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**Recent Sources of Information on the Anabaptists  
in the Netherlands**

**By  
Henry Elias Dosker**

## RECENT SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON THE ANABAPTISTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

BY HENRY ELIAS DOSKER, PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY  
IN THE LOUISVILLE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,  
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

*(Read December 27, 1915)*

THE subject is not of my own choosing. It was assigned to me by our Secretary, when he invited me last summer to write a paper for this meeting of the Society. The reason for this request lies in the fact that, for the last dozen years, much of my spare time has been spent in special work on this engrossing subject, which is shrouded in much mystery. But we all know something about the great Anabaptist movement, which paralleled the history of the Reformation. We have all touched these Anabaptists in their life and labors, in the sixteenth century, in all Europe, but especially in Switzerland, upper Germany, and Holland. Crushed and practically wiped out everywhere else, they rooted themselves deeply in the soil of northeastern Germany and above all in the Low Countries. And thence, whenever persecution overwhelmed them, they crossed the channel and moved to England, where their history is closely interwoven with that of the Nonconformists in general and especially with the nascent history of the English Baptists.

Now we historians do not consider existing things by themselves, but the thing of absorbing interest to us all is the genetic process by which existing things came to be what they are. Or as the Germans say, we study not only

*das Ding an sich, aber wie es geworden ist was es ist.* And thus these many years my eyes had been searching the distant horizon for further light and a deeper understanding of the Anabaptist movement, especially on account of their historic connection with my fatherland. Fortunately the language was no bar to the research work, as most of the available sources were written in modern or middle Dutch. Hooft and Brandt and Wagenaar had written on the Anabaptists, especially the latter two. Ypey and Dermout in their history of the State Church of Holland had necessarily touched their history again and again, inasmuch as the Anabaptist question remained a burning one in Holland till the close of the eighteenth century. I had read, after Cramer, Blaupot ten Cate, and how many others, who were intimately acquainted with the history of the Anabaptists, and yet there remained a void. For all these afforded only a reflected light, a picture of the Anabaptist world as seen through the eyes of others. And I longed for the open vision, for a look face to face, for the writings of these old Anabaptists themselves or for what their contemporaries had written about them. But these documents were so rare and so jealously guarded that they were practically inaccessible; for the power of the Church and of the State had vied with each other in efforts to wipe this heretical literature from the face of the earth. Nor had any difference been made between the writings of the three successive reformatory waves, which, in the early part of the sixteenth century, had swept over the Lowlands. As you know these three were the Lutheran, the Anabaptist, and the Calvinistic movements. And each had left its own literature, of which undoubtedly the greater part was destroyed by the Inquisition. Ah that we had it all to-day; how much that is now dark would be clear as the noonday! And what remains is exceedingly precious and rare. Of several of these literary products only one copy remains, of some two or more, of

a few some copies of different editions. And it is this literature that is needed for a proper study of early Dutch Protestantism, and in a special degree for that of the Anabaptist movement. For they were the despised and hated of all; judged, in the mass, by the political and revolutionary excesses of the Anabaptists, specially so called to distinguish them from the *Doopsgezinden*, a word incapable of an idiomatic translation but literally meaning—*those inclined to baptism*, so that the generic term "Baptists" perhaps is the best translation in English.

Some of our own historians went across the sea and searched far and wide for these precious documents, yet in the end were compelled almost without exception to fall back on second-hand information, because even after they found the documents, they were inaccessible, and if they laid their hands on them, they were confronted with the unsurmountable obstacle of the language, till many turned away in weariness and disgust.

Then came the blessed year 1902, in which Professor Dr. S. Cramer, of Amsterdam, and Professor Dr. F. Pijper, of Leyden, resolved to assume the heroic labor of collecting and editing all this early Reformatory Dutch literature, so far as it remained. It was a grueling and thankless task. There was no money in it; I do not think the publication ever paid for itself. They have given to the students of Church History an actual reprint of these documents, word for word, comma for comma, so that one has access to-day to the very sources which a dozen years ago were priceless. And in this heartless and monotonous labor they spent twelve of the best years of their lives, till ten quarto volumes had been issued and each ancient document had been enriched with an introduction, so searching, so illuminating, so full in information that the document itself is trebled in value.

Dr. Cramer died before the last volume was issued, but

Dr. Pijper was able to see the matter through to the end. Thus the *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica* will forever remain a proud monument to the memory of these two Dutch scholars. These volumes it has been my privilege to study. You may be interested to know what they contain about the Anabaptists, also what came to me through this study.

## I

THE "BIBLIOTHECA REFORMATORIA NEERLANDICA" AND  
THE ANABAPTISTS

These ten volumes form a rich storehouse of information concerning the entire Anabaptist movement, but especially that in Holland. But alas, as has been said, the language is a serious drawback. Were they written in modern Dutch the problem would be comparatively easy to solve. But they are written in the Dutch of the sixteenth century, a composite tongue with a weird spelling and weirder punctuation, so that even to a common Dutchman of fair education they would prove a perfect puzzle. But whoever has mastered the key to their understanding finds here a surprising mine of information, concerning the Anabaptist movement in general, and of that in Holland in particular.

Here we get a glimpse of their peculiar *Weltanschauung*, their Puritanical, almost ascetic view of life, their theology, in many points radically at variance with Rome and the reformers alike. Here we find the secret of their strength as well as of their weakness, of their internal divisions and endless quarrels, of the sublimity of their courage and countless martyrdoms. One cannot peruse these documents, hoary with age, without an increasing reverence for a people apparently so weak yet so strong, loyal to their convictions to the bitter end, ever quarreling within the

family-circle, yet always showing a united front to the common foe.

The entire second volume of the *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica* is devoted to the martyrology of the Dutch Anabaptists. Here we find *Het Offer des Heeren* (The Sacrifice of the Lord), and I dare say without fear of contradiction, that a more pathetic story of martyrdoms was never told. The reading of it grips one with a strange power after all these centuries. In its day—and Dr. Cramer, in giving us this reprint, has followed the edition of 1570—it was a very popular book. To it is added a collection of songs written by the condemned, while waiting for their execution, entitled *Een Liedboexken*. The whole was printed in a pocket edition, which was made possible, as Cramer says, “by the excellent typographical execution of the sixteenth century and by the excellent paper on which it is printed.” The whole volume, bound in leather, was only 12.6 cm. long, 7.7 wide, and 3.3 thick. This pathetic volume is all the more valuable as a historical source, because it recounts the entire *procès-verbal* of the Inquisitorial examination and affords us therefore an exceedingly illuminating picture of the faith and practice of the early Anabaptists.

The entire fifth volume of the series is devoted to the so-called Dutch Anabaptistica. The works of David Joris and the Münster Anabaptists are not included, for the simple reason that they have been printed before. Here we find Henrick Roll's *Die Slotel van het Secret des Nachmaels* (The Key to the Secret of the Supper). So rare is this tract that only three copies of it are known to exist. One of them found by the Dutch antiquary, F. Muller, is now the priceless possession of the Rochester seminary. The second was found in the University library at Utrecht and the last in that of Zürich. As Roll was co-pastor of Rothmann at Münster till the complete ascendancy of John of Leyden, this tract of 123 pages gives us a clear idea of



the Anabaptists in the period prior to the Mennonite reconstruction, in which Menno Simons and Dirk Philips on the one hand and David Joris and Adam Pastor on the other had given them deeper and firmer convictions.

Here also we find several works of Melchior Hoffman, "the father of the Dutch Anabaptists," a restless, changeable character, with prophetic hallucinations; yet a born leader of men, who with Jan Trypmaker, his convert, faced death under a thousand forms, in his Anabaptist propaganda. He and Trypmaker are the men who, for a time at least, gave to the Dutch Anabaptistic movement the frenzied revolutionary type which issued in the Münster catastrophe. He wrote voluminously, but was soon replaced, as a leader, by men of a more sober mind. And thus it is that, although for a brief period a faction of the Anabaptists at least were named Melchiorites after him, his leadership passed into oblivion before he died. Indicted, imprisoned, and released only by death after ten years, he recanted most of his doctrines before he passed away.

Two of his works are found in this collection: *Die Ordinantie Gods*, in which he expounds his views on the imminent parousia of Christ, his strange doctrine of the incarnation, etc.; and also his *Verclaringhe van de gheuangen ende vrien wil* (Explanation of the captive and free will), both tangible sources of information concerning his theological views. And in immediate juxtaposition with these works of Hoffman, we find here the printed charges of the Strassburg clergy, under which he was tried and condemned. Here also are the acts of the Strassburg disputation, in which he tried to defend and expound his views. The whole is a singularly illuminating source of information in regard to the labors and fate of Hoffman.

In this fifth volume we meet with still another great Anabaptist leader, Adam Pastor, to many students of Anabaptist history a name no more. And yet with the

exception of Sebastian Franck, he was the most advanced liberal among them, who paved the way for the wide spread of Socinianism in the North, by his denial of the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, and the personality of the Holy Ghost, by his extreme views of liberty of conscience and his strange views of the sacraments. Not only the most advanced, but also one of the most cultured of the early Anabaptists, he was yet unable to create a school or to form a party but was expelled by his own brethren. It is therefore a rare privilege to be permitted to learn, at first hand, what were the views of this man. And we are enabled to do this by the study of his *Underscheit tusschen rechte leer vnde valsche leer* (Difference between true and false doctrine) and of his *Disputation van der Godtheit des Vaders, des Soens ende des Hilligen Geistes* (Disputation about the divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost).

Last of all we find in this fifth volume the first trace of an attempt at the consolidation of Anabaptist believers into one cohesive group, which was soon to be known as *Doopsgezinden* or Baptists. In this direction we find here nine rare tracts, in which we meet with a clear and simple exposition of the fundamental distinction between the Anabaptists and their fellow believers with other affiliations.

Of still greater interest to the historian are the contents of volume seventh of the *Bibliotheca*, for here we find historical writings of the reformatory period, which unravel many a mystery and give us a better sense of proportion than we had before. It is worthy of note that all the literature here found is from the hands of opponents of the Anabaptists, or of renegades or expelled individuals. The only exception is Alenson's *Tegenbericht op de voor-Reden van't groote Martelaer Boeck* (Critique of the introduction of the great book of Martyrs), a defense of the edition of 1615 against that of 1626, a tract so rare that the copy here reprinted is the only one in existence. But as Dr. Cramer has said—"the

fact that they were written by opponents does not diminish their historical value. The judgments pronounced may be one-sided, but the writers were evidently well informed." In weighing this statement of Dr. Cramer, let us remember that he was himself one of the foremost leaders of the Dutch Mennonites.

Here then we find the precious *Successio Anabaptistica*, which, with Carel van Ghendt's *Beghinsel ende Voortganck* (Beginning and Progress), is the only attempt of a contemporary to write a history of the Anabaptist communion, of their bickerings and schisms and the causes thereof. The author of the *Successio* is unknown, but he wields a trenchant pen; he is evidently a man of culture and is apparently fully acquainted with their literature, their internal organization, and their widely divergent views. Therein lies its historical value.

Of no less interest is the *Bekentnisse Obbe Philipsz* (1584) (The Confession of Obbe Philips), the brother of Dirk Philips, the great Anabaptist theologian. The tract is written by one who had been a leader among the Anabaptists and who loved their communion, but now stood outside of it. Cramer tells us of this book:

No more circumstantial or vivid, no more deeply felt or more finely drawn, and no more trustworthy picture of the tendencies and ideas, which were current among the Dutch Anabaptists from 1534-1536, and of the mind, which then prevailed among them, has come down to us.

And Obbe is so eminently fair, one can almost hear the sob in his voice, as he tells his story. I frankly confess that few of these Anabaptistica have so gripped me as the story of Obbe Philips.

Alenson's *Tegenbericht*, though not printed until 1630, is given a place in this collection because in it numerous things are told from the time of Menno and of the martyr

period, which had come to the author partly from lost books but mostly from the lips of living witnesses, and which are to be found nowhere else in Anabaptist literature. Without this we would know nothing of the practice, among schismatic churches of the communion, of refusing to recognize adult baptism administered by others. We would also be ignorant of the Anabaptist convention of 1555 and its decision anent the incarnation of Christ.

Of equal interest with the former works is the reprint of an amplified translation of Henry Bullinger's great work against the Anabaptists. The first edition was printed in 1531, but thirty years later he re-edited the polemic, under the grandiose title, *Der Widertöufferen vrsprung, fürgang, Secten, wäsen, fürneme vnd gemeine jrer leer Artickel, ouch jre gründ, . . . mit widerlegung vnd Antwort vff alle vnd yede jre gründ vnd artickel, sampt Christenlichem bericht vnd vermanen dasz sy jres irrhumbs vnd absünderens abstandind, . . . beschriben durch Heinrychen Bullingern, . . . Getruckt zu Zürich by Christoffel Froschower, imm Jenner, Anno M.D.LXI.*<sup>1</sup> This work was translated by Gerardus Nicolai and his interpolations (*Inlasschingen*) afford much added light on the conditions prevailing in Anabaptist circles. This interpolated edition appeared eight years after the original and is invaluable for the theology of the Anabaptists.

The last document reprinted in this seventh volume is Carel van Ghendt's *Het beginsel der scheuringen onder de Doopsgezinden* (The beginning of the schisms among the Doopsgezinden). This work, printed in 1615, forms the basis of all historical treatises on the Anabaptists and it is used by their own men as well as by outsiders. Professor DeHoop Scheffer, chief among all the authorities, uses it persistently, albeit not without misgiving. Brandt consulted it for his *History of the Reformation*. The older Cramer used it for his biography of Menno Simons. The question

<sup>1</sup> The British Museum has an edition by Froschower dated March, 1560.

of its authorship is not fully settled, although Carel van Ghendt's name is printed on the title-page. When the book was written, the author was an old man. At twenty-one he had left the Church of Rome, on his conversion to the faith of the Anabaptists, by seeing the death of one of their martyrs. But he had found no peace, for in turn the "Frisians" and later the "Flemings" had cast him out. From that time he became an ecclesiastical freelance, wholly mystical in tendency and far beyond the remnant of organized church-life, found among his former co-religionists. But he continued to take a deep interest in what happened among the Anabaptists and to this lingering affection we owe the preservation of many a curious document.

The interest of the student of Anabaptist history in the ninth volume of the *Bibliotheca* is centered on the *Simplex et Fidelis Narratio* of Johannes Utenhoven, from the fact that it contains the narrative of the expulsion of the first Reformed church ever organized, *i. e.*, that of London, which had received a patent from Edward VI, and had been exiled in the Marian persecution. Its leader was John à Lasco, together with Martin Micron and John Utenhoven, and the latter recited the almost Ulyssean wanderings of the refugee church. They were rejected everywhere; and especially their Lutheran brethren, under the leadership of Joachim Westphal of Hamburg, acted with offensive partisanship. It is a matter of interest to historians, that these early Reformed believers, in all the decrees of expulsion, which ejected them from one place after another, were always named in one breath with the *Wederdoopers*. They themselves are nicknamed *Sacramentarii*, on account of their divergent doctrine of the Supper. It is this identification with the Anabaptists and this bitter sectarianism on the part of the Lutherans which are vividly described in this *Narratio* of Utenhoven. Incidentally the tract gives us a

vivid picture of the bitter struggle waged within the bosom of the Lutheran Church between the Gnesio-Lutherans and the liberalizing Philippists.

When the tenth volume appeared in 1914, Dr. S. Cramer, one of the projectors and editors of this gigantic undertaking, alas, had passed away. He was not permitted to see the laying of the capstone of the building which he had helped to rear, and to him had been committed perhaps the most responsible task of all, the reprinting and introduction of the works of Dirk Philips, to whom the entire tenth volume is devoted.

Dr. Pijper therefore voluntarily undertook the task, which had slipped from the dying hand of his friend and colleague, and he succeeded in the well-nigh impossible undertaking of transplanting himself into the state of mind, almost of veneration, wherewith the Dutch Mennonite views the works of Dirk Philips, next to Menno Simons the most glorious name in the history of the Dutch *Wederdoopers*.

No one who is not familiar with the history of the reformatory period of the Dutch Church can conceive of the inestimable value of the introductions, written by Drs. Pijper and Cramer, for every one of the documents reprinted in the *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, nor of the infinite labor of research which they demanded. And of all these, the introductions of Dr. Pijper, in the last volume, are not the least valuable. For here, for the first time, Dirk Philips steps onto the stage, into the light of history. The full record of his literary activity is here given and we scarcely know what to admire most, his trenchant pen, the virility of his thought, the clearness of his style, the breadth of his learning, or the tenderness of his heart.

The *Enchyridion* of Philips is here reprinted, together with his other works—a reply to two epistles of Sebastian Frank (*Verantwoordingh ende refutation op twee Sendbrieven Sebastiani Frank*); a letter to the four cities (Franeker,

Harlingen, Leeuwarden, Bolsward), where grievous dissensions had occurred among the Anabaptists; an appendix to his work on the schismatic conduct of his co-religionists in Friesland (*Twistigen Handel*); a tract on the marriage of Christians (Anabaptists) (*Van Die Echt der Christenen*); a posthumous publication on the ban and separation (*Ban ende Mydinghe*), together with some personal letters and a few hymns. All these fill nearly seven hundred quarto pages in this volume. If we had nothing else but this tenth volume of the *B. R. N.* it alone would be inestimably valuable for a clearer and better understanding of the entire Anabaptist movement in the sixteenth century, in north-western Europe.

By bringing to light all these rare and practically lost Anabaptistica, the work as a whole has made clear many things that were nebulous. Many things that were in dispute may now be considered as settled forever, and many things in the history of the English Non-conformists, so closely allied with the Anabaptist movement, in the early period of their development, are explained and cleared up. The whole field of the Anabaptist history has been lifted from the realm of the obscure and debatable into that of clear understanding and appreciation. Also many things in the later development of the history of Protestantism in general are found to be evidently related to or ultimately explainable by the Anabaptist movement in the sixteenth century. Their influence has been manifestly underrated and carries infinitely further than is generally supposed.

## II

### OUR SPECIAL DEBT TO THE EDITORS OF THIS GREAT HISTORICAL WORK

A. *We have a far clearer idea of the double current, in the history of the Anabaptists, than we had heretofore.*

The older theory of the claim of apostolic succession for the Anabaptist faith and practice and church-ideals, of an intimate relationship between them and the Waldensians, which was specifically advanced by Keller in his *Die Reformation und die älteren Reformparteien* (1885), may be considered as exploded through the researches and writings of Kolde and Carl Mueller. So far as we know their history in the reformatory period, their earliest beginnings lie in the Zwickau movement, and the Wittenberg disturbances connected therewith. Konrad Grebel, professor at Zürich, demanded from Zwingli absolute separation between the preaching of the gospel and all political interference and activity. And Grebel was a man of an entirely different type from the fanatics of Zwickau. A. Brons, in her *Taufgesinnte oder Mennoniten*, calls him "ein gebildeter und gelehrter Mann, dazu besonnen und massvoll," a man of parts therefore. Simon Strumpf, one of the pastors of Zürich, was apparently a man of the same type and spirit. Felix Manz, another Zürich professor, famed as a Hebraist, was the third of this triumvirate. Their demand was apparently that which remained the ideal of the right wing of the entire movement, throughout their entire history; they desired to build an entirely new church and they refused to rear it on the old foundations. They were therefore the radicals of the period and of the movement, and no one acquainted with Zwingli can doubt for a moment what his position would be on such a question. Besides the three great leaders mentioned above we have men like George Blaurock, Wilhelm Rubli, Dr. Balthasar Hubmaier, Michael Sattler, Ludwig Hätzer, and Hans Denck. One and all, they stood for the ideal of complete separation between Church and State; one and all, they breathed the ancient Donatist spirit and longed for a church, free from priestly rule and having power within herself, on a gospel basis. It has been said that they were ages ahead of their time. Not so much



that, as that they had a stronger memory than the others. Their tangible history begins in Switzerland. The story of their persecution and martyrdoms there does not concern us in this study. It forms a pathetic page in the annals of the Reformation, of which not one of us, as a Protestant, is excessively proud. But persecution scattered the winged seed far and wide over Europe. Especially along the upper Rhine, in East Frisia, and in the Lowlands, they multiplied at an astonishing rate.

Here they begin to cross the line of vision in the collection under consideration. With Melchior Hoffman in 1529, they enter upon a new period of their history. Here they begin to split into a left and a right wing. It was he who injected his immediate followers with the fanatic, visionary, revolutionary spirit which brought the entire communion, for a long time, under universal condemnation. Hoffman and his convert and successor Jan (Volkerts) Trypmaker preached the gospel of the impending parousia, with ever-increasing zeal. And when Trypmaker lost his life for the cause, in 1531, Jan Matthys of Haarlem raised the banner of revolutionary Anabaptism, with the war-cry, "Take up the sword, the unbelieving must be rooted out." For the next four years the tumult constantly grew. Read Brandt's *History of the Reformation*, the secular histories of Hooft and Wagenaar, and the *Geschiedenis der Hervormde Kerk* of Ypey and Dermout, and you can visualize the intensity of the commotion, which, after the lapse of ages, still brings a chill to the blood. The hectic Hoffmanite movement issued in the catastrophe of Münster, in 1535. But the whole communion of the Anabaptists had not been swept by this storm, although they all occupied the same territory. Many scorned the name Anabaptist, for its very associations, and thus instead of the name *Wederdoopers* we soon find that of *Doopsgezinden*, the name by which the Mennonites are still known in the Netherlands. And this

distinction is everywhere emphasized in the writings under consideration. These *Doopsgezinden* were in the main the founders of the English Baptist churches, and their acknowledged leaders in Holland and East Frisia were Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. But their identification with the revolutionary Anabaptists cost them dear. Says Glasius the historian:

Very dear the *Doopsgezinden* had to pay for the fact that, in some points, they were of the same mind with the *Wederdoopers* (Anabaptists). Not only had they to bear the hated name, but they were especially the victims on which the sword of the Inquisition dulled itself. They were grossly ill-treated and the Protestants were led to hate them to the utmost, under the impression that they were the progeny of the Münster sect.

The *Bibliotheca* offers abundant proof of the distinction between these two branches of the Anabaptist current, the *Wederdoopers* and the *Doopsgezinden*.

B. *Common traits of the theology of both branches of the Anabaptists.* The Anabaptists from the beginning separated themselves widely from the tenets of the old Catholic Church and from the common Protestant faith as well. They agreed with the Protestants in accepting the "formal principle" of the Reformation, *i. e.*, the absolute authority of the Word of God. But they differed widely from them in their interpretation of the great truths of the gospel; and this difference is equally noticeable between the left and right wings of the Anabaptist movement.

All Anabaptists of whatever affiliation rejected the dogmas of the creeds in regard to the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, the Sacraments, and, in a minor degree, the atonement of Christ. I do not claim that they absolutely rejected these doctrines, but it is very plain from the old documents reprinted in the *Bibliotheca* that they differed entirely from the rest of Christendom in their statement of these doctrines.

And as there was no Anabaptist or Mennonite Church, and inasmuch as they were the exponents of the later Congregational polity of *individualism*, in personal and congregational beliefs and life, these statements differed again widely in different individuals and groups.

Common to all is this central principle as to the objective of faith: "the change of the lordship of nature into the lordship of the Spirit, through faith in God and in his anointed Jesus Christ" (*T. o. M.*, 65). Says Menno in his *New Creature*: "All those who are born again from God shape their weak lives according to the gospel and endeavor to imitate the example of Christ."

In the disputation in the Franciscan convent at Emden, in 1543, between John à Lasco and Menno Simons, the debate covered the questions of the incarnation of Christ, baptism, original sin, sanctification, and the call to the ministry. And in all these points Menno differed radically from the Reformed churches and so did all his brethren. As to the difference between themselves: in the conference of Strassburg in 1555, between various branches of the Anabaptist communion, some of the Hoffmanites included, it was decided to leave the matter where the Scriptures leave it and not to be wise above what one ought to be. There they say: "In many places of the Holy Scripture it seems as if Christ brought his body from heaven, in others as if he received it from Mary. Further it appears that he is Father and God himself." Thus they confess him "to be God after the inner man," and the "Son of the living Father." They desire to go "no further than the Holy Scripture," which tells us "the word became flesh and dwelt among us." In 1579 in their Emden conference, they once more reasserted their faith or rather belief that it could not be proved that the manner of Christ's birth was an article of faith, or to quote exactly, "dass die Art der Herkunft Christi ein Glaubensartikel sei."

Nay, as late as 1649, in a meeting between the Waterlandians and the Flemings, the old questions were again debated, especially those of the divinity of Christ, his two natures, and the three persons in the Godhead. Anyone who will even superficially study the documents of the *Bibliotheca* will see at once how fundamental were these ideas among the Anabaptists, of all shades. Even the most conservative among them differed *in toto* from the common faith of Christian thought in that period. Menno Simons said:

God is a spirit, whom the heaven of all heavens cannot contain, and beyond this only living, almighty, all-governing God and Lord, we know no other. He is the inexplicable Father, one with his inexplicable Son and inexplicable Spirit, in will, power, and action; and they can be as little separated, as power, light, and warmth. (*Taufgesinnte oder Mennoniten*, 3. Aufl., 1912, p. 157.)

This looks strangely like Modalism. But, in the "disputation" with Hoffman at Strassburg, in 1533, which led to his incarceration, the first of the charges against Hoffman, is that "he denies that the eternal Word of God has adopted the human nature from the virgin Mary." He denied the two natures in Christ and therefore, by implication, the Trinity. And Hoffman and Menno had very little in common (*Bibliotheca*, v., 220).

Adam Pastor, a radical among the Anabaptists, in his *Underscheit tusschen Rechte Leer unde Valsche Leer* (*Bibliotheca*, v., 315), wholly denies the doctrine of the Trinity and that of the Incarnation, as expressed in the creeds of the Church. He goes far beyond Menno and will not believe what he cannot understand. And if I am not mistaken, Adam Pastor is the first man, in the history of Christian doctrine, to speak of the "god-consciousness" as a key to the understanding of the nature of the divinity of Christ. If he does not teach the modern "*Gottesbewusstsein*," his

doctrine is strangely like it. That idea then would not seem to be quite as modern as is generally supposed. He says: "The divinity of Christ is the Father's wisdom in him, the Father's word, will, spirit, feeling, and desire in him, the Father's love, etc." And again: "Christ is a true image (after the inner man) of the invisible God, since he shared one nature with him, the same will, the same desire, spirit, etc." And finally Dirk Philips, the great theologian of the *Doopsgezinden*, defends a modified doctrine of the Trinity against Sebastian Franck and Adam Pastor (*Bibliotheca*, x.). Here again we are impressed with the modalistic conception of the Trinity advanced by the author. In his *Bekentnisse onses Gheloofs*, he tells us that:

"God is an only God and Lord and in the Old Testament bears many names. But in the New Testament he is named by Jesus Christ himself and called Father, Son and Holy Ghost, with which three names the entire divine essence (as much as is and may be intelligible by man) is expressed."

Notice all absence of the word "person" and the significant comparison between the Old and New Testaments. And when in his bitter opposition to Franck and Pastor he tries to defend and state the orthodox view, in regard to the incarnation of Christ, he concludes "that Christ had no earthly but a heavenly body and that he did not receive his flesh from the Virgin Mary." We are told that he passes through her as light passes through glass, without partaking of any of its constituent elements.

It seems evident that there must be a very close connection between the Anabaptist and Socinian movements and that many late liberal views in the Protestant world were anticipated by if they did not originate in, the Anabaptist communion.

C. *Their views on baptism.* The older view that the Anabaptists were immersionists has been eliminated by

later researches. In his volume on the Baptists in the *American Church History Series* Dr. Newman frankly admits this changed view. Says he:

“Immersion was practiced at St. Gall, Augsburg, Strassburg, and by the Anti-trinitarian Anabaptists of Poland. But the common practice among the Swiss, Austrian, Moravian, and Dutch Anabaptists was affusion. The importance of immersion, as the act of Baptism, seems to have been appreciated by few.” (37)

Anent the baptism of Smyth, Helwys, etc., at London, in 1609, he says: “It is almost certain that the rite was administered by affusion and not by immersion.” Roger Williams practiced immersion three years before its introduction among the Baptists of England (80). And this change took place in 1641. And this is the commonly accepted view among us to-day, as it has been from time immemorial in the Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> One of the editors of the *B. R. N.*, Dr. S. Cramer, wrote me some years ago that, barring some sporadic cases above referred to, the Anabaptists knew nothing of the rite of immersion, but re-baptized as they had been baptized in infancy.

With these facts before me I searched these ancient documents with deep interest, to find corroboration of the views above expressed. There was a large amount of material at hand. First of all I had here the martyrology of the Anabaptists, *Het Offer des Heeren*. The accounts of these martyrdoms are the more precious, as they contain a full report of the investigation before the Inquisition. And, in numerous cases, the question about the mode of baptism was asked, but no reference was ever made to immersion. A departure from the administration of the rite, as practiced by the Roman Catholic Church at that

<sup>1</sup> See also Champlin Burrage, *The Restoration of Immersion by the English: Anabaptists and Baptists, 1640-1700*. Reprinted from the *American Journal of Theology*, Vol. xvi., No. 1 (January, 1912).

time, would certainly have attracted the attention of the Inquisitor and must have called for an explanation. But of far greater importance in this regard are the theological treatises of Hoffman, Menno, Pastor, and especially Dirk Philips, in some of which we actually find chapters on *true and false baptism*. The rite of immersion is never so much as mentioned. The discussion always covers the field of pædo- and antipædobaptism.

It would seem to be definitely settled therefore that the change in the administration of baptism by the English Baptists was not an inheritance of the Anabaptist communion, but was introduced among them by those who had witnessed such administration among the Dutch Rhynsburgers or Collegiants, and has no warrant in the general faith or practice of the Anabaptist churches. As a matter of fact the Dutch Mennonites, who later on became very closely affiliated with the same Collegiants, never adopted the practice.

D. *Their views of the world and of life.* The *Doopsgezinden* and Anabaptists in general took a serious, almost an ascetic, view of life. It seemed to them, as to the early Christians, a *militia Christi*: they were soldiers of the cross.

They separated Church and State, religion and politics, with a truly Donatistic fervor. Their faith was absolutely creedless and absolutely life-controlling. Their devotion and rigidity were almost monastic. Taking the Bible literally, they forbade the oath and all military service, their "yea" was "yea," their "nay" was "nay." Their celebration of the Supper was less a sacrament than a congregational festival, for the strengthening of their faith and of the practice of the Christian virtues. They cared little for theology, very much for the leavening of the whole social order with the righteousness of their scriptural beliefs. They refused to hold office or to participate in war, directly or indirectly; but they made the best of citizens: they

obeyed the magistrates implicitly, even if to their hurt. They helped the fatherland in the hour of its need, physically and financially, as they were able, so long as they were not asked to kill their fellow-men. The reaction from the Münster frenzy, in the later history of the Anabaptists, was absolute and unchanging.

The contents of the *Bibliotheca* fully explain the twelve articles of the Dutch Mennonites of 1639, in which a social program is laid down, which, generally applied and practiced, would revolutionize life. It is a picture of domestic and social duty, which shows how far-reaching were those Anabaptist ideals.

In them, even the holding of stock in an armed vessel is prohibited; an almost Quakerlike simplicity of dress and house-furnishings is recommended, and the relation between parents and children is ideally fixed. One may see at a glance, if the continual emigration of Anabaptists from Holland to England must be granted, how close is the evident relationship between them and many of the Nonconformist developments in Great Britain. We know they were continually crossing the Channel and flocks of them settled in some of the coastwise counties of England. The Independents and Puritans got from them the austerity and simplicity of their lives. The so-called "Cartwright principles" bear the earmarks of the Anabaptist spirit. The Quakers got from them their individualism, their peculiar views of the ministry, their horror of war, and their refusal of the oath. Congregationalism itself must have received its polity from the Anabaptist principle of the individual sovereignty of the local church. They formed an unquestionable leaven in the life of the Church and State of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Their church discipline was rigorous in the extreme. One cannot read Philips's tract *On the Ban and Separation (Ban ende Mydinghe)*, and the other one *On Christian Mar-*



riage (*Van die Echt der Christenen*), without sensing the more than Puritanical austerity of the life of the *Doopsgezinden*. They were "Christians," the outside world was irreparably "lost." No papal encyclical against forbidden marriages, like the "Ne temere," was ever more rigorous than their refusal to countenance a marriage between one of themselves and an unbeliever. Only in case one was converted after marriage was cohabitation with an unbeliever tolerated, and then only in the hope of saving the other party. In all other cases it was immediately followed by the ban and expulsion. And in case of repentance and reconciliation, the Anabaptist was compelled to live the brotherly life with his unbelieving wife, or the reverse, even though the husband or wife they dearly loved, lived under the same roof. It was this decree of the ban which caused numerous schisms and divisions among the Anabaptists and which separated them into zealots or rigorists, on the one hand, and liberals on the other. In this regard the *Bibliotheca* is a veritable storehouse of information, and absolutely new information at that.

Numerous echoes of the Anabaptist literature are found in the liturgical writings of the Dutch Reformed Church. As we all know, this ritual, its prayers and offices for the sacraments, for the imposition of discipline, and for the reconciliation of disciplined members, has come to the Dutch Church largely through the hands of John à Lasco. In the norm at least it was his work, but he performed his labors in the Netherlands, or rather in East Frisia, in continuous stormy contact with the Anabaptists. Thus he became very familiar with their literature and well acquainted with their leaders. And thus these ritualistic writings in a way reflect this contact, either in a positive or negative way.

The Anabaptists or rather the *Doopsgezinden* in the Lowlands remained a separate people, ostracized by the

masses and persecuted by the government, till the very beginning of the modern era, till the very collapse of the Dutch Republic. The cause of this persecution lay, in the main, in their confirmed Anti-trinitarian and confused Christological views. And thus they never grew to be a large communion in the land, where they had suffered so much and so long. After the French Revolution, which did not pass them by unscathed, they were almost absorbed by the Remonstrant party, whose theology they eagerly embraced. But till this day they exist in the Netherlands, as a small but highly respected communion, on whose membership-roll appear some of the most brilliant names of past and present Dutch history, in all walks of life, especially in art, science, theology, and medicine.

Whosoever hereafter desires to study the beginnings of Baptist life will have to count with these ten volumes of the *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*. Personally I acknowledge my deepest indebtedness to the two great Dutch scholars, who, at so large a personal sacrifice, have enriched the world of Church History with these wonderful sources of information about the North European Anabaptists. To the living Dr. Pijper we render our homage; and on the grave of Dr. Cramer, who is asleep in Christ, the true friend, so long as he lived, of every lover of patient research, we reverently place a garland.