

A History of the Baptists

By John T. Christian

CHAPTER XIII THE PEASANT WARS AND THE KINGDOM OF MUNSTER

THERE has been reserved for this chapter an account of certain events which have been alleged against the Baptists, namely, the Peasant Wars and the tumult at Munster. Because of these the Baptists have been charged with the wildest vagaries and with instigating horrible tumults.

The most searching investigation has failed to prove that Munzter, the leader of the riots in the Peasant Wars, was a Baptist, or that the Baptists were in anywise responsible for the uprisings.

There had long been trouble between the peasants and the nobility. Many times and in different localities, during the preceding one hundred years, had the oppressed peasants in Central Europe attempted to throw off the yoke which their feudal lords had laid upon them. Heavy burdens had been placed upon the laboring classes by their lay and ecclesiastical masters. The forcible repression of evangelical doctrines was an added grievance. Leonard Fries, secretary of the city of Wurtzburg, who gathered the documentary evidence of that time, writing in the spirit of the age, calls the uprising a deluge. It cannot be doubted that many of these grievances called for redress.

Now again the peasants were in revolt. The leader of the movement was Thomas Munzer, born at Stoltzberg, at the foot of the Hartz Mountains. He had been a priest, but became a disciple of Luther, and was a great favorite of the Reformer. His deportment was remarkably grave; his countenance was pale; his eye was sunk as if absorbed in thought; his visage long, and he wore no beard. His talent lay in a plain and easy method of preaching to the country people, whom it would seem as an itinerant he taught almost throughout the Electorate of Saxony. His air of mortification won him the hearts of the rustics; it was singular then for a preacher so much as to appear humble. When he had finished his sermon in any village he used to retire, either to avoid the crowd or to devote himself to meditation and prayer. This was a practice so very singular and uncommon that the people used to throng about the door, peep through the crevices, and oblige him sometimes to let them in, though he repeatedly assured them that he was nothing; that all he had came from above, and that admiration and praise were due only to God. The more he fled from applause, the more it followed

him. The people called him Luther's curate, and Luther called him his Absalom, probably because he stole "the hearts of the men of Israel" (Robinson, Ecclesiastical Researches, ch. xiv).

The peasants set forth their views in twelve articles. Some have said that the articles were written by Hubmaier, but there is no proof of this. It was an eloquent appeal for human liberty. When the peasants arrived in any village they caused the articles to be read. The articles, in brief, are as follows:

1. Every congregation shall be free to elect its own pastor.
2. The tithes shall be applied, as far as is necessary, to the support of the pastor; the remainder shall be given to the poor and to the common interests.
3. Vassal service shall be entirely abolished.
4. All privileges of the nobles and princes relating to the exclusive ownership of hunting and fishing grounds shall cease.
5. Forests that have been taken away from the commune by ecclesiastical or secular lords shall be restored.
- 6-8 All arbitrary and multiplying and increasing duties and rents shall cease.
9. The laws and penalties attached to them, shall be executed justly and impartially, according to unchangeable principles.
- 10 All fields and meadows which have been taken away from the commune shall be restored.
- 11 The right of the nobles to tax legacies at the unjust expense of widows and orphans shall be abolished.
- 12 They promised finally that they will willingly yield all these demands if it be proved to them that a single one of these articles is contrary to the Word of God (Hosek, Balthasar Hubmaier, ch. ii. Brunn, 1867.. Translated by Dr. W. W. Everts, Jr. In *The Texas and Historical Magazine* 1891, 1892).

There were thousands of peasants who followed the standard of Munzer. On the approach of the armies of the nobles they entrenched themselves on a height above Frankenhausen, still called Schlachtberg. It is needless to say

that Munzer was utterly defeated, and not less than five thousand peasants lost their lives on that day, May 15, 1525. This was an end of the Peasants' War. That the peasants had cause for grievance there can be no dispute, and had their cause succeeded it would have been hailed in history as a cause worthy of the heroes of liberty.

Thomas Munzer, the leader of the tumult, was never a Baptist, but all his life was a Pedobaptist dreamer. "Indeed, in no sense of the term," remarks Burrage, "and at no period of his career, was he an Anabaptist, though strangely enough he is often called the founder and leader of the Anabaptists" (*The Baptist Quarterly Review*, 140. April, 1877). More than any other man Luther was responsible for the bloody outbreak of the peasants. He stirred hopes within them with great smiting words, which fired the hearts of the peasants with their wrongs and a desire for better days. He made them ready to risk and dare, and led them to their fate.

"When Luther's enemies," says Aizog, "sarcastically taunted him with being an accomplished hand at kindling a conflagration, but an indifferent one at putting out the flames, he published a pamphlet against *'those pillaging and murdering peasants.'* 'Strike,' said he to the princes, 'strike, slay, front and rear; nothing is more devilish than sedition; it is a mad dog that bites you if you do not destroy it. There must be no sleep, no patience, no mercy; they are the children of the devil.' Such was his speech in assailing those poor, deluded peasants, who had done no more than practically carry out his own principles. They were to be subdued by the strong hand of authority, and to receive no sympathy, no mercy, from their victorious conquerors. It is computed that a hundred thousand men fell in battle during the Peasants' War, and for this immense loss of life Luther took the responsibility. 'I, Martin Luther,' said he, 'have shed the blood of the rebellious peasants; for I commanded them to be killed. Their blood is indeed upon my head; but,' he blasphemously added, *'I put it upon the Lord God, by whose command I spoke'* (Luther, *Table Talk*, 276. Eisleben, edition)" (Aizog, *Universal Church History*, III, 221, 222. Dublin, 1888).

Munzer once held a conference with Grebel and Manz, the Baptist leaders (Bullinger, *Reformationgeschichte*, I. 368); but no account of the proceedings has come down to us. There is an extant letter which Grebel wrote on the subject "As Grebel's letter shows," says Burrage, "he and his associates were not agreed with Munzer in reference to baptism. They did not believe in the use of the sword as he did. Doubtless they found that they and the Saxon reformer widely differed. Munzer's aims were social and political chiefly" (Burrage, *The Anabaptists of Switzerland*, 89).

The Baptists distinctly disavowed the views of Munzer. Grebel in his letter to

him, after stating his own position, offered to Munzer the following delicate hint:

Since you have expressed yourself against that infant baptism, we hope that you do not sin against the eternal word, wisdom and command of God, according to which believers only are to be baptized and that you decline to baptize infants (Cornelius, *Geschichte des Munserichen Aufruhrs*, II. 240-247).

Cornelius, who was a Roman Catholic, admits the Baptists were in unconcealed opposition to Munzer in cardinal points."

Munzer, beyond doubt, was a Lutheran. There is positive proof, though he sometimes "played tricks with the sacraments," that he was never a Baptist (Erbkam, *Geschichte der protestantischen Sekten*, 494). Possibly he denied at one time the necessity of infant baptism, but he practiced that rite to the end of his life. There is no proof that he was ever rebaptized or in any way was ever connected with the Baptist movement. "He was not baptized," says Frank, "as I am trustworthily informed" (Frank, *Chronik*, 493b).

In the year 1523 he put forth a book for the direction of God's service (Munzer, *Ordnung und berechnung des Teutschen*, 6), and in this book he prescribes infant baptism. In 1525, in a letter to Oecolampadius he defends infant baptism and held to its practice (Herzog, *Das Leben Job. Oekolampads*, I. 302. Basel, 1843). That he was never a Baptist is quite plain (Sekendorf, *Historia Lutheranismi*, I. 192; II 13). Frank says: "He himself never baptized, as I am credibly informed" (Frank, *Chronik*, clxxiiib), and adds he was never a Baptist. With this statement modern scholars agree (Marshall, *The Baptists. The Encyclopedia Britannica*, III.370, Cambridge, 1910).

It may be concluded that Munzer was a follower and friend of Luther; he practiced infant baptism to the close of his life; he was never in the practice of Anabaptism; he was opposed by the Baptist leaders; held doctrinal views radically different from the Baptists on the use of the sword; and he was never intimately associated with the Baptists.

All parties seem anxious to rid themselves of the responsibility of the Munster affair. The Roman Catholics charge the Lutherans with the disturbances, and the Lutherans in return lay all the blame on the Anabaptists. It suited the purposes of each party to make the account of the disturbances as horrible as possible. This is only one more instance of how the dominant class of every age writes history in its own interest, and how it has hitherto succeeded not only in imposing its views on the average

intelligence of its own time, but in passing it down to the second-hand historians of subsequent ages (Bax, Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists, 173).

The accounts given by the enemies of a party, are to be received with caution. This is doubly true in this instance, since the Lutherans were trying to shield themselves from the Roman Catholics, and were endeavoring to lay the blame on the Anabaptists. The Lutherans became the historians, and they wrote what they pleased, and there was no one to correct them.

The insurrection of Munster had more to do with politics than it had with religion. The feudal system had long oppressed the common people. Thought was now awakened, principles which had long been dormant were revived. The common man saw his rights and he determined to possess them. Buck, much against his will, acknowledges this. He says:

It must be acknowledged that the true rise of the insurrections of this period ought not to be attributed to religious opinions (Buck, A Theological Dictionary, 20, Article, Anabaptists).

In the early sixteenth century, we may be quite sure, the revolt against feudalism was not ideal in all of its individual elements. It would be manifestly foolish to expect such to be the case with sections of a population more or less suddenly cast adrift from their social and economic moorings. But at the same time there can be no doubt in the mind of any person who has seriously studied the history of social movements, that the bulk of those who thronged the city of Munster in the year 1534, were infinitely more honest, and more noble characters in reality, than the unscrupulous ruffians of the moribund feudalism with whom they were at war (Bax, Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists, 174). It should never be forgotten, as it frequently is, that during the whole period of the Anabaptist domination of Munster, that town was under-going the perils of a siege, and the military considerations had to be kept largely in mind. Nor should it be forgotten that during its existence the Bishop's troops were murdering in cold blood every Anabaptist they could lay their hands on (Lindsay, A History of the Reformation, II. 460).

Had the insurrection of Munster succeeded it would have been regarded as one of the most brilliant events in the history of human liberty. Had the United States failed in the Revolutionary War what would have been the consequences? Washington would have been called a rebel, and our struggle for liberty sedition. That there were wrongs and excesses at Munster no one denies, but what revolution has them not? Bancroft has beautifully referred to this. He says:

The plebeian sect of the Anabaptists, the same of the Reformation, with greater consistency than Luther, applied the doctrines of the Reformation to the social relations of life, and threatened an end to kingcraft, spiritual dominion, tithes, and vassalage. The party was trodden under foot with foul reproaches and most arrogant scorn; and its history written in the blood of myriad. of the German peasantry; but its principles safe in their immortality, escaped with Roger Williams to Providence; and his colony is the witness that, naturally, the paths of the Baptists were paths of freedom, pleasantness and peace (Bancroft, History of the United States, II. 459).

It has been charged that polygamy was instituted at Munster. It must not be forgotten by the conventional historian, who overflows with indignation at the wickedness of the Munsterites in instituting polygamy that such accredited representatives of orthodox Protestant respectability as Luther and Melancthon had declared polygamy not contrary to Christianity. This, it is true, was said by the distinguished Reformers in question in order to secure the favor of Henry VIII., of England, and the Landgrave of Hesse, respectively, and they, together with their patrons, would have wished doubtless to keep it, as Kautsky has suggested, as a reserve doctrine for the convenience of the great ones of the earth on emergency (Bax, Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists, 253).

The Baptists never held to polygamy in any form. Archaeologists have exhumed a long list of the writings of the leaders in the Munster uprising, and it has been found that their teachings were often at variance with the Romanists and Lutheran doctrinal confessions, but they never varied from the moral life which all Christians are called upon to live. Their writings seldom refer to marriage; but when they do it is always to bear witness to the universal and deeply rooted Christian sentiment that marriage is a sacred and unbreakable union of one man with one woman. Nay, more, one document has descended to us which bears testimony to the teaching of the Anabaptists within the beleaguered city only a few weeks before the proclamation of polygamy. It is entitled *Bekentones des globens und lebens gemein Christe zu Munster* (Cornelius, Die Geschichte des Bisthums Munster, 445, 457, 458), and was meant to be an answer to calumnies circulated by their enemies. It contains a paragraph on marriage which is a clear and distinct assertion that the only Christian marriage is the unbreakable union of one man and one woman (Lindsay, A History of the Reformation, II. 464).

Paul Kautsky, after giving certain reasons why polygamy was permitted at Munster, points out further:

That prostitution was not tolerated within the walls of the New Jerusalem. The very communism of the brethren itself sufficed to render this difficult or

impossible, so that women who wished to live by the sale of their bodies had no alternative but to seek the market outside of the walls amid the forces of law and order in the Bishop's camp. In addition to this, one of the first edicts of the Twelve Elders was one of Draconian severity directed against adultery and seduction (Bax, *Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists*, 203).

No attempt is made to defend polygamy at Munster, or elsewhere, but the people of Munster were more consistent than Luther and Melancthon, and they put every safeguard around the sanctity of the home.

After all has been said of the Anabaptists they were not the prime movers of the rebellion of Munster. This is a mere episode in their history, and we hear of it only through poisoned sources. The doings of Bockhold and his followers were those of a small minority, and they were abhorred by a vast majority of the Baptists. Compared with the company within the walls of Munster, the number of the brethren, the Anabaptists so-called, were as thousands to units (Griffis, *The Anabaptists. The New World*, 657. December, 1895).

No one denies that there were Anabaptists among the people of Munster, but the rebellion began with, and was led by Lutherans (Ten Cate, *Gesch der Doopsg. in Holland. I*, 11). Most of the leaders were Pedobaptists. Gregory and Ruter say:

Nor is it just to charge all of the insurrections of those times, whether at Munster or other places, where the Anabaptists had societies, to that class of people. The first insurgents groaned under severe oppression, and took up arms in defense of their civil rights. The Anabaptists appear rather to have seized the occasion than to have been the prime movers (Gregory and Ruter, *History of the Christian Church*, 500).

It is certain that the leaders in Munster differed essentially in principles from those who elsewhere bore the name of Baptists. The men of Munster wielded the sword; the Baptists were distinguished from other Christians by refusing to bear arms. The men of Munster dreamed of establishing a secular kingdom; the Baptists looked alone to the spiritual reign of Christ. Any one who will impartially study the history of Menno Simon and that of John of Leyden will not deny that the doctrines and spirit of the two men were wholly unlike; and more unlike are they for example, both in doctrine and in spirit than were Luther and the Roman Catholics.

Bernhardt Rothmann, a ringleader, was a Pedobaptist, the Lutheran preacher at the Church of St. Maurice, in Munster. He had been early attracted by the teaching of Luther, as we learn from his Confession of 1532 (Detmer, *Bernhardt Rothman*, 41. *Munster 1904*), and he went to

Wittenberg to make the acquaintance of Luther and Melanchthon. He led the movement at Munster before many Anabaptists appear to have been connected with it (Spanheim, Hist. Anab., 12). Read the following:

It is certain that the disturbances in the very city of Munster were begun by a Pedobaptist minister, whose name was Bernhardt Rothmann; that he was assisted in his endeavors by ministers of the same persuasion, and that they began to stir up tumults; that is, teach revolutionary principles a year before the Anabaptist ringleaders, as they were called, visited the place. These things the Baptists knew. and they failed not to improve them to their own advantage. They uniformly insisted that Luther's doctrines led to rebellion, and his disciples were the prime movers in the insurrections, and they also asserted that an hundred and fifty thousand Lutherans perished in the Rustic War (Fessenden. Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, 77).

A great many were Roman Catholics, and a still greater part had no religion principles whatever (Buck, A Theological Dictionary, 20).

Some fair-minded and discriminating historians have distinguished between the Anabaptists of Minster and the Baptists. Dr. Ludwig Keller says:

Whenever, at the present time, the name "Anabaptist" is mentioned the majority think only of the fanatical sect which, under the leadership of John of Leyden, established the kingdom of the New Jerusalem at Munster. The history of the religious ideas whose caricature appears in the communion of Minster, however, in no wise connects itself with the beginning and the end of the short episode. There were Baptists long before the Munster rebellion, and in all of the centuries that have followed, in spite of the severest persecutions, there have been parties which, as Baptists and Mennonites have secured permanent position in many lands. (*Keller Preusache Jahrbucher, September, 1882*).

D' Aubigue' says:

On one point it seems necessary to guard against misapprehension, Some persons imagine that the Anabaptists of the times of the Reformation, and the Baptists of our day, are the same. But they are as different as possible, there is at least as wide a difference between them as there was between the Episcopalians and the Baptists . . . So much for the historical affinity. As to the principles, it is enough to look at the social and political opinions of the Anabaptists, to see that the present Baptists reject such sentiments. The doctrine of the Mennonites themselves differ not essentially from that of other Protestant communions (Schyn, *Historia Christianorum qul In Beiglo. Amsterdam, 1728*). A popular American work (Fssenden's Encyclopedia)

states the difference. It says, article *Anabaptists*, The English and Dutch Baptists do not consider the word as applicable to their sect. And farther on, it is but justice to observe that the Baptists in Holland, England, and the United States, are to be considered as entirely distinct from these seditious and fanatical individuals above mentioned; and they profess an equal aversion to all principles of rebellion of the one and enthusiasm. of the other (D'Aubigne, History of the Reformation, I. 9 preface).

Few writers have given the subject more thought than Drs. Ypeij and Dermout, who were especially appointed by the King of Holland to look into the facts and give a true report. They write on this theme at great length, They say:

The fanatical Anabaptists, of whom we now speak, were originally from Germany, were under the bishoprick of Speiers, they, by a rebellion, had made known their displeasure at the oppression of the so-called feudal system. This was in the year 1491. Since that time they, by their revolt, have often caused anxiety, and have given the government no little trouble. This continued till the time of the Reformation; when these rebels sought in the new religion an augmented power, and made the most shameful misuse of it to the promotion of their harassing disturbances. These ought by no means to be considered as, the same as the Baptists. Let the reader keep this distinctly in mind in the statements in which we are now about to make.

At much length they draw a distinction between the Baptists and the turbulent Anabaptists of Munster. John of Leyden is described, as are the Munster men. They declare that the Baptists and these turbulent Anabaptists were not the same. They proceed:

We shall now proceed more at length to notice the defense of the worthy Baptists. The Baptists are Protestant Christians entirely different from the Anabaptists in character. They were descendants from the ancient Waldenses, whose teachings were evangelical and tolerably pure, and who were scattered by severe persecutions in various lands, and long before the time of the Reformation of the Church were existing In the Netherlands. In their flight they came thither in the latter part of the twelfth century. In this country and in Flanders, in Holland, and Zeeland they lived as quiet inhabitants, not intermeddling with the affairs of Church and State, in the villages tilling the land, in the cities working at some trade or engaging in traffic, by which means each one was well supplied and in no respect burdensome to society. Their manner of life was simple and exemplary. No great crime was known among them. Their religious teaching was simple and pure, and was exemplified in their daily conduct (Ypeij, A. en Dermout,

J. J., *Geschiedenis der Netherlandache Hervomke Kerk*, 1819. Chapter on Baptists).

Gottfried Arnold, born at Annaberg, Saxony, September 5, 1666, was Professor of History in Giessen. In his great book, which made an epoch in Church History, he says:

It is true that these good testimonies (which had to be accorded to the Anabaptists for their doctrines and lives) do not refer to those who in the Munster sedition showed themselves so impious and seditious. Nevertheless it is manifestly evident from many public acknowledgments that the remaining Catabaptists were not only different from these (and had no part in their seditious doings) but also very greatly abhorred and always in the highest degree condemned and rejected these; just as their adversaries themselves from their writings confess and testify that they, especially the Mennonites, never agreed with the Munsterites (Arnold, *Unparteiischen Kirchen und Ketzler Historie*, II. 479).

The careful discrimination made by these authors is worthy of consideration. The Baptists, or the people ordinarily called Anabaptists, were entirely distinct from these furious persons who were likewise termed Anabaptists. They had nothing in common save that both parties practiced rebaptism. The Munster fanatics did not recognize the baptism of the Baptist churches, but rebaptized all alike. This likeness was the occasion of the Roman Catholics calling the Munster men Anabaptists; but they likewise laid the revolt at the door of the followers of Luther and Zwingli. The Lutherans seized upon the point of rebaptism, and in order to clear themselves, they placed the entire uprising on the Baptists. The Baptists had little to do with it. The Lutherans were the historians, and the Baptists have been to this day compelled to bear the blame.

The Peasant Wars were attributed to the Baptists, although Munzer, the leader, practiced infant baptism to the close of his life. The Munster insurrection was charged to the Baptists, although it was opposed to a fundamental tenet held by them, that under no condition should a Christian bear arms or in any way engage in a tumult. The Baptists held steadfastly to this view before the Munster insurrection. Grebel and Manz were called "false prophets" because they refused to engage in any entangling political alliances (Keller, *Die Reformation und die alteren Reformationparteien*, 40.) In a meeting of the Anabaptists, in January, 1535, at Sparendam, when the Munster riots were in full swing, they were condemned ten to one. In a large gathering at Bocholt, in Westphalia, in the summer of 1586, the Baptists repudiated the whole movement. The Schleithem Confession of Faith condemned the use of the sword by any Christian. The followers of Menno to

this day do not hear arms.

The evidence submitted shows that the Munster insurrection began previous to 1491 and grew out of political disturbances of the times; that it was the opposition of the "common man" to the old feudal system of bishops and nobles; that it was intended to be in the interest of human liberty; that most of the leaders were followers of Luther, and did not become Baptists; that there were many Roman Catholics and many of no religious faith in the movement; that those who were termed Anabaptists in Munster held views divergent from the ordinary tenets of regular Baptists of the period; that the so-called Anabaptists had no vital connection with the great Baptist movement; and had this insurrection succeeded gloriously, as it failed miserably, it would doubtless have been regarded as one of the greatest achievements of human liberty.

The act of baptism practiced in Munster has been the occasion of no end of controversy. Since, as it has been seen this was not a representative Baptist movement, but one largely composed of Lutherans, the act of baptism in Munster was not necessarily the practice of the Baptists of the period. After a somewhat patient investigation it may safely be affirmed that the ordinary form of baptism in Munster was immersion. The evidence is set down impartially.

The *Bekentnisse van Beiden Sacramentem*, The Confession of both Sacraments, which was subscribed to by Bernhardt Rothmann, John Klopries, Hermann Strapade, Henry Roll, Dionysius Vinne and Gottfried Stralen is especially significant, The Confession says:

What the word *doop* means, Every German knows, of course, the meaning of *doopen* (to dip), and consequently also of *doop* and *doopsel* (dipping). *Doopen* is as much as to say dip or immerse in water, and *doop* is as much as to say a ducking or besprinkling with water. Now, this word *doop*, by reason of its natural signification, may be used of all and every kind of dipping. But in the Christian sense there is not much more than one sort of dipping in water that can be called (*doop*), which is when a person is dipped according to the command of Christ otherwise, if it be done in a manner, or with a different intent from what Christ and the Apostles practiced, it may literally or naturally be called (*doop*), but it can never be called *doop* in the Christian sense; for all dipping in water is in fact, and may be called *doop*, but only that which is done according to the command of Christ is the Christian *doop*.

What the *doop* (baptism) is . . . it is a small matter that I be plunged into water. indeed, it is of no benefit to the soul that the filth of the flesh be put

away; but the certain announcement of a good conscience the putting off of the old man. the laying aside the lust of sin, and endeavor henceforth to live in obedience to the will of God—on this salvation depends, and this is also that which in baptism is acquired.

The dipping, as the Apostles write it, and also used the same, is to be performed with this understanding. They also who are dipped are therein to confess their faith, and, by virtue of this faith, to be disposed to put off the old man, and henceforth to live in a new conversation; indeed, it is on this condition that the dipping is to be received, by every candidate that he, with the certain announcement of a good conscience, renewed and born again through the Holy Ghost, will forsake all unrighteousness with all works of darkness, and will die to them. And, accordingly, the dipping is a burial of the old man and a raising up of the new man; likewise a door into the holy church, and a putting on of Jesus Christ.

There are some who . . . make of the dipping a sign of grace; but this can be proved by no Scripture, that the dipping was intended to be the true token of grace . . . But, well, be it so: let the immersion in water be the sign; we hold, however, that the water does not bring anything more with it, but that it is an external sign. But we pray thee, then, what is the use of the sign, where the reality which is signified is not present? He who gives or receives the sign of anything without regard to the reality, is he not a traitor? The kiss is the sign of friendship. Judas gave the sign, and had not the reality; how did he fare? Likewise, when one receives a troth penny, accepts the right band of his friend in token of fidelity, if, in fact, he be found untrue, having not the reality of the sign (which is truth) in his heart, dear friend, what wouldst thou think of such a man? . . . and for what wouldst thou value such a sign? . . . Accordingly, whoever would rightly receive the external sign must assuredly bring the inward reality along with him; otherwise the sign is false, useless and unworthy of commendation.

Well, then, to be brief, and to reach a conclusion as to what the *doop* is, we say that the dipping is an immersion in water, which the candidate desires and receives as a token that he has died to sin, has been buried with Christ, thereby risen to a new life, thenceforth to walk not in the lust of the flesh, but obediently according to the will of God. They who are thus minded and thus confess, the same should be dipped; and they are also rightly dipped, and thus assuredly receive forgiveness of sins in the dipping, and also admission into the holy church and the putting on of Christ. And this comes to the person dipped, not by virtue of the dipping, nor yet because of the formula employed, "I dip thee," etc., neither by reason of the faith of the fathers and of their uninvited vows and suretyship—it comes to him through his knowledge of Christ, his own faith, and because of his own free will and

heart, through the Holy Ghost, he puts off the lusts of the flesh and puts on Christ. And this is briefly what *doop* is and to whom it should and may be usefully administered.

After that this gateway was thus destroyed and opened to everybody, the holy church, was also desecrated and injured; and it is to be expected that the holy church itself also shall never be able to reach her glory unless the gateway be built up, and be judged and cleansed of all abominations (Bouterwek, *Zur Literatur und Geschichte der Wiedertaucher*, 6-8. Bonn, 1864).

The original of the Confession is not at hand, and the point might profitably be raised whether the phrase "besprinkled with water" is a part of the original document. Such a phrase appears to be entirely out of harmony with the argument and spirit of the Confession and might be accounted for as a gloss. It is an interesting question and a comparison with the original manuscript, if it can be found, might throw light on the question. Much care needs to be taken in authenticating manuscripts; and none require more accurate consideration than those which treat of Anabaptist history.

It is to be noted, however, that in the Confession, "besprinkle with water" is not "recognized side by side with immersion as valid baptism," but that the definition is given as a possible one for the *doop* then used. Only dipping is recognized by the Confession as the proper form of baptism among Christians. "We may say that the baptism is an immersion in water," runs the Confession, "which the one baptized requests and receives as a true token that he has died to sin."

In speaking of the Confession, Dr. Jesse B. Thomas truly remarks:

It seems incredible that the clear distinction between the broader etymological signification of the word *doopen*, and its single exclusive use, accompanied by so elaborately detailed explanation of its specific use could have been simultaneously repudiated by the voluntary substitution in practice of the illegitimate modifications condemned in it (*The Western Recorder*, 1898)

On this point of dipping, Dr. Keller says:

The dipping (*eintauchung*) in water was by all means a sign of the dying off of the old man. The very nature of baptism they could conceive to be nothing else; hence, to them, the baptism of unintelligent, thoughtless and speechless children, appeared to them as an abominable blasphemy, and the

source of the destruction of all of the apostasy of the holy church (Keller, *Geschichte der Wiedertaufer*, 132).

Heath, the English writer on the Anabaptists, is equally clear on this point. He says:

The "Confession of both Sacraments" describes baptism as a dipping or plunging completely into water, for only under this form can it be spoken of as being buried with Christ (Heath, *The Anabaptists*, 147, 148)

Cornelius, the Roman Catholic writer, says that Rothmann held:

Baptism is the sign through which we exhibit the passage from death to life; as the passage through the Red Sea was unto the children of Israel of the grace of God so it is to us a sure sign of the grace of God to be baptized in the water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Cornelius, *Geschichte des Munsterischen Aufrubrs*, I. 132).

Thus speak the scholarly students of the Anabaptists, and they hold that the practice of the Anabaptists of Munster was dipping. There is an instance on record of a baptism in Munster. Heath says: "On January 5, 1534, two Hollanders arrived at Munster, apostles sent out by Jan Matthysz. They used the words: 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' that they denounced the wrath of God on all tyrants and blood-shedders, that they called on the believers in Munster to be baptized and form a true community, in which they should be equal and have all things in common, can hardly be doubted. Rothmann, Klopries, Vinne and Stralen were baptized, and, with Roll, were appointed to baptize others. The rite was performed in Rothmann's house, and, judging from the terms of the Confession, was probably by immersion. In eight days there were already 1,000 persons baptized in Munster. Of their state of mind they have left this record: 'In the day God awakened us so that we were faithful to be baptized, there was poured out a spirit, a brotherly love, rising to the floodtide.' And of their consecration therein they say: 'Whatever we now find day by day that God wills among us, that will we do, cost what it may.'" (Heath, *The Anabaptists*, 160).

We have seen elsewhere that the Anabaptists were accustomed to practice dipping in their houses. Dr. Urbanus Rhegius wrote a furious book, from Wittenberg, in 1535, against the Anabaptists of Munster. The Preface of the book was by Martin Luther. He designates the third article of the Anabaptists as an error. He says:

III. The Munster error of holy baptism. In 1 Peter iii. we read that baptism saves, through which we obtain the covenant of good conscience toward God. This demands death of the flesh and all good works. Where no faith is there are no good work., the result is then that faith is necessary to baptism. Then it follows that only true believers can be baptized, Rom. vi.

Gal. iii. 1 Pet. iii. Acts ii. viii. i. xvi. xxii. Conscientiousness and faith must precede, which is not true of children consequently they are not rightly baptized. Therefore one should be baptized right, if one understands and believes. Therefore they drag into ridicule holy baptism and they compare child's baptism, though they plunge them into water (*inns wasser stekt*), to cat and dog baptism and say that it is mockery and child's play (Rhegius, *Widderlegung der Munsterischen neuen Valentinianer*. Wittenberg, 1585).

Christopher Andreas Fischer, A. D., 1607, commenting on this article of the Munster Confession, says:

The baptism in water is nothing, but the baptism which is the death of the flesh saves. The child's baptism is a cat and dog baptism, though they are plunged in the water (*ins wasser steckt*) and is a ridicule and child's play (Fischer, *Vier und Funffzig Exheblacke warumb die Wiedertauffer*, 7).

The form of baptism which the enemies of tile Anabaptists practiced was dipping and the subjects were infants. The form of baptism among the Anabaptists was dipping and the subjects were adult believers. The Anabaptists spoke slightingly of the baptism of infants as no better than the baptism of a cat or dog. It will be noticed that the act of baptism was dipping. This was undoubtedly the form of baptism practiced by the Anabaptists of Munster. Nothing can be plainer than this. If, therefore, we can trust the statement given by Bouterweg, and the contemporaneous account of Rhegius, who gives the words of the Anabaptists, then the Anabaptists of Munster were in the practice of dipping.

Rhegius argued that one thus baptized possessed the new birth, or water bath, and should, therefore, be baptized. And then follows the passage:

It is God who regenerates us young and old. Our knowledge and work cannot accomplish it but the grace of the Holy Spirit, The same can work alike in the infant child as in the mature man as we see in John the baptist, Luke i.

A child can have all that is necessary to baptism. One can dip it in the water (*ins wasaer tuncke*) at the same time quote the Word of God.

The argument of Rhegius is forceful. As the Anabaptists claimed that only adults ought to be baptized in water; so he thinks baptism will bring the same blessing to children. This argument is unanswerable that immersion was the practice of Munster. Rhegius was quite willing that the Anabaptists should dip adults; if the Anabaptists would allow the dipping of children.

The view of John of Leyden on the form of baptism has been preserved by Hermann Kerssenbrock. This writer knows only what is evil of the Anabaptists and only what is good of their opponents. But he directly says that John of Leyden practiced redipping (Kerssenbrock, *Historia belli Monasteriensis*, 15).

The testimony establishes the fact that the so-called anabaptists of Munster were in practice of dipping.