

# HERITAGE

## REVIEW

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### A MANDATE

TO THE AMISH IN SALM, ALSACE, 1793  
-by Roy M. Weaver

This mandate was issued to the Anabaptists in the northern part of Alsace, in the Salm area, at the time of the French Revolution by the newly established French Republic. The Anabaptists in Salm at that time were Amish, having come from the St. Marie-aux-Mines area, which earlier had the largest concentration of Amish anywhere. Alsace is part of France today, but it was German up to the first years of the French Revolution (1790), and again from 1871 to 1919.

France was ruled by King Louis XIV when the French Revolution broke out. He and his government made concessions to the working class, which had been oppressed. By this he was able to rule, though with considerable turmoil, until August 10, 1792. At that time he was overthrown and imprisoned with his family, and France became a Republic instead of a Monarchy. He was executed a short time later.

The leaders of the new government had good intentions in many ways, such as giving the working class equal rights, advocating religious freedoms,<sup>1</sup> equal voting rights for all tax-paying citizens, and other changes. But they were ruthless in their treatment of those who did not agree with their style of government. Approximately 300,000 were imprisoned and 17,000 executed in the two years this government was in power, until July 24, 1794. This period is called the "Reign of Terror."

The Heritage Review is an annual publication of the Ohio Amish Library, 4292 SR 39 Millersburg, Ohio 44654. It is intended to provide information, past and present, about the Amish and Mennonites, especially in Ohio. We invite articles and information. Memberships to the Ohio Amish Library are \$20 annually. Single copies of The Heritage Review are available.

1. This mandate is a good example of this.



The mandate was written during the two years the Republic was in power. The signers of the mandate were some of the leading figures in the French Revolution. Robespierre was the most powerful of the signers, initiating the infamous "Reign of Terror." He arrested any resistors of the Revolution and executed thousands. Barere and Carnot were also members of the *Committee of Public Safety*, which governed the Republic. After two short years in power, Robespierre was arrested and executed on July 29, 1794 by other members of the government who feared for their lives, thus becoming a victim of his own policies.

The next government was governed by a five-man committee called the *Directory*, still as a Republic. On November 9, 1799 Napoleon overthrew this government and became dictator. Napoleon was not sympathetic of the Anabaptist groups and required universal military training.

So we can see that there was much political turmoil which caused concern and uncertainty for the church leaders and parents of the Amish in Salm and elsewhere in Alsace.

The mandate is as follows:

**MANDATE**  
FROM THE REGISTER OF RESOLUTIONS  
**OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
BY THE NATIONAL CONVENTION FOR PUBLIC WELFARE  
ON AUGUST 18, 1793  
The second year of the REPUBLIC OF FRANCE.

The COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY resolves, that the following document be sent out as a circular to the Government Corps of the Republic.

Citizens! The Anabaptists of France have sent several delegates to present to us that their worship and customs forbid them to bear arms, and request that they be used in other branches of service in the Army.

We have seen in them simple hearts and have therefore thought that a good government should utilize all virtues for the common good. We therefore invite you to exercise the same kindness and gentleness toward them as is their character and to prevent them from being persecuted and to give them the kind of work they desire, such as building fortifications, or road construction, or wagon transports, or even to perform their service by a monetary payment.

Signed in the Register,

COUTHON, BARERE, HERAULT, ST. JUST  
THURIOT, ROBESPIERRE

Agreed to the Abstract,

C. COUTHON, L. CARNOT, HERAULT  
B. BARERE, ST. JUST





Almost a hundred years earlier Jacob Ammon had lived in the valley of St. Marie-aux-Mines in lower Alsace. On February 17, 1696 Jacob petitioned the government in the name of his brethren who had moved there two years earlier from Switzerland, and in the name of Ulrich Müller, who had lived there longer. He said that they were compelled to take part in defensive military service against their beliefs. By negotiation they were released from this duty by paying 46 French Lires annually per person.

An exact list of Anabaptists was demanded and presented in 1704, signed by Hans Zimmerman, and Jacob Ammon. It contained 40 familiar family names such as Lungenbühle, Bachman, Joder, Hochstetler, Zimmerman, Rupp, Maurer, Gerig, Graber, Müller, and Roth. A second list required in 1708 contained about 60 names.<sup>2</sup>

On September 9, 1712, orders were issued to the officials and local Lords in Alsace to expel, without exception, the Anabaptists from the St. Marie-aux-Mines Valley. Many moved north to the areas of Salm and Montpelier, and many moved further north to the Palatinate and elsewhere. On a visit to Salm in 2002, a group of American Anabaptists<sup>3</sup> was told by a local historian that most of the Amish came to Salm around 1712, after being expelled from St. Marie. Here they could live peacefully and own land.

Jacob Kùpferschmidt (1723-1813) was bishop of the small flock at Salm during the last half of the 1700's and into the next century. The following story about Jacob Kùpferschmidt was told to Leroy Beachy by Joseph Baecher in 1977.

He said that "Der Alte Graue Kùpferschmidt"<sup>4</sup> was visited by a local military official who was responsible to inform everyone in the community of the King's decree that every physically fit man must train for military duty. After discussion, the official was invited to have dinner with the Kùpferschmidt family, which he accepted. Jacob informed his wife to attend to the preparation of the meal. Then the old Amish Bishop pulled his *Ausbund* hymnal from the wall shelf above the kitchen table. Turning to a hymn that described the principle of his faith which related to the things they had discussed, he sang the hymn for the perplexed visitor. Joseph Beacher described it

2. *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Vol. I "Alsace", p. 70.

3. Goodly Heritage Tour, by Leroy and Mary Jane Beachy.

4. "The elderly, graying Kùpferschmidt"

as "ein langsames Lied, ja, ein ganz langsames Lied."<sup>5</sup> The official was awed and moved by what he had heard and seen. After the meal the official tearfully offered his hand to the bishop and said, "If you people take care of the farming, we will take care of the military duties."<sup>6</sup>

In 1793 the Amish of Salm spoke to a delegation from Paris about their objections to war, oaths, taking part in the military, and other issues of nonresistance. Their request for exemption to these duties was taken to the ruling Committee, and the request was granted. The mandate given here is the answer given by the Committee to the Amish. It was probably written in French originally. The German version appears to be an abstract from the original, translated for the German-speaking Anabaptists. As noted, the signatures on the mandate are of the very top leaders during the "Reign of Terror," which took place from August 10, 1792 to July 24, 1794.

Near the Kùpferschmidt house, which is still standing, there stands a large oak tree which was specially planted at the giving of the above mandate. It is known locally as "der Frieden's Eichen."<sup>7</sup> It is massive, taking the reach of 4 or 5 men to circle its girth. It still stands today in a mowed area separate from other trees, and is majestic both in its size and meaning.

Although Napoleon had not been tolerant of the Anabaptists in Alsace and Lorraine, the Anabaptists in the Palatinate later showed him much compassion. Early in 1814, what was left of Napoleon's army came marching through Zweibrücken. They were retreating from their disastrous invasion of Russia. The soldiers were haggard and nearly starved. But the Anabaptists were not allowed by the German government to openly give them food. So they left a cart load of apples by the roadside, making sure some spilled along the gutter, and the retreating men ate them.

My father, Monroe A. Weaver, and John Martin visited Joseph Baecher in May of 1978 and spent a night in his home. Joseph told them that his grandfather was an Amish bishop and remembers him having hooks and eyes on his "mutza" (suit coat). Josephs were members of the Mennonite Church which exists today in Salm.

5. "A slow hymn-tune, a v e r y slow hymn-tune."

6. Another source identifies the officer as "Goupilleau," and the song as "the third one in the book."

7. "The Oak of Peace."



# SEBASTIAN FRANCK (1499-1542)

## A REVIEW OF HIS LIFE AND BELIEFS

by Edward A. Kline

In their early days, the Anabaptists soon found themselves in opposition with both the Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformers and incurred disfavor from both. Disputations over their beliefs and practices and then persecution followed.

Almost everything that was written about the Anabaptists was written by their opponents and contained much hearsay and biased information. But in 1531, one of the most able thinkers and chroniclers of that day, Sebastian Franck, wrote an account on the Anabaptist beginnings and beliefs in his *Chronica, Zeitbuch und Geschichtsbibel*. He also was in opposition to the state churches and was sympathetic to the Anabaptists and shared many, but not all, of their beliefs. His account may be considered probably the most accurate and objective record of the Anabaptists of that time. The following translation of the third part of the *Chronica*, the *Ketzer Chronik* (*Chronicle of Heretics*), which contains the account of the Anabaptists, is presented here to provide an insight into the early years of Anabaptism.

After Martin Luther in Germany and Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland spoke out against the corruption and excesses of the Roman Church, and Luther advanced his concept of justification by faith, a great surge of religious interest and fervor arose among the population. Many started questioning centuries-old practices and began searching for answers in their quest for truth. Many others, however, were more interested in merely escaping the oppressive arm of Catholic dogma and authority, which had permeated almost every phase of their lives. Luther's assistant, Melancthon (1497-1560), wrote prior to 1525, "The common people adhere to Luther only because they think no further religious duty will be laid upon them. Many believe themselves very pious and holy when they upbraid the priests and monks, or eat meat on Friday."<sup>1</sup> The Reformers' work generally did not result in greater piety among the people. It brought little spiritual depth or moral improvement in their church, in which every citizen was a member.

So the Anabaptists stressed strongly that in

order for justification by faith to be valid, it must bring amendment of life and holy living for its adherents. They separated themselves and formed a church of those "who were in earnest in their Christian profession."<sup>2</sup> This separation, coupled with their rejection of infant baptism, oaths, participation in government, or bearing a sword, and their aggressive preaching of the truth as they understood it, brought opposition, persecution, and often death to many from both the Catholics and the Reformers. They were considered social anarchists, political mavericks, and religious heretics. In the eyes of the state, they were non-citizens, and unchurched.

Because of this persecution, the Anabaptists were hindered from organizing and interacting freely to formulate and blend their ideas. Many Anabaptist preachers came into a geographical area and made converts, but soon had to leave because of persecution. Often the converts never saw the preacher again. In many places across Europe many individuals rose up through the study of the newly available Scriptures in their language,<sup>3</sup> and embraced similar but sometimes diverse doctrines, all standing against the Reformers. Many succumbed, in various measures, to the influences of spiritualism, mysticism, anti-Trinitarianism, and Augustinian predestination which were common at that time.

Franck's account reflects this diversity. He says on p. CXCI (b) of his *Ketzer Chronik*, that "especially the Täufer also are so disunited and split among themselves, that I do not know what to write of them concretely or conclusively." This raises the question of what should be considered "mainstream" Anabaptism and what belongs to marginal thought and practice deviating from the "mainstream." Franck obviously describes both in his account. It is often confusing to determine who Franck is describing because he often says some believe one way and others, differently. He does not clarify who the two groups were.

2. Luther used this phrase early in his career when he considered founding a "select" church of "earnest" people. When he chose to form a state church, he rejected the idea.

3. Only when Luther's translation of the New Testament appeared in 1522 were there enough available at a price modest enough that the common people could afford one. More affordable editions followed. Urs. B. Leu, "Froschauer Bibles and their Significance for the Anabaptist Movement," Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage, Vol. 25, April 2002.

1. John Horsch, *Mennonites in Europe*, (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1942) p. 28



One of the great tragedies of church history has been that for many years the excesses of the militant, chiliastic Münsterites and Davidians<sup>4</sup> were ascribed to the whole Anabaptist movement. This error was intentionally advanced by their contemporary opponents and continued in various degrees of naivete by later historians. Later many of these marginal groups such as the Münsterites and Davidians disappeared either through actions of the authorities or because their ideas proved impractical and unscriptural. Thus they lost their appeal among the scattered non-conformist groups who were generally lumped together as "Täufer" by the state religionists. Thankfully most historians now understand that these extremists were not "true" Anabaptists.

Heinrich Bullinger (1504-75), Ulrich Zwingli's successor as chief pastor of Zurich, lists 13 different groups of what he considers Anabaptists.<sup>5</sup> Later historians simplified this and list the Anabaptists in five or six groups. Franck refrains from listing different groups of Anabaptists but alludes to this diversity when he writes, with obvious exaggeration, that "they have so many sects, and opinions... that almost not a one is united in all articles with another."<sup>6</sup> Franck's treatment of this diversity suggests that he carried some prejudices against the Anabaptists, although he was not as totally or bitterly prejudiced as many of his day. When one reads the following translation of Franck's account of the Anabaptists, it must be remembered that he writes of various groups without classifying them.

### FRANCK'S LIFE

Sebastian Franck was born in 1499 in Donauwörth in Schwabia. He attended the University of Ingolstadt, and also the Dominican College at Heidelberg. Here he came under the influence of scholastic Humanism, which was challenging the norms of knowledge and faith in the late medieval period. He began to read his Bible, which caused him to question the religion of his day. While a student at Heidelberg, he heard Martin Luther speak on the doctrine of justification by faith. However, Franck was not ready to follow Luther's reforms and was ordained a priest in the Catholic Church around 1524.

4. David Joris, a Dutch Anabaptist, was taken up with mysticism and visions and promoted rigid asceticism. His followers are accused of fanaticism and moral errors.

5. R.J. Smithson, *The Anabaptists*, (London, James Clark & Co., 1935), p. 119.

6. *Ketzerchronick*, p. CC (200)

Soon afterward, however, he joined the Reformation and became the preacher at a small Reformed church at Gustenfeld near Nuremberg. During this period Franck became taken up with the Humanistic spirit that prevailed in that city. He became immersed in the writings of Hans Sachs, Erasmus and others of the prominent Humanists of the day. A little later he came into contact with men like Hans Bänderlin, Caspar Schwenkfeld, and possibly Hans Denck, all who had Anabaptist connections but were the contemporary leaders of the "spiritualist" movement. Their message agreed with the aspirations Franck was forming about the church. In a letter to a friend he indicated that Bänderlin especially influenced him and helped him define his beliefs. Later in his short life Franck stood closer to Schwenkfeld than to any other. At this time he wrote a tract "Concerning the Terrible Blasphemy of Drunkenness," wherein he attacks Catholic corruptions from a Reformation viewpoint. He advocated the use of the bann to deal with moral laxness. Later he would feel the bann was unnecessary.

While preaching at Gustenfeld, Franck felt that if one's preaching does not bring spiritual fruit and change in people's lives, then one should cease preaching. Several years later, in 1528, he resigned his post as preacher for this very reason. He felt his teaching of Luther's doctrine of free grace did not result in wholesome Christian living among his listeners, and so he quit preaching. Later he would write that the preaching of the "letter" was ineffective and no longer needed. He came to feel that only the light of the "inner Word" was able to give spiritual life and that this was not dependent on the written Word.<sup>7</sup>

After Franck resigned his preaching post, he never again accepted any position or joined any group. He turned to soapmaking, writing, and printing to support himself and his family and preferred this over any position. He writes at this time: "There already are in our times, three distinct Faiths, which have a large following, the Lutheran, Zwinglian, and the Anabaptist; and a *fourth* is well on the way to birth, which will dispense with external preaching, ceremonies, sacraments, bann, and office as unnecessary, and which seeks solely to gather among all peoples an invisible, spiritual Church in the unity of the Spirit and of faith, to be governed wholly by the eternal, invisible Word of God, without external means, as the apostolic Church was governed

7. *Chronica*, p. 452b



before its apostasy, which occurred after the death of the apostles."<sup>8</sup> To establish this "fourth" group and to promote an "invisible, spiritual church" became his life goal.

In 1529 Franck moved to Strasbourg where he made and sold soap while writing books and letters expounding his beliefs. After he published his *Chronica, Zeitbuch und Geschichtsbibel* here in 1531, he aroused bitter hostility and opposition by what he wrote. He critiqued almost all the religious groups of the day and exposed their errors. Erasmus, the humanist, was offended that he was included among the "heretics" and raised a complaint with the city council of Strasbourg. Franck was arrested, his *Chronica* confiscated, and he was expelled from the city on Dec. 30, 1531.

After this, Franck and his family lived in Kehl, then Esslingen, working as a journalist, printer, and soapmaker. In 1533 he moved to Ulm where he resided longer than anywhere else, working at a printery. Here he published a number of books, including his *Paradoxa* (*Paradoxes*) which is an explanation of 280 Scripture passages as well as secular writings which he felt were hard to understand. In it he most clearly states his doctrines and beliefs. In Ulm he was also attacked for his writings. In 1535 Phillip of Hesse demanded his expulsion as an "Anabaptist and revolutionary." Franck protested that he was not an Anabaptist, and that as a citizen of the city he could not be expelled without a trial. After he promised not to write anything against the clergy or publish anything in Ulm without censorship, he was allowed to stay. But he kept on writing and had his *Güldin Arch* (*The Golden Ark*) printed in Augsburg, and his *Germaniae Chronica* (*A Chronicle of German Lands*) in Frankfurt am Main. In it he writes, among other criticisms, that the theologians quarrel about the sacraments and let practical Christian living perish. These publications aroused a fresh wave of indignation and finally on Jan. 8, 1539 Franck, with his wife and 5 children, was expelled from Ulm.

Several months later Franck arrived in Basel, Switzerland with his family, and he worked for a printer named Nickalous Brylinger. Here he wrote a letter to "Christians in Lower Germany," presumably to Anabaptists. In it he admonishes his "dear Brethren ...to seek the kingdom of God

not outwardly but within," and warns against sectarianism and separation. He advocates that "anyone who lives right and well, let him be to you a true brother."<sup>9</sup> This expressed his basic view of Christianity. He wrote several more books in the three years he lived in Basel, including his *Verbütschiert mit sieben Sieglen verschlossenes Buch*, (*The Book Sealed With Seven Seals*) which is a concordance of the Bible dealing especially with "contradictions" in it.

Franck died in 1542 at 43 years of age, destitute financially, and unowned and unclaimed by any religious group, a victim of the religious upheavals of his day. He had no following and no one to continue his teachings. If he had not written his many books, he would probably not be known today.

### FRANCK'S WRITINGS

But write he did, and that with astonishing prolificacy. "The fruitlessness of the Reformed preaching and the moral laxness that he observed everywhere pressed the quill into his hands."<sup>10</sup>

Franck began writing early in his career. He often signed his letters "Franck von Wörd," referring to his birthplace of Donauwörth. His writings reflect his spiritualist orientation, and even in his formative years he insists that the Spirit, and not commentaries or ancient writings are the true guide for interpretation of Scripture. He contrasts Spirit and letter, and the outer man with the inner man.

Some of Franck's most notable writings are:

1.) *Türkenchronik*, 1530 (*Chronicle and Description of Turkey*). In it he writes against ceremonies or any outward forms and promotes an invisible church.

2.) *Chronica, Zeitbuch und Geschichtsbibel*, 1531, (*A Universal Chronicle of the World's History*). A massive folio volume of more than 1000 pages, and Franck's first major work, this book is the best known and most widely read of all his writings. The Anabaptists read and used this book extensively. Menno Simons probably acquired his understanding of early church history from this book and quoted it more often than any other secular writing. The introduction

8. *Chronica und Beschreibung der Turkey*, in Jones, Rufus M., *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1914, 1959) p. 49

9. *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, p. 365 from the letter written to "Christians in Lower Switzerland," by Franck.

10. *Paradoxa*, Introduction by W. Lehmann, vii, (Eugen Diedrichs/Jena), 1909



to the *Hutterite Chronicle*, which began to be written soon after this time, is basically a large excerpt from the *Chronica*.

The *Chronica* is a history of the world, both from secular and spiritual viewpoints. It is made up of three parts: a) the story of mankind from Adam to Christ. b.) the story of the emperors and secular events. c.) the story of the popes and a history of the church from apostolic times to 1531. Franck had intended a fourth part called *Weltbuch* to be added to subsequent printings of the *Chronica*. The opposition raised by the first printing prevented this. In 1534 the *Weltbuch* was printed in Ulm. It is a description of the countries, people, religions, and doctrines in all the world, including the newly discovered America.

It is in the third, most important part of the *Chronica*, that Franck includes his *Ketzerchronik*, which is the story of the non-Catholics who dared to think and live differently. It is the story of the "remnant churches" as well as anyone else the Catholics considered "heretics." Franck describes the "heretics" by name down through the alphabet. When he comes to "W" he writes 17 pages about the "Wiedertäufer" (Anabaptists), which is perhaps the best written section of the whole book, and for us the most important. In it, one senses Franck's personal interest and involvement. It is this section that I have translated and is the occasion for this commentary.

The *Chronica* raised a furor and made as many enemies as friends for Franck. Because he had broken with both the Roman Church and the Reformers by this time, he writes that the "heretics" were nearer to the truth than anyone and that the truth has been, and is now persecuted under the pretext that it is "heresy." No group escaped his pointed exposure of their shortcomings. Its concepts were too radical for many of its time, except for maybe the non-conformists. The book caused him to be expelled from Strasbourg with his wife and children in 1531.

3.) *Paradoxa*, 1534 (*Paradoxes*). In this book Franck explains 280 statements about God and the world, statements from both the Scriptures and ancient writers. In it Franck clearly develops his doctrinal position. The underlying thought seems to be that these writings, especially the Scriptures, cannot be understood by their "letter," or text, but only by inner enlightenment. Since Scripture texts seem to contradict

each other at times, he feels God is trying to teach us that we should not follow the letter. He writes that following the "letter" makes heretics and sects.<sup>11</sup>

4.) *Guldin Arch*, 1538 (*The Golden Ark*). This is a colorful collection of sayings from the Scriptures, the church fathers, and pagan philosophers, which Franck interprets. In it he teaches that God places his Inner Light in each person and that one must find God in himself and himself in God.

5.) *Kriegbüchlein des Friedens*, 1539 (*Booklet on the War for Peace*). Franck always championed the cause of the oppressed and persecuted; the heretics. He criticized the authorities for persecuting those who did not agree with them. This booklet is a noble plea for peace and tolerance.

6.) *Das Verbütischert mit sieben Siegeln verschloßene Buch*, 1540 (*The Book sealed with seven Seals*). One of Franck's lifelong concerns was that the Scriptures be interpreted and understood "after the Spirit." This concordance springs from that concern. In it he upbraids the "scribes" who drive away and persecute the Truth and true Christians as heresy and heretics by misusing Scripture.

7.) *Sprichwörter*, 1541 (*A Collection of Proverbs*). This is a volume of proverbs and wise sayings which Franck wrote or collected.

8.) *Obgleich die Harf ist gut und scharf...* 1534, (*Although the harp is good and sharp...*) This is the first song in the *Ausbund*. It explains "how one should properly pray and sing psalms." Since the unknown compiler of the *Ausbund* chose Franck's song as an introduction to proper singing, it can be seen that the Anabaptists were familiar with Franck's writings and agreed with him in some points, though not all.

Besides these books, Franck's major works included his *Chronicle of German Lands*, a translation of Erasmus' writings, a paraphrase of *Theologia Deutsch*,<sup>12</sup> and a book of 613 Commands and Prohibitions of the Jews. In all Franck authored around 30 writings known today, with about half of them being major, extensive works.

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11. *Paradoxa*, "Einleitung," p.4, and Saying #47, "Gottes Wort bleibt ewig," p. 83

12. A booklet written ca. 1500 which advanced principles later found in the Reformation. Early on, Luther promoted and published *Theologia Deutsch*, but later turned against it.



## FRANCK'S BELIEFS

Many people at the close of the Middle Ages were filled with a yearning for a meaningful religious life and the truth. They were tired of the old forms wherein their religion and hope for salvation consisted of partaking of sacraments and repeated confessions. By 1500 the Roman Catholic Church had become a powerful organization, owning vast territories and maintaining monasteries and schools, whereby they sought to control all thought and moral doctrine. Many scholars chafed at this. The common people were also restless under the social and economic yoke of the feudal system.

The advent of Humanism, which was basically a scholarly movement, stressed training in the ancient languages of Hebrew and Greek as well as in the Latin used at that time. It also promoted understanding of ancient writers, including both the Greek philosophers and the early Christian writers. Humanism paved the way for the Reformation by rejecting blind acceptance of Catholic dogma and promoting the responsibility of the individual to examine original sources, including the Bible, to find Truth. Humanism supported many principles the Anabaptists later would embrace, such as non-resistance, holy living, religious tolerance by the authorities, and in some cases, adult baptism. Franck was both a product and promoter of these teachings. Once the stranglehold of the Catholic Church was broken, the resulting efforts for renewal took many forms.

Although Franck was an original thinker, he was nevertheless also a product of his times. His writings reflect ideas from many of the major religious philosophies of his day, such as Protestantism, Humanism, Mysticism, the Spiritualists, and Anabaptism.

A very gifted analyst and objective chronicler, Franck did not merely copy the ideas of others, but formed his own philosophies from them. His thinking, especially in the area of religious freedom and separation of state and religion was often far ahead of his time. Indeed he can be considered an advocate of modern thought.

Franck spent time both in the Catholic and Protestant camps. Among the Catholics he saw nothing but outward forms with very little inner renewal or spiritual understanding. Moral corruption reigned. While a Lutheran preacher he became convinced that the preaching of the

doctrine of free grace did not bring the desired result of Christian virtues in most people. Indeed many lived more sinful lives than before. When Luther decided to form a state church and compromised his earlier positions, Franck decided this was not much better than the Roman Catholic Church. He writes: "We must unlearn all that we have learned from our youth up from the papists, and we must change everything we have gotten from the Pope or from Luther or Zwingli."<sup>13</sup>

So Franck, in true spiritualist form, turned against all outward forms and visible ordinances and taught that inward enlightenment by the Spirit of God was sufficient. His password became "Ohne Mittel" (without any medium). In his *Türkenchronik* Franck describes the "fourth" religion which will dispense with everything outward. Franck diligently promoted the dogmas for building this "fourth religion." In a letter to a friend he writes, "I am fully convinced [by the study of the early Church Fathers] that after the death of the apostles, the external Church of Christ, with its gifts and sacraments, vanished from the earth and withdrew into heaven, and is now hidden in spirit and in truth, and for these past fourteen hundred years there existed no true external Church and no efficacious sacraments."<sup>14</sup>

Franck met the Anabaptists and came to know them well. While agreeing with many of their aspirations, he was uncomfortable with their methods. In the following beliefs he agreed with the Anabaptists: He opposed infant baptism, and held that if baptism had any value, it was a sign and covenant of an inner renewal and commitment to follow God. He agreed with the Anabaptists that the Old Testament was superceded by the New and that to base doctrines on the Old Testament alone was wrong. So he rejected infant baptism as being without Scriptural basis. He rejected taking part in government and taking part in war or shedding of blood. He believed in the free will, that one has the power to choose to follow God through a "divine seed" placed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. He rejected Calvin's teaching of predestination. Perhaps his greatest attraction to the Anabaptists was their upright and holy living. It was of utmost importance to Franck that when one embraces Grace, that he experiences renewal of the inner life and changes his outer life. He agreed with the Anabaptists that discipleship is the essence of Christianity and that faith without works is dead.

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13. Jones, p. 49

14. Jones, p. 59



Franck, with the Anabaptists, was far ahead of his time in insisting that the church should not be subservient to the state and that people should not be judged and persecuted by the state for supposed "heresies."

Franck, in contrast to the mainline Anabaptists, seemed to hold to the idea of the "middle way" or "standing still" in regards to the state church, as was promoted by Denck and Schwenkfeld. They avoided persecution by not separating from the state church and accommodating themselves to its outward ceremonies, and holding still on anything the state church did not approve. The Anabaptists saw this as a compromise. Franck, in his *Ketzerchronik*, chides the Anabaptists for making a God out of the cross and suffering. He believes in inner separation from the world, but feels that outer separation is sectarian.

Franck includes Hans Denck among the Anabaptists and uses him several times to point out errors in their methods. After Denck promoted the spiritualist viewpoints early in his career, he later joined the Anabaptists and preached among them for a while. Toward the end of his life he wrote a booklet called *Recantation* wherein he rejects his Anabaptist views. Denck did not accept the Scriptures as final authority but held to the idea of the "inner Word." He denied the sinfulness of human nature and believed that all men will finally be saved. He did not believe in an outward church as the Anabaptists did. Horsch,<sup>15</sup> and Smithson,<sup>16</sup> as well as others, insist that Denck was not a true Anabaptist, as some would assume,<sup>17</sup> but must be classed as a spiritualist. This must be remembered when one reads Franck's *Ketzerchronik*.

### THREE AREAS FRANCK DIFFERS FROM THE ANABAPTISTS

In a song<sup>18</sup> Franck writes: "Ich will und mag nitt Baptisch...Luttrisch...Zwinglisch sein. (I will and cannot be a Catholic, Lutheran, or Zwinglian) Then the fourth verse goes:

Kein Wiedertäufer will ich sein,  
Ihr Grund ist klein,  
Steht auff dem Wassertaufen.

( I will not be an Anabaptist  
Their foundation is too narrow,  
Being built on water baptism.)

It was in Franck's distinctly Spiritualist views that he disagreed with the Anabaptists. For the sake of convenience, I list a number of these disagreements in three categories.

1.) The Church. Because Franck felt the visible church became obsolete soon after the time of the Apostles, he promoted an invisible church made up of scattered individuals across the face of the earth, his "fourth faith." In his *Paradoxa*,<sup>19</sup> he writes: "The Church is indeed not a special group or a sect that can be pointed to with our finger, bound to one entity, one time, person or place, but a spiritual, invisible body..." He did not believe in preaching, baptising, communion, or that any outward ceremonies were necessary. While preaching at Gustenfeld, he advocated the use of the bann to keep the church pure, but later taught against any outward ordinances.

In the following translation from the *Ketzerchronik*,<sup>20</sup> he writes that "the church is bound together in Spirit and truth alone, not in any outward ceremonies or elements."

He felt that the Anabaptists were sectarian for insisting on separation from the state churches and for structuring close-knit, disciplined brotherhoods of believers in visible congregations. Their building of a church consisting of baptised, committed, and dedicated members he considered narrow.

The first of his seven criticisms of the Anabaptists in his *Ketzerchronik*,<sup>21</sup> is "their divisive separating from all others and [forming] a special group."

Dirk Phillips writes, in his *Handbook, or Writings*<sup>22</sup> that a book written by Franck came into his hands and that "several bishops and brethren" wanted him to reply to it. It is easy to understand his concern, for some writers feel that his brother Obbe left the Anabaptists because of spiritualist leanings learned from Franck. His pointed reply defines the Anabaptist position clearly: "The church is then an assembly

15. Horsch, John; *Mennonites in Europe* (Herald Press, 1942), p. 156

16. Smithson, p. 149

17. As presented by Peter Hoover, *The Secret of the Strength*, (Shippensburg, PA., Benchmark Press, 1998)

18. ME, Vol. II, "Sebastian Franck," p. 365

19. Pp. 8-9

20. P. CC(b), (200b)

21. P. CC(b), (200b)

22. *The Writings of Dirk Philips, Classics of the Radical Reformation*, (Herald Press, 1992) pp. 445-466



of the repentant, God-fearing, believing, and born again people of God who are obedient to the gospel and are baptized as one body through the Spirit."<sup>23</sup> "He [Sebastian Franck] would thus have God's congregation invisible among all peoples, that is, scattered under the name of Christians, Jews, heathen, and Turks. The congregation of the Lord, although it is certainly based in Spirit and truth, is nevertheless visible..."<sup>24</sup>

Dirk insists that Christ teaches that the church must be separated from evil, citing the teaching of Christ in Matt. 13:47; 22:2; 25:1-25, and I Cor. 5:12. He writes: "Therefore the congregation of the Lord cannot be invisible, since the bad or wicked are separated therefrom and the pious remain therein."<sup>25</sup> Further: "It is unjust and false what Sebastian Franck presented, to wit, that after the early and apostolic church has fallen, and the antichrist has destroyed everything and changed it into a misuse, thus now all ordinances of the Lord (which Franck calls ceremonies or sacraments) should be suspended and are not to be respected."<sup>26</sup> "No one may reject or let fall into disuse any ordinance of God on account of misuse. But one is to deal rightly therewith according to the Lord's command and first formulation."<sup>27</sup> He also writes: "But this Sebastian Franck is wise in his own eyes. Nevertheless, before God and every right understanding person, he is unwise."

2. The Scriptures. Franck taught that the Scriptures are not necessarily the Word of God, that the Word is Christ and not the same as the "letter" of the written Scriptures. He insists that the written Word cannot be the final authority in Christianity because a.) it is outward and external and the seat of religion is in the soul. b.) language and words change in meaning so the Scriptures are full of mysteries, contradictions, and paradoxes which only the "inner light" can unlock. c.) Scripture at best brings knowledge and cannot create faith and love or deliver from sin. He insists that following the "letter" of Scripture brings heresies and sects. He says "the 'letter' killed Christ in Judea and is killing him now."<sup>28</sup>

In his *Ketzerchronik*,<sup>29</sup> Franck writes: "The Scriptures should be understood as God intends them and not always as they appear in letter. For

this reason the letter has always caused heresies, because the Scripture is cleft and divided in letter. Indeed, Franck wrote his *Paradoxa* (and other of his writings) to prove this point.

The Anabaptists, on the other hand, built their whole teaching on the written Scripture. To them it was the basis for all their distinctive doctrines, such as believer's baptism, a disciplined church, rejection of oaths or participation in government, etc. Their whole rejection of the papal system as well as Luther was rooted in their conviction that those systems were not true to Scripture. In short, their password was "Sola Scriptura" (Scripture alone).

Pilgrim Marpeck, the influential South German Anabaptist leader, answers this idea as follows: "We say again that there are not two but only one word of God, and the word of Divine evangelical preaching (which Schwenkfeld and Franck call the word of the letter) is truly the word of the Holy Spirit and of God, for the Holy Spirit, who is God, has spoken through and out of the heart and mouth of the Apostles."<sup>30</sup> Franck recognizes this when he chides the Anabaptists for always dealing with, expounding, and interpreting the Scriptures "after the letter."

3. Sin. Sin for Franck is to live for the flesh instead of for the Spirit, to live carnally instead of spiritually. It is to turn from the "inner Word" in the soul to follow the idle voices of the moment. It is a choice of living for one-self instead of doing what is good for one's fellow man and fulfilling the will of God. Sin for him was not inherited but chosen. So, as with all his doctrines, Franck spiritualized sin and downplayed its influence and outward manifestations.

The Anabaptists, on the other hand, believed in both inherited and "chosen" sin. They did not feel that the inherited sin condemns anyone unless he makes sin his own by choice and action. They believed that although Christ takes away the guilt of the inherited sin if one repents of its power and practice, it still nevertheless exercises influence over us in an inclination to sin. They believed in a sinful human nature and stressed discipleship and striving after holiness, as well as separation, as a means to overcome and quench sin's influence and effects. Then they went one step further and based their practice of a disciplined church with a standard and use of the bann, and the principle of responsible brotherhood, on this concept.

23. *Writings*, p. 466

24. *Writings*, p. 463

25. *Writings*, p. 464

26. *Writings*, p. 455

27. *Writings*, p. 456

28. In *Das verbütschierte Buch*.

29. p. CCI (201)

30. Smithson, p. 158



## CONCLUSION

When one reads Franck's writings, one becomes convinced that he influenced and was influenced by the Anabaptists. Franck admired them for their godly living and dedication and says, "I scarcely know of any other... who would let themselves be burned for their beliefs." This can be seen in the translated material which follows.

Beyond doubt Franck was outstanding in his day for his knowledge both of secular and spiritual history, and his blend of ideas from both. His fearless proclaiming of the right of the individual in matters of faith, of the wrongness of the use of all force, and the responsibility of the individual, was ahead of his time. His ability to expose the wrongs of his times and his chronicles were for the most part objective, but nevertheless colored by his spiritualism.

But it appears to us today that Franck over-reacted against the religious corruption of his day, and its decadence into an exercise of outward (and questionable) forms. So he sought to do away with everything outward in religion. In the age-old struggle to find a balance of form and spirit, of the outward and the inner, of passion held by principle, Franck did the ultimate: he rejected everything outward. A charitable observation is that Franck's teachings would be compatible with what we imagine life in heaven will be like. If on this earth our knowledge would be perfect, and our human nature and sin eradicated, then Franck's ideas of an invisible church without forms might be realistic, but alas, this is not the case. We believe that as long as we sojourn on this earth, our Christian life will be a combination of physical and spiritual, of outward and inner. We need to find a balance of the two which is conducive to ongoing Christian living.

Later generations of Anabaptists, today's Mennonites, Hutterites, and Amish, have constantly struggled to maintain meaning in their outward forms and church life. They have struggled to maintain their heritage of godly living, separation, and scriptural purity by finding a balance of inner life and inspiration, and outward form and discipline. This struggle has had many results, including decadence into cold formalism. Many have been tempted to dip into solutions and ideas similar to Franck's to correct this. The result is often an over-reaction similar to his.

The value and legitimacy of any philosophy is best seen in its purest form and in its most con-

sistent application. Thus it can be seen in Franck's writings how his spiritualism mitigates against the Anabaptist position. The two camps are not compatible, and one will eventually replace the other. Groups who today advocate a "no-rules" church, with more emphasis on the inner than a balance, find themselves in the dilemma of this process. The temptation to apply spiritualistic ideas to address formalism or lack of spiritual understanding is nothing new, but has come up since Franck's time. It is as Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 1:10, "Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? Behold it hath been already of old time."

Franck's spiritualism was based on an individualistic view of his relationship with God. Indeed, we believe spiritualism and individualism are mutually conducive, that one brings the other. Franck wrote, "Nobody is the master of my faith..." and, "...I allow nobody to have dominion over the one place in which I am pledged to the Lord as a pure virgin, namely my heart and my conscience. If you try to bind my conscience, to rule over my faith, or to be master of my heart, then I must leave you."<sup>31</sup> Because of this, Franck had no continuity, and left no movement behind when he died. Since he belonged to no church he had no actual following. Indeed, he sought none outwardly. Because he did not answer to anyone for his life and actions but to God, no one continued his teachings. His was a one-generation movement. We believe espousal of his spiritualist doctrines will have the same effect today, and that the strength of that effect will be in the same measure that spiritualism is embraced.

I trust this evaluation of Franck's life and teachings will help us understand and evaluate his description of the Anabaptists in the following translation of his *Chronica der Römische Ketzer* (*Chronicle of the Heretics under the Roman Church*), beginning on p. 193 of his *Chronica*. Hopefully one can gain inspiration from, and insight into the life and teachings of the early Anabaptists, with applications valid for our day.

I have marked the original page numbers in the manuscript with Roman numerals, as they appear in the original text. Franck calls the new group *Wiedertäufer* (Anabaptists) or *Täufer* (Baptists). I have chosen to use the German term *Täufer* instead of Anabaptists throughout the text. The text I worked from is a 1969 reprint by the "Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft," Darmstadt, Germany.

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31. Pp. 5-8 of the Apologia to *Das verbütschierte Buch*.



## *DAS CHRONICA, Zeitbuch u. Geschichts Bibel* Sebastian Franck, 1531

### Teil III, *Chronica der Römische Ketzer*, pp. 193–201b (*Chronicle of the Heretics<sup>1</sup> under the Roman Church*)

In Anno. MDXXVI (1526), during and soon after the Peasant's Uprising, there emerged through the letter of the Scriptures a new sect and remarkable church. Some call them Anabaptists, others call them Täufer. These began to segregate themselves from the others by a special baptism, and reject all other churches as unscriptural. Also they do not consider anyone saved, nor a brother, who is not of their sect and party. They began to baptise again those who join them. Or rather, as they maintain, to baptise according according to the command of Christ. They maintain that the baptism of children, even less than the auricular confession, is without Scripture and without any foundation or command of Christ. Such statements are made by the heretics, and a great issue is made of this; whether one baptises his child or not and whether he will be baptised himself.

Several of their leaders and bishops, among others, were at the beginning Doctor Balthassar Hubmar (sic), Melchior Rinck, Johannes Hut, Johannes Denck, and Ludwig Haetzer<sup>2</sup>. Their movement developed so quickly that soon their teaching swept through the whole land. They soon had a large following and baptised many thousands. And through their good appearance and by the letter of the Scriptures (to which they strictly adhere) they draw to themselves many good-hearted souls who are zealous toward God. For they appear to teach nothing but love, faith, and the cross. They demonstrate themselves to be humble, and patient in much suffering. They break bread among themselves as a sign of oneness and love. They help each other faithfully and with purpose, by lending and borrowing, and giving. They teach that all things should be held in common and call each other Brothers. But those who are not of their sect they scarcely greet, nor offer them a hand of fellowship. They keep themselves together and increase so rapidly that the world fears an uprising from them. (But yet I hear that on all counts they have been found innocent of this accusation.)

In many places men sought to seize them with great tyranny, primarily especially the Papists [Catholics]. They imprison them with great force and torture them with burnings, with sword, with fire, with water, and with all sorts of incarcerations, so that very many of them were killed in many places. Thus over 2000 of them were seized and killed in various places, and in Ensisheim<sup>3</sup> alone over 600 were killed, which they suffered patiently and humbly as martyrs. Through their example and the sermon of their blood many more people were not only moved by them, that they were right and that for the sake of the truth they suffered persecution, but also joined them. This is because everyone thinks that they (the Täufer) have the true pattern and example of faith, and that the true blessing of the Gospel is found with them. Therefore many pious and guileless people allied themselves with them, and enlisted themselves in their church through baptism. For this cause many faithfully shed their blood. Many people took part in this tyranny [of persecution], of whom there were yet more and more [persecutions], until finally (when they saw that it was not accomplishing anything, but the opposite was taking place, and that their exercising of the sword and power was mocking God), they despaired so that they somewhat desisted from this tyranny. For everyone is of the opinion that because the Täufer suffer so patiently, their sect and cause is right and that they are the only Christians. Because of this their numbers and their church increased and became larger.

Then the scum, the false brethren, the most carnal and ignoble chaff, which were cast-offs and refuse from the threshing and which exalted themselves over the grain, became more arrogant in spirit. They began to pass

1. Franck uses this derogatory term to describe what later has been called the "old-evangelical fellowships" or remnant churches, who deviated from the mainstream. Franck makes it clear that he does not consider all of them to be wrong, or condemned.

2. Franck lists the South German leaders of Anabaptism. However, none of these whom he mentioned were fully agreed with the Swiss Brethren, such as Grebel, Manz, or Sattler, whom he does not list.

3. Ensisheim is in Alsace, between Colmar and Mulhouse. It has been called "the slaughterhouse of Alsace."



p. CXCIII(b), (193b)

judgment on everyone and in many cases became divided among themselves and promoted many teachings, almost as many as they had leaders<sup>4</sup>. And God, who is against all sects, also began to confound these men in their designs, speech, and counsel, wherewith some left off their building, and in spirit and in truth separated themselves from the sinful and heathen churches and turned to the spiritual, impartial, scattered churches of Christ among all the heathen. They became companions of, and girded themselves with all spirituality, so that they learned that with God the outward things (which he put in place for our sakes and not for his) are not of great consequence, and that men divide themselves over such matters, and break the bonds of love and unity<sup>5</sup>.

Though I consider it to be true and hold totally to it, that there were and still are, many pious and dedicated people in this sect, and that many of their leaders were zealous toward God, but according to my opinion, not with understanding. Yet one should not tyrannize them, over that which they obstinately will not let themselves be shown, rather to simply commit them to God, who alone can give faith, uproot heresy, and as heard, provide a remedy for the matter. Thereto everyone should remember that many of us also deviate much and yet would make every error into a heresy and separate such persons from God. Here remains not alone the church and crowd of the Pope, which are nothing but pure error (and yet judge others as heretics, indeed one blind and bann-worthy person condemning another) but also Origin, Cyprianus Augustus, etc, and all of us who indeed notwithstanding are in the same company, who would have those who are saints before God and the world apologize for and recant of their errors. One should advance cautiously herein, withdraw his hands, hold still, and not infringe upon God in his domain and judgment. One should give attention with the sword to the fist [of violence] and not to matters of faith, nor fall upon spiritual matters with the earthly scepter<sup>6</sup>. For inasmuch as we intrude too far into these matters and unfairly condemn the calamities and errors of others, so we bring judgment upon ourselves, because indeed we are filled with other similar, or yet much worse, errors. It will be as Paul says in Romans 2[1], "O man, etc." [whosoever thou art that judgest another: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest the same things.] For these dealings belong not under the jurisdiction of men, rather under the judgment of God, who alone shall be charged with judging. Deut. 18, Matt. 5.

#### The Articles and Teachings of the Täufer, Which are Condemned as Heresy by the Pope and in Part by Other Sects and Faiths

Inasmuch that all sects are divided in themselves, so are the Täufer also especially disunited and split among themselves, that I do not know what to write of them concretely or conclusively. Some of them hold their own rebaptism or baptism so important that they do not consider anyone saved without it, nor greet them, offer their hand, nor acknowledge them as brethren. Some of them hold it not so important, so that they also gladly associate with all the pious and consider them brethren, but these are quite few<sup>7</sup>.

Some of them consider the baptism of children an abomination, and would rather be torn to pieces than to let their children be baptised. Some hold it as a liberty for children, or allow it as a human institution and vain baptism, and do not put a strong emphasis on outward matters.

Some consider themselves to be the holy and pure ones. These have separated themselves from others and hold all things in common. No one of them says that anything is his own, and all ownership of possessions is p.CXCIV, (194)

considered sin with these<sup>8</sup>. Others also have all things in common, so that no one of them is allowed to suffer need. These do not hold that one's possessions shall be anothers in any circumstance, but in time of need one's goods shall be the other's, and no one should hide anything from another, rather to have an open house, and that the giver is willing and ready [to share], and the taker should be unwilling<sup>9</sup>. And as far as one can manage, he should spare his brother and not to burden him. But herein is much hypocrisy and unfaithfulness, and very much of "Ananias," as they themselves indeed know.

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4. Franck possibly refers to the Münsterites, and the followers of David Joris, and other radicals who were active at that time.

5. Franck's spiritualism shows here. Men like Denck and Hetzer, whom he mentions, would have believed like this.

6. Franck expounds this conviction more fully later in his writings.

7. The Spiritualists; Franck, Denck, Schwenkfeld, and others, did not think outward baptism was of great value or even necessary.

8. One of the first groups to practice community of goods were the Münsterites, in the early 1530s.

9. The "mainstream Anabaptists" took this position. Among the conservative Anabaptists today, such as the O.O. Mennonites and Amish, the mentality of a willing giver and a reluctant receiver is still prevalent.



In several places, such as Austerlitz, and in Moravia<sup>10</sup>, they have *Oeconomicos*<sup>11</sup>, that is, they have economical community of goods, and all have a common purse, from which they are to give to every one according to his need. But I ask them whether this actually takes place, and if it is divided rightly? These put the other Brothers in the bann, as those who are not on the right path. There is much use of the bann in their church, so that almost every church puts all the others who do not support all their points, in the bann. The freedom of belief is among them almost like it is among the Catholics. Those in their churches who do not agree to everything, [they think] have had their ears stopped by God, and they begin to pray earnestly for them. If one will not soon change his mind, they will expel him.

There is also, as I have experienced, very great hypocrisy among many, who gladly lay claim to great godliness, but are given to wickedness or the old Adam. They never truly want to go by the new converted man, but continually follow the old Adamic piety and are presumptuous counterfeits, upon which they put great confidence. And there is a purely fleshly piety among many, as well as in other places and among all sects.

The other Täufer do not hold to the afore mentioned church, and consider having things in common to be unnecessary, and somewhat excessive, so that they call themselves the perfect Christians, despising the others. These work, each one for himself, but help, inquire after, and offer each other (it seems to me) a hand, but are hypocritical with their goods. Although herewith I do not want to criticize those who mean well thereby. I would though, that they take heed to themselves in their hypocrisy, and for once begin to be ashamed before the eyes of God, and to cease from condemning others so freely. For they must remember that certainly there are more Christians than only their corner of new churches, but [they are] in all corners of the world.

A number have suffered martyrdom, and separated themselves simply because they did not want to observe days, in defiance of the Antichrist, which other people observe, like the Sunday, because it is Antichrist's holiday and custom, with whom they want to have nothing in common, not even the holidays. In contrast, there are others who allow this, saying that always out of love they want to help to observe them and give alms. They say that one should do nothing else, and have their Scriptures for this.

A number of them arrive at this, through the letter of the scriptures, that they teach their wife and children, whether they are sick or healthy, or though the wife is expecting a child, to eat anything without making a distinction and to eat whatever falls into their hands. They allege that to those who believe and to the pure all things are pure, as though this saying were spoken of the belly and not rather of the conscience. Hereby they themselves must suffer harm, and also their wives and children<sup>12</sup>.

A number of them have arrived at the place where they want to have nothing in common with the heathen, with their fasting, holidays, manner of life, eating, or drinking, etc. They make rules as to how poor the garments should be, how one should walk and how many pleats should be in the apron. And like the monks, they have rules concerning eating, drinking, keeping silence, speaking, and clothing.

p. CXCIV (b), (194b)

And if their wives are laid up from delivering a child, they shall not be ashamed of anything at all. And they shall not make any curtains [around the bed] after the ways of the world. Some allege that, "Ye shall not be conformed to this world, etc.", Rom. 12, means faith changes the ways and powers of the nature of the outward man. As though Paul meant that we should walk with our head and eat with our feet, and speak with our hands, and to exercise all the natural functions differently than the world, when he says, "You shall not be or make yourselves to be conformed to the world, etc."<sup>13</sup> Paul refers to the wicked and vain actions and deeds of the world in their matters, in which we shall not be like them. For what is lofty with the world, is an abomination before God. But not all chase this fantasy, rather only a few. The others allow nature its order in these things.

A number seek to live as the Apostles lived and emulate the manner of the first church, and keep all things according to the letter of the scriptures. They wash each other's feet, and go from one place to the other preaching, speaking of a great calling and mission. Some exalt their way to be so sure that they would gladly take upon themselves the [burden of the] whole world, and give account thereof, by which they entice [people], if only they would follow after them.

A number are hesitant about their calling, and regret the foolish zeal for the house of the Lord, wishing they

10. These later became the Hutterites.

11. A Latin term referring to an economic arrangement. Our word 'economy' is derived from this term.

12. Apparently medieval practice was to restrict the diet of sick children and pregnant women, probably enforced by the Church. Interestingly, the Anabaptists advocated eating under these circumstances, because of their understanding of Scripture.

13. It is not clear whether Franck is saying the Anabaptists taught this exaggeration, or that this statement is his (rather sarcastic) criticism. He follows with his explanation of Paul's teaching.



had never baptised anyone, such is Johannes Denck.<sup>14</sup> Many people fall away from them because they see such many-sided<sup>15</sup> divisions.

Some teach that a person should stand free and absolved in all things, both good and evil, without embracing everything, to be sure nothing that is done is sinful. Some consider themselves to have come so far, that they cannot sin.

For the most part they preach the cross, that this is the true and only way unto life, if only they do not make suffering to be an idol, as though they must be partakers of life through the suffering and not through Christ. Or that our sufferings are of great consequence to God, or that he has such a joy in them. They embrace suffering so much that the Papists (Catholics) see it as a grace of the Christians and Christ. Thus, some of them are zealous to suffer; desire it, and follow after it.

A number of them go about preaching repentance to the people, arguing with the preachers in the pulpits, and vaunt themselves of a great leading of the Spirit, especially of their callings. They hold that these callings are transmitted to them from God, and suffer great martyrdom because of their them. In contrast, others hold that preaching is no longer valid, that the door is locked and it is time to keep silent. They hold that the world will never [accept] the truth, which it has so often rejected.<sup>16</sup>

Some of them feel God reveals new instructions to them daily, to be carried out among the brethren or strangers. Some of them see visions, distort their faces and lie around for as much as an hour. Some shiver, some do not move, for as much as two or three days. Afterwards, when they are rational again, they prophesy, and relate wonders, as though they had been in another world. And this they consider to be same as Paul, in II Cor. 6, when he was caught up into the third heaven. Many cannot speak of the mysteries which they saw in this ecstasy.<sup>17</sup> For some this ecstasy comes often; for some seldom; and many, not at all. Many among them put much emphasis on visions and dreams, but some none at all, who keep themselves close to the letter of the Scriptures.

Some of them do not put much stock in preaching nor in books, and are practically all opposed to the [state] preachers, because they are not sent, and their matters do not take place in a true order after the command of Christ.

p. CXCV, (195)

However some of them go to the [state] preaching and break bread with them, but the other (Täufer) do not think highly of them. And if they can agree in their church, they will expel them through the Bann.

Some have a regulated refrain from speaking among themselves, and are occupied with many laws and outward things whereby they entangle the conscience and bind it. They cast a rope about their necks with [rules about] clothes, braiding of hair, eating, speaking, etc. These are called the silent brethren<sup>18</sup>. Others let all these things free, and commend themselves to each one's spirit. They do want that any should make a conscience in those things which Christ has placed within our freedom.

Some put much emphasis on the Scriptures as the Word of God. They depend too much on the letter, and carry books with them wherever they go. Others say, however, even though we have books, Christ is not necessarily present. These do not place much value in any outward preaching or Scriptures. They think we must all be taught by God without any other medium. Also that the Scriptures are not the Word of God, and that a man can believe and be saved without them. See Johannes Denck's writings, also Ludwig Haetzer's and Thomas Müntzer's.

Almost all of them hold the children to be pure and their blood innocent, and that the inherited sin does not condemn them, both in children and their elders. Also they hold that it will not make any unclean, except those who make it their own, and bring fruits from it, and will not cease from doing so. For the sins of others, they say, will not condemn anyone, alleging thereto Ezekial ch.18. Therefore the children, as being pure and not

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14. At the close of his short life of 27 years, Denck wrote his *Recantation*, wherein he restates his earlier spiritualist ideas. He expresses regret for the time he preached as an Anabaptist.

15. German; "vilköpfig."

16. The Anabaptists with spiritualist leanings; Schwenkfeld, Denck, and Bänderlin believed this. Franck also promoted this idea, which is probably why he brings it up.

17. Thomas Müntzer was taken up with fanatical dreams and vision. At the time of this writing, Müntzer was deceased, but his disciple, Melchoir Rinck, was active. David Joris, and the "Zwickau Prophets;" Nikolaus Storch, Thomas Drechsel, and Marcus Stübner, would fit this description and were active at the time of Franck's writing.

18. Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli's successor as pastor of Zürich, wrote about the "silent brethren" in his polemic against the Anabaptists; *Der Widertäufer Ursprung...*, 1560. He does not identify them, but says they do not feel preaching was necessary, and would not answer if anyone asked them about their religion.



responsible, are not qualified for baptism, nor need it. They hold that the command of Christ goes out only for their elders; that a man is to be baptized upon his repentance and be joined to the church.

Some of them maintain that even if the baptism of children were right, necessary, and godly; everyone should still let himself be baptised again, or as they call it, be baptised aright (for they consider the afore received baptism to be no baptism), because the baptism took place outside of the "heretic church," namely in the Pope's church, which is not able to give baptism. Thereto, that the one true baptism cannot be found in different, but in one church and gathering, even as there is one God, one faith, and one Christ. and this error they have shared with Cyprian, who decreed this with a whole council at Carthage, as we have heard<sup>19</sup>.

Many of them do not consider the inherited sin, nor wicked thoughts and desires, to be sin, if one does not give in to them and bring them unto works. Because of this they compel and force themselves very strenuously to quench their flesh, and dominate all its actions with much resistance from the flesh, and though it indeed cries and murmurs against it. They say that the kingdom of heaven is violent and alone the forceful (they understand it to do violence to themselves) seize it. They say Christians are knights and must fight to obtain the kingdom of God. To this they claim the saying in Luke 13; Contend, compel, and force yourselves to enter into the narrow gate, etc. Therefore it is not right and is dangerous to teach that one should not do any good work unless he is desposed to it or that he has a delight to do so. It is sufficient that the spirit is willing, for the flesh will never gain any joy thereto. He that waits for such will forever be without good works, and will get nothing good accomplished.

A number of them speak pointedly, and according to my thnking, not incorrectly, how that one must be still before God, and to be surrendered in all things, as in a Sabbath which is free<sup>20</sup>, without any presumption or self-seeking. They hold that God has his work in us and recognizes only his own in us, p. CXCV(b), (195b)

and will crown nothing but his own work in our lives. It seems to me they could do this without separation or sects, each one for himself, whereby they might be separated from the world in life and religion, to come out from their wicked ways, and hold nothing in common with the world's blasphemies<sup>21</sup>. They should not sin because of outward things and raise up their own sects, as though one could not be pious outside of the sects, or that one must suffer because of this [separation], and be martyrs for Christ, and not be a Master of Ceremonies, or follow ceremonies. Their zeal in religious matters, their fear of God, etc., I greatly love in each one of them, because God wants a people zealous for good works. But I cannot be pleased with all the sects.

Many of the Täufer have a zeal that is good, but it is not carried out wisely. Thus many of their leaders go about inflamed with great zeal in what they pursue and are convinced of their callings. Let me answer them: I would indeed that they would "take heed to the nice devil at noonday,"<sup>22</sup> and to let Johannes Denck be an example to them, to be constantly before their eyes. He indeed was as pious and fiery as any one of them, yet at his end he acknowledged his foolish zeal and was burdened that he may have gone about without a calling. He also concluded that he would do it no more<sup>23</sup>. They themselves know how fervently some of them have gone about, how powerfully they have exercised, without any aid, a sure calling as though they were sent out by God, and now have turned back. These have at this time entirely rejected the Täufer, and fallen away from them, when they would have [at one time] died for their claim that they were sent by, and their walk of life was from, God. There will be crafty and powerful deceptions at the last times. The devil will let all his skill be known on the right hand and on the left, and will give out such a pretense and zeal for the Word of God that even the elect (if it were possible) might be led astray. Therefore let everyone take heed well to who he is, for nothing will suffice but watchfulness and it will help nothing if the devil brings Scriptures. For at another time he surrounded himself with Scripture, considering and exalting it as the Word of God. One cannot wait until he

19. At the Seventh Council of Carthage in 258 A.D., Cyprian (200-258) took the position that "heretics" who come to join the Catholic Church must be baptized, even if they had been baptized elsewhere. He felt that there is only "one true baptism", as there is only one true God and one faith. Here Franck chides the "heretics" for baptizing those who come to them from the state church, who had been baptized as infants. Franck didn't believe baptism was important and so the Anabaptist's insisting on a true baptism seemed foolish to him. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol V, "The Seventh Council of Carthage", pp. 565-572

20. German, "gelassen stehn im freien Sabbath."

21. In his "Letter to Christians in Lower Germany," Franck writes, "God...is equally close to every nation, even if they are outwardly heathen, Jews, Turks, or Christians. Anyone who lives right and well, let him be to you a true brother." Franck was against outward separation and advocated fellowship with anyone who lives right.

22. "daß sy auff den schönen Teüfel im mittag ebe acht hetten." Apparently an idiom which Franck uses to call attention to Denck.

23. At the end of his life, Denck questioned his calling as an Anabaptist preacher.



denies them. In these last, subtle times he will not appear so coarsely, rather will come and parade around clothed completely in Scriptures.

Concerning the original sin, some of them, indeed practically all, say that like as Christ's righteousness does not benefit or come to the help of any unless he takes hold of that righteousness and makes it his own through faith, so in the counterpart will sin or the original sin of Adam not be detrimental to anyone, unless he through disbelief takes hold of it and thus makes it his own, that it brings its fruit. For as another's righteousness will not save anyone, so also another's sins will not condemn anyone. But if Adam's sin condemns all men by nature, then it must follow that Christ's righteousness also likewise will again save all men, because he has profoundly corrected and restored the fall of Adam, (Romans 5), and grace has exceeded sin.

But if the righteousness of Christ alone saves those who believe, who through faith in Christ are changed and do not live any longer, but Christ lives in them, then it must follow that Adam's sin condemns only those who do not believe, who not through birth, but through the unbelief of Adam take hold of it and bring forth its fruit, so that they are planted in sin and sin in them. Thus they [the Täufer] speak of the matter. Martin Luther is against this, as in the sermon "Concerning [the] Three-Fold Justice," and elsewhere.

The greater part of them hold that God, Christ, and his Word and Spirit are in all men because the Holy p. CXCVI, (196)

Spirit reproves the world of sin in the consciences of all men. So is this gnawing little worm and spark which responds to God's Word, which is sufficient, and constantly brings testimony to us of God's Word and Spirit within us. The lack, however, is that many are not in God and in his kingdom, and God is covered over by their flesh. He lies buried in them without fruit, as ore buried in a mountain, or a living spark of fire buried under a pile of ashes.

A number of them hold that the Scriptures do not speak anything at all about children, and that neither the Scriptures, the Law, the Gospel, or Christ concerns them. Rather they are, without any medium, saved, pure, and an image of God. And as they have not fallen in Adam, so they must not rise up in Christ or be restored, if they die in innocence. They interpret the little word 'omnes', which means "all-inclusive," to mean only the adults, who have fallen "in Adam" and died spiritually [by sinning]. Only those must be restored in Christ. That which is not lost or corrupted, this must one not seek to restore. And according to their thinking, Christ is not a Saviour of children, but only of those who are fallen and sold under sin.

Others, we hear, recognize the original inherited sin somewhat, and allow that the children have, in a measure, died and became corrupted in Adam. But that this is all restored and brought back again in Christ or through Christ. Therefore the inherited original sin is not detrimental and injurious, not alone for children but for all men, if they do not bring forth the fruits of sin and break forth in doing actual sins. For as in Adam all have died, so in Christ all is again made alive, etc.

A number of them think that those to whom Christ is not preached will not be judged until Christ is presented to them for either a resurrection or a fall, if not here then yonder. They quote Peter [I Peter 4:6] for this and say that the children are not damned nor saved until they either reject or accept Christ. And no one is condemned except one who goes against the cornerstone and rock of offense which is Christ, and no one is saved but he who acknowledges and embraces Him. Therefore to those who here have not heard [the Gospel] through their own prophets who were sent out, to these will He preach in the yonder darkness, as Peter testifies, to salvation or destruction.

Some of them hold that there are two types of seed, that of God and that of the serpent and no one can get out of his kind. Thus also that the seed of the woman cannot and may not become the seed of the serpent. And again a child of the devil cannot be made into a child of God. Each party cannot change his birth or kind. Thus the children of God cannot fall away, and the children of the devil cannot turn to God. And the sum is that [they say] some cannot be condemned and the others cannot be saved. Promoting this view is also Martinus Cellarius' book "The Workings of God."<sup>24</sup>

Some of them do almost nothing but pray. They engage every misfortune with their order of prayer, as though one does God a great service thereby, when we pray until our mouth is tired from constantly praying, and much more, so our [bodies]. These maintain that one should withstand all evil by no other means than prayer, and will not allow their people to take weapons under any conditions.<sup>25</sup> Thereby they are resigned in all things, and one does not see any seeking revenge. Others have another opinion, and almost every one a different one,

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24. "De Operibus Dei," Martin Cellarius, 1499-1535, was not an Anabaptist but supported their view on baptism. He differed with them on the free will, but was very influential with Luther's colleagues. He lived an upright life after the manner of the Anabaptists.

25. Bullinger, in his account of the Anabaptists, also writes of "praying Täufer," who, he says, do nothing else but pray. He does not identify them.



that barely two of them are completely of one mind. What they love to dwell upon among themselves and believe to this end, is impossible to write about. For all these articles there are so many, diverse, audacious, and idle questions which they construct daily.

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Yet many of them are against this, who praise a pious simplicity, and call these high-flying, sharp-tongued spirits, scribes who are occupied with Scotisch questions.<sup>26</sup> These want to hear nothing but what pertains to repentance, amendment of life, love and faith.

A number of them maintain that to be a Christian is a holy, singular, unrepachable and perfect calling and that one must have died [to self] so that he does not live any longer after the flesh nor seek after the things upon the earth. Therefore a Christian may not, nor shall he, love the world, nor consider highly anything worldly, to whom dying is as acceptable as living, indeed for whom this life is boring. He must be surrendered and patient in all things; if he is smitten, not to smite back. He shall be disciplined and exercise self-denial, and not self-seeking. He shall have turned away all carnal things, and not know anything after the flesh any longer. He considers dying as gain, riches as dung, and the world's joy, pleasure, honor, and life, etc., as sorrow, loathing, shame, and death. He glories in the cross and poverty and considers good fortune in this time as misfortune and is sorrowful because of it. He loves his enemies, blesses those who curse him, and in and through all things recognized the sovereignty of God, and stands resigned as in a free Sabbath, in whom God is always allowed to have his work and place. He willingly and gladly suffers oppression, and that which is taken from him by violence he does not ask for again. He gives to everyone and lends to everyone who asks and needs, and does hope for anything in return. He does not swear in any circumstances, and brings nothing before judgment. He does not fight and carries no weapons. He does not want any worldly dominion, tribute, or servants. In all things he goes about as a deceased person, without any adornments, who wants nothing for himself. He wants nothing in common with the world, such as entertaining of guests, feasts of celebration, commerce, fraternities and guilds, companionships, housekeeping, weddings, dancing, etc.

These claim that a Christian should not hold any worldly office, such as being in position of authority, nor anything that involves force. He shall neither own a servant, nor otherwise have one. Also in all things he shall not fight nor shake his fist, if he encounters either God or his neighbor. God is strong enough to avenge himself, and they shall not fight for themselves and their neighbor, except through prayer. Rather they shall suffer, wait patiently, and await the help and vengeance of God. A Christian also shall not singularly seek for any worldly pleasures, rather flee them and alone rejoice in the cross, destitution, and poverty. He alone seeks what is above and nothing upon this earth. He considers it equal to take as well as give, to die as to live, to want as to have enough, poverty as well as riches, and possesses all things as though he does not possess them, etc. Yes, he also has died unto the world so that he has become unfeeling after the flesh. For him all things are of equal worth, and in him there is no place found for self-opinion, jealousy, strife, and evil desires. Though such things are aroused by the flesh, they are to be distracted and suppressed by the spirit, and sin is not allowed to come forth. To this end they quote all the writings of Paul concerning the new man. For example: Paul, in Romans 7, had not sinned, but he bemoans himself of and over the indwelling sin, which cries out against and strives with his spirit and inner being. Thus some of them fly so high, but only a small number. Others let things remain on a norm, and allow themselves to carry on as the world. The first think little of these.

Many think that we can only wish to have more people like this, or to look for such in heaven, or maybe in a Platonian Republic.<sup>27</sup> They do not know whether any Apostle or any other person, with the exception of Christ, attained this ideal. The others hold that it is our sought-after goal and mark which we shall pursue and haste after. If we have not attained it then we must seek to reach that goal, for nothing imperfect will come into the kingdom of Christ. Matt. 6.

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Zwingli, Bullinger, and others in many places write against this [idea]. I would that these were so free from and dead to the inner world and sin as they consider themselves to be outwardly. I refer to self-love, spiritual pride, complacency, indiscriminate judging of beliefs, seeking for honor, and the whole scope of spiritual peculiarities and hyprocrisies, which I fear that not a few are caught up in. If they will presume to be inwardly spiritual persons, then they should do so without divisions and parties. Each one should look upon himself, that he is doing what is right, and that the nice luminous devil is not lying in his way, that their perfection is turned

26. John Duns Scotus, 1265-1308, was an influential theologian and philosopher in the Middle Ages. He writes about many controversial questions of the day, probably prompting Franck to use him as a type of the ultimate in philosophical and 'vain' questions.

27. "Repub. Platonis," *The Neuestes Vollständiges Fremdwörterbuch*, (Dr. L. Kiesewetter, Golan u. Leipzig, 1855) defines this phrase as: "das Muster einer vollkommenen Staatsverfassung," (the pattern of a perfect governmental constitution), or an utopia.



into pure buffonery, hypocrisy, and monkishness, as it seems to me to be. Yet I do not want to censure anyone's piety, for I cannot see into their heart, why he does as he does. A godly person is not pompous with his piety, rather stands in his godliness with simplicity, (unto which he indeed has died), and is resigned and obedient in his *gelassenheit*. He has also died unto self and to all unworthy judging, so that he impartially considers everyone of equal value, both friend and enemy. For a Christian at the same time loves and hates both all men and the whole world. He loves them so that he would gladly die for them with Christ. And again, he hates them so that he will have nothing in common or to do with them, especially their ways. But the devil mimics God and can imitate and pretend all things, and make himself appear exceedingly pious. But to love and to believe as is right, he cannot, as Chrysostom<sup>28</sup> says. These are the distinguishing marks and sure signs of a Christian, by which one can know a Christian, and as Christ says, by no other: Praying, fasting, giving of alms, sharing of clothing and food, suffering, sharing of travels, praising God, preaching the Scriptures, demonstrating tongues, prophecies, and signs, watching, crucifying of self, mortification, separating himself, baptizing, self-examination, weeping, going to church, reading, hearing preaching, etc. All this can the devil also pretend in the most appealing way, (Matthew 7:1, II Corinthians 13, Daniel 7, Acts 13), indeed all the deeds of compassion.

Some of them are not well pleased that many preach that Christ [came] for us and do not preach [that He is] in us, that one can know within himself that He has done what is sufficient for us, suffered and died. From this they bring in that Christ has done everything for us, that we do not have to do anything in Him, that is, to die and live with him. Yes, that He has suffered and died for us, so that we do not have to suffer and die. He also ascended into Heaven for us, that we might remain below. Or that He has ascended to Heaven so that in Him we also might reach that place. Thus He has, in this manner, fulfilled the Law for us, that we might also fulfill it in Him, and might stand before God. For this reason one should not preach Christ outwardly or as before us, that He stands here, and that He has done everything for us. Rather He should be preached to be in our hearts, that we are in Him and that He is in us, and inspires us by what He is and desires.

But the world flees Christ and will not put on Christ, or has not put Him on and holds Christ as one who seeks them from afar. They pray to Him and gladly give Him honor, that He has done all, therefore they must not do anything, but alone embrace his battle cry. And they do not understand that they must put Him on inwardly, and so they are not comforted by Christ. For Christ on the outside and before us is of no benefit, but only when He is in us and we in Him. John 15. When the severed, withered branch constantly says, "Yonder is the good grapevine," etc., it does not help anything. It must be attached to and be on the vine, etc., [to benefit]. Thus they speak thereof, that they make an idol out of Christ, when they preach Christ outwardly to us and for us and know and worship Him only after the flesh.

Some of them have a peculiar opinion of the resurrection, [that] everyone will again rise up in the condition p. CXCVII(b), (197 b)

and emotional state wherein he fell asleep: a fuller with his flasks, and a soldier with his armor and halbert. Then the godly will rise again peacefully as they fell asleep in Christ, and reign with Him 1000 years here on earth. Others think [the reign] will be for eternity, and believe that the kingdom of Christ will be here on the earth, as seem to be indicated in the letter of the prophets' writings and as Lactantius<sup>29</sup> understood it, and as the Jews today still understand it. A number of them think that there are no holy ones in heaven, nor any condemned people in hell, but that when we die, then the saved ascend into the bosom of Abraham, or to paradise. And the condemned also will go to a designated place until judgment. Only then will each one be sentenced and receive his destiny. Matthew 25.

Some of them think that the bodies of both sleep in the earth. But that the soul and spirit of the blessed go to God and rest there, after the body is put off. But the soul of the godless [rests] in the devil.

A number of them hold to the opinion of Johannes Denck and Origen, which was condemned long ago, that eventually everyone will be saved, even the condemned evil spirits. That in Christ everything will again be brought back into that wherefrom it was fallen. For as everything is fallen in Adam, so in Christ must everything be reinstated and restored. For this they show many Scriptures, and speak thereof in a peculiar and undiscerning manner. They make out that there is a terrible hell, wherein the godless, with their spirits, will be tormented eternally, which they take to mean "for a long time." Against this many hold, with the state church, that there is an eternal damnation and nothing else. And in the opposite, an eternal blessedness.

28. John Chrysostom (ca.347-407) was bishop of Constantinople, and the greatest preacher in the early church, writing many sermons.

29. In his *Divine Institutes*, Lactantius (250-325) writes, "That righteous King and Conqueror will institute a great judgment on the earth, and will deliver all the nations into subjection to the righteous who are alive. He will raise the righteous dead to eternal life, and will Himself reign with them on the earth, and this kingdom of the righteous shall be for a thousand years." *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. VII, p. 254.



A number of them, but very few, hold that one should not swear under any circumstance, if he would be a Christian. This [swearing] might be for any reason it may; whether about God, or for the sake of the faith, or for the neighbor out of love. Also that a Christian may not be a magistrate, and exercise judgment of capital punishment;<sup>30</sup> pass judgment over one's blood; or to direct warfare. For Christians have only the Bann and not the sword among themselves. Also that a Christian may not fight or kill for any reason, whatever it may be. Michael Sattler was of this opinion, and his followers, who were burned, but they are few.

The others (and that is most of them) hold that one may indeed testify to the Truth with an oath, if love requires it or if it concerns the faith. For this they cite many examples and teachings from both Testaments. Johannes Denck is also of this opinion. These also allow a Christian to be a magistrate, if he deals according to the precepts of God. They also sanction self-defense and warfare, if one does not [do it] freely, but [only] out of necessity and by command, takes this upon himself. However they all teach unitedly to be obedient to the government in all things which are not against God, not only with taxes and tribute, but [also] go give them one's mantle and coat, and other things which one does not freely give. They also say they are prepared to suffer violence, and also to be obedient to tyrants, because Paul in Romans 13, when he teaches obedience [to authorities], is speaking of heathen authorities, such as Caligula, Tiberius, and Nero; that one should give obedience to them. To this we give answer that as many of them as I have spoken to are [prepared] to patiently suffer for the sake of Christ, and not to rebel with chafing. For the Gospel's teaching and acceptance is not vindicated or established with the fists (as the peasants<sup>31</sup> have in mind), but with suffering and dying. Here fighting does not prevail, but suffering, as one sees in Christ and the Apostles an example, who never resorted

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to any force, or tried to establish their doings with the fist. They also reprove all those who teach a Christianity that allows warfare and seeks to defend the Gospel with the sword, because there are no teachings or example of Christ, the Apostles, nor the early church for this. For this reason, according to my consideration, there is no great fear that anyone must fear an uprising from them. But the devil, who gladly sees murder and takes pleasure in bathing in blood, convinces many of a foolish zeal, that they thus tyrannize over these poor folks, as though they were persecuting them out of zeal and love. [They think to] prevent blasphemy and uprisings before both God and the province. God is powerful enough to resist and punish all heresy without any mediums, indeed all which opposes Him, such as heresy, unbelief, etc.

Thereto He [God] has ordained the authorities for the punishment of that which may be done against one's fellow man. Because there is no uproar in evidence, they should therefore martyr no one simply because they do not trust them. I would fear an uprising less from these than from any other people if I were a Pope or the Emperor, or a Turk. Only in Johannes Hut<sup>32</sup>, a leader of sorts among them, was there found a legalistic zeal. He took [passages] from Moses and the Prophets and thought that as God's children, they must root out the ungodly, like the children of Israel did. But not before God would send them and command them to do so. Many among them spoke out against this and wrote against it, and this opinion is no longer found among any, or at least among very few, as far as I can ascertain. For they entirely find fault with this opinion, and condemn it in Hut as an error and apostasy. They say that only suffering for the sake of Christ and to accept the stigma [of following Him] is of any value. Whoever wants to be a Christian must endure persecution, suffer for [his kingdom], take up the hood [of a condemned person], and not to persecute. This belongs to the Antichrist, who persecutes others, and the church, so that she must suffer. She overcomes by believing, patience, hoping, and waiting. Isaiah 30, I John 5, and Luke 7.

With one accord they hold to [the concept of] a free will, as far as I have determined. That God first comes, knocks at our door, woos us, and lays the first stone. Then it is up to us and our free will, whether we will accept this offered grace, or if we will throw it to the wind. Or whether we allow the pleading, recruiting Spirit which is around us [to work in] our lives or not. And again, whether we will open up to the one knocking, or not. This, and more, stands in our power, for God will not compel anyone to his gifts and grace.

Further, they say that it does not lack with God and grace when we desire [to do] good, that we can do so through the proffered grace, which has enticed and drawn (but not forced) us thereto, for God would not allow this. He creates and brings to completion in us every good volition, yet not without our consent and working

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30. German, "halßgericht besitzen."

31. The Peasant's War (Bauern Krieg), 1524-1525.

32. During the Peasants' War, Hut preached that the clergy will be punished by God for their corruption and the peasants will have the power. Later he defended himself, saying he thought the end of time was at hand, and God would judge the unrighteous and vindicate the peasants. "Hans Hut", ME, Vol.II, p. 347



together [with Him]. For God, who desires and orders every good thing, will not refuse anyone his grace nor cause that he cannot obtain it. Indeed He has pleasure and joy in this; to bring to perfection a good will. For if He would command us to do that which is good, but would not give us grace thereto, so that we can desire it; and if we desire it, to bring it to fruition, then the fault would stand with Him, and He could condemn no one. This is like asking [from us] what is good and not helping us thereto with his grace, rather working in us the opposite and withdrawing from us the grace to do good.

For this reason many maintain that God is alone good and can therefore neither desire nor work anything but what is good. Therefore God is no reason for, nor brings about a single sin. They do not allow at all that God p. CXCVIII (b), (198 b)

works both that which is good and that which is wicked in men (which is the opinion of many today), because he hates sin. They do not think that He could work such as this or bring this about in a man. And that afterward He would condemn this man and condemn his own work in him. For this reason God works no evil, sin, or wickedness, but only what is good. Sin and wickedness come alone from the Devil<sup>33</sup>.

Concerning the providence, foreknowledge, and predestination of God, they also have a very different opinion than all other sects. Namely, that God does not direct nor foreordain any one to sin nor to condemnation. Rather He foresees, in his eternal, prevailing omniscience, who will be an Esau and who a Jacob. He knows our coming in and going out before we are born. Through this foreknowledge and prevailing wisdom, all of our life stands exposed before his eyes. And as we will turn out to be, so He predestinates and orders from eternity, before his eyes. And as we will turn out to be, so He predestinates and orders this from eternity, before we are born, indeed before the foundation of the world was laid. For [He knows] that in time to come He will show the Esau unto eternal fire, and through this knowledge of his, will hate him in his mother's womb. The other whom He knows as a Jacob, He loves unto eternal life. It is not that God has hardened anyone or taken pleasure in his wickedness, or would desire it thus. Rather that He knew from eternity that he would be such a person and could not help him, who indeed would tread under his feet every proffered grace.

Thus God is not responsible for the destruction of any one, rather the person himself is, who will not forsake sin and will not admit the grace which knocks [at his heart], nor lets the enlightening light shine. And thus God is acquitted in every way and every circumstance, because he has no pleasure nor responsibility in the destruction of any of us. They do not think that God hardened Pharoah as the text in Moses' writings says, rather he hardened himself, as it is written beforehand.

The greater part of them, very many, say this concerning Christ: That they hope in him, to whom they ascribe every grace, and salvation, and their redemption. And that they do not believe in him revealed and from a distance, as being outside of him, rather they put him on. They believe in him and follow him in complete submission,<sup>34</sup> as they speak thereof.

A number of them, though few, hold to what is almost an Arian belief. They confess nothing of three persons in the Godhead, saying God cannot be a person, but alone Christ can. They do not hold Christ to be the true living God, like Him in essence and substance, rather that He is of the same will and volition. Yet they call Christ their God, and the Son of God, and the saviour of the world, and the head of the church. They consider him more that all the prophets or any other man, and do not hold him as a bad prophet or as a man, as they complain that some attribute to them. In conclusion, some of them speak so profoundly and subtly of Christ that I cannot sufficiently understand it nor grasp how they expound it. Herewith I commit them to God, to whom they must give account in these matters, whether they believe rightly or wrongly.

Some of them consider separation so important that they will not have any fellowship with those who are open to the world and attend open public spectacles, or visit the taverns, nor acknowledge them as brethren. Others, on the other hand, do not consider it so important, and can tolerate every man.

The sacrament of the altar (communion) they consider to be the Lord's bread, a remembrance, and a sign of brotherly love, showing that they are one body and bread in Christ. But they do not believe at all that the body of Christ is present therein, in essence or in a bodily manner. Rather, [Christ] is only, by faith, partaken of spiritually through this sacrament by those who believe. So as the mouth receives the sign, so also the heart receives the truth of the body of Christ.

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33. The Anabaptists taught that the fallen human nature, with its tendencies, is the avenue by which sin and wickedness come about. They taught that man is therefore responsible for his actions, because sin depends on his choice. The prevailing theology in the State Church was that evil comes from the Devil, and even from God, and downplayed man's responsibility in the expression of sin.

34. German, "Gelassenheit".



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Thereto they also have many different practices [concerning communion] in many places. In some places they hold it frequently and in other places quite seldom. In some places they conduct their communion so strictly with proclamation of preaching, that at some places scarcely two can be found who can break the bread together. Herein they also have much splintering and many sects. Some think it necessary to hold communion often. Others do not think it necessary, indeed as not right unless one is in great earnest and almost in pain of death. Some think one should hold communion only when he is ready to die and to bequeath his body and goods to another.

In some places they place those in the bann who go to the preaching of the "scribes," or have anything to do with them. For practically all of them are ill-disposed toward the preachers, whom they distainingly call 'scribes.' In my opinion, they condemn many things too freely. On the other hand, there are some who will allow that one should read, hear, and try all things and keep what is good. These go there themselves, yet the manner, calling, order, and ordination of every preacher does not commonly appeal to them.

They do not allow any images in their church, which they call idolatry. And they call the houses of worship heathen temples. And some consider it a sin to go through a temple of idols.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, there are some who turn aside for nothing, wherever they may be, and will go into a state church and also watch a mass being conducted.

Some place so much emphasis on the cross, that they in turn persecute or despise those who have no cross. They say that things must not be right or going right with such a one, for if he truly walked in the way of the Lord, the cross will not be absent. They stress this so hard that some seek a cross. On the other hand the others are minded differently.

Some have taught that a brother or sister may not live with a 'heathen' marriage partner, if he does not cooperate in everything with her, such as in bringing up the children in her faith, and in keeping the house, etc. With this foolish teaching they have caused separation in many marriages, so that this one's wife, and another's husband, have run away. Yet this teaching has practically become extinct, and came into disgrace, so that many of them teach against it.

Some have entangled their conscience with the saying: "Whoever does not forsake all: wife, child, fields, father, or mother, etc." Herewith they have, for a small reason which they insist upon in some places, brought to nothing that one should shelter his brother, or that he should have worship services in his house. With these Scriptures they have constrained themselves, so that some left everything, abandoned their wife and child, and went into exile. Afterwards they had to burden the people [for help], while in their exile. They left their house, became as an unfaithful heathen to their children, walked away from them, and left their house in shambles. They let their children become undisciplined, forsook the brethren, and went about begging like a spiritually displaced person. And he who could have had his own bread, could have supported his own wife and children, and could have helped others, is now being a burden to other people. Many of them are against this foolishness, and they rebuke this error, and will not tolerate it.

Some elevate the old law almost above the new. They bring the whole law of Moses, especially the *indicialia* and *moralia*, that is, all laws which deal with morals and judgments, into the New Testament. They not only take the sword, but accept warfare as in Moses' time and all police work, as though only the ceremonial aspects [of the law] were abrogated. The others are strongly opposed to this. These are quite a few, who say p.CXCIX (b), (199b)

that Moses is not in effect in the covenant of Christ, that the time of service for Moses' [law] is past, and the time of shadows and figures is gone. Only Christ, who is the sun and the truth, is at hand. They will not by any means allow anything which one cannot prove with and in the New Testament. For Christ is more than Moses and the prophets, and is lifted up by the Father as the only one who is to be heard. These do not allow swearing an oath, going to war, and whatever else the letter of the New Testament does not support.

Many among them go about daily with fresh instructions to seek to win others to the church. At times the Spirit has commanded them to do this. Other times God revealed it to them in a vision or dream. Other times the Spirit told them how God will deal with the world, that the last day should soon come, to which they set a time. Hut is entirely overtaken with these things, whereby he has convinced a number so that they have freely squandered their possessions, and cast them away.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps they thought they have enough left over for this

35. These passages seem to be referring to the Catholic Church and its services.

36. It is known that Hans Hut preached much about the signs of the times and the imminent return of Christ, but It is questionable that he taught or supported these excesses.



short remaining time. And thus they sought to make friends with those treacherous goods, and to trust God, being totally surrendered to him. They have not recognized that their roguish Adam looks out for himself, and in these things has sought his own opinion and ends. Namely that he [Adam] would resurrect with Christ, and avoid the voice and curse of God [when He says] "Go to now"...etc., and would reign eternally. Thereto what they hoped for, they would no longer need to anticipate. Now since those prophecies are manifest and are [not] holding true, one can indeed see that they could not have been sent out [by God] because these things did not take place. Thus God, through Moses, recognized the false prophets, Deut.18. Through this it is clearly evident that they went about of themselves without a [true] calling, and all this without a command from God. They have spoken from their own self initiative. Those whom they hold as the best and the most fervent [among them], have deceived them. Herewith they can see how God is mocking them, because they should not be infatuated with men in such a way. They give forth whatever they please as being their calling.

Therefore there rose up a sect among them who would, as with all goods, also have their wives in common. But these were immediately condemned and rejected by the other brethren. Some would accuse Hut (Hans Hut), and Hetzer (Ludwig Haetzer) of this, as being leaders of the sect. Indeed, if this is true, they have both brought upon themselves judgment because of this.

Some speak against the eternal purity of Mary, saying she had other children with Joseph, her husband, after that as a virgin she conceived, carried, and gave birth to Christ. These speak against the others, saying it is an idle question. [They say] it is not important, nor an article of faith, and does not serve for any edification.

Some maintain that one cannot obtain faith by studying in any book, nor learn it in any sermon. Rather [faith] comes without any medium from the inner, true, living Word of God. It comes when God speaks to our heart, and shines the enlightening illumination into our souls, which impresses itself and imprints itself in us as a seal. They consider this [enlightenment] such an intuition, and sure understanding, that the inner man can see and know what he believes, yes with more certainty than if the outer man could see it, or hear it, or touch it, or grasp it with all five senses. All that could be only a mirage, an apparation, or a deception. These are hard opposed against those who teach that faith comes from the outward (literal) Word of God. And again that faith is not an understanding, that one must close his mouth and ears and become blind. This is indeed true, they say, if one considers the outer man, but nothing is more untrue if one considers the inner man. He who does not have faith, but only believes what he knows and sees, indeed does not believe.

p. CC, (200)

Rather he grasps and receives only that which the outer man believes. For this see Paul in Hebrews 11, and perhaps Luther in many places. A number of their leaders and their followers believe it (faith) comes through much reading, hearing, and preaching. For this reason they continually go from one place to another. To support this they quote Paul in Romans 5: "Faith cometh by hearing." And so, everything has its Scriptures.

Some would cease from baptizing and other ceremonies until God gives another commandment, until He sends faithful laborers into his harvest; who have a great zeal and honestly have a fervent longing for the work and desire nothing else. Some others oppose these and believe that soon after the passing of the Apostles the ceremonies were bespoiled and fallen down. God does not regard these anymore, nor does he want them any longer. For this reason they will not be reinstated again. Rather they are all now exercised only in spirit and truth, and no more outwardly. For it is unseemly when one has come to the wine to turn back to the symbols again, or when one has passed over a way to turn back to look at the statues behind him. These are not acknowledged by the Täufer as brethren, but they expel them, and are against them with words and pen.<sup>37</sup>

They still have uncountably many sects and beliefs among themselves, which I cannot all know or relate. Almost not a one is united in all articles with another. Thus God lets them see that he is as weary of and against their sect, as He is with all others. He wants us to be one, and to be gathered together in oneness, not outwardly by baptizing, but in unity of spirit and in brotherly love. And this more with mind, spirit, and faith than with body, time, place, or manner in outward ceremonies. For they shall know that no party nor sect pleases God. Because of this God will bring them to shame as already takes place daily, that they might know thereby that the New Testament does not stand in letter. For God will have his children to be united in one body, covenant, and bread; ground, melted, and bound together by the spirit, faith, heart, and love, and not in an outward, mundane pact pertaining to baptizing, clothing, food, time, place, or ceremony.

They may not excuse themselves with their forefathers, as the present [Catholic] Bishops do with the Apostles, who have shed their blood for the sake of the name of Christ, and thus are martyrs for Christ. So God passed over their outward errors because of their inward justification, and because of their constant zeal and Christ-like faith, and did not hold them their errors against them. Who will convince us that they have shed their

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37. Literally, "with feather," that is, with a quill for writing.



blood because of baptism and for outward ceremonies? Much more we believe that in suffering, all these outward things faded away for them as stubble and wood do alongside the gold in a fire. Also that alone the pure, purged, and tried faith in God through Jesus Christ remained steadfast in distress, for which they offered up their lives. I refer to the select who in times past died among them as true martyrs for the sake of Christ's name. I cannot condemn them, yet I will advise those living now that they will neither comfort themselves in, nor rely on their deaths, [because of] their errors. For no one knows how, or for what reason, they died or concluded their lives.

Now all this and especially their articles of faith I relate more than that of the other heretics. [I do it] in part because I want to set before your eyes how fine and well they are united outwardly in ceremonies and inwardly in faith and spirit, agreeing together and are one.<sup>38</sup> [I want to show] how God smites them with confusion at this tower of Babel, as He does all other sects, so that they might acknowledge their foolishness, cease from it, p. CC(b), (200b)

and come to the true unity of the church.

This unity is bound together in spirit and truth alone, and not in any outward ceremonies or elements. It denys the ungodly doings of this world, and by it no one takes heed of the other, and no one believes and holds anything [against] another's love and service, as Peter when he looked upon John [when Christ reinstated him, John, ch. 21]. But that everyone considers himself, how sure he is of his own matters. [He considers] how deeply he is convinced; by whom he is taught, by God or man; and where he is at home in his conscience. If they truly go to the school of Christ, of which they speak much, then the Lord will remind and instruct them of all these things. [He will show] on what their emphasis hangs and is centered on, if it is in spirit and truth.

Now I want to warn their enemies and persecutors that they withdraw their hand, and not impose upon God in his authority. That they do not, as so often occurs, apprehend a Christian as a heretic, when according to them they have this power to apprehend, when indeed they do not. Thus they bring upon themselves the blood of Christ and with Annas, Caiphas, Pilate, and Herod become guilty of his death, and hereby become worse than they.<sup>39</sup>

For there is no sect so wicked, but that they somewhere have brought forth some good. Thus God casts his treasures among the multitudes and scatters them among the heretics and heathen, so that every man has received and claimed something of his treasures. Be this sect as it may, who would die for it if all their things were heresy and false? Though they err and might be called heretics, I know of scarcely any [other], especially of their enemies, who would let himself be burned for his beliefs. For many who are not of their sect insist that we cannot speak against them in many of their things, though they err in other things. No one has achieved this, that they have quenched their every error, so help us God! If we would see all our errors written before us, then would both the Täufer and us often be more reserved with our judging, and often be ashamed to open our mouth.

Take what is good from each sect, and let the rest go to the devil.<sup>40</sup> The foremost which offends<sup>41</sup>, not unfairly, and is in error with this and other sects, is their divisive separating from others and [forming] a special group. Secondly, that their torn and divided beliefs are scattered among so many sects, whereby they betray themselves. Thirdly, they have several unchristian articles. Fourthly, the wanton, impudent, and audacious judgment which they cast over others, which they do more out of self-love and self-pleasing than from the judging of the Spirit. This nice, proud, and hypocritical devil is not good enough for any, but now he will also be pious. And each sect thinks they have alone arrived [at the truth], and would gladly draw and compel all the others to join them, if they can, even with force. Fifthly, that their legalistic rules, and their monkish, regulated Christianity cannot be the Chrisitan faith, which tolerates no laws nor ordinances.<sup>42</sup> It cannot be contained in rules, rather it is a freedom of the spirit wherein the Holy Spirit alone wants to be teacher and master, who by no means lets any law be given or written up. Rather He lifts his own up above all laws, even God's law, and makes them to be free men. And he pours out and writes in their hearts the love which is the fulfilling of all laws. Indeed, that they do everything out of a willing love, yes more than they are obligated to, without any

38. It is not clear whom he is referring to, since earlier he writes that scarcely two can be found who are agreed. Apparently there was a group(s) of Täufer who were united together.

39. In his *Kriegbüchlein des Friedens*, 1539, (Booklet on the War for Peace), Franck writes extensively about the wrongness of using force against the "heretics." The book is a plea for tolerance in religious matters. Franck's concepts on this were ahead of his time.

40. German, "laß das ander dem Teufel faren."

41. Here follow seven points in which Franck disagrees with the Anabaptists. Most of them stem from his spiritualist beliefs. The mainstream Anabaptists' emphasis on building on the Scriptures gave them much ground to refute Franck's criticisms.

42. German, "Ordnung", or church standards



compelling, commanding, law, commandment, or prescribed rules. Sixthly, that their things do not come to pass, which they prophesied. That their words pass away empty, which is the sign and test of a false prophet. Deut. 18. Seventhly, that they always deal with the scriptures and interpret and expound them according to the letter and not after the mind of Christ. For the scriptures should be understood and interpreted as God intends it and p. CCI, (201)

not as they appear in letter. And for this reason, the letter (as is constantly seen throughout this history of heretics) always caused heretics. For because the Scriptures are cleft and divided in letter,<sup>43</sup> the letter will produce heresies, and one can never become one or united in them. Therefore one should comprehend in them the mind of the Spirit or Christ, how he intended each and every [passage]. But this we must be taught of God alone in silence.

They shall also indeed be aware that so many contradicting visions, revelations, dreams, and prophecies (which they daily allege, and yet they do not take place), cannot be from God. Because that which is spoken from God, comes as the Word of God and does not fail to take place. Not that one should therefore despise and quench all prophesy, rather to not immediately depend on them, but to first test everything, and to keep what is good. For they should indeed have become aware how often the devil has lied to them, with all the dreams, visions, and prophecies. Thus now the last strong delusions are going forth as a hoax, when the devil confirms his things not only by Scriptures, but with pure Scripture, and also with miracles. Therefore we must walk circumspectly before God, exercising our salvation with fear and trembling. We must trust in God alone, look at the reason for everything, and give heed well to our own selves to see what God says within us about any matter. We must consider well the testimony of our heart and not to do, refrain from, deal with, or accept anything against our conscience. For not everything depends on the bare letter of the Scriptures, for we see that all heretics have Scriptures.

So it is with the multitudes, especially the Antichrist of the end time, who receives worship in the Scriptures, wants to convince us with Scriptures, and appears to be wise in the Scriptures. Therefore everything is dependant on the sense of the scriptures, and a spiritual interpretation, how God intended them, and why he spoke and said what he did. If we thus ponder every instance, then we will discover [its meaning] in the depth of a spiritual understanding, and in the mind of Christ. Otherwise the dead letter will also make us all to be heretics and fools.

For everything wants to be repaired, adorned, and excused by Scripture. Therefore no one should let himself be dazzled and enchanted by the letter of the Scriptures, but to first ponder and test the Scriptures, as to how they compare with his heart. If they are against his conscience and the indwelling Word, then take heed by all means, for then they are not understood nor interpreted according to the mind of the Spirit. For the Scriptures should bear witness with our heart and spirit, and not be against them.<sup>44</sup> And as one must first try the spirits, so also the letter of the Scriptures, whether they are expounded and presented according to the mind of Christ. For one should not be sure of the letter nor trust it for everything, because so many heresies come from the letter. Rather, diligently and with fear; search, embrace, and accept the mind of the Spirit.

For this reason I appeal to the Täufer that they would walk in the truth, repent, and be devout and conscientious, but not to separate themselves. They are so hasty after the cross and fear it will fail with them, if they do not let themselves be baptized. If they enter into the power of baptism and go in its truth, then whatever happens, they will find the cross, and the cross will not fail them. For the devil is an enemy not so much to baptism of water but to the power thereof and to the spiritual baptism in truth. Which baptism the water baptism is a sign of, namely a crucified godly life. For this reason I appeal to the Täufer that they would let this be an example of their folly, that God does not desire their mockery and their sect, as He does not want any other.

I was informed by a trustworthy source, that recently a woman at Appenzell in Switzerland convinced many that she was Christ and gained twelve disciples, which is too shameful to say much about. I would that they should remember how often they let themselves be made fools, and their leaders deluded, as they indeed to some p. CCI(b), (201b)

extend have experienced, not without harm. See where human foolishness leads to, if one gives it importance through the Scriptures and God's name! I believe [she] quickly convinced [people] that with God all things are possible, that He is no respecter of persons, and that we are all one in Christ, so therefore it was surely possible that a woman could be Christ. See, now even she had Scriptures [to back her]! Another example is that

43. Franck, in his book "Paradoxa" expounds 280 sayings from the Scriptures which he feels contradict themselves somewhat. Most of the passages do not seem so difficult.

44. In a true Spiritualist response, Franck gives the individual conscience and understanding precedence over the written Word.



supposedly a brother in Switzerland at St. Gall said to his blood brother: "Kneel down quickly, for I have a command from the Lord to chop off your head!" So the brother patiently and willingly knelt down and let himself be beheaded. The other was apprehended by the authorities for this and died maintaining that he knew and thought nothing else but that the Lord had charged him with this. One could freely adorn this also with Scriptures, as I indeed would do, but it would be pure fantasy and delusion, and nothing else than a weapon of the devil and the dead letter of the Scripture. But from the mind of Christ and the Spirit come peace, unity, and eternal life for the spiritually minded.

Photocopy of original

1531 Chronica.

Courtesy of Amos B. Hoover

## Von Petro biß auff Clementem bñ. cxcij.

In mit der sper die seiten hab eröffnet/2c. vnnnd vil des narrenwercks. Darumb  
hoch der zornig Bapst immer zu mit ketzern zu wirfft/vnd über die hell schicket/  
wenn yemande an seinen schüben zweifelt/das sie nicht heylig wären / der ist  
schon cyn ketzer.

Von Widertäufern oder Täufern.

**A**nno M.D. xxvj. gleich inn vnd nach der auffrühr der Baturen ent  
stand auß dem büchstaben der schrift eyn newe Sect vnd sonder  
kirch/die nentten etlich Widertäufer/etlich Täufer / die siengen an  
mit eynem sonderm tauß sich von den andern züsündern/vnd alle  
andere gemeyn als vnchristlich züuerachten. Auch keyn selig oder für keyn brü  
der züselen/der nit irer sect vnd part bei war/siengen an die so zü in tratten / wi  
der zü taußen/oder vil mehr/wie sieß für gabē/zü taußen nach dem beuelch Chri  
sti/dann sie den kindertauß nicht weniger/als die Obzenbeicht schrift loß / vnd  
in allen grunde vnd beuelch Christi/darzu von ketzern gegeben sein/sprachen/  
oben eyn grossen gewel darauff/wer sein kind taußen / od sich nit taußen ließ.  
Deren vorsteher vnnnd Bischoß waren erstlich vnder andern Doctor Baltha  
sar Hübmoß / Melchior Rinck / Johannes Hut / Johannes Denck / Ludwig  
Pezzer. Deren lauff gieng so schnell/das jr leer bald das gang land durchtroch  
vnd sie bald eyn grossen anhang erlangten/vil tausent taußten/vnd vil/ auch  
guter hertzen/die nach Gott eiferten/mit irem guten schein/vnd auch dem büch  
staben der schrift (den sie steiff für sich hielten) zü in zohen. Dann sie lereten im  
schein nichts/dann lieb/glauben/vnd creutz. Erzeygten sich in vil leidens gee  
ultig/demütig/brachten das brot miteynander züm zeychen der eynigkeyt vnd  
lieb/halffen eynander trewlich mit fürsatz/leyben/bo:gen/schencken/vñ lereten  
alle ding gemeyn haben/bießten eynander brüder. Wer aber irer sect nicht war/  
den grüßten sie kaum/botten auch dem keyn handt/bielten sich züsammen/vñ  
namen so gebeling zü/also/das die welt sich eyner auffrühr vor jnen besorgte (der  
maber doch sie allenthalben / wie ich böz / vñschuldig gefunden worden seind)  
vnd man griff nach in an vil orten mit grosser tyrannei / sonderlich erstlich im  
bapstumb/mit gewalt/leger sie gefangen/vñ peiniget sie mit brant / schwer  
tze/wasser/vnd mit mancherley gefäncknis/das jr in wenig jaren seer vil an  
vil orten vmbbracht worden/also das etlich weit über zwey tausent anschlag  
en/an allen orten getödt/vñ alleyn zü Einspheyen biß in die sechshundert vmb  
bracht seind/Das sie als Martyrer gedultig vñ standt mütig liden. Auß wel  
chem exempel vnnnd predig jres blüts erst noch vil mehr bewegt wurden/als zü  
den rechten/die vmb der warheyt willen veruolgung liden/zü tratten/weil ye  
derman meynet/sie hetten die rechte prob/kreid/vñ das rechte glück des Euang.  
fünde sich bei jnen. Darumb vil frommer eynsältiger leut sich zü jnen gesels  
ten/vnd sich mit dem tauß in jr gemeyn ließen einschliessen/dero vil bestendig/  
darumb jr blüt vergossen. Also machten vil mit irer tyrannei deren nur ye  
mehr vnd mehr/das sie zületzt (als sie sahen/das nit alleyn nichts halff/sonder  
das widerspiel sich fande/vnd Gott jres schewts vnd gewalts hierinn spottet)  
daran verzagten/also/das sie etwas von diser tyrannei abstunden. Dann ye  
derman meynet/darumb das sie so gedultig liden/jr sach vnd Sect wer recht/  
vnd sie weren alleyn die Christen. Darauf der hauff vnnnd jr kirch erst zünam  
vnnnd groß ward/daber der außwurf/die falschen brüder/die fleyschlichsten  
vñ geringsten spreut/die noch am trennen außgeworffen überig waren / sich des  
larns überhebten / wurden etwas im geyst haffertiger / siengen an yederman  
zu virey

Widertäu  
fer an  
kunft.