 1.; *TAE II*, No. 611, p. 390, n. 1.

¹¹ *TAE II*, No. 611, p. 389.

authorities more than give an indication of numbers. Nearly 400 nonconformists are named in the sources between 1536 and 1552, but distinctions between different groups are rare.¹²

The key statements regarding Anabaptist assemblies up to 1550 are as follows: 1) in August 1538 the Catholic priest of Rossheim spoke of 300 Anabaptists gathering in the forest.¹³ 2) In February 1540 a magistrate reported Anabaptist meetings of sixty and thirty participants.¹⁴ 3) In March 1540 ninety-nine gathered Anabaptists were surprised by police raids.¹⁵ 4) One of those imprisoned spoke of 800 Anabaptists in the city.¹⁶ 5) A non-Anabaptist reported in July 1541 that 350 Anabaptists would be gathering in the Brumath forest for several days.¹⁷ 6) An Anabaptist in 1545 spoke of a 1542 meeting with sixty participants.¹⁸ 7) In July 1545 about 300 persons participated in a nighttime meeting in the Eckbolsheim Forest.¹⁹ 8) In October 1546 an

¹² TAE III, 12-13; Rott and Lienhard, "Frères suisses," 27; R. Gerber, "Les Anabaptistes à Strasbourg entre 1536 et 1552," *Bibliotheca Dissidentium: Scripta et Studia*, No. 3 (Baden-Baden: Editions Valentin Koerner, 1987), 312.

¹³ TAE III, No. 843, p. 243.

¹⁴ TAE III, No. 993, pp. 387-388.

¹⁵ TAE III, Nos. 1002 and 1003, pp. 391-392.

¹⁶ TAE III, No. 1022.

¹⁷ TAE III, No. 1129, p. 488.

¹⁸ TAE III, No 1239; TAE IV, no. 1455.

¹⁹ TAE IV, Nos. 1453, 1455.

Anabaptist reported five Melchiorites and 100 Swiss Brethren in Anabaptist meetings in Strasbourg.²⁰ 9) In September 1550 an Anabaptist testified to 100 non-citizen Anabaptists.²¹ Together these reports might suggest a total figure of 1000 or more religious nonconformists in both the urban and the surrounding rural areas. If half of Strasbourg's 20,000 inhabitants were adults, and an equal number or more lived in its rural dependencies, religious dissidents may have totalled around 5% of the adult population.

Regarding social location, unlike the Schwenckfeldians who came mostly from the intellectual and social elite and therefore enjoyed greater protection, the Anabaptists suffered a social decline. With the departure of intellectuals and leaders by 1534, the Anabaptists and their sympathizers were almost all artisans and of the lower classes. By November 1538 it was a mason's apprentice named Ulrich who commonly led Anabaptist meetings in the Eckbolsheim Forest.²²

At the same time, by the 1540s there appears among the Anabaptists an increasing naturalization and economic stabilization as immigrants of the 1520s settled down, purchased citizenship and became indigenized. This naturalization

²⁰ TAE IV, No. 1529.

²¹ TAE IV, No. 1716; TAE III, 13; Gerber, "Anabaptistes," 312.

²² TAE III, No. 866, p. 295.

encouraged the magistrates to become more accepting. While most of the radicals before the Peasants' War had been native Strasbourgeois, most of those after the war were immigrants. With the expulsions of foreigners in 1533-35, the movement again became more indigenous. More and more of those interrogated by the Rat turned out to be citizens or long-time residents.

Along with naturalization and long-time residency came an increase in property ownership. Unlike the refugees of the 1520s, by 1540 Anabaptists of substance became more visible. In some cases these propertied Anabaptists were there all along but had been overshadowed in the 1520s by the refugees. With the foreigners' departure the former came more into view. While they moved in less prestigious circles than the Schwenckfeldians, the number of people the magistrates quietly acknowledged as respectable was on the increase. Although immigrants continued their march into Strasbourg, increasingly the nonconformists interrogated turned out to be people with a settled place in Strasbourg society.

While the clergy pointed dissidents out to the Rat, their neighbors raised "little outcry" against them; many considered them pious fellow Christians. Faced with this widespread sympathy for the nonconformists, the magistrates could ill-afford to create martyrs. When Münster was not repeated in Strasbourg, the depleted sectarians showing

themselves to be mostly law-abiding, the magistrates began to accept them as individual eccentrics who could safely be tolerated.²³ Thus the Anabaptist mandates of 1538 and 1540 focused less on suppressing local Anabaptists than on keeping outsiders out.

III. Non-Melchiorite Radicals, 1534-40

A. 1534-35

Also for Strasbourg's non-Melchiorite radicals, the events of 1533-35 constituted a crisis. From the spring of 1534 on, a string of non-citizen Anabaptists was interrogated, imprisoned, expelled and forced to find new homes elsewhere, usually in the countryside. Those who remained either conformed or struggled to carry on in secret. After the synod in the summer of 1533, besides groups led by Melchiorites Valentin Dufft and Barbara Rebstock, one group was led by an inn-keeper's wife in the hospital, and others met at the homes of a shoemaker and of Fridolin Meyger.²⁴

The radicals opposed to Hoffman were mostly congregational biblicists: the Swiss Brethren and the Marpeck circle. Included were an elderly sawsmith, Leopold Scharnschlager the soapboiler, Schreiber Jörglin the teacher, Alexander the schoolmaster, Hans Beck, Anderlin

²³ Abray, *People's Reformation*, 115.

²⁴ *TAE II*, No. 400, pp. 110-111.

Seiler, and a former monk.²⁵ Others interrogated in 1534 included Jakob Krumb from Rottenburg whose wife Anna Pfeiffer was an active Anabaptist,²⁶ and a leader named Walter (Genssfleisch) Sorger.²⁷ Most, such as Hans Huber the watchmaker, were artisans, but among them were also Caspar Andlauer, the secretary for the cathedral construction project, and his maid.²⁸

Hans Frisch, the Swiss Brethren deacon baptized by Reublin, had lived in Strasbourg with the outspoken butcher, Thomas Schormath, since 1529, but had been too poor to purchase citizenship. Since 1532, under orders from an Adam Stumpfle, he had collected money among the "brethren." To his interrogators in April 1534, Frisch yielded the names and meeting places of his fellow Anabaptists, including Melchiorites such as Valentin Dufft who had tried to convert him. He also testified that the several radical groupings had been reduced to three: followers of Hoffman, of Kautz and of Reublin.²⁹ The Denck/Kautz group may have almost died, for after 1534 it is mentioned only once. A main reason for its decline may lie in the group's disregard for

²⁵ Hulshof, 154; *TAE II*, No. 368, pp. 19-20.

²⁶ *TAE II*, No. 664, pp. 451-452.

²⁷ *TAE II*, No. 574, p. 345.

²⁸ *TAE II*, No. 550, p. 311.

²⁹ *TAE II*, No. 533, p. 299.

structures such as ceremonies, sacraments and church which could define and orient them over the long run.³⁰

Also disciplined was the long time radical tailor, Hans Adam, who recently had become more confrontational.³¹ Although named at the Synod as one of three nonconformists in Schiltigheim,³² he was not intimidated. Two weeks later he was apprehended because when Wolfgang Schultheiss stepped down from his Sunday sermon, Adam stepped up and continued to preach.³³ This would not be his only overt challenge to the clergy. That summer he interrupted Jörg Buser, the Mundolsheim pastor, during the sermon. Then after the Christmas Day sermon, Adam advised Buser to let him preach in the afternoon in order to correct the errors of the morning's sermon.³⁴ Three days later, when Capito finished his sermon in Young St. Peter, Adam stepped up to continue preaching. The authorities called him a "hardnecked" and fanatical Anabaptist.³⁵ In May 1535, the church visitation

³⁰ Hulshof, *Geschiednis*, 154-155. In the 1540s, however, mention is made of several other groups with their roots in the 1520s. In 1543 Johann Gast from Basel heard of followers of Kautz and of Ludwig Hätzer in Strasbourg. *TAE IV*, No. 1330, p. 58.

³¹ *TAE I*, No. 148, p. 180, n. 1.

³² *TAE II*, No. 384, p. 72.

³³ *TAE II*, No. 400, pp. 110-111.

³⁴ *TAE IV*, *Beilage*, No. 475a, pp. 508-509.

³⁵ *TAE II*, No. 477 & 477a, pp. 233-234.

report from Schiltigheim described him and his wife as stubbornly wayward, deserving punishment.³⁶

The most prominent sectarian, Leonard Scharnschlager, now the leader of the Marpeck circle, was expelled. Before leaving Scharnschlager presented to the Rat a weighty statement on the freedom of religious conscience. The magistrates were inconsistent, he argued, demanding religious conformity from the radicals, even while disobeying their own superior, Charles V. The distinction between "the two kingdoms and the two swords," although now abandoned by Luther and Zwingli, was still a valid New Testament principle.³⁷

Spiritualists interrogated included Schwenckfeld's followers who met in small, informal groups. In December 1534 Schwenckfeld's friend, the notary Jakob Held, engaged the authorities over the baptism of his child. He could not, he said, consider the baptism of infants the true baptism of Christ, but they could baptize the child on their own if they insisted.³⁸ Held's exile in the spring of 1535 was brief; with the May 1535 entente between Schwenckfeld and

³⁶ *TAE II*, No. 680, p. 467.

³⁷ *TAE II*, No. 576, pp. 346-353; E. T. in W. Klassen, "Leupold's Farewell to the Strasbourg Council," *MQR* 42 (1968), 211-218; Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 295-296. Where he went from Strasbourg is not known, but it is known that in the 1540s he and Marpeck worked together in South Germany. "Scharnschlager, Leupold," *ME IV*.

³⁸ *CS V*, No. 183, p. 269; Husser, "Liberté Spiritualiste," 95, 392; *TAE II*, No. 645a, p. 438.

Bucer at the Colloquy of Tübingen, he re-entered Strasbourg.³⁹ But within three months he was again reprimanded for hosting illicit meetings and lodging heretics.⁴⁰

Other nonconformists included the spiritualist knight and nobleman, Eckhart zum Drübel, and the Spanish anti-trinitarian Claude of Savoy. Zum Drübel's ethical spiritualism had emerged already in 1528 with his *Ein veterliche...Bericht*. In his 1534 *De gloriam Deo -- Von dem eynigen Gott* it assumed stronger expression. He scolded the Anabaptists, Luther and Zwingli for quarreling over doctrine, and castigated the clergy for their ambitions and lifestyles of luxury.⁴¹ In addition, as did Clement Ziegler and Schwenckfeld, he denounced the Anabaptists' exclusivism:

The Anabaptists aim to show their holiness to the world by giving no greeting or thanks to anyone else. They live like troublesome and stubborn oxen in their unfriendly dealings with all other human creatures.⁴²

Especially Schwenckfeldian was his view of the eucharist. The Anabaptists "had their water, the Zwinglians the bread of the Eucharist and the Lutherans the bread of the Lord," but he would leave each to her/his own opinion. For him the Lord's Supper was solely "spiritual food for his

³⁹ Husser, 95.

⁴⁰ Husser, 117, 134. Cf. chapter 12 below.

⁴¹ *TAE II*, No. 604, p. 382; Chrisman, "Lay Response," 48; Clasen, *Anabaptism*, 81.

⁴² *De gloriam Deo -- Von dem eynigen Gott*. *TAE II*, No. 604, pp. 382-385.

soul." The exact relationship of Christ's body to the bread was of no significance; "what mattered was...faith in God's Word"; that was based on spiritual reality.⁴³

Although not an Anabaptist, for some reason, against the ordinance, he did not baptize his three sons until ages seven, five and six months. After the birth of his third son in 1537, he published a defense of their late baptism.⁴⁴ While denying that he was an Anabaptist, he argued that Christ accepted all without age distinction, and, in fact, the rush to baptize displayed anxiety and lack of faith in God. With a certain audacity perhaps enabled by his social position, he declared to God and the authorities that if he had three more sons, he would wait again and baptize them together. Resting on the Word of God, the sole source of truth, he would keep his faith free.⁴⁵

That zum Drübel, with his somewhat anti-trinitarian ideas was allowed to publish, while Claude of Savoy was quickly expelled,⁴⁶ indicates that also after 1533 wealthy and influential citizens received greater tolerance than non-citizens, even if their views were similar.

⁴³ Chrisman, "Lay Response," 48-49; *TAE II*, No. 604, pp. 382-385.

⁴⁴ *TAE III*, No. 823, pp. 147-150.

⁴⁵ *TAE II*, No. 604, pp. 382-385.

⁴⁶ *TAE II*, Nos. 603, 608, 614.

Many of those who fled to the countryside settled in the outlying villages and more widely in central Alsace. Those who hid in the city remained in contact with those in the countryside through messengers and common worship services located outside the city. By 1535 reports came to the Rat of Anabaptists in Dorlisheim, Benfeld, Illkirch and Kehl, as well as enlarged congregations in Schiltigheim, Mundolsheim and Ottrott.⁴⁷ By 1537 Anabaptist groups were also active in Mundolsheim, Schlettstadt, Ottrott, Oberehenheim, Rosheim, Wasselnheim, Reichstett, Suffelweyersheim and Rappoltsweiler.⁴⁸

According to the first rural parish visitation in early 1535, the pastor in Dorlisheim, while complaining of low wages and poor housing, mentioned that the Anabaptists offered him financial assistance. Some, he said were good-hearted, and others, especially a Hoffmanian woman, quarrelsome. He also reported that Lorentz Schuhmacher had married his wife outside of the church.⁴⁹ This was a problem because marriage had for centuries been a public religious celebration held in the church, and the Ecclesiastical

⁴⁷ TAE II, No. 680, pp. 467-468; Hulshof, 159; Adam, *Evangelische Kirchengeschichte*, 209.

⁴⁸ TAE III, p. 762, p. 65; Hulshof, 164.

⁴⁹ TAE II, No. 680, p. 468.

Ordinance of 1534 had specified that weddings should not be celebrated in secret.⁵⁰

In Schiltigheim the people complained that because the manse of their pastor, Wolfgang Schultheiss, was not yet built, he was often absent, and all, especially the dying, were left without comfort. In his absence an Anabaptist, the tailor Jörg Ziegler (Jerg Schneider) stepped in to comfort the sick and dying. The other tailor, Hans Adam, was refractory. His wife, equally feisty, was willing rather to lose her life than yield. In Benfeld some were Melchiorites. In the neighboring village of Grafenstaden the examiners found "a stubborn, hard-necked Anabaptist" shoemaker who was upset about the preaching and the sacraments. In Ruprechtsau the gardener-preacher Clement Ziegler disobeyed some of the laws and disturbed the pastor with his errors, but the congregation suffered no lack. In Kehl the Melchiorite miller, Wilhelm Blum the younger, was hiding some Anabaptists.⁵¹ In the spring of 1535, as Münster was about to fall,⁵² new disciplinary ordinances decreed that all infants were to be baptized within six weeks of birth. On pain of expulsion, unbaptized children were to receive baptism immediately or be forcibly baptized, and all adults

⁵⁰ Lienhard, 482-483.

⁵¹ *TAE II*, No. 680, p. 468.

⁵² Deppermann, *Hoffman*, 356; *TAE II*, Nos. 637, 639, 644, 645, 649, 653, 660.

were to swear the civic oath.⁵³ A special commission was appointed to track down unbaptized children, and this led to a string of incarcerations in the spring of 1535.

Immediately ten fathers and a widow, all artisans with twenty-two or more children between them, were interrogated for resisting the baptism of their children.⁵⁴ Most argued that the gospel did not teach infant baptism or that earlier the reformers themselves had denigrated infant baptism. Wolf Sibmacher with one child, Hans Lawoner, a carpenter with one child, Zimprecht Müller, a shoemaker with two children, and Heinrich Buchsner's widow all protested that for two years the preachers had preached freedom of conscience. These now wished to keep their conscience free and wait for God's guidance.

Konrad Haug, a Viennese joiner with four children, was in Strasbourg for the third time after several expulsions from Vienna. Like Denck and Clement Ziegler, he believed in universal salvation; in 1530 in Michel Hoffman's house he asserted that Judas would one day be saved.⁵⁵ Haug now protested that years ago Capito and Bucer had told him infant baptism was not grounded in Scripture. They had

⁵³ *TAE II*, No. 638, pp. 431-432; No. 647, p. 439; Williams, 297; Deppermann, 308; Adam, 209.

⁵⁴ *TAE II*, No. 649, pp. 440-441; Hulshof, 150.

⁵⁵ *TAE I*, No. 213, p. 262; No. 224, p. 272; *TAE IV*, No. 303a, p. 459. Michel Hoffmann would be among sixty-nine Swiss Brethren arrested in April 1540. *TAE III*, No. 1006-1024, pp. 393-410.

encouraged him to stay so he had settled down with his wife and children.⁵⁶ His wife, Brida Brenndline, was also a strong Anabaptist personality; in April 1533 she had been among ten leaders of the Anabaptist community in Rottenburg.⁵⁷

Christof Meisinger, a city smith with at least two children, protested that in Capito's words six years earlier, infant baptism was no baptism and should be dropped. Conrad Schretz, a shoemaker with one child, agreed. Hans Borst, a knifsmith with three children, protested that at one time, with the agreement of former *Ammeister* Claus Kniebs, the clergy had preached publicly that one should not coerce another to have his child baptized. But if they now wished a child baptism rather than a Christian baptism, to honor the authorities he would let them do it. The windlass maker Hans Ysenman from the village of Börsch said he could not find where Scripture taught to baptize children. The clothworker Jörg Schmid argued that he could not find it in his conscience to have his three children baptized; infant baptism was no Christian baptism. Although two of the clothworker Christmann Feyss' three children were baptized, he did not want his one-year-old youngest baptized for it was not in the gospel.

⁵⁶ *TAE II*, No. 649, pp. 440-441.

⁵⁷ *TAE II*, No. 359, pp. 9-10.

The verdicts were negative; in the end nine of the eleven were expelled with their families. Only the cloth workers Jörg Schmid and Christmann Feyss, disciplined probably by their guild, were apparently not expelled.⁵⁸

In the case of Jörg Schmid, this would be the beginning of a long relationship with the Strasbourg authorities. Once the cellarer and then prior of a monastery at Hirsach, Schmid had left the monastery, married, and become an Anabaptist with three unbaptized children. Apprehended now in 1535, he recanted and swore the oath in September 1536.⁵⁹ By April 1540 he was appointed preacher in Young St. Peter by Capito⁶⁰ and became known as Jörg Faber. Later that year the Rat interceded on his behalf to Duke Ulrich von Württemberg regarding his inheritance. Ever zealous, in 1547 he became involved in the self-disciplining *Christlichen Gemeinschaften* organized by Bucer.⁶¹

Besides these eleven families, a rope maker named Andres Neff was expelled for refusing the oath.⁶² Hans Braun admitted being rebaptized, but would not divulge when and where the baptism took place. He had left Freiburg, he said, because of Strasbourg's reputation for religious

⁵⁸ TAE II, No. 649, pp. 440-441.

⁵⁹ TAE III, No. 967, p. 372.

⁶⁰ TAE III, No. 1015, p. 404.

⁶¹ TAE III, No. 1060, p. 432.

⁶² TAE II, No. 653, p. 444.

tolerance; had he known Strasbourg would constrain his faith, he would not have come. The clergy were unworthy for they admitted whores and knaves to the sacraments. Ultimately, Braun refused to be identified with any group: "as little as he is Butzerisch, so little is he Schwenckfeldian or Anabaptist."⁶³

Since so many radicals fled to nearby villages, the *Rat* in April 1535 extended its legislation also to its rural territory. On pain of punishment, citizens in Strasbourg's rural dependencies were forbidden to lodge Anabaptists or assist them in any way, and were also to have all children baptized within six weeks of birth.⁶⁴

In this the *Rat* received surprising support from the Catholic Church. In the spring of 1535 the Catholic bishop invited the magistrates together to discuss policy toward the Anabaptists, and the *Rat* cautiously accepted. The discussion in Molsheim led to no conclusion other than a call, if "*rottungen*" occurred, to be alert and to respond with diligence.⁶⁵ Some idea of what the Catholic perspective might have been appears in a 1538 note of Georg Gyr, the priest of Rossheim, regarding an Anabaptist meeting:

⁶³ *TAE II*, No. 650, p. 442.

⁶⁴ *TAE II*, No. 657, pp. 446-449; Hulshof, 159; Adam, 209; Deppermann, 309.

⁶⁵ *TAE II*, Nos. 661, 667, 668; Adam, 210.

It happened...on Sunday that in the Sermersheim Forest near Epsig there were hunted and caught twenty five wild animals...who entirely destroy the Lord's vineyard. In recent days more than 300 such animals have gathered in our forests...What they have in mind an understanding person may well guess...Behind this lies a veritable *Bundschuh* from which may God protect us.⁶⁶

Although both the Catholic hierarchy and the magistrates saw in the radicals another commoners' revolt, the attitudes of the authorities in Catholic villages were usually less tolerant than those of the Strasbourg regime.⁶⁷

In July 1535 the Dorlisheim authorities delivered to the Rat the names of several Anabaptists whom they considered "hardnecked" and deserving of strict treatment. Among them were a shoemaker Hans Hess and his wife, and Lorentz Schuhmacher and his wife who had married outside of the official church.⁶⁸ Another was Barbara Kiefer from Barr, whose husband, Barthel Kiefer, apparently was not an Anabaptist. A year later, upon her confession of having been rebaptized by the Strasbourg carpenter Lukas Hobelmacher, she was expelled.⁶⁹

Some pastors such as Bernhard Wacker in Ostwald preferred to continue the dialogue with their Anabaptists rather than resort to automatic expulsion. Wendling

⁶⁶ *TAE III*, No. 843, p. 243; see also Hulshof, 164.

⁶⁷ Wangen, ch. 8 below, is one example.

⁶⁸ *TAE II*, No. 684a, pp. 470-471; No. 680, p. 467.

⁶⁹ *TAE II*, No. 684a, pp. 470-471; *TAE III*, No. 723, pp. 30-31.

Schneyder and Peter Weber were two parishioners who differed with him on the sacraments, and to each he wrote a detailed letter of response.⁷⁰

Soon after the decrees of 1535 the authorities' surveillance began to slacken and some of the banned radicals returned secretly. In May 1535 the Anabaptist Anna Pfeiffer, wife of Jakob Krumb from Rottenburg, inadvertently revealed to the *Wiedertäuferherren* that Anabaptists messengers travelled up to thirty kilometers to call believers to a meeting near Ottrott. Veltin Dufft, the expelled Melchiorite goldsmith, had gone as far as Worms to deliver the message. Back in the city were a barrelmaker who often returned seemingly under God's special protection, the Melchiorite miller Wilhelm Blum the younger, one Heinrich who served as messenger between Anabaptist leaders and their congregations, her tailor brother Pangratz Pfeiffer and Hans Adam the tailor. Sometimes large numbers gathered together. According to some prisoners 300 Anabaptists had gathered in a chapel near Colmar on Easter evening.⁷¹ Pfeiffer's information reveals that despite the differences between the Melchiorites and the Swiss Brethren, in this time of crisis they did communicate and even met with each other.

⁷⁰ *TAE II*, No. 701, pp. 484-491.

⁷¹ *TAE II*, No. 664, pp. 451-452; Hulshof, 163-164, 171-172; Adam, 211.

B. The Moravian Connection

In 1533-35 Moravia was an attractive alternative for harried Anabaptists. Communication and travel between the two locales was frequent. This is seen from a letter of protest to Bucer around the turn of 1534-35 from Kilian Auerbacher, a well-educated "shepherd" of the Hutterian flock in Austerlitz and a colleague of Jakob Widemann who had been in Strasbourg in November 1533. A brother from Strasbourg, he wrote, had told him of the city's harsh measures against the nonconformists. This dismayed him for he and all evangelicals had thought of Strasbourg as a city where refugees of conscience would be protected, and where the gospel could be preached without fear. But now Strasbourg's clergy were persecuting dissidents more cruelly than the emperor. The change in Bucer who was responsible for these measures was tragic, for besides wrongly generalizing the errors of a few Anabaptists to all, and exaggerating what evil he knew of them, in his commentary on the Synoptic Gospels (1527) he had repudiated the use of magisterial coercion for Christians.⁷²

Auerbacher may have urged the Strasbourg Anabaptists to move to Moravia for refuge. Missionaries from Moravian congregations frequently came to South Germany to urge harassed

⁷² *TAE II*, No. 625, pp. 401-411; No. 459, p. 210; Hulshof, 164-166; Williams, 296-297.

Anabaptists, especially the Swiss Brethren, to "serve God safely and undisturbed" in Moravia.⁷³ One such invitation came from a preacher in the home of the innkeeper Rudolf Claus. Claus lodged the preacher and was baptized by him in March 1534. Although a citizen registered in the Freiburger innkeepers' guild, Claus now refused to swear the oath and refused "better instruction" from the clergy. Also present were about ten people including two tailors, Jakob Moser and Balthasar Weber. Moser confessed to having lodged the Swiss Brethren deacon Hans Frisch. Weber, baptized in Augsburg seven years earlier (1527), preached occasionally and withheld his child from baptism. Also in the group were Veltin Northheim and his wife from Wangen, and Hans Methor, a baker's apprentice from Rottweil for whom Katherine Zell had found work. Northheim, baptized with his wife in a forest near Benfeld, was apprehended at another meeting attended by four men and three women. Methor, also apprehended, was not yet baptized but was committed to the Anabaptist way. Sometimes he did the reading at Anabaptist meetings. He too refused instruction from the clergy, and since he refused to swear the oath, he was expelled. Their host, Diebolt Soldner, another Wangen Anabaptist who also refused to swear the oath, admitted to being (re)baptized but would not say by whom.⁷⁴

⁷³ Hulshof, 166.

⁷⁴ TAE II, Nos. 529, 534, 539.

These invitations to Moravia produced results. Methor tried to persuade his master's step-daughter to leave with him and others.⁷⁵ In 1531 Scharnschlager's daughter Ursula married Hans Felix, a Strasbourg clockmaker converted by Scharnschlager, and by 1533 they had moved to Moravia.⁷⁶ Fritsch Beck of Dorlisheim was a "Swiss Brother" who in April 1536 described infant baptism as a devilish command and protested that Matthew Zell had openly preached against it.⁷⁷ In January 1539 he emigrated to Moravia -- and left his children behind in Strasbourg territory.⁷⁸ The city was left to administer his goods and care for his children. By August 1542 the children had died in Dorlisheim, and periodically up to June 1543 the *Rat* discussed his affairs.⁷⁹

When in 1535 persecution broke out also in Moravia, many returned to their homeland. Five of these returnees, interrogated in Strasbourg in August 1536, were Anabaptists of a separate party called the Philippites, after their teacher, preacher and baptizer, the weaver Philip (Pläermel) Plener of Strasbourg. In 1527/1528 he had led a number of fellow believers from South Germany to Auspitz in Moravia, and

⁷⁵ *TAE II*, No. 529, pp. 296-297.

⁷⁶ "Scharnschlager, Leupold," *ME IV*.

⁷⁷ *TAE III*, No. 711, p. 24.

⁷⁸ *TAE III*, No. 883, p. 303-304.

⁷⁹ *TAE III*, Nos. 883, 904, 909, 914, 1053, 1056, 1198, 1201, 1207, 1211; *TAE IV*, Nos. 1284, 1292; Gerber, "Les Anabaptistes," 313-314; *TAE III*, 10.

there had founded a congregation which grew to 200. His assistants were Blesy Kaumauf (Kuhm) from Bruchsal and Adam Slegel, a tailor from Nürnberg. The congregation held all goods in common, and the leaders managed their temporal affairs.

The persecution in Moravia forced them to return to South Germany. While returning many were captured and executed in Passau in Bavaria. Others escaped. These men, staying in the Zum Pflug and Zur Lungen inns, were now in Strasbourg to find Blesy and Pläermel who were to meet them soon. They were also to receive money belonging to the entire congregation to support the brothers. All wanted to settle down and seek their fortune in Strasbourg. About thirty others were together in a forest near Heilbrunn.⁸⁰

Individually, Hans von Ölbrunn in Baden, was a pursemaker baptized by Kaumauff in Auspitz. As a Catholic, he said, he had not known whether he was an animal or a human. The Anabaptists, he found, were righteous, and Adam Slegel was a spirit-filled servant of God. Michel Gartner von Ettenheim in Baden, a weaver, had been baptized in Moravia four years earlier (1532) by Pläermel and by a tall, dark person (Kaumauf). Gewer Baur from Schwaigern in Württemberg had been baptized five years earlier (1531). He had come looking for work in Strasbourg with Schuchhantz from Nantze

⁸⁰ TAE III, No. 731, p. 39. According to Adam, 210, Pläermel died in the Passau prison.

in Baden, who had been baptized by Kaumauf. With them was Adam Slegel, a Nürnberg tailor who had been baptized in his home by a son of a magistrate from Moravia. He declared he would rather die than swear an oath. Not all held such views, however. Radicals such as the *Schwertler* who carried the sword and swore the oath, the Sabbatarians who had reinstated the Sabbath, and the Münsterites Slegel did not consider his brothers. He was determined; in a long discussion on infant baptism, not even Bucer could shake his conviction.⁸¹

The relationship of Strasbourg's Anabaptists with the Moravian Anabaptists proved to be long lasting. Pilgram Marpeck contacted both the Moravians and the Strasbourgeois in the early 1540s.⁸² In 1543 the Melchiorite Jörg Nörlinger, expelled from Strasbourg, surfaced in Moravia as a Melchiorite missionary.⁸³ In 1548 the Pilgramite leader Sigmund Bosch sent a letter from Strasbourg to fellow believers in Moravia.⁸⁴ This communication demonstrates that although Strasbourg's nonconformists were driven underground, they were nourished by contacts with fellow

⁸¹ TAE III, No. 731, p. 39; No. 747, pp. 51-52. See also Hulshof, 168-169; Adam, 210.

⁸² Boyd, *Marpeck*, 199-201.

⁸³ *The Geschicht-Buch der Hutterischen Brüder*, R. Wolkan, ed., 1923, pp. 190ff, and *Die älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder*, A. J. F. Zieglschmied, ed., 1943, pp. 243ff; TAE IV, No. 1259, p. 16, n. 1.

⁸⁴ TAE IV, No. 1614a, pp. 256-257.

believers in other lands. Such contacts eventually grew into multi-regional conferences in the 1550s and 1560s.

C. 1536 to 1538

After 1535, with the slackening of the authorities' strict surveillance, although arrests, interrogations and expulsions continued, radicals began secretly to return to the city and to hold meetings. New immigrants also arrived. Some had fled France in the wake of the 1534 Placards affair when Protestant propaganda was posted up throughout Paris. Others were Melchiorite refugees from the Netherlands. By April 1537, referring to Anabaptist meetings in the Krutenau district, a magistrate commented, "It seems the Anabaptists are running strong again."⁸⁵ The rising number of dissidents gave courage to some would-be radicals. In April the maid of Wendling Bittelbronn, the city lawyer, announced that she did not want to go to church at all, and then quit working for him.⁸⁶ In July Anabaptist meetings were noticed on the *Murhof*, perhaps the city's workplace for masonry materials. Meetings also took place near Lingolsheim, in the Eckbolsheim Forest and in nearby Gansau where the mayor was an Anabaptist sympathizer.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ TAE III, No. 759, p. 64.

⁸⁶ TAE III, No. 759, p. 64.

⁸⁷ TAE III, No. 774, pp. 77-78; No. 1013, p. 402.

In May 1537 the Mundolsheim tailor, Hans Adam, was arrested. Having resisted the institutional church since 1524,⁸⁸ he was by now a definite leader and even an elder; he traveled around encouraging Anabaptist congregations in Reichstett, Mundolsheim, Suffelweyersheim, Ottrott, Rossheim, Schlettstadt, Oberehenheim and elsewhere.⁸⁹ He rebaptized Barbara Kneiger, the wife of the tailor Hans Kneiger, a converted Jew in Rossheim. Kneiger later testified that she had been rebaptized because she had not properly understood her first baptism.⁹⁰ When arrested for these activities, Adam declared:

Our pastors preach the letter...and promise us salvation and consolation before they or we have renounced our sins, and so they give us a rotten stick in our hand on which we lean.

Again the authorities characterized him as a "hard-necked troublemaker."⁹¹

As late as August 1540 Adam converted to Anabaptism a local peasant named Heinrich Wendling from Flexburg. Wen-

⁸⁸ TAE II, Nos. 148, 384, 400, 477 & 477a, 680; TAE IV, Beilage, No. 475a.

⁸⁹ TAE III, No. 762, p. 65.

⁹⁰ TAE III, No. 980, pp. 380-381.

⁹¹ TAE III, No. 762, p. 65. See also Adam, 211; Hulshof, 172. In the fourteen Melchiorite tracts from Speyer of December 1537, a man named Adam is mentioned. Since Adam Slegel (TAE III, Nos. 731, 747) was a Philippite and Hans Adam was a radical long before Hoffman's arrival, the Melchiorite Adam may be a third individual. In one tract he claimed a divine vision that there were still 700 Anabaptists in Strasbourg. TAE III, No. 799, p. 115.

dling was imprisoned but would not be shaken in his faith. His wife pleaded for his release; she only wanted him to be a good man, and would deliver him from his error were it not for Hans Adam who gave him no peace. Johann Lenglin, pastor of St. Niklaus, remonstrated with Wendling and was to be followed by the former Melchiorites Peter Tasch and Johannes Eisenburg if he failed. And if Wendling remained obstinate, he was to help his wife take in the harvest and then be expelled. Adam, for his part, was to be summoned one more time.⁹²

For all his combativeness, unlike other outspoken radicals, Adam managed to remain in Strasbourg. The fact that he was probably not Melchiorite contributed to his staying power; in general Melchiorites (like Wilhelm Blum the younger) created greater fear and received stricter treatment than other kinds of Anabaptists. His roots in Strasbourg also doubtlessly helped him; indigenous citizens were expelled less frequently than non-citizens such as Hans Denck or even immigrant citizens such as Pilgram Marpeck. Still, other indigenous commoners such as Heinrich Wendling were expelled for less reason; few were as publicly confrontational as Adam. He may have sensed when to pressure the authorities and when to lay back; at other moments his challenges might have earned him immediate expulsion. His presence also points to the flexibility and tolerance of the

⁹² *TAE III*, No. 1057, pp. 429-430.

Rat; at times the Rat turned a deaf ear to even its more outspoken critics.

Not all radicals were as combative as Adam. Some tried dialogue. Cornelius Schehe of Bobenhausen, a teacher in Geispolsheim baptized by Pilgram Marpeck, engaged in a number of conversations with Hedio the cathedral preacher.⁹³ Others tried to find a middle ground where they could cooperate with the government without compromising their convictions. 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.⁹⁴ In November 1537 the shipper Philips testified that he was "neither Lutheran...nor Hoffmanian; he wanted to be a Nazarene and wanted to do the right."⁹⁵

Those who found the stand for their convictions, the search for a middle ground or exile too strenuous simply recanted. Benedict Klein was an Augsburg Anabaptist who had purchased citizenship in 1528 and had settled down in Ruprechtsau. In 1535 he was expelled but by February 1536 he recanted and asked for readmission to Strasbourg.⁹⁶ Diebolt Schwartz, pastor of Old St. Peter, noted in July

⁹³ TAE III, No. 720, p. 28.

⁹⁴ TAE III, No. 774, pp. 77. Anabaptist meetings continued in Ottrott at least until 1545.

⁹⁵ TAE III, No. 790, p. 88; Hulshof, 172. Philips did not explain what he meant by "Nazarene."

⁹⁶ TAE III, No. 706, pp. 21-22.

1537 that two Alsatian refugees who had been baptized in Moravia had returned and recanted, and now were being supported by Strasbourg's relief agency.⁹⁷

Barbara Kiefer from Barr, indicted in July 1535 by the Dorlisheim authorities as a "hardnecked" Anabaptist, was finally interrogated a year later. She testified that she sought to follow the clergy's frequent exhortations, namely to "die to the world." So years ago she had been baptized in Mutzig in the Molsheim district by the Strasbourg carpenter Lukas Hobelmacher. Expelled from Barr, she had met with Capito who, with tears in his eyes, praised God that living saints had come to his home and said she had acted rightly in being baptized.⁹⁸ For this statement Kiefer was expelled from Dorlisheim although her husband was not. But by October 1537 she recanted and asked to be readmitted, saying among other things that she wished to live again in her home with her dear husband.⁹⁹ The recantation may have been more one of convenience than of conviction; during the next five years she left her husband four times for the sake of Anabaptism, and this by 1542 resulted in their request for a divorce.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ *TAE III*, No. 773, pp. 76-77; *TAE I*, No. 15, p. 23, n. 5.

⁹⁸ *TAE III*, No. 723, pp. 30-31.

⁹⁹ *TAE III*, No. 786, pp. 85-86.

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

A great number of religious dissidents, especially in the countryside, tried to slip out of anti-Anabaptist restrictions by playing the Strasbourg Rat off against the authorities of the local village or chapter or the Catholic church. By convincing the Rat that village, episcopal or chapter authorities were encroaching on prized Strasbourg freedoms, they could often get the magistrates to side with them against the local oppressors. For example, in August 1538 Georg Gyr, the Catholic priest of Rossheim, noted a strong Anabaptist presence in his area and complained that the Anabaptists deliberately pitted the Catholic authorities against the Strasbourg regime.

The Anabaptists we expel here become Strasbourg citizens, claiming that they are persecuted for the gospel...Others who are Strasbourg citizens live with us and are offensive to all...[When I] preach against them, they accuse me of speaking against the praiseworthy city of Strasbourg. For that reason many preaching priests stand in grave danger...Behind this lies a veritable *Bundschuh* from which may God protect us.¹⁰¹

Also in other villages such as Börsch and Wangen, Anabaptists regularly strove to evade the Rat's scrutiny while enjoying its protection against local authorities.¹⁰²

D. 1538 to 1540

The city's lenient enforcement of the Anabaptist mandate came to an end in December 1537. A bundle of Melchiorite

¹⁰¹ TAE III, No. 843, p. 243.

¹⁰² For Börsch, see pp. For Wangen, see ch. 8 below.

writings sent from Speyer containing visions and inflammatory predictions about Strasbourg spurred the *Rat* again to sharper measures.¹⁰³

Although the Melchiorites had by this time become more moderate, as evidenced by their 1538 disputation with David Joris, the *Rat*, unaware that the tracts reflected more the Melchiorites' mindset in 1533 than in 1537, issued a stricter mandate to prevent expelled Anabaptists from returning to the city, and to prevent another Münster in Strasbourg. Illegal returns would earn severe punishments: those caught on first offence would

be imprisoned for four weeks...on...bread and water. A second attempt would be punished by cutting off the index finger or by burning a hole through the cheek. A third attempt would bring...death by drowning.

These served, in fact, more to intimidate than to persecute. The sources make no mention of Strasbourg Anabaptists being executed or disfigured.¹⁰⁴

In an "Anabaptist Article" supplementary to the mandate, the *Rat* distinguished between radical citizens and foreigners. Relcalcitrant foreigners were forced to swear an oath never to return. Those who refused to swear at all would still be punished with death upon return to the

¹⁰³ *TAE III*, No. 799, pp. 109-115; cf. *TAE II*, No. 444, p. 186.

¹⁰⁴ *TAE III*, No. 816, pp. 141-142; Deppermann, 357-358; Hulshof, 174-175.

city.¹⁰⁵ Dissenting citizens were issued a gentler document. They were not required to embrace the doctrines of the church; they had only to promise not to dispute or revile those doctrines and not to attend forbidden meetings. Unwillingness to accept the Anabaptist article would result in expulsion. The rest of the family could stay if they repudiated the one member's radicalism.¹⁰⁶

While seeking to eliminate all religious dissidence, the magistrates distinguished between Hoffmanians, Anabaptists and other sects and opinions,¹⁰⁷ and recognized the presence of pious people who were simply misled.¹⁰⁸ Fear of Melchiorite unrest was the impetus behind the mandate, and the Rat's pragmatism surfaced in the document's rationale: "...This decree does not apply to inner belief, but only for the sake of the order and prohibition of our authorities and to protect the unity of the church...."¹⁰⁹ Although the Melchiorites were treated strictly, compared with other city governments, Strasbourg's treatment of radicals was moder-

¹⁰⁵ *TAE III*, No. 817, pp. 143-144; Hulshof, 175-176.

¹⁰⁶ *TAE III*, No. 817, pp. 142-143. The Rat dealt with the tailor Jörg Ziegler in this way.

¹⁰⁷ *TAE III*, No. 817, p. 143.

¹⁰⁸ *TAE III*, No. 816, p. 140.

¹⁰⁹ *TAE III*, No. 816, p. 142.

ate except for 1534-35 when the Münster revolution drove the Rat to severe action.¹¹⁰

The effort to restrict nonconformists with the Anabaptist mandate of 1538 was followed by a parallel effort to strengthen the Strasbourg church in the second Strasbourg Synod of May 26-28, 1539. This synod was less significant for the religious radicals than that of 1533. The Strasbourg church was suffering a shortage of pastors between 1535 and 1540 because Catholic priests were converting to Protestantism less frequently, and because institutions to educate new pastors were not yet fully operative.¹¹¹ This synod and its 22 articles, then, were intended primarily to buttress and supplement the legislation of 1533. The sects were dealt with but less so than earlier. Infant baptism was justified at length in five articles, compulsory baptism of children within six weeks of birth was affirmed unofficially, the eucharist received thorough discussion, and salvation outside the official church was denied. But doctrinal errors and individual nonconformists were not the center of attention as in 1533. Although none of the fifty-five paragraphs summarizing the synod referred particularly to the Anabaptists,¹¹² it was hoped that a strengthened and

¹¹⁰ Hulshof, 176-177.

¹¹¹ Lienhard, 475.

¹¹² *TAE III*, No. 920, pp. 330-337; Adam, 212-213.

revitalized church would neutralize the impact of dissidents and even persuade them to convert.

Simultaneously with the synod, ex-Melchiorites Peter Tasch and Johannes Eisenburg began their work of dismantling the Melchiorite community. Hoffman's prophecies of the imminent return of Christ had not been fulfilled. Tasch and Eisenburg, disillusioned, had been convinced by Bucer to join the Strasbourg church and bring their fellow Anabaptists to the church, partly by spreading word that Hoffman had recanted in 1539. They had success in persuading many Melchiorites to leave the movement, but they did not entirely reach their goal of drawing them into the church. A good number joined the Swiss Brethren. This was understandable for the Swiss Brethren were the main non-conformist alternative, and if the Melchiorites dropped their apocalypticism and their monophysite Christology, their doctrine was close to that of the Swiss Brethren. Thus, as Hoffman's followers experienced attrition, the Swiss Brethren experienced a corresponding revival.¹¹³

With the Mandate of 1538 passed, the church's doctrine and structure reinforced with the Synod of 1539, and the dismantling work of Eisenburg and Tasch underway, the magistrates' vigilance relaxed somewhat. This enabled some of those expelled to re-enter the city, and enabled Anabaptist meetings again to be held more frequently. Swiss

¹¹³ Hulshof, 204-205.

Brethren meetings were now augmented by the addition of disaffected Melchiorites. In February 1540 a spy informed the Rat that meetings of sixty and of thirty persons had been held at night in the past three weeks, and a third was about to be held. The Rat determined to apprehend the participants.¹¹⁴

In March two Anabaptist meetings near Illkirch were raided by the authorities. While thirty escaped, sixty-nine were arrested. Forty of these had been lodged by the innkeeper of the Zum Bock inn. A shoemaker and a barber had seen through the window how they prayed, cried and ate together. They were interrogated and the innkeeper was punished, probably with expulsion. As the admonitions of Hedio, Tasch and Eisenburg had little effect on them, the twelve most prominent men were imprisoned¹¹⁵ while the others, women and men, were released. A discussion involving Hedio, the *Wiedertäuferherren* and the twelve leaders went poorly for they spoke in a disorganized fashion. Eventually they were separated into two groups -- those who wished to cooperate and those who did not.¹¹⁶

All maintained that they wished to remain true to the gospel, but none could decently explain his faith.¹¹⁷ Since

¹¹⁴ TAE III, No. 993, pp. 387-388.

¹¹⁵ TAE III, No. 1003, p. 392.

¹¹⁶ TAE III, Nos. 1012-1013, pp. 399-402.

¹¹⁷ TAE III, No. 1010, p. 398.

the clergy received assistance from Tasch and Eisenburg, the Anabaptists also requested assistance from brothers in Switzerland (Georg Sattler and Hans Hütz) who could better articulate their faith. The Rat, willing to try any means to win them over, granted this request, but nothing came of this debate because the Anabaptists wished to speak before the entire citizenry rather than in a closed circle as the Rat dictated.¹¹⁸

Of those imprisoned, Thomas Kieffer von Rappoltsweiler, Simon Geisser von Tübingen and others confessed to having been instructed and baptized in Upper Alsatian villages by a preacher named Jörg Spielmann from Schlettstadt. Others would not say by whom they had been baptized and would not identify their leaders. Jörg Ulrich von Gaggenau in Baden, a basket-carriage weaver, confessed to being a former Melchiorite baptized by an Alexander in his home town. He would not reveal his current leader.¹¹⁹ Peter Walther, a weaver, was probably Peter Walther the armorer who appears as Anabaptist leader in 1545 and 1576.¹²⁰ Bastian Hertzog claimed no suspicion of the clergy, and asked for more brothers to come to a debate. He may have been Bastian the

¹¹⁸ *TAE III*, No. 1013, pp. 399-402. This episode occupied the authorities intensely for the month of April 1540 and dominates the sources at the time. *TAE III*, Nos. 1002, 1003, 1006-1022, pp. 391-409. See also Hulshof, 205-206; Adam, 214.

¹¹⁹ *TAE III*, No. 1006, p. 394.

¹²⁰ *TAE III*, No. 1013, pp. 400-401.

strawcutter who appears as a leader with Peter Walther in March 1546.¹²¹ Hans Betz, a metal ringmaker with property, decided to leave the city voluntarily rather than be expelled. He was granted two or three weeks to clean up his affairs.¹²² Another was Vrax (Viexen) Weibel whose wife Anna, also an Anabaptist, recanted and swore the Anabaptist oath.¹²³ Ludwig Herenbach, a vine-dresser from Heilbrunn, after repeated discussions remained firm and was expelled.¹²⁴ Others imprisoned included Ambrosius Alber, Michel Engelfried, Jakob Rauch, Kaspar Hoffmann¹²⁵, Oster Hans, Jakob Ringler,¹²⁶ and Gall, a tailor from Neckarsteinach in Hesse. Their inability to defend their faith points to their lack of education. Hedio noted that many of them were "simple ones" (*einfeltig*); no more than two were able to defend their beliefs.¹²⁷ This is probably due mostly to the disappearance of educated leaders, the lack of education among the lower classes, and to the scatteredness

¹²¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1496, p. 178. At an Anabaptist meeting in July 1545 a leader named Barthel would be replaced by Peter Walter, *TAE IV*, No. 1453, pp. 144-145. Could Bastian and Barthel be the same person?

¹²² *TAE III*, No. 1010, p. 397; No. 1027, p. 412.

¹²³ *TAE III*, No. 1024, p. 410.

¹²⁴ *TAE III*, Nos. 1012-1014, 1024.

¹²⁵ He had a child. *TAE III*, No. 1013, p. 401.

¹²⁶ *TAE III*, No. 1010, p. 397.

¹²⁷ *TAE III*, No. 101, p. 398.

of the Anabaptist movement.¹²⁸

Hans Schmid was probably Hans Schmid von Knittlingen in Württemberg whose wife was also an Anabaptist. Baptized in Württemberg, commissioned as an elder, and then imprisoned in November 1535 with his highly pregnant wife, Hans had escaped and his wife had been expelled. With time they made their way to Strasbourg where he was interrogated in November 1538.¹²⁹ As elder he had led, taught and baptized Anabaptists throughout upper Baden and Alsace. Two months before this arrest he had been baptizing in the Schlettstadt area. One of the few who could articulate their faith, Schmid did much of the talking.¹³⁰

To the wife of Jörg Schneider the prison warden, Schmid estimated 800 Anabaptists in the Strasbourg area. To his brother-in-law, the cloth shearer Hans von Turken (possibly a city spy), Schmid's wife agreed that they were many. Another Anabaptist, Reinhold Jacob, told Hans von Turken of 40 Anabaptists sitting together on mats with one, probably the speaker, standing in their midst.¹³¹ The *Ratsherren* learned that the mayor of the hamlet of Gansau was also an

¹²⁸ *TAE III*, Nos. 1002, 1003, 1006-1022.

¹²⁹ *TAE III*, No. 865, p. 294.

¹³⁰ *TAE III*, No. 1010, p. 398.

¹³¹ *TAE III*, No. 1022, p. 409.

Anabaptist supporter. A large number were planning to meet the following Monday.¹³²

These numbers represent a resurgence after the scattering of 1535. To the Rat they were alarming enough to warrant not only an investigation concerning these 800 Anabaptists,¹³³ but also, on April 9, 1540, a renewal of the 1538 Anabaptist mandate. Imprisonment on bread and water would be followed by punishment of "body and life." Stricter action would also be taken against all who lodged or sheltered Anabaptists in any way. The death penalty still appears never to have been carried out. These measures may have hurt the declining Melchiorites the most, for the Swiss Brethren maintained their strength.¹³⁴

The mandate renewal, however, had little impact. Later in 1540 a meeting was reported in Lingolsheim.¹³⁵ By February 1541 reports arrived of an Anabaptist group meeting in a Strasbourgeois home and of others meeting elsewhere.¹³⁶ In July Hans von Turken reported that for several days 350 Anabaptists would be gathering in the Brumath forest north

¹³² *TAE III*, No. 1013, p. 402.

¹³³ *TAE III*, No. 1022, p. 409.

¹³⁴ *TAE III*, No. 1014, pp. 402-404; Hulshof, 206; Adam, 214-215.

¹³⁵ *TAE III*, No. 1074, p. 445.

¹³⁶ *TAE III*, No. 1080, p. 450.

of Strasbourg.¹³⁷ The following year a meeting "near the chapel near the Carthusians" involved sixty participants.¹³⁸

IV. Conclusion

Strasbourg's religious radicals experienced a near death and a slight rebirth in the years 1534 to 1540. The numbers were lower than in their heyday, for many left Strasbourg. While some who stayed recanted under pressure, most displayed a grim determination to keep their faith and way of life, even if they had to begin again outside the city. They traveled up to thirty kilometers to announce a meeting in 1535 and organized a gathering of 300 in 1538. In addition meetings of sixty, thirty, twenty-five, and fewer took place.

According to the sources, the number of those expelled far exceeds those who compromised. Their main religious criticisms and the main reasons for their expulsions concerned infant baptism and oath swearing. After 1540 the emphasis would change; hypocrisy, lack of love and unethical living would replace infant baptism and oath swearing as the radicals' main objection to the Strasbourg church and authorities.

In terms of social composition, in the sources considered for this chapter, fifty-two occupations of non-

¹³⁷ *TAE III*, No. 1129, p. 488.

¹³⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1455, p. 146; *TAE III*, No. 1239, p. 551.

Melchiorite radicals appeared. Ten (19%) were of higher social or intellectual status: two notaries, two teachers, one schoolmaster, one secretary, one former monk, one nobleman, one intellectual and one mayor. Eight of these were Anabaptists or Anabaptist sympathizers. Thirty-nine (75%) were artisans. They represented twenty seven occupations: seven tailors, five shoemakers, three weavers, and one mason's apprentice, sawsmith, soapboiler, watchmaker, gardener, carpenter, joiner, smith, knifsmith, windlass maker, clothworker (former cellarman and prior), barrel-maker, ropemaker, baker's apprentice, innkeeper, clockmaker, purse-maker, shipper, basket-carriage weaver, strawcutter, metal ringmaker, vine-dresser and inn-keeper's wife. All of these were Anabaptists or Anabaptist sympathizers. The remaining three (6%) of lower class were two maids and one peasant. Another was too poor to afford citizenship.

Leadership of the Anabaptists was solidly in the artisan class and became more solidly so as the years passed. The notary Fridolin Meyger was the only known Anabaptist leader of the intellectual class, and he died by 1536. Other leaders included two tailors, a soapboiler, a gardener, a clothworker (former cellarman and prior), a mason's apprentice, a weaver and a strawcutter. By the time of the large arrests in 1540, no intellectual leaders were left among the Anabaptists. A large number could not intelligibly defend their faith. Women were actively involved, some individually and

many at the side of their husbands. Fifteen women were singled out, and at least two were Anabaptist leaders. At least three differed from the views of their husbands.

Compared to the late 1520s, this profile points to a social and educational decline among the Anabaptists after 1533. Members of the intellectual and social elite tended to leave, associate with Schwenckfeldians or operate as individual thinkers. With this move toward lay and artisan leadership came relatively more involvement in and ownership of religious life by women.

Chapter 5

THE MELCHIORITES AFTER 1535

The story of Strasbourg Melchioritism continues long after Münster in 1534 and even Hoffman's death in 1543. While Hoffman's following declined gradually up to his alleged recantation in 1539 and rapidly thereafter, the Melchiorite tradition perdured. Among a few it persisted in an apocalyptic form similar to Hoffman's. Among others it continued in non-apocalyptic form, and so came to resemble the movement around Menno Simons. Among still others, particularly in Martin Steinbach's *Lichtseher* movement, Melchioritism merged with the social-revolutionary tradition of Clement Ziegler and the Peasants' War, and continued at least up to 1570.

I. Melchior Hoffman, 1537-39

Melchior Hoffman had been in prison since May 1533. At the Synod his views were judged to be both heretical and politically dangerous, and so he was left in his cell. Although his health was failing and his attempts to secure his release through diplomacy in 1534 proved futile, his convictions remained firm and his followers remained loyal. He denounced the violence of Münster, and when the Anabap-

tist kingdom fell in June 1535, he hardly seemed to care.¹ After the fall of Münster in June 1535, Hoffman's health declined, he became more passive, and apart from complaints of harsh treatment in 1536, little is heard from him.

In December 1537, despite deteriorating eyesight, twenty-four handwritten pieces of cloth were found in Hoffman's cell. Without paper since 1533, on these cloths he had written biblical texts, many from the book of Revelation, which supported his doctrines and prophecies. On one cloth was found the names of sixteen prophets:

Elijah	Abel
Ananias	John the Baptist
Jeremiah	Schnepfe Hans (Rebstock?)
Daniel	Hans Fuht (Hut?)
Daniel (again)	Jörg Jubele (not identified)
Michael	Bärbel (Rebstock)
Caspar (Beck/Schwenckfeld?)	Ursel (Jost)
Johannes Eisenburg	Lorenz (Gertrud or Joseph)
	Blum (Wilhelm, Sr. or Jr.)

According to Deppermann this list was probably part of two lists of twelve prophets, in which every prophet of the past was seen to "prefigure" a present-day prophet.²

Hoffman's health continued to deteriorate. By March 1539 his legs and face were swollen. Finally, after three years in a dungeon, Hoffman asked to see sunlight again,

¹ Deppermann, *Hoffman*, 338.

² *TAE III*, No. 800, 116-119. This list is according to a copy by the Strasbourg archivist Jakob Wencker II (1668-1743). We may have neither the original order nor the full list of names. Cf. Deppermann, 354-355.

only to return to darkness a month later. Despite his illness his convictions remained firm.³

II. The Melchiorites, 1536-38

By 1536 the severity of government action lessened somewhat, and this allowed Melchiorites and other nonconformists to become active again in Strasbourg. Melchiorites such as Wilhelm Blum the younger secretly returned to the city.⁴ In August 1536 Netherlanders were reported hiding in an inn with an Anabaptist named Lirman.⁵ A civil servant spoke of many Melchiorites in the city, including three "prophets," Alexander Weber, Jörg Platner in Schiltigheim and Peter from Cologne, one Bernhard Schmid, Fridolin Meyger's successor as episcopal notary, a prophetess from nearby Ottrott and a Barbara Murer who took her children to Anabaptist meetings.⁶

Women were numerous and sometimes prominent. Barbara Murer, the visionary and outspoken wife of Wolf Murer, spoke of many Anabaptists at the meetings, mentioned some of their names to a civil servant, and disclosed that the Anabaptists often gathered in the Eckbolsheim Forest. She would not,

³ Deppermann, 355.

⁴ TAE II, No. 664, pp. 451-452.

⁵ TAE III, No. 727, p. 32.

⁶ TAE III, No. 727, p. 32; Hulshof, *Geschiednis*, 171; Adam, *Evangelische Kirchengeschichte*, 211. Peter from Cologne was probably different from Peter Tasch, although Tasch came from Geyer near Cologne. TAE III, No. 836, p. 162.

however, identify who had baptized her and would not obey the clergy. Rather she asked to be left alone to her conscience. Interrogated with her was the Philippite tailor Adam Slegel and Lienhard Jost who spoke of prophecy and dreams.⁷ Magdalena Baltner lived with her husband Jakob Baltner in the Krutenau district near the St. Wilhelm church.⁸ Barbara Bruder, wife of Frax Bruder, engaged in a ten-day debate with Jakob Wetzel von Marsilien, a nobleman, magistrate and canon at Young St. Peter, who repeatedly sought to proselytize Anabaptists.⁹ Bruder, baptized by Jörg N. (perhaps Jörg Nespitzer), wished for the baptism of John, rejected infant baptism and believed in a heavenly Christ. She expressed pity that Strasbourg's magistrates had been deceived by the clergy.¹⁰ Imprisoned Anabaptists were treated with moderation; their wives were permitted to bring linen cloths and other needed items.¹¹ Melchiorites apprehended and interrogated in April 1537 included a seal and signet cutter named Franz from Meiland.

⁷ *TAE III*, No. 727, p. 32; No. 747, pp. 51-52.

⁸ *TAE III*, No. 726, p. 31. In May 1538 the artist Christoph Zürner and his wife Ottilie Eisenburger would move into a house beside theirs. *TAE III*, No. 826, p. 152.

⁹ *TAE III*, No. 737, pp. 43-44. In 1541 he visited Hoffman in prison. *TAE III*, No. 1046, p. 464; Hulshof, 183; Adam, 214.

¹⁰ *TAE III*, No. 739, p. 48; No. 747, pp. 51-52. For Nespitzer, see *TAE I*, No. 234, p. 288; "Nespitzer, Georg," *ME III*.

¹¹ *TAE III*, No. 747, pp. 51-52.

Through marriage to the daughter of an innkeeper, he had obtained Strasbourg citizenship in August 1528 and had registered in *Zum Spiegel*, Strasbourg's most prestigious guild. He argued for freedom of conscience, refused to let his child be baptized and was expelled.¹² His associate, a Hans Robert from Liège, claimed that if he was to live as a sectarian, he would rather live under the Catholics than under these reformed schismatics.¹³ In 1539 Hans Robert would reappear as Johannes Rofer and would turn out (probably) to be Johannes Eisenburg!¹⁴

The bundle of Melchiorite tracts which arrived from Speyer in December 1537 caused the Rat new anxiety. These visionary writings reflected faith in Hoffman's invulnerability, certainty about Strasbourg's destruction and sharp anticlericalism.¹⁵

According to Lienhard Jost, although the preachers had poked Hoffman's eyes out and the *Magistrat* had wanted to behead him four times, only a few hairs had been cut off. The emperor would besiege Strasbourg and then the lower classes would revolt. After a terrible bloodbath, Catholicism would return to the city. Prior to this, however, the burghers would rescue Hoffman while all the soldiers and politicians

¹² TAE III, No. 760, p. 64.

¹³ TAE III, No. 760, p. 64.

¹⁴ TAE III No. 922, pp. 337-338.

¹⁵ Deppermann, 356-358.

were drunk. Another saw that Strasbourg and its rulers would be stripped of power amid great bloodshed. Barbara Rebstock, referring to the Italian prophet Venturinus, prophesied that unless Strasbourg repented, it would disintegrate into a village. According to Valentin Dufft, Bucer, using a falsified Bible with which to debate Hoffman, had spoken at will while Hoffman was silenced after a few words. Rebstock called Capito Hoffman's Judas; after kissing Hoffman, he betrayed him. In Ursula Jost's vision, "Hedio fell from the Cathedral pulpit" and people waded up to their ankles in blood.¹⁶

Unaware that these pamphlets no longer reflected the 1533 mindset of Strasbourg's Melchiorites,¹⁷ the Rat guarded Hoffman's prison more closely and issued the Anabaptist mandate of 1538 to quell Melchiorite unrest.¹⁸ Because of their revolutionary potential, the Rat always treated the Melchiorites more strictly than the other radicals.¹⁹

III. David Joris

¹⁶ Deppermann, 356-357; Hulshof, 172-173; Adam, 211-212; *TAE III*, No. 799, pp. 109-115.

¹⁷ Cf. *TAE II*, No. 444, p. 186.

¹⁸ Deppermann, 357-358; Hulshof, 174.

¹⁹ Hulshof, 176-177.

A. The Splintering of the Larger Melchiorite Movement

According to Gary Waite, the fall of Münster in June 1535 led the Melchiorites to rethink their faith, and it led to three main responses:

the spiritualist-Nicodemianism of Obbe Philips and David Joris; the radical militantism of Jan van Batenburg; or the sectarianism of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips.²⁰

More immediately the Melchiorite movement splintered into five main groups: 1) "the original Melchiorites in Strasbourg, Hesse, Eastern Frisia, Netherlands and England;" 2) the Obbenites/Mennonites, pacifist followers of Obbe Philips and Menno Simons in the Netherlands and Eastern Frisia; 3) the remaining Münsterites in Westphalia and Oldenburg who hoped to restore their kingdom in Münster or elsewhere; 4) the Batenburgers, militant "followers of Jan van Batenburg in Westphalia and along the Lower Rhine;" 5) the Davidites, generally non-violent followers of David Joris, a glass painter and merchant turned theologian.²¹

Unlike the Münsterites, the Melchiorites and Obbenites repudiated polygamy and all militaristic attempts to bring about the kingdom of God. But their views on divine revela-

²⁰ G. K. Waite, "The Anabaptist Movement in the Netherlands, 1531-1535: An Initial Investigation into its Genesis and Social Dynamics," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 18 (1987), 264.

²¹ G. K. Waite, *David Joris and Dutch Anabaptism, 1524-1543* (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), 113-114; Deppermann, 358. See also Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword*, 2nd. ed., 283-305.

tion and on future events differed. The Melchiorites still anticipated the imminent end of world-history. It was the waiting period "between Good Friday (Hoffman's imprisonment) and Pentecost," when the Holy Spirit would be poured out anew, and when pious kings led by spiritual men would depose the ruling priests and ecclesiastical princes and renew the earth. For the Obbenites/Mennonites, in contrast, the only rule of Christ on earth was in the suffering community of true believers. In place of progressive revelation, they moved towards biblicism and in place of hierarchical, charismatic leadership in the church, they opted for congregational election of pastors guided by Scripture.²²

Jan van Batenburg, a former mayor of Steenwijk²³ and since 1535 leader of a radical group called *Schwertgeister*, was more militant. In his view "the time for grace, forgiveness and baptism had passed; the moment for vengeance" on God's enemies had arrived.²⁴ Bands of Batenburgers throughout the Netherlands and Westphalia plundered churches and attacked farms. The Münsterites, now mostly in Oldenburg, still trusted in military power to establish the rule of God, but considered Batenburg's banditry pointless. They

²² Deppermann, 358-359.

²³ Steenwijk is in Overijssel, east of Holland.

²⁴ Deppermann, 359. He would be captured in December 1537 and executed in early 1538. *TAE III*, No. 799, n. 1.

also accepted polygamy.²⁵ David Joris held a mediating position between the pacifist and revolutionary groups.²⁶

In August 1536 about two dozen Melchiorite leaders gathered at Bocholt in Westphalia with hopes to reunite their movement. Chances for a lasting settlement were slim since Obbe Philips, Batenburg and the Strasbourg Melchiorites all stayed away. While the Melchiorite leader Jan Matthijs of Middleburg denounced the Münster kingdom as contrary to Hoffman's teaching, the Münsterites threatened their opponents with death. At this point David Joris managed to pull the parties together on Hoffman's core doctrines (Monophysite Christology, free will, the perfection for the saints, a spiritualist eucharist and believers' baptism, the temporary rejection of violence and renewed proselytization). The question of polygamy would be discussed later. This temporary success strengthened his claim "as the most important Anabaptist leader in the Netherlands."²⁷

B. David Joris and the Strasbourg Melchiorites

After his triumph at Bocholt, Joris took further steps to unify the Melchiorites groups and become Hoffman's successor. In the North he attracted most of the Münsterites

²⁵ Deppermann, 359.

²⁶ Waite, *Joris*, 116.

²⁷ Waite, *Joris*, 117-118; Deppermann, 359-361; Williams, 381-383.

and many Batenburgers after their leader's 1538 execution. But he also needed to win over Strasbourg's Melchiorites who were everywhere respected as "the Elders of Israel."²⁸ First he tried letters and tracts, including a reply to Johannes Eisenburg on marriage. Monogamy was the rule, but should be founded on a "spiritual union." Divorce was permissible if one or both of the partners were "fleshly." By claiming special inspiration for his writings, he raised the issue of his mission and leadership. At the same time he denigrated the leadership of others, especially women such as Barbara Rebstock.²⁹

To strengthen his leadership claims and to discuss the issues facing Melchiorites, Joris and his colleagues travelled to Strasbourg in June 1538. The educated Melchiorites Peter Tasch and Johannes Eisenburg, and the prophets Barbara Rebstock and Lienhard Jost were Strasbourg's representatives in the debate. Tasch came from Geyen near Cologne where he had been an influential Melchiorite preacher, and he had missionaried across central and western Europe. Eisenburg, a Dutch intellectual and perhaps a coin-minter by profession, was considered by Hoffman as one of the prophets.³⁰ The crucial issue was

²⁸ Deppermann, 361-363; Waite, *Joris*, 120-122, 129.

²⁹ Waite, *Joris*, 129-132.

³⁰ *TAE III*, No. 800, pp. 116-119. For the record of the debate, the *Twistreden*, see *TAE III*, No. 836, pp. 156-238. Waite, *Joris*, 132, Deppermann, 363.

whether the Strasbourg Melchiorites would accept Joris' leadership and teachings. While he insisted that his words, based on "visions formulated from the Scriptures," were inspired of God and that the Strasbourg Melchiorites should accept his inspiration, Eisenburg and Tasch, well-acquainted with others such as van Batenburg who had claimed prophetic powers, were skeptical. Having moved toward a more traditional scripturally based hermeneutic, they now demanded scriptural and rational validation for Joris' teachings which, of course, should not contradict Hoffman's doctrines.³¹

Joris then sought "to split the united front" by siding with the visionary Lienhard Jost against the others. Jost had been somewhat marginalized in the discussion because although he possessed prophetic gifts, in the view of Eisenburg and Tasch, he was unable "to discern the spirits" and speak well.³² Finally, Joris tried to range Eisenburg and Tasch against Rebstock. When Joris doubted the Strasbourg' "fear of the Lord," she cut him off. He then retorted that through her the devil was speaking. Men in

³¹ *TAE III*, No. 860, p. 293; Waite, *Joris*, 132-133, 135; Deppermann, 363-364, 367.

³² Waite, *Joris*, 135-136; Deppermann, 364-365.

Strasbourg should keep their authority over women so as not to be deceived. With this discussion broke down.³³

In subsequent discussions on the theology of history, Joris posited that

as the human spirit develops from childhood through youth to maturity, so too...does the "shadowy Gospel"...of the Old Testament [("the first David")] make way for the "Gospel according to the flesh"...embodied in Christ, "the second David." This in its turn will lead on to the..."Gospel according to the Spirit" in which

a "third David" (Joris) would reign on earth. The saints, Spirit-filled people without need of ceremonies or sacraments, would enter into blessedness on earth and in heaven.³⁴

The discussions also revealed differing approaches to Scripture. Whereas Eisenburg and Tasch understood Exekiel 36 and 37 to refer to the restitution of the Kingdom, Joris interpreted it in terms of internal confession.³⁵ On the basis of this and miraculous experiences, Joris urged full and public confession of all sins, particularly sexual sins,

³³ Waite, *Joris*, 136-137; Deppermann, 364-365. Rebstock, esteemed and powerful on the basis of her visionary abilities, here also displayed critical judgment and courage openly to oppose Joris. *TAE III*, No. 836, p. 180. Her judgment of Hoffman was different. He both valued women like her and let himself be influenced by them. By including "Bärbel" in his December 1537 list of prophets, Hoffman evidenced his respect for her. *TAE III*, No. 800, pp. 116-119; Marion Kobelt-Groch, rev. of *TAE III* and *IV*, *Menonitische Geschichtsblätter*, 46 (1989) 163.

³⁴ Depperman, 365.

³⁵ Waite, *Joris*, 137.

so that they would not all be exposed on Judgment Day.³⁶ Against Hoffman's denial of forgiveness for deliberate sins committed after illumination, Joris taught a step by step progression toward moral perfection. It was to begin by replacing "the old man" (one's own wisdom) with "the Mind of Christ," (the wisdom of the Spirit as taught by Joris). From there Joris could lead them on to "Christian perfection." Since Eisenburg and Tasch resisted the first step, Joris refused to teach more about the later stages.³⁷

Clearly the Strasbourg Melchiorites had moderated their course. The scholars Eisenburg and Tasch had assumed leading roles and had redirected Hoffman's movement away from eschatological fantasies and more toward piety and upright living, with Scripture as authoritative. Hoffman's leadership they justified on the grounds that his doctrines were biblical. Lienhard Jost, their leading visionary, was tempered, and foreign prophets' claims to direct revelation were suspect. Joris' teachings which agreed with the Scriptures such as his admonitions to piety, conversion, denying the flesh, prayer and humility they appreciated. But they could not accept his new teachings such as the public confession of all sins, the absence of shame and "spiritual divorce" which felt unbiblical and smacked of sexual libertinism.³⁸

³⁶ Waite, *Joris*, 138; Deppermann, 366-368.

³⁷ Waite, *Joris*, 138-139; Deppermann, 373.

³⁸ Deppermann, 368-369; Hulshof, 203-204; Adam,

IV. The Dissolution of Strasbourg's Melchiorite Community

Most of the Anabaptists who returned to the Strasbourg church were Melchiorites, but the Melchiorite movement showed few signs of falling-off before 1539. In the fall of 1538 a variety of Melchiorites from the Low Countries became citizens in Strasbourg. They had been expelled from places like Delft and Liège and now were settling in villages such as Nonnenweier and Niderhausen on the east side of the Rhine. Jurisdiction over these locales was complicated by shifting geographical divisions between Strasbourg, Illkirch and the Catholic bishopric in previous decades. Since 1501 about half of Nonnenweier belonged to the city of Strasbourg but lay in Illkirch's territorial jurisdiction.³⁹ These complications benefitted the Melchiorites there for, appealing to Strasbourg for protection from Catholic harassment, they often received protection from the Rat which was more anxious to curb Catholic expansion than to monitor Anabaptist meetings. Thus, they were able to remain there for a long time.⁴⁰

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³⁹ Since 1528 the other half belonged to the bishop. *TAE III*, No. 865, p. 294, n. 6.

⁴⁰ The presence of Anabaptists in Nonnenweier and Niderhausen is attested in 1545, 1566 and 1567. Cf. *TAE IV*, No. 1468, p. 157; *AMS*, XXI, No. 40 (1562), f. 254v; No. 44 (1566), f. 486v, 488v; No. 45 (1567), f. 424r; No. 45 (1567), f. 453v.

Not only were Netherlander Anabaptists settling in Strasbourg; they were also conducting marriages outside the church in their homes.⁴¹ In addition, Netherlander babies were not being baptized. The midwife Cordula Federlin, interrogated about this in November 1538, claimed ignorance. She denied being rebaptized and said that although her own children had been baptized, she paid little attention to whether or not the women she served had their children baptized. She did know of some Netherlanders or other foreigners, but did not know with which sect they were associated.⁴²

It fell largely to Tasch and Eisenburg, converted by Bucer soon after the debate with Joris, to try to dissolve the Melchiorite movements in Hesse and Strasbourg and bring their leaders to the official church.⁴³ The Melchiorites in Hesse had suffered a severe blow early in 1536 when authorities surprised a gathering of thirty Anabaptists at which leaders were present, and incarcerated all but one.⁴⁴ Having failed to convert them with a priest, a theologian and an anti-Anabaptist ordinance, Philip of Hesse was at a

⁴¹ *TAE III*, No. 867, p. 295.

⁴² *TAE III*, No. 866, p. 295.

⁴³ *TAE III*, No. 836, p. 162, n. 2; *TAE II*, No. 475, p. 232, n. 1; *TAE III*, No. 727, p. 32.

⁴⁴ Deppermann, 369; B. Hammann, "Lindenborn: A Typical Incident in Early Anabaptist History in Upper Hesse," *MQR*, 51 (1977), 67-69.

loss over what to do. Finally Philip called Bucer to Marburg in October 1538 to hold a public debate with the Anabaptist leaders. Combining firmness on basic doctrines with concessions on ethics, particularly regarding usury and the need for stricter church discipline, Bucer managed to win some leaders over, including Peter Tasch who originally had been there to encourage the imprisoned Melchiorites. While Bucer had always felt the need for church discipline, these discussions with the Anabaptists seem to have focused the issue more sharply for him.⁴⁵

In Strasbourg this resulted in a January 1539 disciplinary ordinance for the church which included a ban, and in a greater emphasis on discipline at the Synod of 1539.⁴⁶ Tasch then offered to return the Melchiorites of Hesse to the church on condition that no Anabaptist leader bringing fellow believers into the official church be asked to recant publicly; no civil or ecclesiastical measures be taken against any returning Anabaptists; and returning Anabaptists not be obliged immediately to receive the Lord's Supper.⁴⁷ This offer was accepted. Eisenburg soon also returned to the Strasbourg church, but asked not to swear the Anabaptist

⁴⁵ F. H. Littell, ed. and trans. "What Butzer Debated with the Anabaptists at Marburg: A Document of 1538." *MQR* 35 (1962), 256-276; Deppermann, 369-370; W. Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 151-152.

⁴⁶ *TAE III*, Nos. 889-890, pp. 307-309.

⁴⁷ Deppermann, 370.

oath so that he could visit Anabaptist assemblies in his effort to convert them.⁴⁸ By the turn of 1538/39, on Bucer's urging to Philip of Hesse, Tasch and Eisenburg were criss-crossing Hesse with remarkable success. Before long 200 Anabaptists were in the arms of the church of Hesse.⁴⁹

In May 1539 Tasch confessed the Strasbourg Confession of faith,⁵⁰ and then with Eisenburg requested theological discussions with Hoffman. Under the watchful eye of two *Täuferherren*, Eisenburg and Tasch tried to get Hoffman to agree to a recantation which would break up his following in Strasbourg and, they hoped, lead to a similar dissolution in the Netherlands.⁵¹ After twenty-six hours of discussion over five sessions, the *Täuferherren* concluded that further discussion was futile. While Eisenburg and Tasch reproached Hoffman for the destruction done in his name, Hoffman denounced the violence but clung to his doctrines. Only on infant baptism did he compromise, but that would have been insufficient to move the masses.

Finally, one of the men managed to spend two days and a night in Hoffman's cell without the *Täuferherren* present. The outcome of this ordeal was Hoffman's signature on a

⁴⁸ Deppermann, 371; *TAE III*, No. 922, pp. 337-338.

⁴⁹ *TAE III*, No. 863, p. 293; Deppermann, 371-372; Littell, 258.

⁵⁰ *TAE III*, No. 913, pp. 322-324.

⁵¹ Deppermann, 372; Adam, 212; *TAE III*, No. 908, pp. 317-318; No. 911, pp. 319-320.

"recantation" so slight that the Rat would not to publish it. In it he simply renounced adult baptism and modified his understanding of "unforgivable sin." Hoffman maintained his positions on universal grace and free will, his Christology and his chiliasm. This constituted little real change from his confession of November 1534.⁵²

All this work with Hoffman took place just as the second Strasbourg Synod of May 26-28, 1539 was getting underway with hopes of revitalizing the church and thereby neutralizing the impact of dissidents. A week after the synod, Bucer, Capito, Zell and Hedio visited Hoffman in prison. Although he was despondent and uncertain, they could not discern his true feelings. Persuaded that his recantation was largely due to his illness and that he might not regain full health, they proposed that he be taken to a hospice for further instruction toward a full recantation, after which his remaining followers could be won to the Strasbourg Church.⁵³ Naturally the clergy made much of Hoffman's concession, publicizing the fact of his recantation without revealing its details. Eisenburg and Tasch spread word that Hoffman had recanted completely. Ironically, this untruth accomplished what neither discredited prophecies nor per-

⁵² Deppermann, 372-374; Hulshof, 177-181; *TAE III*, No. 912, pp. 320-322. Hulshof and W. Packull, "Melchior Hoffman -- A Recanted Anabaptist," *MQR* 57 (1983), 108-109, discuss the depth and nature of Hoffman's "recantation." Cf. *TAE II*, No. 368, p. 19; No. 617, p. 394.

⁵³ Deppermann, 374; Hulshof, 178; Adam, 212.

secution had achieved. Within a year, Strasbourg's throng of Melchiorites was reduced to a small circle of loyalists.⁵⁴

Upon hearing of Hoffman's recantation, many of his followers left the movement and some joined the Strasbourg church. Even Melchiorites with hostile anticlerical prophecies gave way to a milder disposition. Lienhard Jost, after having been arrested twice and having lost stature within the movement, swore the oath and expressed hope in April 1539 that the Anabaptists and the Strasbourg church might finally become one. This was because the ban had finally been established in the church, and not every blatant, gross sinner would be admitted to the eucharist.⁵⁵ Ten years later, still zealous for a pure church, he would involve himself in the *christlichen Gemeinschaften*, Bucer's self-disciplining fellowship groups within the larger church.⁵⁶ Lienhard's wife Agnes Jost, however, like some other Melchiorites, did not recant. Arrested and interrogated in Schiltigheim in 1539 with some other Anabaptists, she clung to the social revolutionary, spiritualist and

⁵⁴ Deppermann, 375; Hulshof, 181-182.

⁵⁵ *TAE III*, No. 907, p. 317. For the mandate including the ban, see *TAE III*, Nos. 889-890, pp. 307-309.

⁵⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1676, p. 297. Another Anabaptist in the *christlichen Gemeinschaften* was the former Swiss Brethren, Jörg Schmid. He became Jörg Faber, the assistant in Young St. Peter. *TAE II*, No. 649, pp. 440-441.

apocalyptic convictions of Hans Wolff who had baptized her in Strasbourg twelve years earlier.⁵⁷

Melchiorites who recanted in September 1539 included a woman named Barbara, Valentin Nessel, the expelled bucket-maker and friend of Hoffman's, a Hans Jäger who had been baptized by Valentin Dufft, and a vine dresser named Diebolt Esslinger from Börsch.⁵⁸ In June 1540, Hoffman's close friend, the goldsmith Valentin Dufft, requested re-entry into the city saying that he had come to view the clergy as more gracious than he had earlier thought. He was admitted on condition that he swear the Anabaptist article and attend the baptism of his children together with his wife.⁵⁹

Another convert was Johannes Rofer, a Netherlander Anabaptist who had identified himself in April 1537 as Hans Robert from Liège.⁶⁰ Although Rofer denied being an Anabaptist or having any association with any other sect, he did refuse to swear the oath in 1539 and was therefore interrogated on May 29, the day after the synod ended.⁶¹ Rofer

⁵⁷ *TAE III*, No. 980, pp. 380-381.

⁵⁸ *TAE III*, No. 952, p. 365; Hulshof, 182, 202-203.

⁵⁹ *TAE III*, No. 1032, p. 414; Deppermann, 375; Hulshof, 203-204; Adam, 214.

⁶⁰ *TAE III*, No. 760, p. 64.

⁶¹ *TAE III*, No. 922, pp. 337-338. In the opinion of the Strasbourg archivist, Jakob Wencker (1668-1743), Johannes Rofer is also Johannes Eisenburg who recanted about the same time and who similarly became active in bringing fellow Melchiorites to return to the church. *TAE III*, No. 922, pp. 337-338; No. 930, pp. 348-349. The fact that only Tasch confessed the Strasbourg Confession of faith on May 11 makes this possibility more plausible. *TAE III*, No. 913,

recanted at the interrogation or soon thereafter, for within three weeks, following his lead, his associate, Franz Mailand the seal and signet cutter, and a Nonnenweier Melchiorite named Lienhart Müller also recanted. Mailand was readmitted into the city after swearing the Anabaptist oath.⁶² Müller, the son of a miller, said that because "Johannes the Netherlander" (Rofer? Eisenburg?) had told him that Hoffman had renounced some doctrines and had given him "better instruction," he had become able to swear the required article.⁶³

Lienhart Müller, evidently a compassionate person, became caught up in controversies involving children in the following years. In the summer of 1540 he brought an unidentified two-year-old child into Nonnenweier to be nursed by his daughter-in-law. The Rat, pulled into the search for the child's family, questioned both father and son Müller about whether the child had been baptized.⁶⁴ In January 1543 Müller petitioned the Rat for his grandchildren. His daughter had married another Nonnenweier Anabaptist, Valentin Weber who, expelled for his Anabaptism, wished to sell all his property except for the house, and

pp. 322-324; No. 922, p. 338, n. 3.

⁶² *TAE III*, No. 932, p. 49.

⁶³ *TAE III*, No. 930, pp. 348-349.

⁶⁴ *TAE III*, No. 1035, p. 416.

move elsewhere with his children. Müller, fearing for his grandchildren's welfare, asked the Rat to let him raise the children, and to ensure that the house and their mother's inheritance be left only for them. The Rat consented and Müller swore the oath to become the children's guardian.⁶⁵

Another recanted Melchiorite was Gotfrid Walney, a lame school teacher from the village of Wenden in Westfalen. Before the summer of 1539 he had been imprisoned and expelled from Strasbourg. Perhaps converted by Eisenburg or Tasch, in August 1539 he recanted, swore the Anabaptist article and was readmitted into the city.⁶⁶ Walney spent most of his remaining years serving the church, but unlike Eisenburg or Tasch who rose to social eminence, he struggled financially. For two years he assisted Bucer loyally and so when in March 1541 he sought a teaching position in the neighboring village of Hunaweier, Capito recommended him as a "pious and knowledgeable Christian." He got the job and maintained good relations with the local pastor and the Strasbourg clergy.⁶⁷ The post, however, was short-lived, for by November 1543 he had fallen into poverty and received social assistance from Lukas Hackfurt.⁶⁸ Later he served as

⁶⁵ Weber's father-in-law, identified only as a Nonnenweier miller, is probably Lienhart Müller. *TAE IV*, No. 1254, pp. 13-14.

⁶⁶ *TAE III*, No. 940, pp. 358-359.

⁶⁷ *TAE III*, No. 1086-1087, pp. 453-454.

⁶⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1322, p. 52.

evangelical pastor in the Alsatian villages of Bolsenheim and then Kirrweiler where he again needed assistance from Hackfurt. In Kirrweiler at least until 1556, he then moved to Ettlingen where in 1558 he served as parish assistant. Illness and a falling out with his pastor led to his replacement by 1564.⁶⁹

Encouraged by their success, Tasch and Eisenburg intensified their attempts to change Hoffman's views. To the end of 1541 both Rat and clergy still hoped for a recantation from Hoffman but he remained adamant. In November 1539, on scraps of paper torn out of books lent to him, Hoffman wrote another warning calling on the *Ammeister* to lay in provisions and weapons in preparation for the siege which was now imminent. The Rat left him with his own book-let but took from him the other books and his source of ink.⁷⁰ Tasch and Eisenburg brought to him "translations of Ignatius, Gregory and Dionysius Areopagita" in order to dissuade him of his Christology. Hoffman was not easily persuaded; eight months later, in August 1540, Tasch and Eisenburg were still debating with him.⁷¹

In March 1541 a friend of the nobleman, magistrate and canon at Young St. Peter, Jakob Wetzler von Marsilien, pub-

⁶⁹ TAE III, No. 940, p. 358-359, n. 1.

⁷⁰ TAE III, No. 969, pp. 373-374.

⁷¹ Hulshof, 182-183; Adam, 214; Deppermann, 378; TAE III, No. 973, p. 377.

lished a booklet countering Hoffman's teaching on baptism and the Incarnation. Originally it was directed at a Melchiorite guild master who had left the Strasbourg church.⁷² Wetzell, ever debating with Anabaptists, asked to present Hoffman with this booklet. The Rat, however, declined, arguing that like the efforts of Tasch and Eisenburg, this attempt would also collapse.⁷³

Although Eisenburg and Tasch enjoyed substantial success, they did not fully attain their goal. Many ex-Melchiorites joined the Swiss Brethren rather than the Strasbourg church, and in so doing gave the Swiss Brethren momentum. Contemptuous of Tasch and Eisenburg's "treason," the Swiss Brethren repelled their proselytizing attempts, and the latter soon gave up efforts to convert them.⁷⁴ By March 1540 large numbers of Anabaptists were active with one prisoner claiming up to 800 Anabaptists in Strasbourg.⁷⁵ In August 1541 Eisenburg, now a teacher in Strasbourg, requested a certificate of Strasbourg citizenship in the hope that, his wife having died, he could procure an inheritance for his child from Haarlem in the Netherlands. The magistrates, fearing for his safety, advised him rather

⁷² *TAE III*, No. 1094, pp. 459-463.

⁷³ *TAE III*, No. 1096, p. 464; No. 1101, pp. 468-469.

⁷⁴ Deppermann, 375.

⁷⁵ *TAE III*, No. 1022, p. 409.

to send a lawyer with whom they would gladly send the requisite documents.⁷⁶ When Eisenburg succumbed to the plague two months later, Bucer eulogized him with high praise:

Johannes Isenburg has died...He was a man unequalled in prudence, zeal and wisdom in ecclesiastical affairs, though he had been a leader of the Anabaptists some years ago. With him our church has suffered an irreparable loss.⁷⁷

If the tactics used by Tasch and Eisenburg to dissolve the Melchiorite community were less than honorable, considering their intellectual orientation, their disillusionment over Hoffman's unfulfilled prophecies and the movement's dim future, they were perhaps understandable and realistic. In hastening the decline of Melchioritism, they also brought to an end the persecution suffered by Melchiorites in Strasbourg and Hesse.⁷⁸

V. Calvin and the Melchiorite Anabaptists

If the Strasbourg clergy received assistance from Tasch and Eisenburger in their efforts to win over the Melchiorites, they found a strong co-worker in John Calvin who lived in Strasbourg from September 1538 to 1541. Driven out of Geneva, he came to Strasbourg at Bucer's invitation, and

⁷⁶ TAE III, No. 1133, pp. 492-493.

⁷⁷ T. Schiess, ed., *Briefwechsel*, Vol. 2, No. 914, p. 88, quoted by Deppermann, 375; TAE III, No. 836, p. 162, n. 2.

⁷⁸ Deppermann, 375.

soon established a congregation of French-speaking Protestants.

After 1525 French-speaking religious refugees (*Welsches*) arrived from France, Lorraine and the Low Countries. In a number of towns in France, clandestine circles of artisans, notables and humanists created evangelical communities which eventually developed into Calvinist churches. Reforming groups included one centered in Meaux around the leadership of the scholar Lefèvre d'Étaples, the theologian Gérard Roussel, and William Briconnet, Bishop of Meaux. Protected by Marguerite de Navarre, sister of Francis I, it could continue as long as it remained moderate. When things got "too hot" for Lefèvre and Roussel, Strasbourg became their refuge and a source of inspiration.⁷⁹ Another group, tied to Erasmian humanism and led by William Budé, promoted reform in the Catholic church while seeking to avoid schism and sectarianism.⁸⁰

Although Anabaptism spread rapidly in Switzerland, and the empire, it failed to take hold in France where sectarian movements were more Libertine and mystic than Anabaptist. Around 1530 there were some "Anabaptists" in Orléans and Bourges, but this term embraced "German mystics, Italian

⁷⁹ Capito dedicated his commentary on Hosea to Marguerite de Navarre. Balke, 18; Reuss, 132; Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings*, 50; H. Heller, *The Conquest of Poverty: The Calvinist Revolt in Sixteenth Century France* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), ix, 56, 64, 132.

⁸⁰ Balke, 18-19.

rationalists, unorthodox heterodox anarchists and... the so-called *libertins spirituels* or Quintinites." Libertine spiritualist preachers of the 1540s such as Antoine Pocquet and Quintin Thieffry from Flanders stopped in Strasbourg in the course of their travels, and focused their attention on attracting individuals rather than establishing communities.⁸¹

Renewed persecutions of Protestants in France in the wake of the 1534 Placards Affair in which Protestant posters appeared all over Paris, produced a new wave of French speaking refugees, and by 1538 about 1500 lived in Strasbourg. Besides the French, refugees from Italy included preachers and scholars such as Bernard Ochino and Peter Martyr Vermigli.⁸² Many of the refugees from the Low Countries were Melchiorites.

By the fall of 1538 Calvin was appointed by the Rat as pastor to a new parish of French-speaking refugees. With the Italians and some Strasbourgeois, they soon formed a congregation of about 400. One reason why the clergy called him to organize the Francophone parish may be that with the influx of Flemish (Walloon) Melchiorite refugees from the Netherlands, Anabaptists were converting French-speaking

⁸¹ Balke, 21-22.

⁸² Reuss, 132; Jacques Pannier, *Calvin á Strasbourg* (Strasbourg: Librairie Istra, 1925), 22, 32; Lienhard, 410; H. J. Hillerbrand, *The World of the Reformation* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973, 155.

Protestants.⁸³ Throughout his stay in Strasbourg Calvin worked to bring them and other dissidents into the church. In the hope of discussing with the Anabaptists, when purchasing citizenship, Calvin enrolled in the tailors' guild where some Anabaptists were to be found.⁸⁴

In the effort to win French Melchiorites to the Strasbourg church, Calvin, probably with the aid of Peter Tasch, had greater success than the other clergy, mostly because of his strong personality and the strong church discipline he instituted.⁸⁵ While Bucer over time moved from a certain sympathy with the Anabaptists in the early 1520s to a greater intolerance, Calvin was more consistent. Despite disapproval of Anabaptists' separatism, he did sympathize with their concern for discipline and morally worthy participation in the eucharist, and his ecclesiology did seek to combine community life with church discipline.⁸⁶ Every attendant at the Lord's Supper had beforehand to undergo a

⁸³ Deppermann, 376; Hulshof, 186; Pannier, 18, 22, 32; Lienhard, 410; Balke, 123.

⁸⁴ Deppermann, 376; see Balke, 132, n. 37; Gerber, "Les Anabaptistes," 314.

⁸⁵ Hulshof, 186-195. Nicolaus Blesdijk, in his *Historia vitae, doctrinae ac rerum gestarum Davidis Georgii, Daventriae*, 1642, 108-109, mentions the return of Melchiorites due to Calvin's efforts. *TAE III*, No. 924, p. 342. Tasch's cooperation with Calvin concerning the Anabaptists, makes more understandable his later agreement to take under his care the son of Jean Stordeur and Idellette. *TAE IV*, Nos. 1432, 1464, 1483; Gerber, 318; Balke 135-136.

⁸⁶ Gerber, 317-318; Balke, 131-132, 150-153.

private hearing with him whereby unworthy persons were denied access to the Lord's Supper. In his congregation sectarians believed they were more likely to find a fellowship of believers than in the other Strasbourg churches. So Anabaptists in the Strasbourg area brought their children from far and near to Calvin for baptism.⁸⁷

Esteem for Calvin grew through the organization of his church and through his theological teaching which attracted many foreigners. The *Rat* asked his advice in important church affairs. In the Synod of 1539 Calvin handled dealings with French speakers, and conducted whatever hearings were required among French-speaking Anabaptists.⁸⁸

Some of the Anabaptists Calvin knew in Strasbourg had already debated with him in Geneva. Early in 1537 Anabaptists from the Netherlands, probably Melchiorites, began to attract followers in Geneva. The Geneva *Rat*, alerted by Calvin and his colleague, William Farel, summoned two Netherlanders, Hermann van Gerbihan and a barber named Andry Benoit, for a hearing in March 1537. Knowing well who had reported them, von Gerbihan and Benoit requested a public debate. Although the *Rat* preferred to limit Anabaptist exposure to the Council of 200, Farel also pursued a public debate and got his way. On March 16-17, a debate open to all took place in the Franciscan monastery of Rive, evi-

⁸⁷ Adam, 213.

⁸⁸ Hulshof, 193-194; Balke, 130.

dently without Calvin.⁸⁹ While van Gerbihan and Benoit impressed some of the commoners, they were poorly received by the Council of 200, who asked them to recant. When they refused, they were expelled. Benoit went to Metz where he was probably drowned with other Anabaptists in August 1538.⁹⁰ Van Gerbihan made his way to Strasbourg.

Other Anabaptists remained in Geneva. Two from Liège, a printer named Johann Bomeronemus and a wealthy lathe-turner named Jean Stordeur, engaged in a second debate which this time included Calvin. Little match for the better educated Calvin and Farel, Bomeronemus and Stordeur were banned from Geneva. Their impact, however, out-lasting their stay; many citizens refused to swear the oath regarding the articles of faith, and six months later the Rat was still interrogating Anabaptists.⁹¹

Bomeronemus and Stordeur followed Van Gerbihan to Strasbourg and appear to have settled there by May 1537. Bomeronemus testified that he had been expelled from Liège in 1533. In various places he had debated with learned people and had never been defeated. He had read Bucer's writings and expected that in Strasbourg people taught and lived in accordance with them. But he soon found that Bucer's teachings had changed in a more Lutheran direction,

⁸⁹ Hulshof, 187; Balke, 80-81, 83.

⁹⁰ Balke, 83, 128; Hulshof, 190.

⁹¹ Hulshof, 190-192; Balke, 83-84.

notably on the sacraments. A quick thinker skilled in three languages, Bomeronemus called for a debate with Bucer.⁹² Stordeur, still wealthy, served as guarantor when his wife's brother, Lambert de Bure, Jr., purchased a purse-making business in September 1539.⁹³ According to Capito, these French-speaking Anabaptist were fomenting new dissension in Strasbourg's congregations.⁹⁴

It was as pastor of the French-speaking congregation that Calvin met these men once again. According to Calvin, by early 1540 he persuaded Stordeur and van Gerbihan to give up all Anabaptist teachings except the freedom of the will. He did not insist that van Gerbihan accept predestination before joining the church, and Stordeur agreed to the baptism of his son who later became Calvin's stepson.⁹⁵

In August 1540, soon after Stordeur's death of the plague, Calvin married his widow, Idelette de Bure. Born in Liège, Idelette was probably the daughter of Lambert de Bure who in 1533 was stripped of his goods and banned for life from Liège for his Anabaptism.⁹⁶ She brought a son and a

⁹² *TAE III*, No. 804, p. 122; Hulshof, 192; Balke, 128.

⁹³ *TAE III*, No. 960, p. 369.

⁹⁴ Deppermann, 376.

⁹⁵ Deppermann, 377; Balke, 130-131; *TAE III*, No. 991, pp. 386-387; No. 996, p. 389.

⁹⁶ Hulshof, 194; Balke, 133-135; *TAE III*, No. 857, p. 291, n. 2.

daughter from her previous marriage with her. As soon as they were married, both became ill due to the plague. Calvin left for Worms and then for the interconfessional unity talks in Regensburg where he spent four homesick months. Idelette remained in Strasbourg with her brother, Lambert de Bure, Jr.⁹⁷

Peter Tasch took responsibility for the son of Stordeur and Idelette when she and Calvin moved to Geneva in 1541. After nine years of happy marriage, Idelette died. According to both Calvin and Beza, Idelette, the former Anabaptist, was an intelligent, strong, courageous and devout woman, and a devoted wife to Calvin. If she influenced Calvin's thought and ministry, record of this is lacking.⁹⁸

Several reasons emerge for Calvin's relative success in winning Anabaptists to the church. He was a formidable and eloquent debater. He knew Scripture and the Church Fathers thoroughly. He could distinguish between revolutionary and peaceful Anabaptists; more of the latter were won to the church. Lastly, he was able to affirm and capitalize on common ground between himself and Anabaptists, particularly regarding ecclesiology. Although his view of the church was not sectarian, he did envision a disciplined, sanctified

⁹⁷ Pannier, 45-46; Balke, 134.

⁹⁸ Hulshof, 195; Balke, 133-138. Calvin's role in returning Paul Volz, the former pastor of the St. Nicholas Church, to the Strasbourg church is discussed below in chapter 9.

church.⁹⁹ That the moral life of parishioners was not supervised, that no separation between worthy and unworthy took place before communion, and that unrepentant sinners were not excluded from fellowship were major grievances of the Anabaptists against the Strasbourg church. To them, Calvin's refusal of cavalier and unrepentant parishioners to the Lord's table until they bettered their life proved appealing. His church discipline may have been the key factor in his success.¹⁰⁰

Calvin's main critique of Strasbourg's radicals was that they isolated the Word of the Spirit from the written Word, and in so doing, they made "room for their own falsehoods." At the same time he agreed with them that faith and life should cohere, and was willing to excommunicate in order to maintain that coherence. Further, like the Melchiorites, he taught a spiritual eucharist. Thus, while he and the Melchiorites debated the Word/Spirit relationship, Christology, free will, universal grace and baptism, they could begin the debates on common ground.¹⁰¹

It is not known how many Anabaptists Calvin converted in Strasbourg. The great number Beza reports would also include the children baptized by Calvin. The number of adults which Calvin brought to the church was limited, for

⁹⁹ Balke, 132.

¹⁰⁰ Hulshof, 199-200.

¹⁰¹ Deppermann, 376-377; Balke, 131-132.

the vast majority of Strasbourg's Anabaptists were German-speaking.¹⁰² Still, while Calvin's congregation grew, the Anabaptist congregations remained small largely because they lacked leaders of Calvin's calibre, and because, unaccepted by the authorities, they had to remain clandestine.

Besides having taught in the *Gymnasium* and having published the second edition of his *Institutes*, Calvin is known for having brought to the Strasbourg church a liturgy, hymnology, a catechism, the exercise of discipline, and a diversity of ministries. From his Strasbourg experience Calvin obtained a workable model of church which he took with him to Geneva. From Calvin Strasbourg gained a first rate teacher and a vibrant French-speaking congregation. Strasbourg's Alsatian doctrine lay somewhere between Luther and Zwingli, and in this balance Calvin provided some counterweight to the growing Lutheranism of the 1536 Wittenberg Concord.¹⁰³

Calvin visited Strasbourg again briefly in 1543 and remained on good terms with the Strasbourg reformers. After his departure in 1541 and that of his successor in 1544, the French-speaking parish weathered a number of crises.¹⁰⁴ When Calvin visited again in 1556, things had changed; the Lutheran Johann Marbach was church leader and Calvin was not

¹⁰² Hulshof, 198-199; Balke 129.

¹⁰³ Pannier, 55.

¹⁰⁴ Lienhard, 414.

allowed to preach in his French church. With Marbach's rise, hostilities against the French speakers and against non-Lutheran theology grew. Calvin advised the pastor of the French congregation to sign the Lutheran formula of Concord but in vain. In August 1563, twenty five years after its inception under Calvin, the French speaking church was closed.¹⁰⁵

VI. Hoffman's Last Years, 1539-43

The few diehard Melchiorites who remained in Strasbourg after 1540 lived in danger of arrest. In February 1541, Maria from Delft in Holland, Diebolt Bangarten from Dürrenbach and Konrad Junger von Bühell were all apprehended in the home of a manual laborer named Barthel, and imprisoned.¹⁰⁶ Junger was expelled, but within two years he was back in the city, daring to visit Hoffman in prison. In January 1543, by bribing the wife and the maid of the prison warden, Junger and his wife, Wilhelm Blum the younger, the wife of Hans Schlemmer, an Anabaptist butcher, Margretlin von Gengenbach in Baden, and the wife of Adolph Winther, a gardener, visited their imprisoned leader.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Pannier, 51-52.

¹⁰⁶ *TAE III*, No. 1083, p. 452.

¹⁰⁷ This is probably the same woman as the Anabaptist wife of the gardener named Adolf Winther in October 1530. *TAE I*, No. 224, pp. 273, 277. In June 1541 one Adolf Winther the younger was summoned before the church wardens in June 1541. A gardener named Adolf Winther also appears in 1550. *TAE IV*, No. 1248, p. 9.

The trial of Hoffman's visitors reveals that attempts to change his views had had little effect. According to Junger who for this offense was expelled a second time, Hoffman denied the rumors of his recantation. His view on the Incarnation had not changed, but he was less sure about his eschatology. He no longer knew of a Last Judgment, but a time would come when peace, joy and justice on earth would reign. In the light of Christ's non-appearance, Hoffman had come to hope for Christ's peaceable rule not in the next age but this one.¹⁰⁸ In addition, Hoffman admonished Junger to be pious and live quietly. All revolutionary implications of his teachings were discarded. The radicals should no longer assemble in forests or as armed bands. The Peasants' War, Zwingli and Münster were ample tragic evidence of the consequences of using unjustified force. Temporal authorities, particularly those of Strasbourg, should be respected. Marriage should be honoured. In essence, "live a quiet life, obey the authorities, and aim towards an inner perfection within an unblemished marriage."¹⁰⁹

While these words of resignation and conciliation struck a different note than in earlier years, they do not constitute a wholesale change, for Hoffman had never urged his followers to violence and revolt. Although his proclamation

¹⁰⁸ Deppermann, 379; *TAE IV*, No. 1249, pp. 10-11; Hulshof, 183-184.

¹⁰⁹ Deppermann, 379; *TAE IV*, No. 1249, pp. 10-11; Hulshof, 183-184; Adam, 214.

of God's vengeance over the godless made him a major contributor to the violence of Münster, he had always called his followers away from executing that judgment themselves. He had always held obedience to government as a Christian duty.¹¹⁰ Hoffman's theology without his eschatological expectations now resembled the sectarianism of the Swiss Brethren, and with his monophysite Christology, it paralleled the thought of Menno Simons.¹¹¹

From then on Hoffman was held in tight security, with the key to his cell in the Rat Chamber and the presence of magistrate required for his cell to be opened. Hoffman's food was lowered through the ceiling.¹¹² In November 1543 it was reported that Hoffman was so ill that he could no longer eat and that one had to wait on him.¹¹³ He died soon thereafter.

VII. Conclusion regarding Melchior Hoffman

Within Anabaptism, the Melchiorite movement had its own distinction. Hoffman believed he was unique, alone possessing the truth, standing outside any Anabaptist succession, with authority to baptize as the eschatological Elijah. With its mixture of revolutionary chiliasm, "the Lutheran

¹¹⁰ Hulshof, 184-185.

¹¹¹ Deppermann, 379-380.

¹¹² Depperman, 379.

¹¹³ TAE IV, No. 1326, p. 55.

doctrine of obedience" and Swiss Brethren pacifism, Hoffman's movement may be seen in addition to Zurich's Swiss Brethren and the Central German movement founded by Hans Hut, to constitute "a third type of European Anabaptism." That Hoffman was a precursor of the Anabaptist kingdom of Münster is seen by his three fundamental ideas adopted by Münster's Jan Matthijs: 1) judgment on the godless would precede the Last Judgment; 2) a theocracy that would rule the earth would usher in Christ's rule; 3) nothing could harm the "apostolic messengers." The main difference was that while Hoffman waited for a "revolution from above," Matthijs believed the "apostolic messengers" should themselves take up the sword.¹¹⁴

Why, ten years after this "second Elijah" inspired hopes and fears in the hearts of commoners, nobles, preachers and rulers, did he die forsaken and isolated? Although Hoffman's evangelical preaching began with Lutheran doctrines, his following was won by his attacks on the clergy and the church, his apocalyptic prophecies, and his declaration that it was the downtrodden who would be saved. For many lower class followers he raised hopes of a world turned upside-down by promising vengeance on religious and secular tyrants. Often Hoffman's words were received for reasons other than he intended. In Strasbourg as elsewhere it was mainly artisans, refugees and the hungry who joined his

¹¹⁴ Deppermann, 389-390.

movement.¹¹⁵ With such a narrow social base, lacking the support of political and economic leaders, the prospects of success for the Melchiorite movement were slim. If at times Hoffman managed to win over holders of high office, when they realized the movement's revolutionary potential, they changed their minds. Or, as in Münster, political leaders sought to capitalize on the movement's momentum for their own ends. Yet to the end of his life Hoffman believed in a "pious government" that would help fulfill his visions. The Free Imperial cities, including Strasbourg, were, at the end of history, to be God's agents to defeat the Antichrist and precipitate Christ's rule.¹¹⁶ Yet the very power in whom he trusted held him captive until his death.

The Melchiorite movement failed for several reasons. One was the contradictions in Hoffman's thinking. It was impossible to reconcile his Lutheran understanding of authority and the pacifism he expected from the "apostolic messengers" with his "ideas about the 'massacre of the godless' or military struggles of the 'Spiritual Jerusalem.'" A workable synthesis of Luther, Müntzer and Sattler was impossible.¹¹⁷ In addition, Hoffman's failure to win the ruling classes to his side meant that when "judgment day"

¹¹⁵ For the Netherlands, see Waite, "The Anabaptist Movement," 249-265.

¹¹⁶ Deppermann, 380-384.

¹¹⁷ Deppermann, 389.

arrived, the Melchiorites had neither the military, political nor economic power to be victorious. Finally, the blow that weakened Hoffman's hold on people's imaginations and eroded the movement's popular base was the continuing failure of his prophecies of Christ's return to be fulfilled. For all its energy, the Melchiorite movement weakened the dynamic of the Reformation. In Strasbourg it drove the Rat to narrow its definition of religious orthodoxy and to intensify persecution of dissidents. In Münster the consequences were catastrophic; the city reverted to Catholicism. Only in Holland was the Reformation advanced, but here it thrived as Calvinism rather than Anabaptism.¹¹⁸

VIII. Melchiorites after Melchior Hoffman

The efforts of Eisenburg and Tasch to dissolve the Melchiorite community and Hoffman's death in 1543 did not entirely halt his radical ideas. Evidence of their presence continues but Melchiorite numbers were greatly diminished. According to the Anabaptist Ruprecht Schwartz in October 1546, at meetings in Strasbourg there were over one hundred Swiss Brethren as against only five Melchiorites.¹¹⁹ A few of these appear in the sources after 1543.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Deppermann, 383-384.

¹¹⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1529, pp. 203-204.

¹²⁰ For Peter Tasch who was now no longer a religious nonconformist, see W. O. Packull, "Peter Tasch: From Melchiorite to Bankrupt Wine Merchant," *MQR* 62 (1988), 276-295.

A. Hans Schlemer

Hans Schlemer, the Anabaptist butcher and Strasbourg citizen whose wife had visited Hoffman in 1543, had recurring encounters with the Rat. In January 1547 together with two others he was punished by the Rat for critical comments regarding the Smalkald War.¹²¹ In 1548 his newborn child was not baptized immediately. Schlemer argued with his pastor about it and punishment was threatened in October, but three weeks later the child still was not baptized.¹²² The matter must have been resolved, for in March 1551 the Rat treated him graciously. He requested permission to slaughter more of his twenty-nine cattle than the law allowed because he had no more hay to feed them. The Rat agreed to grant his request if his guild did, but to reconsider if the guild refused. About a year later Schlemer died, leaving his butcher's business in the hands of his children's guardians.¹²³

B. Nonnenweier Melchiorites

Netherlander Melchiorites had been settling, marrying and having children in Nonnenweier and Niderhausen on the

¹²¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1541, p. 214.

¹²² *TAE IV*, No. 1626, p. 263; No. 1630, p. 265.

¹²³ *TAE IV*, No. 1744, p. 337, n. 1.

east side of the Rhine since 1538.¹²⁴ Seven years later, in September 1545, it was reported in the *Rat* that many Anabaptists were to be found in Niderhausen and Nonnenweier, but since the villages were temporarily without a *Vogt*, they had not yet sworn loyalty to him and an estimate of their number was not available. The *Rat* sent a magistrate there to appoint a *Vogt*.¹²⁵

After a silence of sixteen years, Anabaptists were again reported in Nonnenweier. In 1561 three Anabaptist women in Nonnenweier about whom there had been repeated complaints over the years were ordered by the *Rat* to leave the Strasbourg territory permanently. The order was ignored and the following summer the *Rat* found itself dealing with them again. This time it resolved, with Nonnenweier's *Vogt* and *Schultheiss*, to enforce the previous year's decision.¹²⁶

In November 1566 the *Rat* learned that an Anabaptist tailor to whom the normally lenient episcopal mayor refused a lesser citizenship (*Schultheissenbürgerrecht*) was tolerated in Nonnenweier despite not bringing his child in for baptism. The *Rat* ordered him to clear out of Strasbourg territory and earn his living elsewhere.¹²⁷ But the following summer the *Rat* again heard that the Anabaptists were

¹²⁴ *TAE III*, Nos. 866-867, p. 295.

¹²⁵ *TAE IV*, No. 1468, p. 157.

¹²⁶ *AMS*, XXI, No. 40 (1562), f. 254v.

¹²⁷ *AMS*, XXI, No. 44 (1566), f. 486v, 488v.

increasing in Nonnenweier.¹²⁸ Although expulsion of these Anabaptists had long been on order, it had never been carried out by the local authorities. Again the Nonnenweier authorities were ordered to expel them, and if they returned, to imprison them.¹²⁹

The sixteen year silence between 1545 and 1561 suggests less that the Anabaptists had disappeared than that the Nonnenweier authorities accepted and kept silent about their presence. Complaints about Anabaptists had been heard for years, and expulsion orders had been issued for years with nothing being done. The expulsion order of 1561 was not carried out, and in 1566 the authorities appeared negligent if not in complicity with the dissidents. Whether these dissidents were Melchiorites is not stated, but since they came from the Netherlands, it is plausible that some of them, like Wilhelm Blum the younger, nurtured the tradition over the years.¹³⁰

C. Jörg Nörlinger

The Melchiorite leader Jörg Nörlinger was first imprisoned in Strasbourg in February 1543. Before coming to

¹²⁸ AMS, XXI, No. 45 (1567), f. 424r.

¹²⁹ AMS, XXI, No. 45 (1567), f. 453v.

¹³⁰ AMS, XXI, No. 38 (1560), f. 139r, 141r-v., 176r-177r. Material on the Nonnenweier Anabaptists is published in *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, vol. 4, *Baden und Pfalz*, Manfred Krebs, ed. (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1951), 441-449.

Strasbourg he appears to have been a "searcher" moving from one religious group to another, or more likely, an itinerant Melchiorite missionary. Although born in Swabia, perhaps hoping to win greater acceptance in Strasbourg, he claimed to be an Alsatian.¹³¹ He appears to have been wealthy, for in Austria he collected excise taxes and married a woman of nobility.¹³² There he began to read the Bible in an Anabaptist way, but because of persecution moved to Moravia where he was baptized. Before coming to Strasbourg, in Augsburg and Ulm he had often heard "right (Lutheran) doctrine," but in his view it did not bear fruit in righteous living.¹³³

Within ten days of his imprisonment in Strasbourg, he received a letter of comfort from a fellow believer who believed God had a purpose in this ordeal and that the Strasbourg clergy had many deceived people. Greetings were sent in code from a Melchior H. (evidently not Melchior Hoffman), an elderly man, the writer's wife, all the women together with the entire congregation, and others including visitors from Moravia, a Peter Schneider and a pastor named

¹³¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1532, p. 205.

¹³² *TAE IV*, No. 1259, p. 16. On the social position of collectors of excise taxes (*Ungelter*), see Brady, *Ruling Class*, 118.

¹³³ *TAE IV*, No. 1259, p. 16.

Marx von Bierbaum.¹³⁴ Nörlinger was expelled and probably returned to Moravia as a Melchiorite missionary.¹³⁵

Three years later (July 1546) he was again imprisoned because he had reentered the city after being expelled. Nörlinger argued that his previous expulsion was invalid for "the whole earth is the Lord's" (I Cor. 10:26) and he could settle where he wished. He admitted teaching but claimed he had not baptized. He would not say where and with whom he was being lodged, who his followers were nor where they gathered for meetings. He desired no instruction for rather than doctrinal error, he had a grace from God,¹³⁶ and although Bucer had earlier preached rightly about the sacraments, since the 1536 Wittenberg Concord he had fallen away from that truth.¹³⁷ Like Hoffman, Nörlinger's Christology was monophysite.¹³⁸ The mention of Christology and the eucharist together with silence regarding apocalyptic expectations suggests that Nörlinger, like Hoffman, had de-emphasized or abandoned his apocalypticism. He may have

¹³⁴ TAE IV, No. 1264, pp. 18-19.

¹³⁵ The *Geschicht-Buch der Hutterischen Brüder*, R. Wolkan, ed., 1923, 190ff, and *Die älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder*, A. J. F. Zieglschmied, ed., 1943, 243ff. speak of a Jörg Nörlinger who moved to Moravia from Württemberg in 1543 and there tried to persuade the Anabaptists of the Melchiorite view of the Incarnation. TAE IV, No. 1259, p. 16, n. 1.

¹³⁶ TAE IV, No. 1518, p. 196.

¹³⁷ TAE IV, No. 1532, p. 205.

¹³⁸ TAE IV, No. 1527, p. 202.

been left with a monophysite sectarianism resembling that of Menno Simons.

After four months in prison Nörlinger became ill and the magistrates became concerned about the cost of keeping him. Upon his recovery in November, since he remained silent about his host, his followers and where they gathered for meetings, Nörlinger was expelled a second time with a reminder about the death penalty for a third reentry into the city.¹³⁹

D. Veit Barthel

Besides Hoffman, the only person to be detained indefinitely by the *Rat* was a maverick, educated dissident named Veit Barthel who languished eighteen years in prison until his death in 1554. The enigmatic Barthel does not emerge clearly as a Melchiorite, but he did participate in radical socio-political activity around 1534, showed an interest in Hoffman's literature while in prison, and wrote materials with apocalyptic and social revolutionary themes. For lack of a better designation, we include him in this chapter.

Originally from Zschauitz in Saxony, having offended Duke George of Saxony, Barthel had fled for Speyer where he raised a stir by posting two declarations against the

¹³⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1532, p. 205. There is no indication of his being disfigured according to the mandates of 1538 and 1540 for his second reentry.

Emperor and all the states of the empire. From Speyer he fled to Strasbourg where in June 1535 he submitted to the Rat a warning that the Strasbourg clergy were seducing the populace. He was arrested and upon identification by the Speyer Rat, was imprisoned in Strasbourg.¹⁴⁰

According to Duke George, Barthel had earlier sworn the oath before King Ferdinand I and the *Reichstag* in Augsburg. These defamatory writings now contradicted his oath. Strasbourg was to hold him in custody until Duke George would pick him up.¹⁴¹ However, when the duke's representative threatened to execute Barthel for oath-breaking, the Rat became convinced a Saxon court would not grant him a fair trial. And so, although costly to Strasbourg, the Rat insisted on the basis of a judicial privilege that the court case take place only in Strasbourg.¹⁴²

Over the years a fair trial in Saxony was not the only issue; more pressing in the minds of many magistrates was the cost of keeping Barthel in custody. If the Saxon rulers would not give him a fair trial, the Strasbourg magistrates wished at least that they would share the costs of Barthel's

¹⁴⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 680a, 680b. pp. 542-543; *TAE III*, No. 839, p. 240, n. 1.; No. 928, pp. 345-346; p. 11; Abray, *People's Reformation*, 113.

¹⁴¹ *TAE III*, No. 839, p. 240, fn. 1.

¹⁴² *TAE III*, No. 928, pp. 345-347; *TAE III*, p. 11; Abray, 113.

imprisonment.¹⁴³ Discussions with Saxon delegates usually occurred at meetings of the *Reichstag*. Failing that, the Rat resorted to messages sent to the duke with Saxon merchants,¹⁴⁴ or even to personal deliveries of a message to the Saxon court. Whether with Duke George (d. 1539), Duke Heinrich (1539-1541) or Duke Moritz (1541-1553), the Rat failed to get satisfactory responses. George and Heinrich, after long delays, called for extradition to Saxony, and threatened execution for oath-breaking.¹⁴⁵ Duke Moritz decided that Strasbourg's problem did not need to be his and never bothered to respond.¹⁴⁶

The failure of negotiations aroused impatience among some magistrates who repeatedly asked if the duke had been dealt with and why Barthel was being held so long.¹⁴⁷ By 1550 they were complaining that they had to keep Barthel forever.¹⁴⁸ At the same time, the Rat displayed patience, faith in diplomacy and a commitment to fairness even at high cost. In May 1549, to an inquiry about Barthel's long

¹⁴³ *TAE III*, Nos. 910, 923, 928, 994, 1420.

¹⁴⁴ *TAE IV*, No. 1667, p. 292.

¹⁴⁵ *TAE IV*, No. 680a, 680b, pp. 542-543; *TAE III*, Nos. 839, 954, 970, 979.

¹⁴⁶ *TAE III*, Nos. 1146, 1149; *TAE IV*, Nos. 1257, 1337, 1420, 1423, 1566, 1601, 1616, 1621, 1629, 1659, 1667, 1721, 1722, 1724, 1729.

¹⁴⁷ *TAE IV*, Nos. 1403, 1405, p. 116.

¹⁴⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1701, p. 310; No. 1711, p. 318.

imprisonment, the Rat's answer was that after eight years it was still waiting for word from Moritz.¹⁴⁹ To the end of 1552 city lawyers and most magistrates recommended diplomacy.¹⁵⁰

Barthel claimed to have a brother Gregor Barthel who had also been imprisoned by Duke George.¹⁵¹ In March 1542 Barthel's brother, perhaps Gregor, asked the magistrates simply to release Barthel that he might take him home. Some thought this a good idea. Barthel's brother was allowed to visit him accompanied by two magistrates who listened in on their conversation.¹⁵² Barthel's comments must have alarmed them, for six months later he was still in prison and the magistrates were discussing how to get him to change his views.¹⁵³

The Barthel case pulled in at least two people with Schwenckfeldian connections. In early 1540 the Rat sought the counsel of city lawyer Dr. Franz Frosch, husband of the Schwenckfeldian Felicitas Scher and son-in-law of the Schwenckfeldian noble Peter Scher. Frosch advised against extradition.¹⁵⁴ In late 1540 Michael Han, the

¹⁴⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1659, p. 285.

¹⁵⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1788, p. 378.

¹⁵¹ *TAE III*, No. 928, pp. 347.

¹⁵² *TAE III*, No. 1166, p. 510.

¹⁵³ *TAE III*, No. 1209, p. 533.

¹⁵⁴ *TAE III*, No. 985, p. 383.

Schwenckfeldian city secretary, became involved in drafting letters to Duke Heinrich.¹⁵⁵ Han also visited Barthel in prison and may have befriended him, for when the magistrates wanted Barthel's views on things, Han was the messenger.¹⁵⁶

Although there is no direct evidence of contact between Barthel and Hoffman, they appear to have been imprisoned in the same tower.¹⁵⁷ While it is unclear to which dissident group Barthel may have belonged,¹⁵⁸ he did have an interest in Hoffman's views. In February 1548 upon his request he was given Bucer's response to Hoffman, "*Handlund in dem offentlichen Gesprach...*", a Bible and other books by the Strasbourg reformers.¹⁵⁹ The alarm of the magistrates in 1542 over his views, and a March 1552 wish to write about the "endtimes of Christ"¹⁶⁰ may also point to a Hoffmanian inclination.

Although Barthel's physical needs were always provided, even when they increased towards the end of his life,¹⁶¹ books, paper and ink were not always supplied. While he

¹⁵⁵ TAE III, No. 1066; p. 440.

¹⁵⁶ TAE IV, No. 1349, p. 80.

¹⁵⁷ TAE III, No. 899, pp. 313-134; TAE IV, No. 1248, p. 9.

¹⁵⁸ TAE III, No. 839, p. 240, fn. 1.

¹⁵⁹ TAE IV, No. 1593, p. 246.

¹⁶⁰ TAE IV, No. 1769, p. 350.

¹⁶¹ TAE IV, Nos. 1566, 1617, 1622, 1759, 1781, 1785.

naturally complained and asked to be released, his response to imprisonment took different expressions. At times, though eating little, he behaved well,¹⁶² but more often he expressed anger.¹⁶³

In September 1550, since Barthel had neither a following nor had engaged in slander, the Rat allowed him paper, ink and a quill with which he wished to write a testament.¹⁶⁴ A month later the Rat and the "lords of the prison" (perhaps canons of the Cathedral Chapter) each received a letter. The magistrates found theirs to be full of cursing and slander. From now on they collected all his writings in a container to be seen only by *Ratsherren*.¹⁶⁵ When he then asked for books, paper and ink to chronicle his seventeen years in prison, his request was refused.¹⁶⁶ So also was his March 1552 request for paper and ink to write a poem about Luther and the "endtimes of Christ."¹⁶⁷ He died in prison in 1554.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶² *TAE III*, No. 1059, p. 431; *TAE IV*, No. 1719, p. 324.

¹⁶³ *TAE III*, No. 887, p. 306; No. 1209, p. 533; *TAE IV*, No. 1726, p. 328.

¹⁶⁴ *TAE IV*, No. 1719, p. 324. It is unclear whether a will or a Bible was intended.

¹⁶⁵ *TAE IV*, No. 1726, p. 328.

¹⁶⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1765, p. 348.

¹⁶⁷ *TAE IV*, No. 1769, p. 350.

¹⁶⁸ *AMS*, XXI, No. 32 (1554), f. 105r. Konzept ebenda f. 103r.

Strasbourg's treatment of religious dissidents was more moderate than that of most other cities. Whereas the death penalty for Anabaptism was legal, Strasbourg never made use of it; the usual punishment for recalcitrant sectarians was exile. Some, such as the tailor Jörg Zeigler, were expelled for limited periods whether or not they recanted. More commonly they were expelled until they agreed to swear the Anabaptist article. For those who recanted, readmittance was a straightforward matter. For others such the Melchiorite miller, Wilhelm Blum the younger, who refused to recant, this amounted to an indefinite expulsion.¹⁶⁹ Only Melchior Hoffman and Veit Barthel were kept in prison until their deaths.

E. Wilhelm Blum

The Melchiorite who carried on in Strasbourg most determinedly after his leader's death was Wilhelm Blum the younger. Among the Strasbourg Prophets of the late 1520s were a father and a son, both named Wilhelm Blum and both millers. Wilhelm Blum the elder, a citizen since 1508, was an officer and *Schöffen* representative of the Luzern Guild for millers and merchants of flax and corn. While Blum the elder held a higher social position and died respectably within the city in 1551, Blum the younger remained a devoted

¹⁶⁹ TAE III, No. 917, 955, 1040, 1052; TAE IV, No. 1735-1738.

Melchiorite to the end and died outside the city in 1560 after twenty-six years of exile.¹⁷⁰

Neither father nor son feared controversy. Blum the elder was involved in court cases in 1524, 1527 and 1530.¹⁷¹ In December 1528 he was imprisoned¹⁷² possibly for Anabaptism, for together with Anabaptists and Schwenckfeldians he was engaged in social assistance. In December 1529 he donated funds to religious refugees and he worked with Hackfurt, Katherine Zell and Alexander Berner in poor relief. In his mill he sheltered a nonconformist city secretary from Burckheim named Hans Schuler.¹⁷³

Possession of a Hoffmanian booklet against the Rat and the clergy led to Blum's arrest and interrogation in August 1534 along with all the city's printers.¹⁷⁴ Blum claimed that he had found the booklet on the street but had paid no attention to it for he was illiterate. He guessed it was a Psalter and had instructed his wife to give it to whomever should come asking for it. But when a client came on other business and Blum asked him to read from it, he took it home

¹⁷⁰ *TAE II*, No. 597, p. 375, n. 21; *TAE IV Beilage*, p. 527; Deppermann, 206, 356, n. 21.

¹⁷¹ *TAE IV Beilage*, p. 527.

¹⁷² *TAE IV Beilage*, No. 164a, p. 406.

¹⁷³ *TAE IV Beilage*, No. 197b, pp. 416-417.

¹⁷⁴ *TAE II*, No. 596, pp. 371-372. Valentin Kobian of Hagenau was fingered as the printer. *TAE II*, No. 597, pp. 372-376.

without revealing its contents and so Blum still did not know what it was.¹⁷⁵ The magistrates did not believe him. Besides possessing the booklet, he had been heard to say that soon all would see what kind of people the clergy were and how godly the Anabaptists were. But since his story was consistent he was released with a warning.¹⁷⁶ He seems to have avoided conflict from then on.

Wilhelm Blum the younger, active in Hoffman's circle by 1533, was apprehended in April 1534. While he denied going to Melchiorite meetings or hosting them in his home, he argued at length that adult baptism was Scriptural. He claimed willingness to die for his Melchiorite beliefs but would not say who had baptized him or who his associates were.¹⁷⁷ This intransigence led to his expulsion despite his being a citizen¹⁷⁸ and it kept him out for the next twenty-six years. In early 1535 Blum hid Anabaptists in Kehl across the Rhine River.¹⁷⁹ By May 1535, as soon as the authorities' vigilance had eased, he returned home secretly and served as messenger for a large meeting near Ottrott. The inadvertant disclosure of Blum's presence by the Anabap-

¹⁷⁵ *TAE II*, No. 597, pp. 375-376.

¹⁷⁶ *TAE II*, No. 600, pp. 379-380.

¹⁷⁷ *TAE II*, No. 539, p. 303.

¹⁷⁸ *TAE II*, No. 539, p. 303; No. 664, p. 452.

¹⁷⁹ *TAE II*, No. 680, p. 468.

tist Anna Pfeiffer, however, resulted in his permanent expulsion.¹⁸⁰

As "Strasbourg Prophets" both Blums may have been visionaries. In the bundle of Melchiorite tracts received by the Rat in December 1537, the twelfth prophecy contained visions of a shoemaker named Heinrich and, the *Wiedertäuferherren* thought, visions of Veltin Dufft and Wilhelm Blum (probably the younger).¹⁸¹ The twenty-four handwritten pieces of cloth found in Hoffman's cell that same week included Wilhelm Blum (probably the younger) among the sixteen prophets. Whatever the meaning of the names, the list confirms Blum's exalted status in the Melchiorite circle.¹⁸²

With the rumored recantation of Hoffman and the success of Eisenburg and Tasch in bringing Melchiorites to the Strasbourg church in 1539, Blum's wife and father-in-law hoped he too would yield. Upon their request, the Rat granted him a week's entry and invited him to stay if he swore the Anabaptist article of March 1538.¹⁸³ Blum immediately asked for two months to restore his neglected house and mill but would not recant. Within ten days he was again out of the city and his agent was ordered no more to

¹⁸⁰ TAE II, No. 664, pp. 451-452.

¹⁸¹ TAE III, No. 799, p. 114.

¹⁸² TAE III, No. 800, p. 117; Deppermann, 355.

¹⁸³ TAE III, No. 817; No. 934, pp. 350-351.

arrange his entry into the city.¹⁸⁴ Blum still managed somehow to enter the city, and with Konrad Junger and his wife, the butcher Hans Schlemer's wife, Margretlin von Gengenbach and the wife of Adolph Winter, visited Hoffman in January 1543.¹⁸⁵ Like Junger, he was again expelled.

In March 1544 Blum's wife died while he was outside the city. Family and friends asked for his temporary return but the Rat, remembering his illegal visit to Hoffman the year before, refused: since Blum the elder was in the city and since the children were together, Blum could remain outside.¹⁸⁶ But that July the need to settle his wife's estate brought him into the city briefly. He took the opportunity to argue his harmlessness before the Rat. Although the magistrates brought Tasch with them in an effort to win Blum over, he remained firm and was expelled again.¹⁸⁷

Requests to allow Blum into the city arose every few months. In June 1545 the issue was a lawsuit in which Blum wished to defend himself in court.¹⁸⁸ In September the administrator (*Vogt*) of his children's affairs requested a month for Blum to repair the mill because a working mill

¹⁸⁴ *TAE III*, No. 936, pp. 351-352.

¹⁸⁵ *TAE IV*, No. 1248, p. 9.

¹⁸⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1347, p. 80.

¹⁸⁷ *TAE IV*, No. 1381, p. 105.

¹⁸⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1445, p. 139.

would be good both for the children and the citizenry.¹⁸⁹ The following summer it was again the mill's bad state of repair.¹⁹⁰ Usually the Rat's answer was no. Each time he had been in the city, whether because of his father's illness, to settle the estate or to work on the mill, he had been recalcitrant.¹⁹¹ Although unlearned and unable to give a well-formulated answer, he would not receive instruction. And yet, whenever he returned there was a marked increase in Anabaptists. Further, Blum was involved in a kind of Anabaptist community of goods. Whatever profit he gained from the mill he would share with his children and the Anabaptist community.¹⁹²

In October 1546 an emergency brought Blum back into the city. A contract between Blum, his children and Ciliox, his daughter's husband, provided that Ciliox would operate the mill and keep the accounts until Blum's son had grown up. One night Ciliox, a carouser, hid in the bedroom of Blum's other daughter and raped her. This the Rat considered an emergency; Blum joined two magistrates and the children's *Vogt* to deal with the case. Within two weeks Ciliox had

¹⁸⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1472, p. 161.

¹⁹⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1513, pp. 193-194.

¹⁹¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1472, p. 161.

¹⁹² *TAE IV*, No. 1513, pp. 193-194. Other examples of attempted community of goods at this time in Strasbourg include Diebolt Hartschedel in 1546 (*TAE IV*, No. 1525, p. 200) and Anton Pfirlin in 1547 (*TAE IV*, No. 1554, p. 222).

moved to Eckbolsheim and had annulled his Strasbourg citizenship. And Blum, for "the common good," on condition that he not interact with anyone, especially Anabaptists, was granted four weeks to restore his mill which had virtually ground to a halt.¹⁹³

1547 saw more refusals. In April a request to consult with the children's guardian was denied,¹⁹⁴ as was his July request to complete work on the mill. First, the magistrates insisted, he should swear the Anabaptist article.¹⁹⁵ It took two of Blum's friends, one a young miller, to convince the *Rat* in January 1548 that the disrepair of Blum's mill was to the disadvantage of all Strasbourgeois. They even offered to help Blum work on it and so he was granted one week.¹⁹⁶ While attempting to repair the mill Blum decided to sell it. Exiled and with his son-in-law Ciliox gone, he found it impossible to operate. Not finding a private buyer, Blum and his father approached the city. Clearly a competent miller was needed but the *Rat* was unwilling to let Blum into the city to do the job. And so, because Blum was an Anabaptist, for the good of his children and to keep the mill profitable, the *Rat* decided to take

¹⁹³ *TAE IV*, No. 1531, pp. 204-205. "The common good" emerges here as a characteristic rationale of the magistrates in their policy toward dissidents.

¹⁹⁴ *TAE IV*, No. 1551, p. 220.

¹⁹⁵ *TAE IV*, No. 1559, p. 226.

¹⁹⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1586, p. 241.

over the mill. Concerned that the money made from a sale not all disappear (perhaps to an Anabaptist community), the magistrates decided that the principle would go to the children in trust, and that Blum be paid a pension from the interest.¹⁹⁷

Blum returned to the city several times during the last years of his father who in old age had become senile and poor. In April 1550 the magistrate Michael Odenstein, administrator (*Vogt*) of the elder Blum's affairs, initiated steps to enable him to survive. Concerned that the exiled Blum not later reverse what was now being arranged, Odenstein met with Blum and his brother-in-law to arrange the father's affairs.¹⁹⁸ A year later Odenstein again consulted with Blum in the city regarding the ailing father's condition. Finally, in September 1551, Blum the elder died and Blum the younger returned with Odenstein to settle the estate. Each time Blum lived under virtual house arrest.¹⁹⁹

Blum maintained an interest in the mill now being held in trust for his children. In November 1553 Ciliox, Blum's estranged son-in-law, demanded an inquiry into why he was no

¹⁹⁷ In this the magistrates ignored the imperial legislation of January 4, 1528 and April 23, 1529. Since they already disregarded the imperial laws calling for execution of sectarians, there seemed little reason to enforce property clauses which demanded confiscation of sectarian property. *TAE IV*, No. 1588, pp. 242-243; No. 1590, pp. 243-244; *Abray*, 113, n. 29.

¹⁹⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1699, pp. 309-310.

¹⁹⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1752, p. 342; *Beilage*, p. 527.

longer receiving his share of the mill's income. Blum spent two weeks in the city on the question, again confined to his house.²⁰⁰ In the end the mill did pass over to his children. By the summer of 1558 his daughter was operating the mill and Blum, still expelled, had settled down in Eckbolsheim to help his daughter. This worried the *Schultheiss* of Eckbolsheim who was anxious to stay in good relations with the Strasbourg regime that had expelled him.²⁰¹

Wilhelm Blum died in the spring of 1560. In his library were found many Anabaptist booklets and other Anabaptist writings. The Rat confiscated them, asked Blum's widow (he had remarried) to identify the printer, and reminded all the printers about the law against printing Anabaptist materials.²⁰² The printer, they learned, was a Friesian named Herman who had boarded with Peter (Novesianus) Schaff, the Schwenckfeldian Latin teacher. Later, perhaps after Novesianus' expulsion in 1556, Herman lived in the Krutenau district where many other dissidents lived. But since he was now no longer in Strasbourg he could not be punished. Although the books ended up in Blum's home, his widow claimed she did not know whether their contents were good or bad. According to Johann Marbach, Bucer's successor as leader of the Strasbourg church, one booklet, replete with

²⁰⁰ AMS, XXI, No. 31 (1553), f. 392v-393r.

²⁰¹ AST, No. 195, (1558) p. 75.

²⁰² AMS, XXI, No. 38 (1560), f. 139r, 141r-v.

Scripture references, taught that Christ broke from human seed and was the savior of the world, and that Christ would establish an earthly reign in this world and cast out the ungodly. It also castigated the pastors. A second book contained a revelation that Christ would establish his kingdom in 1525, but obviously it was wrong.²⁰³ These writings, over a generation old, were apocalyptic if not specifically Hoffmanian. While Novesianus probably did not embrace their teaching, he did know about them and did not condemn their printer or their recipient. That Blum preserved these books suggests that he did embrace their teaching and that apocalyptic hopes continued to inspire people in and near Strasbourg a generation after Hoffman's death.

F. The Steinbachians

Strasbourg's Krutenau district near the parish of St. Wilhelm was where Clement Ziegler had preached social justice before the Peasants' War, where Anabaptists and other radicals had flourished around 1530, and where dissidence continued to fester thereafter. In the Krutenau, from time to time over three decades, there appeared members of an informal group of visionaries called the *Lichtseher* or the Steinbachians. Their leader and prophet, a barrelmaker named Martin Steinbach, had come from Ammerschweier and Schlettstadt where he had been forbidden to preach in 1535

²⁰³ AMS, XXI, No. 38, (1560), f. 176r-177r.

and expelled in 1539. He surfaced in Strasbourg in 1544, just as strong gains among the Anabaptists were being noted by the *Rat.*²⁰⁴

Having purchased citizenship, he settled in the Krutenau and came under the jurisdiction of the St. Wilhelm parish. In 1544 pastor Johannes Lenglin of St. Wilhelm recorded the names of seven men and their families who were missing church. Hans Grein from Mindelheim would leave his devout wife when she went to church and the sacraments. His neighbor Bartel Schreiner, Wendel Sandtfierer, Schnee Jacob and a wheelwright named Hans Gaudentz each missed church with his entire family. Finally there were Wendel Hoffling and Martin Steinbach.²⁰⁵ Only Steinbach and Gaudentz appear again in the records, but the mention of the other five together with Steinbach suggests that they too may have been Steinbachians.

Once thought to be an Anabaptist, by 1546 Steinbach was recognized as the leader of a unique sect. Imprisoned in December, he testified that he had been baptized as an infant and had not been rebaptized. He swore the citizen oath annually and would defend the city like any other citizen. Although two strangers had approached him, he had held no special meetings with anyone. He wished to preach

²⁰⁴ *TAE IV*, Nos. 1394, 1397, 1399, 1401, 1407, 1411.

²⁰⁵ *TAE IV*, Beilage to No. 1356, pp. 89-90; See also Bellardi, *Christlichen Gemeinschaften*, 189.

but would willingly refrain if the authorities opposed it. Unable either to read or write, he said he had been taught by God. This was possible because in contrast to the written word, Christ's word was spirit and life.

Christ, he said, was true God and true man, born of Mary by the Holy Spirit. As for himself, Steinbach claimed he was Elijah, the chosen one spoken of in Isaiah 26:4-6 and 60:1-3, Jeremiah 48:12, Malachi 4:5, Acts 17:31 and I Pet. 2:9. Strasbourg was Jerusalem as spoken of Baruch 5:3ff. According to these passages he saw himself as an especially enlightened prophet called by God to overturn, destroy and renew the city, its social structures and its rulers.²⁰⁶ His followers, largely from Schlettstadt and the Krutenau, claimed that they saw a light, and some even said that Steinbach was that light.²⁰⁷ But sometimes even they found his prophecies esoteric. The butcher Veltin Rul, interrogated with Steinbach and an apprentice bridgebuilder named Blesi Huber, admitted that he and others did not know what Steinbach was saying, but through his many sufferings he hoped to come to understand these things.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ *TAE IV*, No. 1536, pp. 207-208; Adam, 355.

²⁰⁷ *TAE IV*, No. 1536, pp. 207-208; Adam, 355.

²⁰⁸ Several persons named Veltin Rul appear in the sources, of whom perhaps only one was Steinbachian. In 1544, 1547 and 1548 a Veltin Rul, a shipper, appears in the Rat minutes in connection with shipping matters. *TAE IV*, No. 1536, pp. 207-208. The Strasbourg butchers had a tradition of radicalism dating back to the Peasants' War and earlier.

Although the Steinbachians grew in number and were considered troublemakers by the clergy,²⁰⁹ the Rat continued to treat Steinbach generously. In the summer of 1549, aware that he had lost a long-running court battle to the Ammerschweier authorities,²¹⁰ that he was appealing to an imperial higher court and that legal expenses had absorbed all his income, the Rat issued him a certificate of poverty to enable him to receive welfare assistance. According to the city auditor who inventoried Steinbach's possessions, his total worth came to less than twenty-five pounds, thus qualifying him among the city's poor.²¹¹

To the clergy's distress, Steinbach gained not only a large following²¹² but also initiators and leaders in their own right. Besides Steinbach, by early 1549 Hans Gaudenz and another, perhaps a tailor named Diebolt Heugel, were also considered prophets. The gardeners Anton Murler and Matthis Schultheiss participated in a meeting of the St. Wilhelm parish in October 1549,²¹³ and the butcher Veltin Rul campaigned against the Interim in 1548.²¹⁴ Rul appears to have been prosperous. In January 1550 he hosted a large

²⁰⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1642, p. 273.

²¹⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1484, p. 171; No. 1666, p. 273.

²¹¹ *TAE IV*, No. 1666, p. 291.

²¹² *TAE IV*, No. 1642, p. 273.

²¹³ *TAE IV*, No. 1680, p. 298.

²¹⁴ *TAE IV*, No. 1536, p. 207.

and expensive wedding for his daughter at Strasbourg's most renowned inn. His pastor, having heard that the daughter had earlier promised herself in marriage to an unknown man in Speyer, refused to bless the marriage. Rul denied the rumor, saying that his daughter was innocent and had done all things properly. Another pastor appeared to conduct the service, and people were curious to see whether or not this marriage would be blessed. Since no one knew the entire truth, the Rat decided to go ahead and sanction the wedding and punish guilty persons later if some wrongdoing were found to have been done.²¹⁵

Steinbach remained in Strasbourg until February 1550 when he renounced his citizenship and left, perhaps voluntarily. He probably returned to Schlettstadt which became the center of his movement, but he continued to make appearances in Strasbourg.²¹⁶ By the summer of 1551 he was calling himself not only Elijah but also the Holy Spirit, and among his many followers, he was attracting especially the youth -- all this while the Anabaptists too were increasing. The blasphemous claim to be of the eternal God-head horrified the clergy and the growing numbers alarmed the authorities. So Steinbach's followers -- the tailor Diebolt Heugel, Veltin Rul, Mathis Kupferschmid, and the

²¹⁵ TAE IV, No. 1687, pp. 302-303.

²¹⁶ AMS, Kontrakt Stube, No. 70 III, f. 1r; TAE IV, Beilage to No. 1356, pp. 89-90, n. 1; No. 1690, p. 304. I am grateful to L. J. Abray for information on his departure.

Krutenau gardeners Anton Murler, Mathis Schultheiss and Lehertz Wolff -- were interrogated again, this time before a larger number of pastors.²¹⁷ As Steinbach was not in the city at the time, orders were given to imprison and expel him immediately should he appear, and his followers were ordered not to shelter him.

Heugel, called before the *Stettmeister* and the *Ammeister* and ordered to swear the Anabaptist oath or leave the city, received the firmest treatment. When he remained recalcitrant, he was immediately imprisoned and expelled.²¹⁸ The others were given eight days to recant before being expelled.²¹⁹ The mention of Heugel before the others and the firmer dealings with him suggest that after Steinbach (and perhaps Gaudenz) he may have been the third prophet or the most prominent leader. Though not a primary leader, Rul, from the traditionally radical butchers' guild, had financial means, initiative and convictions strong enough to campaign against the Interim. Although Kupferschmid, Murler, Schultheiss and Wolff appear not to have been leaders, they displayed long term loyalty. In March 1554 all four were named in Johann Marbach's church visitation report.²²⁰

²¹⁷ *TAE IV*, No. 1748, pp. 340-341; No. 1751, p. 342; No. 1680, p. 298, n. 1, 3.

²¹⁸ *TAE IV*, No. 1750, p. 341.

²¹⁹ *TAE IV*, No. 1751, p. 342.

²²⁰ *TAE IV*, No. 1680, p. 298, n. 1, 3.

The sources are silent for ten years, but the Steinbachians did not die out during a 1550s offensive by the clergy against nonconformists. With the death of Steinbach in 1564,²²¹ his followers seem to have gained new momentum. In May 1565 Murler, Schultheiss, a basket maker named Veltin Rul and one Elizabeth Wolff were interrogated again on suspicion of being Steinbachians.²²² Wolff was the widow of Lienhard (Lehertz?) Wolff, the bailiff (*Büttel*) of the gardeners' guild. She was accused of lodging Steinbachians and was herself under suspicion. She claimed that, like the pastors, she had heard only second hand that Steinbach claimed to see a light and to have a special grace from God. She attended church and the sacraments, and had even been examined by Pastor Negelin. For eight days, because she had daily heard the preachers encourage their listeners to feed and help the poor, she had lodged a couple named Georg and Apollonia who had been expelled from Schlettstadt. At the time, she claimed, she did not know that they were Steinbachian. After they left, she took no more in.²²³

Murler claimed to be pious, orthodox and law-abiding, although he preferred the more tolerant Zell and Bucer to the current clergy. He denied knowing Steinbach, but did

²²¹ *TAE IV, Beilage*, to No. 1356, p. 89, n. 1.

²²² *TAE IV*, No. 1536, pp. 207-208, n. 3; Gerber, "Recherches," 30, 60; Gerber, "Anabaptistes," 321.

²²³ *AMS, Wiedertäuferherren minutes*, I, 14, f. 34v-35v.

hear him say that God was his father, and therefore he was God's son and his spirit was God's spirit. He did not hear Steinbach say he was the Holy Spirit.²²⁴ The basketmaker Veltin Rul (probably identical with the butcher) was accused of lodging Steinbachians. He denied the charge and disclaimed any special relationship with Steinbach. He had heard the prophet claim to have special revelation and light, but he could not understand it. Rul claimed orthodoxy, had taken the eucharist within the last month, and worshiped at the cathedral rather than at St. Wilhelm because he preferred the cathedral preacher.²²⁵ Schultheiss also claimed orthodoxy. As Steinbach's neighbor, several times he had heard Steinbach teach that one should attend church, partake of the eucharist and obey the authorities. This he had done, but he had stayed away from St. Wilhelm because in his view the pastor was of the devil. For worship and the eucharist he now went to the cathedral. About the church he had no complaints, but the lack of shepherds in the Krutenau made it difficult to care for his livestock.²²⁶

A report by Pastor Renhardus Lutz of Schlettstadt in the spring of 1566 listed Steinbachians who had been interrogated and expelled from Schlettstadt: Hans Weiss, Stein-

²²⁴ AMS, *Wiedertäuferherren*, I, 14, f. 35v-36v.

²²⁵ AMS, *Wiedertäuferherren*, I, 14, f. 37r-v.

²²⁶ AMS, *Wiedertäuferherren*, I, 14, f. 37v-38v.

bach's son-in-law, the baker and miller, Aurelius Müller and his wife, Lorentz Cuder, Hans Meyer, Diebolt Metzger, Marx Dietrich and his wife, Jörg Jäckler and his wife, a widow named Christina Kegler, the widow of Hieronymi Casselman, Anna the wife of Hans Schuster, Sophia the wife of a blind man, the widow of Vincent Heilman, and Walch, the wife of the physician Michel Els. Some considered Steinbach a pious man, some affirmed that he was both human and the Holy Spirit, some sought to know when Judgment Day would come, and some thought Schlettstadt would be the New Jerusalem. While some refused to speak against Steinbach for fear of committing the unforgiveable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, others recanted and denounced him as a heretic.²²⁷ When a number of those expelled from Schlettstadt fled to the Krutenau, the Rat was not pleased and it resolved to examine them.²²⁸

Later that year Matthew Negelin of St. Wilhelm published a refutation of the Steinbachians. He argued that the heritage of untruth which had come from the medieval Catholic Church through the Anabaptists, Zwinglians, Schwenckfeldians, Melchiorites and Davidites had now culminated in the Steinbachians. In his view Steinbach's key errors -- that he made himself out to be the Holy Spirit,

²²⁷ Renhardus Lutz, "Verzeichnus vn kurtzer begriff der Kätzerischen vn verdampten Leer Martin Steinbachs..." (Strassburg: Christian Müller, 1566), Ex. BNUS R 102 335.

²²⁸ AMS, XXI, No. 44 (1566) f. 172v-173r.

that he claimed to be the Elijah of Malachi 4:5, that the Steinbachians claimed to see a light, and that some followers considered him that light -- contradicted both Scripture and reason.²²⁹

In 1568 the gardeners Schultheiss and Murler appear again. Schultheiss was accused of supporting the Steinbachian widow Christina Kegler. He claimed orthodox faith and denied the charge, but he did admit to having had one Sophia as his maid. Now he did not know where either woman was. As for Murler, his stepdaughter was marrying the son of a gardener, and the young couple was warned to avoid the Steinbachians with which Murler was associated.²³⁰

That the Steinbachians endured for over thirty years in at least two cities and well beyond the death of their prophet suggests that in some circles sympathies for them ran deep and wide. In their visionary spiritualism they followed in a tradition as ancient as Meister Eckhart and Johann Tauler, and as immediate as Clement Ziegler and Melchior Hoffman who were still alive when Steinbach appeared on the scene. Indeed, in some ways Steinbach appears as a second generation amalgam of Ziegler and Hoffman. Unlike both men, his Christology appears to have been orthodox. But in his visionary character, in his anger against the

²²⁹ "Ein kurtze...Anleytung zugebegnen dem...Steinbachischen oder Küfferischen Secten" (Strassburg: Christian Müller, 1566). See also Adam, 355.

²³⁰ AMS, *Wiedertäuferherren*, I, 14, f. 40v-41r.

powerful and in his call for an overturned and renewed society, he resembled both men. Hoffman he imitated in his self-designation as Elijah and in the expectation of a new Jerusalem. In his association with the gardeners and other commoners, his non-Anabaptism, his acceptance of political duties and his location in the Krutenau, he followed Ziegler. The outlook of his followers appears to have been more apocalyptic than political. If the Steinbachians' immediate social or political impact was slight, their presence was significant enough to spur pastors Lenglin and Negelin of Strasbourg and Renhardus Lutz of Schlettstadt to preach and write against them and recount their story.²³¹ As illustrated by the wedding of Murler's stepdaughter, Steinbach's movement was also enough to pass the tradition of visionary religious and social dissidence in Strasbourg on to the next generation and into the seventeenth century.

H. Conclusion

What happened to the Strasbourg Melchiorites after Hoffman's death? Some like Peter Tasch joined the Strasbourg church. Others like the basket-carriage weaver Jörg Ulrich²³² joined the Swiss Brethren. A small number remained Melchiorite. Of these a few, perhaps like Blum, remained apocalypticist. A larger number, like Jörg

²³¹ Gerber, "Recherches," 32.

²³² *TAE III*, No. 1006, p. 394.

Nörlinger, tempered or discarded their apocalyptic expectations while maintaining a spiritualist eucharist and monophysite Christology. Their monophysite Christology emerged as their most distinctive feature, for on the eucharist they had company with the Swiss, the Calvinists and the Schwenckfeldians. In the Netherlands quietist sectarians with a spiritualist eucharist and a monophysite Christology joined the movement led by Menno Simons. In Strasbourg they were torn between the Swiss Brethren who rejected their Christology and the Dutch "Mennists" who were too far away for fellowship. The 1550s and 1560s would see a series of conferences in Strasbourg (1554, 1555, 1557, 1568) aimed at finding unity between the Swiss Brethren and the followers of Menno, and Christology would be a central issue.²³³ Finally, some Melchiorites found new inspiration in Martin Steinbach's *Lichtseher* movement. In modified form the Steinbachians would carry Hoffman's apocalyptic and social revolutionary vision toward the seventeenth century.

²³³ On these conferences, see Oyer, "Strasbourg Conferences," 218-229, and Hulshof, 218-232.