

Confessional Migration: Anabaptists – Mennonites, Hutterites, Baptists etc.

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Lacking a durable alliance with the state anywhere in Europe, Anabaptists constituted one of the most persecuted and most mobile religious populations of the Reformation and Confessional Ages. A single, clearly defined magisterial office was also absent from the movement, and the Anabaptists' migratory experience encouraged regional variations in the movement that built on its distinct starting points and traditions. At the same time, interactions between different Anabaptist groups undermined those regional differences. The result was the formation of distinct yet inter-related traditions that survived the Confessional Age: Mennonites, Swiss Brethren, Amish, and Hutterites.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Confessional Migrants
 1. The Beginnings in Switzerland and South Germany
 2. Moravia: The Promised Land
 3. North German and Dutch Anabaptism
3. Migration and the Formation of Anabaptist Traditions
4. Communication Processes
5. Conclusion
6. Appendix
 1. Sources
 2. Literature
 3. Notes

Indices

Citation

Introduction

In many ways, Anabaptists were the quintessential confessional migrants of early modern Europe. Driven by a combination of missionary zeal and persecution, they established communities across Europe, ultimately migrating to Russia and the Americas. Perceiving themselves to be the true church in a hostile world, they usually tried to isolate themselves from the surrounding society and culture. Nonetheless, both forced and voluntary migration put Anabaptists into situations in which they had to adapt their teachings and institutions to new conditions. However, determining what developments in Anabaptist history are the result of their migratory existence is complicated by the fact that we are not dealing with a homogeneous, clearly demarcated confessional group. Those whom history calls Anabaptists (rebaptizers) usually referred to each other simply as Brethren: the term "Anabaptist" was imposed on them by their enemies to justify the use of the death penalty against them. Furthermore, Anabaptist movements arose in different areas at different times. From early on, though, they interacted with each other (→ Media Link #ac), ultimately leading to common ground on some issues of theology and practice.¹ As a result, despite the divergent starting points, we can try to understand how migration and resettlement affected the different Anabaptist groups if we trace their developing positions on several issues central to the Anabaptist movement. These concerns included the meaning of baptism and the nature of the church to which baptism is the entrance; the relationship between the true church and the world, with the related question of nonresistance or pacifism; leadership structures and authority of leaders within the community; as well as patterns of mutual assistance and the forms it takes within the community. For the purposes of this study, the term "Anabaptists" will be used for those groups and individuals coming out of the Protestant Reformation (→ Media Link #ad) who chose to baptize adults, which meant in the first generation at least that they were rebaptizers. The focus will be on continental Anabaptism; the English Baptist tradition, whose history intersected with that of the Anabaptists during the 17th century, had its own point of departure and trajectory.² In addition, we will restrict ourselves to the history of these groups during the 16th and 17th centuries, when crucial aspects of their identities were formed.³

Confessional Migrants

The Beginnings in Switzerland and South Germany

According to *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren*, on the evening of 21 January 1525 a group of former adherents of the reforming movement led by Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531) (→ Media Link #ae) in Zurich gathered in the house of the mother of Felix Manz (ca. 1498–1527) (→ Media Link #af).

▲ 2

After the prayer, Georg Blaurock stood up and asked Conrad Grebel in the name of God to baptize him with true Christian baptism on his faith and recognition of truth. With this request he knelt down, and Conrad baptized him. . . . Then the others turned to Georg in their turn, asking him to baptize them, which he did.⁴

While the *Chronicle's* account of the earliest years of the Anabaptist movement is no longer given the same credence as it once was, other sources suggest the first baptisms did, in fact, occur in Zurich about this time.⁵ This act marked a clear break with Zwingli and the Zurich Reformation. Shortly before this event the city council had decreed that children be baptized as soon as they were born, that Conrad Grebel (ca. 1498–1526) (→ Media Link #ag) and Mantz, both of whom were citizens of the city, be silent, and that other, non-citizen members of the group leave the city.⁶ This expulsion, combined with the missionary zeal (→ Media Link #ah) of the early Anabaptists, led to the rapid diffusion of the movement in Switzerland. On the following day in January 1525 baptisms were occurring in the neighboring village of Zollikon. Simultaneously, the baptizers fanned out to the west in areas around Basel and Bern, east to St. Gall and Appenzell, and north to Schaffhausen, Waldshut, and Hallau. Already the movement was adapting to local circumstances. In areas experiencing social and political unrest associated with the German Peasants' War it took on the characteristics of a mass movement.⁷ Among these locations Waldshut stands out, in part because of the size of its Anabaptist community. Equally significant, though, was the character of its leader, Balthasar Hubmaier (1485–1528) (→ Media Link #ai), the only trained theologian among the early Anabaptist leaders, and his vision of reform, which looked more like Zwingli's civic Reformation (→ Media Link #aj) than the gathered church usually associated with Anabaptism.⁸

▲ 3

In February 1527, in the village of Schleithem just north of Schaffhausen, Michael Sattler (ca. 1490–1527) (→ Media Link #ak) wrote a series of articles by which he sought to clarify some of the central teachings and practices of the movement: baptism, the ban, the Lord's Supper (→ Media Link #al), separation from the fallen world, the place and authority of pastors within the community, the sword of government, and the swearing of oaths. While the Schleithem Articles (or the Schleithem Confession)⁹ (→ Media Link #am) have often been the lens through which subsequent Swiss Anabaptist history has been viewed, their adoption in different regions of the Confederation was gradual and piecemeal, and often dependent on local circumstances.¹⁰ In the end, however, Swiss Anabaptists developed the contours of a distinct tradition. This process occurred in no small part as a result of encounters with representatives of other Anabaptist traditions, as the Swiss spread their beliefs far and wide, establishing congregations south into Tyrol, east across southern Germany as far as Moravia, and north along the Rhine and Neckar rivers (→ Media Link #an). Already in the 1540s members of other Anabaptist groups were referring to them as Swiss Brethren. The general parameters of Swiss Brethren thought and practice were those enshrined in the Schleithem Confession, but well into the 17th century variations existed in how specific elements of that definition were interpreted to adapt to local circumstances. At times, regional variations could become the cause of serious conflict, as at the end of the 17th century when disagreements between Swiss Brethren in Alsace and the Palatinate on one hand and their coreligionists remaining in Swiss territories on the other resulted in the Amish (→ Media Link #ao) schism and the creation of a new Anabaptist tradition.¹¹

▲ 4

As the Swiss Anabaptists moved beyond the borders of the Confederation, they encountered a distinct Anabaptist tradition rooted in the mystically inspired theology of the Saxon Reformers Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1480–1541) (→ Media Link #ap) and Thomas Müntzer (1489–1525) (→ Media Link #aq). These Anabaptists also criticized infant baptism, but for different reasons than the Swiss. While the Biblicism of the Swiss pushed them to restore what they perceived to be the true ceremonies of the ancient church, south German Anabaptists sought to purge the church of empty and meaningless rites that paid no attention to the commitment of the believer.

▲ 5

South German and Austrian Anabaptism has no clearly defined start comparable to the Zurich baptisms of January 1525. However, one could designate the baptism of Hans Hut (1490–1527) (→ Media Link #ar)¹² at the hands of Hans Denck (ca. 1495–1527) (→ Media Link #as) in Augsburg on Pentecost 1526 as such an event. Denck's direct influence on the subsequent development of that tradition was limited – his own baptizing activities were circumscribed and toward the end of his life he questioned the validity of his own and others' commissions to baptize.¹³ Nonetheless, he did give Anabaptism a spiritualist impulse that would reappear periodically throughout its history. Hut, by way of contrast, became one of the most active and prolific missionaries of the movement, recruiting followers and establishing communities in Franconia, Bavaria, Austria, Moravia, and possibly even Silesia. Hut's thought was strongly eschatological. After his death in December 1527 and the failure of the end times to materialize at Pentecost 1528 as he had predicted, disillusionment set in among many of his followers.¹⁴ Thereafter, Anabaptism in southern regions of the German-speaking lands came under the increasing influence of the Swiss model. However, as part of that process interesting encounters occurred between representatives of the Swiss and south German traditions, most notably in Strasbourg where an unusually tolerant policy toward religious heterodoxy provided the setting for wide-ranging dissent.¹⁵

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Moravia: The Promised Land

Another significant meeting between representatives of differing Anabaptist traditions occurred in Nikolsburg (Mikulov), Moravia. Balthasar Hubmaier arrived there in June or July 1526 and soon won over the local lord, Leonhard von Liechtenstein (1482–1534), and the local humanist-trained clergy to his vision of an Anabaptist Reformation from above. News of Hubmaier's activities quickly spread and drew large numbers of refugees from the southern German lands, where persecution of Anabaptists was increasing exponentially. Like Bohemia, Moravia had become a land of religious pluralism in the wake of the 15th-century Hussite wars, where a semi-autonomous nobility sought to attract economically valuable immigrants. As refugees flocked to Moravia from different areas in the Holy Roman Empire, they brought with them their own distinct versions of Anabaptism. Among them was Hans Hut, who was able to establish a sizable following, especially among the new arrivals. Conflict soon developed between Hubmaier and Hut.¹⁶ After an open disputation with the local clergy, Hut was arrested, although he subsequently escaped and fled the territory, ultimately meeting his end in Augsburg in early December 1527. Hubmaier did not long survive him, being martyred in March 1528 after his noble patron could no longer protect him from the long reach of the Habsburgs. Thereafter, Anabaptism in Nikolsburg moved in the direction of Sabbatarianism and survived as an isolated enclave into the second half of the 16th century.¹⁷

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In the winter of 1527 to 1528 supporters of Hut in and around Nikolsburg, many of them Austrian refugees, coalesced around Jakob Wiedemann (died 1536) (→ Media Link #at), one of Hut's missionaries. Expelled from the lands of the Liechtenstein lords, in the spring of 1528 they established a community in Austerlitz. From Austerlitz they undertook extensive missionary activity in southern Germany and Austria aimed at organized emigration to the new "promised land" in Moravia. Among the refugees pouring into Moravia was a group arriving from Austria and Tyrol in 1529 which included Pilgram Marpeck (ca. 1495–1556) (→ Media Link #au). He would later play an important role in interactions between Anabaptist groups in southern Germany, adopting a position critical of both the increasing Spiritualism of some of Denck's followers and what he regarded as the excessive legalism of the Swiss.¹⁸ Other Anabaptist leaders from different regions also brought their flocks to Moravia, including Philipp Plener from the Rhineland, Gabriel Ascherham (died 1545) (→ Media Link #av) from Silesia, and Jakob Hutter (died 1536) (→ Media Link #aw) from south Tyrol. Moravia thus became a melting pot, in which elements of both Swiss and south German traditions mingled freely. Each of these groups established their own communities: the Austerlitz Brethren in Austerlitz, the Philippites and Hutterites (→ Media Link #ax) in Auspitz, and the Gabrielites in Rossitz (Rosice). Initially relations were congenial between the different communities and between refugees from different regions within the communities. Gradually, however, conflicts developed, often along the fault lines separating different groups of refugees.¹⁹

▲8

Periods of intense persecution from 1535 to 1537 and again between 1547 and 1552 had a profound effect on the Anabaptist communities in Moravia. The Philippites and Gabrielites for the most part returned to their home territories, where many Philippites eventually joined the Swiss Brethren and the Gabrielites were increasingly drawn to Spiritualism.²⁰ The Austerlitz Brethren and the Hutterites were able to weather the storm in Moravia, but adopted very different strategies to do so. The former gave up the communitarian ideals so characteristic of Moravian Anabaptism, thereby allowing them to blend in with local populations and to survive into the 17th century.²¹ The Hutterites rode out the periods of persecution by breaking up into smaller groups and dispersing throughout lower Austria, southern Moravia, and Slovakia. When the danger had passed, they returned to their communal lives.²² In the second half of the 16th century they entered into their "golden years", when the strict organization of their communitarian settlements (*Haushaben* (→ Media Link #ay) or *Brüderhöfe*) and efficiencies of communal living created an economic success story that likely drew further converts from the Empire for economic as much as religious reasons. The number of *Haushaben*, estimated at 36 not

long after the mid-century persecutions, grew to as many as 74 settlements by the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries. These units may have housed between 20,000 and 25,000 people.²³ Much of this growth came from continued vigorous missionary activity in southern Germany and Austria, as well as Venetian territories in northern Italy. This activity led regularly to clashes with the Swiss Brethren, as the Hutterites now called Anabaptist congregations deriving from the Swiss tradition.

▲ 9

The security and prosperity of the brethren in the later 16th century was, however, short lived. In the early years of the 17th century, the *Haushaben* along the Moravian-Hungarian border were ravaged during incursions by Turkish troops (→ Media Link #az). More serious damage came with the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War (→ Media Link #bo), especially after the Habsburg victory at the Battle of White Mountain (1620) (→ Media Link #b1) near Prague, which put an end to religious pluralism in the region. Two years later the final expulsion of the Hutterites was ordered and their property seized. Some of the Hutterites converted to Catholicism, the remainder of about 10,000 people crossed into Hungary where they had already established satellite communities in the middle of the preceding century. There, with a new administrative center in Sabatisch (Sobotište), they witnessed a modest revival, especially under the leadership of the elder Andreas Ehrenpreis (1589–1662). However, in the second half of the 17th century, the communities went into rapid economic and demographic decline. One of the reasons for this may be a reduction in the numbers of refugees from the traditional missionary fields in the German-speaking lands. In the later 18th century, the final remnants of a few hundred people in Habsburg lands were forced to embrace Catholicism under the "Enlightened" policies of Maria Theresa (1717–1780) (→ Media Link #b2) and Joseph II. (1741–1790) (→ Media Link #b3).²⁴ However, that was not the end of the Hutterite story. In the middle of the 18th century Lutheran migrants (→ Media Link #b4) from Carinthia encountered the remnants of the Hutterite community in Transylvania. Impressed by the organization of the Hutterites, the Lutherans joined and reinvigorated the community. Under the threat of continued persecution, descendants of this group migrated first to Ukraine and Russia, and ultimately to the United States and Canada (→ Media Link #b5).

▲ 10

North German and Dutch Anabaptism

Among the radicals flocking to Strasbourg at the end of the 1520s was Melchior Hoffman (ca. 1490–ca. 1543) (→ Media Link #b6), a furrier and lay preacher active in the north, who had run afoul of the Lutheran authorities and clergy. Initially well received by the Strasbourg Reformers, he soon had conflicts with them as well. In 1530 he visited Emden and East Frisia, where he baptized numerous converts. Among them were individuals who were later to play important roles in the movement, especially Jan Mathys van Haarlem (died 1534) (→ Media Link #b7) and David Joris (ca. 1501–1556) (→ Media Link #b8). However, in 1531 after the execution of several of his followers, Hoffman suspended baptizing.

▲ 11

Melchiorite Anabaptism first rose to prominence when its history intersected with that of the civic reformation in the Westphalian city of Münster. Bernhard Rothmann (ca. 1495–ca. 1535) (→ Media Link #b9), the city's leading Reformer, was drawn to Anabaptism, possibly by radical preachers visiting the city from Wassenberg near Jülich, who had occupied some of Münster's pulpits and with whom he co-authored in 1533 *Confession of Two Sacraments* (Bekentnisse van beydem Sacramenten Doepe unde Nachmaele der predicanten tho Munster). This work helped to reinvigorate the northern Melchiorite movement. In the neighboring Habsburg Netherlands, where Melchiorite Anabaptism spread with considerable success, Mathys and his follower Jan Bockelson van Leyden (1509–1536) (→ Media Link #ba) played on apocalyptic themes in Hoffman's theology to reinstate adult baptism and identify Münster as the promised New Jerusalem.²⁵ In January 1534 emissaries of Mathys baptized Rothmann and his followers, and in February the Anabaptists (→ Media Link #bb) and their supporters won regular elections to the city council. Almost immediately, the Catholic bishop of Münster and local Lutheran princes laid siege to the city (→ Media Link #bc), from which non-Anabaptists had been expelled, but whose population was supplemented with the arrival of around 2,500 trekkers from Westphalia and the Netherlands. For the next 16 months events in Münster, which included experiments with community of goods, polygamy, and unusual constitutional forms modeled on the Old Testament, were played out before the eyes of Europeans and confirmed the suspicions of many about the inherently seditious nature of Anabaptism.²⁶

▲ 12

The fall of "New Jerusalem" in June 1535 left the Melchiorite movement in a shambles. Initially the mantle of leadership fell to David Joris, but in the context of ongoing persecution he relinquished his commitment to the necessity of adult baptism in 1539. In 1544 he moved to Basel with a small group of followers, where he lived for the rest of his life in disguise and in conformity with local religious conventions.²⁷ After Joris's defection, Menno Simons (1496–1561) (→ Media Link #bd) took up the reins of the movement, and groups

descending from the early Mennonites became the dominant Anabaptist tradition in northern continental Europe, with settlements especially in coastal areas and along major waterways in the Netherlands, north-western Germany and the Vistula River delta. Subsequently, they also migrated to southern Russia and the Americas. Granted limited toleration in the northern Netherlands during the revolt against Spain, they moved gradually toward respectable nonconformity, participating widely in the benefits of the Dutch Golden Age (→ Media Link #be). By the late 16th century the Mennonites numbered as many as 100,000 in hundreds of congregations, in some areas of the Netherlands even outnumbering the Reformed.²⁸ However, the history of Melchiorite Anabaptism in the later 16th and 17th centuries is not without conflict. In particular, the lure of the world and the need to maintain a flawless church led to numerous conflicts and divisions within the movement. These began already during Menno's lifetime, producing ultimately a major division between more conservative Mennonites and *Doopsgezinden*. The latter group practiced a less strict imposition of the ban and shunning, was not as averse to contacts with the world or with other religious communities, and was not as rigorous in its interpretation of nonresistance. Subsequently, numerous subdivisions appeared among the more conservative groups. Attempts to counter these trends and reunify the splintered movements were often less spectacular, but were supplemented by a tradition of philanthropy and advocacy of religious toleration, through which wealthy Doopsgezinde and Mennonite merchants sought to share the fruits of their success, especially with Mennonites around Danzig and in Poland, Swiss Brethren, and Hutterites, all of whom faced continued persecution and hardship.²⁹

▲ 13

Migration and the Formation of Anabaptist Traditions

Despite some important regional variations, different Anabaptist groups shared a common basic understanding of baptism. In general, they desacralized the rite: water baptism was merely an external act, witnessing to an internal arrival of faith and a commitment to lead a Christian life.³⁰ Much greater variation appears in their understanding of the communities arising from this act. While debate continues about the nature of the community intended by the first Zurich baptisms, evidence from areas around the city suggests that the environment could play a significant role in determining its characteristics.³¹ Ultimately, the tightly knit community of believers envisioned in the Schleithem Articles, which still maintained a number of traditional social structures and institutions, became the norm. However, in at least two cases specific environments dictated the development of more comprehensive institutions. In Moravia circumstances faced by the refugees after the Nikolsburg split, and thereafter the need to integrate newcomers from the mission fields, suggested the adoption of communal living arrangements, culminating in the regimented life of the Hutterite *Haushaben*.³² Similarly, in Münster the need to integrate refugees from the Netherlands and to deal with shortages caused by the siege encouraged social experiments, most obvious in the adoption of polygamy as a means to regulate the large number of women in the city.³³

▲ 14

The Schleithem Articles also outlined the relationship of the true church to the world and its institutions and practices. These recognized that government, and with it physical coercion, was a necessary evil to regulate human interaction in a fallen world, but insisted that the faithful were not subject to its strictures. Rather, the wayward among the faithful were to be dealt with through the ban or exclusion from the community, as described in Matthew 18,15–17.³⁴ Here, too, the early Swiss Anabaptists leave us no unequivocal image of their intentions. Particularly their activities outside of Zurich, often in the context of armed peasant resistance to the authorities, call into question the extent to which they categorically rejected temporal authority and the use of force. This is most obvious in Waldshut where Hubmaier worked closely with civic authorities and called for an armed defense of the Reformation in the city.³⁵ Outside the Swiss context, the case for the original pacifism and rejection of temporal authority of the Anabaptists is even more problematic: both Hut and Hoffman allowed for the possibility of godly rulers and some use of force in the events of the last days.³⁶ Even after Hoffman's eschatological emphasis waned in the Melchiorite movement, Dutch Anabaptism continued to maintain a more positive assessment of secular authority than its Swiss and Moravian counterparts.³⁷

▲ 15

In some cases circumstances could reinforce these differences. In *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren* a disagreement over nonresistance, specifically the payment of war taxes, is presented as an important cause of the divisions among Anabaptists at Nikolsburg. This account identifies the group associated with Hubmaier as sword-bearers (*Schwertler*) while the followers of Wiedemann are labeled staff-bearers (*Stäbler*).³⁸ The accuracy of this portrayal of events is not clearly documented; the Hutterites may have emphasized differences between these groups to highlight the continuity between their own teachings and those of the Wiedemann group. Nonetheless, the positions described seem plausible. While Hut was not a pacifist, he would have opposed a magisterial Anabaptist reformation on Hubmaier's model, and the stance on the sword propagated in the Schleithem Articles had a solid following among the Wiedemann group.³⁹ However, the backing of Hubmaier by the Liechtenstein lords would certainly have

reinforced the assumptions of the *Schwertler*, just as it would have confirmed the antagonism to secular authority of the *Stäbler*. Similarly, the initial decision to unsheathe the sword in Münster owed more to the perception of the city's citizens that they had a legitimate right to defend their civic reformation than it did to the eschatological musings of Jan Matthijs in the Netherlands.⁴⁰

▲ 16

Even after there was a general consensus on separation and nonresistance among the different Anabaptist groups, variations persisted in the interpretation of what that meant, and those variations could be a source of friction between groups or even within groups. Ironically, the Hutterites were able to maintain a radical separation from the world and their categorical rejection of the possibility of a Christian government as well as of the legitimate use of force because they enjoyed the protection of the Moravian nobility.⁴¹ From that perspective they criticized the accommodations of the Swiss Brethren with the world in a context of ongoing persecution, especially their willingness to pay war taxes, which the Hutterites regarded as a betrayal of the principle of nonresistance.⁴² In the Netherlands during the later 16th and 17th centuries, in the eyes of some, accommodation with the world was not really a survival strategy but an even greater danger than the earlier persecution faced by the Anabaptists. As a result, the sources of conflict in the seemingly endless divisions among Mennonites included matters involving accommodation with the world, such as questions of personal ostentation, marriage outside the community, or the arming of merchant ships with cannon as a self-defense measure.⁴³ Similarly, the roots of the Amish schism lie in criticisms of accommodation with the world of Swiss Anabaptists by their confreres who had emigrated to more tolerant environments in Alsace and the Palatinate.⁴⁴

▲ 17

A similar adaptation to local circumstances is evident in Anabaptist definitions of the roles and authority of congregational leaders. In general, Anabaptists rejected the sacramental priesthood and hierarchical offices of the church to a degree that took the Reformation teaching of the priesthood of all believers to its logical conclusion. Nevertheless, variations existed between the different Anabaptist traditions. While Swiss Anabaptism vested greater authority in the congregation than in the hands of the leader, the more charismatic leadership of Hut and Hoffman bequeathed to south German and Austrian as well as north German and Dutch Anabaptism greater roles and authority for leaders. These differences could sometimes be taken to extremes. For example, in Esslingen, where the Anabaptist movement was an amalgam of Swiss and south German traditions, the efforts of local authorities to eradicate Anabaptism focused almost exclusively on rooting out its leadership. In response, formal leadership within the congregation disappeared.⁴⁵ At the other end of the spectrum, charisma remained a crucial element of leadership in Münster under Jan Matthijs and Jan van Leyden and in the refugee communities in Austerlitz, Auspitz, and Rossitz in Moravia. Subsequently, this charisma was institutionalized in the greater authority exercised by leaders among the Dutch Mennonites than among the Swiss Brethren, and even more dramatically in the strict hierarchy of offices in the Hutterite *Haushaben*.⁴⁶ On this point, too, friction developed between different Anabaptist groups: Pilgram Marpeck criticized the Swiss Brethren for undercutting the authority of congregational leaders, while the Swiss Brethren were appalled by the privileges enjoyed by the Hutterite leadership and the imbalance of authority between leaders and congregations.⁴⁷

▲ 18

No less dramatic are the connections between Anabaptist teachings on mutual aid or community of goods and the refugee experience. This practice is most famous in the compulsory community of goods practiced by the Hutterites, but a commitment to mutual support within the community modeled on the description of the primitive church in Acts 2 and 4 ran through Anabaptism generally. This is evident in a contemporary description of the activities of the Anabaptists in Zollikon:

▲ 19

Now because Zollikon in general had itself baptized, and they assumed they were the true Christian church, they also undertook, like the early Christians, to practice community of goods (as can be read in the Acts of the Apostles), broke the locks off their doors, chests, and cellars, and ate food and drink in good fellowship without discrimination.⁴⁸

Possibly coming out of Zollikon was an early Swiss congregational order (→ Media Link #bf) advocating community of goods, which may have served as a model for some Moravian congregational orders.⁴⁹ However, the appeal of that model was certainly reinforced by the refugee experience of the early Moravian Anabaptists, which resulted in a wide variety of experiments with community of goods. Especially among the Hutterites, it served as a crucial component in both the integration of new arrivals to the community from the mission fields and in the economic success of the communities which made them so attractive to the local nobility.⁵⁰ The other case of compulsory community of goods, which was instituted in Anabaptist Münster, was also determined by circumstances, specifically the need to integrate trekkers with the local population of the city and to deal with the emergency rationing necessitated by the

siege.⁵¹ Not surprisingly, differences in how mutual support was understood, too, became distinguishing characteristics of these groups and a source of contention between them. In the second half of the 16th century, the Swiss Brethren accused the Hutterites of making a god out of their practice of community of goods.⁵²

▲ 20

Yet, in changed circumstances even the most committed adherents to the tradition were willing to abandon it. When the Philippites, Gabrielites, and Austerlitz Brethren faced prolonged persecution in the 1530s, they stepped away from communal living and community of goods. In order to justify this change, they appealed to the model of the primitive church (→ Media Link #bg) after the dispersion from Jerusalem rather than to the description in Acts 2 and 4.⁵³ In the end even the Hutterites renounced community of goods for a time in the second half of the 17th century.⁵⁴ In the wake of the Münster debacle, Melchiorite Anabaptists abandoned community of goods, opting for a Swiss style of voluntary sharing that manifested itself in the extensive philanthropic activities of Dutch Mennonites and *Doopsgezinden* in the 17th and 18th centuries.⁵⁵

▲ 21

Communication Processes

Clearly, the experiences of a migratory existence, frequently as refugees, highlighted and even exacerbated differences between Anabaptist traditions and groups. Yet, especially in the 17th century and after, there were moves toward greater unity and uniformity between those groups and traditions, facilitated by the sharing of ideas and practices. Obviously, face-to-face encounters, either formal meetings aimed at the unification of groups or encounters between missionaries of competing traditions, played an important role. However, limited surviving evidence of such encounters suggests that they did more to harden differences between the various groups than to encourage unity. Rather, it appears that the written word, either in printed form or in the manuscript collections characteristic of the Hutterite tradition, was a much more effective means of transmission.⁵⁶ This is most obvious in a number of high profile cases of borrowing, or even plagiarizing, major treatises, biblical concordances, and congregational orders from other traditions.⁵⁷ However, some of the most common means of transmission were likely collections of martyr stories and hymns.

▲ 22

Both martyr stories and hymns played important roles in consolidating group identity and solidarity by reinforcing an awareness of being a persecuted minority in a hostile world. Initially, hand-written accounts of martyrdoms and collections of martyr stories were assembled locally with each group venerating its own martyrs. In 1615, however, a dramatic change came with the publication of the *Doopsgezinde martyrology History of the Martyrs or Genuine Witnesses of Christ* (*Historie der Martelaren*) by Hans de Ries (1553–1638) (→ Media Link #bh), which consciously drew on martyr accounts from a variety of Anabaptist groups in an effort to promote unity between them. This more inclusive approach was taken up in later Dutch Anabaptist martyrologies, including the 1685 edition of *The Martyrs Mirror* (→ Media Link #bi),⁵⁸ one of the most influential books in subsequent Anabaptist tradition.⁵⁹ Hymns were shared among Anabaptist groups in a similar fashion. The first printed Anabaptist hymn collection, *Some Beautiful Christian Songs* (1564), consisted of 51 hymns written by Philippites imprisoned in Passau from 1535 to 1540 after fleeing persecution in Moravia. In 1583 these hymns were republished in the *Ausbund* (→ Media Link #bj),⁶⁰ the best known and most influential Swiss Brethren hymnal, where they supplemented hymns not only from Swiss and Dutch Anabaptist sources, but from other traditions as well. Hymns from the *Ausbund* (→ Media Link #bk) were in turn taken up in other collections in a variety of Anabaptist and Mennonite traditions respectively.⁶¹

▲ 23

Conclusion

As they moved across northern Europe, Anabaptist refugees were subjected to pressures that encouraged both assimilation with and differentiation from the surrounding society and other Anabaptists. Without a single dominant theological teacher or office, and with only limited ties to secular authority, they had no clearly defined orthodoxy or orthopraxis. Different Anabaptist groups did, however, share some basic assumptions about central teachings of the movement: that baptism should be administered to adults on the basis of a confession of faith, that the church was a voluntary association in some way separated from the world, that the leadership was non-sacerdotal and drawn from the community, and that members of the community were responsible for each other's wellbeing through some sort of mutual sharing. The details of these teachings, and how they were to be implemented in the life of the community, varied between regions where the Anabaptist movement began. More variations developed as a result of the Anabaptists' refugee experiences. Often these experiences encouraged conflict and further distinctions within the movement, as with the Hutterites and

other Moravian Anabaptists, the Mennonites and the *Doopsgezinden*, the Amish and the Swiss Brethren. Throughout this process, though, the shared core of teachings persisted and encouraged attempts at unification, resulting in a shared perception of a common heritage.

▲ 24

Geoffrey Dipple, Sioux Falls

Appendix

Sources

[Anonymus]: *Ausbund etlicher schöner Christlicher Geseng, wie die in der Gefengnuß zu Passaw im Schloss von den Schweitzern, und auch von andern rechtgläubigen Christen hin und her gedicht worden*, s.l. 1583; online: <http://www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10207712-6> [24.10.2014].

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Notes

1. ^ Contemporaries often applied the label "Anabaptist" to religious dissenters in general. In the 19th and 20th centuries, free-church historians, who identified the 16th-century Anabaptists as their own spiritual ancestors, narrowed the focus to "Evangelical Anabaptists", associated especially with the movement stemming from Zurich and later that in the Netherlands and northern Germany identified with Menno Simons. The classic statement of this position is Bender, *The Anabaptist Vision* 1944. The scope of the definition was again widened and the multiple origins of the movement stressed in Stayer / Packull / Deppermann, *From Monogenesis* 1975. More recent scholarship has emphasized the developing theological unity between the different Anabaptist traditions, see Snyder, *Anabaptist History* 1995, pp. 83–98; idem, *Beyond Polygenesis* 1994.
2. ^ Bebbington, *Baptists* 2010, p. 25 calls the question of the relationship between continental Anabaptists and English Baptists "the most developed historiographical controversy concerning the Baptists". In fact, this question has dogged the movement since the formation of the first Baptist congregation. The earliest Baptists usually disavowed any connection to Anabaptism. Serious suggestions of any association first appeared in the 18th century, and grew significantly in the 19th when enlisted in support of claims that an unbroken succession of believer's baptism had existed in Christianity since the time of the apostolic church, see Kliever, *General Baptist Origins* 1962, pp. 291–292. The most ambitious thesis about the influence of Anabaptism on not only the English Baptist movement but also on the English separatist tradition in general is Horst, *The Radical Brethren* 1972. However, as critics of this thesis (e.g. White, *The English Separatist Tradition* 1971, pp. 161–164; Bebbington, *Baptists* 2010, pp. 29–30) have observed, the English "anabaptists" shared few characteristics with continental Anabaptists, and even believer's baptism was not among them. A stronger case can be made for Anabaptist influence specifically on the formation of the General Baptists, a branch of the English Baptist tradition founded in an exile church in Amsterdam in 1608 or 1609 by John Smyth (ca. 1554–1612) and Thomas Helwys (ca. 1550–1616). Theologically the General Baptists were much closer to continental Anabaptists than were the more Calvinist Particular Baptists, and part of the first General Baptist congregation eventually joined the *Doopsgezinden*. However, the remainder of the congregation, which returned to England and laid the foundations for subsequent General Baptist history, may have broken with their fellows over the decision to join the *Doopsgezinden*. See Underwood, *A History* 1947, pp. 52–53; Kliever, *General Baptist Origins* 1962, pp. 303–315; Brachlow, *The Community* 1988, p. 156; Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation* 1991, pp. 61–114; Cross, *The Adoption* 2010, pp. 14–15.
3. ^ In some ways more spectacular is the story of Mennonite and Hutterite migrations to Russia beginning in the 18th century and ultimately to the United States, Canada, and Latin America in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, by that time many of the distinctive teachings and practices of the different Anabaptist groups had already been established as a result of migrations within Europe.
4. ^ Hutterian Brethren, *The Chronicle* 1987, vol. 1, p. 45.
5. ^ Blanke, *Brothers in Christ* 1961, p. 20.
6. ^ Harder, *The Sources* 1985, pp. 336–338.
7. ^ Snyder, *The Birth* 2006, pp. 538–581; Stayer, *Die Anfänge* 1975; Haas, *Der Weg* 1975; Hui, *Vom Bauernaufstand* 1989.
8. ^ Snyder, *The Birth* 2006, pp. 554–564.
9. ^ Sattler, *Brüderliche Vereinigung* 1527, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn%3Anbn%3Ade%3Abvb%3A12-bsb00027178-4>
10. ^ Snyder, *The Birth* 2006, pp. 595–616. For an overview of the influence of Sattler's Schleithem Articles on subsequent Anabaptism, see idem, *The Influence* 1989.
11. ^ Roth, *Marpeck* 2007.
12. ^ On Hans Hut see Seebaß, *Müntzers Erbe* 2002.
13. ^ Bauman, *The Spiritual Legacy* 1991, p. 257.
14. ^ Stayer, *The German Peasants' War* 1991, pp. 153–154. The best treatment of the roots of south German and Austrian Anabaptism and the roles of Hut and Denck in its origins remains Packull, *Mysticism* 1977. See also Dipple, *The Spiritualist Anabaptists* 2007.
15. ^ Deppermann, *Melchior Hoffman* 1987, pp. 162–203 remains one of the best summaries of religious developments in Strasbourg during this period. See also Stayer, *Swiss-South German Anabaptism* 2007, pp. 99–107; Dipple, *The Spiritualist Anabaptists* 2007, pp. 266–279; and Seebaß, *Müntzers Erbe* 2002.
16. ^ On the conflict between Hubmaier and Hut, see Packull, *Mysticism* 1977, pp. 99–106.
17. ^ Rothkegel, *Anabaptist Sabbatarianism* 2013, pp. 519–573.
18. ^ Marpeck has been the object of increasing interest in recent years. Among the best introductions to his life and thought are Klassen, *Covenant* 1968; Boyd, *Pilgram Marpeck* 1992; and Klaassen / Klassen, *Marpeck* 2008.
19. ^ Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings* 1995, pp. 214–235.
20. ^ ibidem, pp. 283–302.
21. ^ Rothkegel, *Anabaptism* 2007, pp. 185–189.
22. ^ On the Hutterites see Chudaska, *Peter Riedemann* 2003; Schlachta, *Hutterische Konfession* 2003; idem, *From the Tyrol* 2008; Rauert, *Katalog* 2011.
23. ^ Rothkegel, *Anabaptism* 2007, pp. 199–200.
24. ^ ibidem, pp. 207–210; Harrison, *Andreas Ehrenpreis* 1997.
25. ^ Revelation 21,2 describes the descent of a New Jerusalem which will serve as a haven during the tribulations of the apocalypse. Melchior Hoffman had earlier identified Strasbourg as the New Jerusalem.

26. ^ Vogler, Die Täuferherrschaft 2014.
27. ^ Waite, David Joris 1990.
28. ^ Stayer, The Radical Reformation 1995, pp. 273–274.
29. ^ Visser, Mennonites and Doopsgezinden 2007, pp. 299–343.
30. ^ The primary motivation of the early Swiss Anabaptists was to reinstate a fundamental practice of the New Testament church on the basis of the biblical record, see Harder, The Sources 1985, p. 335, pp. 427–428; Yoder, The Legacy 1973, p. 36; Pipkin, Balthasar Hubmaier 1989, pp. 95–149; Armour, Anabaptist Baptism 1966, pp. 19–57. By way of contrast Hans Hut and Melchior Hoffman both bequeathed to their followers an understanding of baptism including more mystical and eschatological themes, although both of these elements were later deemphasized, see Packull, Mysticism 1977, pp. 66–87; Deppermann, Melchior Hoffman 1987, pp. 229–240; Armour, Anabaptist Baptism 1966, pp. 58–112.
31. ^ For the most recent statements in the debate about the ecclesiology of the first Swiss Anabaptists, see Snyder, The Birth 2006; Strübind, Eifriger als Zwingli 2003.
32. ^ Packull, Hutterite Beginnings 1995, pp. 61–66, 87–89, 122–123, 214–235.
33. ^ Stayer, Vielweiberei 1980.
34. ^ Yoder, The Legacy 1973, pp. 36–42.
35. ^ Snyder, The Birth 2006, pp. 520–581.
36. ^ Stayer, Anabaptists and the Sword 1976, pp. xxv–xxvii, 150–159, 213–223.
37. ^ ibidem, pp. 309–328.
38. ^ Hutterian Brethren, The Chronicle 1987, vol. 1, pp. 47–50, 80.
39. ^ Stayer, The German Peasants' War 1991, pp. 141–142.
40. ^ Klötzer, The Melchiorites 2007, p. 233.
41. ^ A clear statement of the radical separation adopted by the Hutterites is Peter Rideman's *Confession of Faith*. See Stayer, Anabaptists and the Sword 1976, pp. 175–177; Rideman, Confession 1970, pp. 102–114, 131–136, 139–153, 205–223.
42. ^ Roth, Marpeck 2007, pp. 366–367.
43. ^ Van Braght, Martyrs Mirror 1950, p. 8; Zijlstra, Om de ware gemeente 2000, pp. 270–315; Visser, Mennonites and Doopsgezinden 2007, pp. 319–322.
44. ^ Roth, Letters of the Amish Division 1993, pp. 1–18.
45. ^ Oyer, The Anabaptists 2000, pp. 247–253.
46. ^ Stayer, The German Peasants' War 1991, pp. 131, 146–147; Packull, Hutterite Beginnings 1995, p. 294.
47. ^ Rempel, Jörg Maler's Kunstbuch 2010, p. 191; Gross, The Golden Years 1980, pp. 172–173.
48. ^ Harder, The Sources 1985, p. 345.
49. ^ Yoder, The Legacy 1973, pp. 44–45; Packull, Hutterite Beginnings 1995, pp. 33–53.
50. ^ Stayer, The German Peasants' War 1991, pp. 144–146.
51. ^ ibidem, pp. 131–138.
52. ^ Roth, Marpeck 2007, p. 365.
53. ^ Packull, Hutterite Beginnings 1995, pp. 283–302.
54. ^ Rothkegel, Anabaptism 2007, pp. 208–209; Harrison, Andreas Ehrenpreis 1997.
55. ^ In addition to caring for the less fortunate in their own communities, they often reached beyond their own borders. Probably best known is their financial and political support for embattled Swiss Brethren in the 17th century, although they also provided support to the Hutterites and to non-Anabaptist persecuted minorities. See Bangs, Letters on Toleration 2004; Wälichli, Täufer 2010.
56. ^ For details of the Hutterite book culture, see Rothkegel, Anabaptism 2007, pp. 204–205.
57. ^ For example, Pilgram Marpeck's *Admonition of 1542* (Marpeck, Vermanung 1542) includes a careful reworking of Bernhard Rothmann's *Confession of Two Sacraments* (Rothmann, Bekentnisse 1533, <http://resolver.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/SBB0000ACDC00000000>), see Wray, The "Vermahnung" 1956. In a similar vein, by 1575 Menno Simons' *Foundation Book* (Simons, Ein Fundament 1794, <http://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl?PPN240643674>) had been translated into German and was widely circulated among the Swiss Brethren, see Roth, Marpeck 2007, p. 369. The first church order of the Hutterites was likely an expanded version of the earliest known Swiss congregational order, see Packull, Hutterite Beginnings 1995, pp. 33–53.
58. ^ Van Braght, Het bloedig tooneel 1685, https://disc.leidenuniv.nl/webclient/DeliveryManager?custom_att_2=simple_viewer&pid=2952159
59. ^ Gregory, Anabaptist Martyrdom 2007, pp. 496–499. A number of the Dutch Mennonite martyr accounts appear in *Golden Apples in Silver Bowls*, a published Swiss Brethren collection of documents and treatises that contain martyrological material, see Rempel, Anabaptist Religious Literature 2007, p. 415; Gross, Golden Apples 1999. *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren* also includes a significant number of martyr accounts, although these are largely about members of the community or south German Anabaptists that the Hutterites regarded as their own forebears, see Hutterian Brethren, The Chronicle 1987–1998.
60. ^ [Anonymus], Ausbund 1583, <http://www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10207712-6>

61. ^ Roth, Marpeck 2007, pp. 370–371; Rempel, Anabaptist Religious Literature 2007, p. 402; Rothkegel, Anabaptism 2007, p. 206. On the importance of hymns in encouraging perseverance in the face of persecution, see Gregory, Anabaptist Martyrdom 2007, pp. 474–475.

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Europa unterwegs › Christliche Konfessionsmigration* › Confessional Migration: Anabaptists

Europe on the Road › Confessional Migration* › Confessional Migration: Anabaptists

Indices

DDC: 274 , 277 , 284 , 286 , 289

Locations

Alsace DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4014500-1>)
America DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4001670-5>)
Appenzell, town DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4002485-4>)
Augsburg DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4003614-5>)
Austerlitz DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4003894-4>)
Austria DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4043271-3>)
Basel DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4004617-5>)
Bavaria DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4005044-0>)
Berne DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4005762-8>)
Bohemia DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4007467-5>)
Canada DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4029456-0>)
Carinthia DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4029175-3>)
East Frisia DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4044067-9>)
Emden DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4014564-5>)
England DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4014770-8>)
Esslingen am Neckar DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4015575-4>)
Europe DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4015701-5>)
Franken DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4018093-1>)
Gdansk DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4011039-4>)
Hallau DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/2095251-X>)
Holy Roman Empire (-1806) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/2035457-5>)
Hungary DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4078541-5>)
Hustopece DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/410642-8>)
Jülich DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4028835-3>)
Lower Austria DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4075391-8>)
Mikulov DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4075404-2>)
Moravia DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4074432-2>)
Moravia DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4074432-2>)
Münster DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/2029094-9>)
Netherlands DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4042203-3>)
Northern Germany DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4075454-6>)

Northern Italy DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4042547-2) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4042547-2>)
Northern Netherlands DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4245680-0) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4245680-0>)
Northwestern Germany DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4075486-8) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4075486-8>)
Ottoman Empire DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4075720-1) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4075720-1>)
Palatinate DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4076031-5) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4076031-5>)
Passau DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4044828-9) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4044828-9>)
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Prague DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4076310-9) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4076310-9>)
Rhineland DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4049788-4) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4049788-4>)
Rosice DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/7680269-3) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/7680269-3>)
Russia DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4076899-5) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4076899-5>)
Schaffhausen DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4051993-4) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4051993-4>)
Schleitheim DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4118487-7) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4118487-7>)
Silesia DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4052678-1) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4052678-1>)
Slovakia DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4055297-4) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4055297-4>)
Sobotište DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/1051146534) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/1051146534>)
South Tyrol DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4078047-8) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4078047-8>)
Southern Germany DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4078022-3) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4078022-3>)
Southern Russia DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4374282-8) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4374282-8>)
Spain DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4055964-6) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4055964-6>)
St. Gall DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4051594-1) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4051594-1>)
Strasbourg DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4057878-1) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4057878-1>)
Switzerland DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4053881-3) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4053881-3>)
Transylvania DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4054835-1) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4054835-1>)
Tyrol DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4060207-2) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4060207-2>)
Ukraine DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4061496-7) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4061496-7>)
United States DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4078704-7) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4078704-7>)
Veneto DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4062510-2) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4062510-2>)
Vistula DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4079105-1) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4079105-1>)
Waldshut DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/30897-3) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/30897-3>)
Westphalia DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4065781-4) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4065781-4>)
Zollikon DNB [↗](http://d-nb.info/gnd/4067943-3) (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/4067943-3>)
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Link #ac

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Link #ad

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Link #ae

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-  (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/huldrych-zwingli-148420131531>)
Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531)

Link #af

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Link #ag

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Link #ah

- Christian Mission (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/europe-and-the-world/mission/michael-sievernich-christian-mission>)

Link #ai

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Link #aj

- Church Discipline (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/crossroads/religious-and-confessional-spaces/jordan-ballor-w-bradford-littlejohn-european-calvinism-church-discipline>)

Link #ak

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Link #al

- Abendmahlsräume (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/de/threads/crossroads/religionsraeume-und-konfessionsraeume/ruth-slenczka-die-gestaltende-wirkung-von-abendmahlslehre-und-abendmahlspraxis-im-16-jahrhundert>)

Link #am



-  (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/cover-of-the-schleithem-confession-of-1527>)
Cover of the Schleithem Confession of 1527

Link #an



- <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/spread-of-the-anabaptists-152520131550>
Spread of the Anabaptists 1525–1550

Link #ao

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Link #ap

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Link #aq

- Thomas Müntzer (1489–1525) VIAF <http://viaf.org/viaf/17226919> DNB <http://d-nb.info/gnd/118585533> ADB/NDB <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118585533.html>

Link #ar

- Hans Hut (1490–1527) VIAF <http://viaf.org/viaf/54086076> DNB <http://d-nb.info/gnd/123955777> ADB/NDB <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd123955777.html>

Link #as

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Link #at

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Link #au

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Link #av

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Link #aw

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Link #ax

- Täufergemeinschaften: Die Hutterer (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/de/threads/europaeische-netzwerke/christliche-netzwerke/astrid-von-schlachta-taeufergemeinschaften-die-hutterer>)

Link #ay

- Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online: Haushaben/Brüderhöfe <http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Bruderhof>

Link #az

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Link #bo

- Dreißigjähriger Krieg (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/de/threads/europaeische-medien/europaeische-medienereignisse/esther-beate-koerber-der-dreissigjaehrige-krieg-als-europaeisches-medienereignis>)

Link #b1



- <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/de/mediainfo/schlacht-am-weissen-berg>
Pieter Snayers (1592–1666): Die Schlacht am Weißen Berg

Link #b2

- Empress Maria Theresa (1717–1780) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/59876481>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118577867>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118577867.html>)

Link #b3

- Emperor Joseph II. (1741–1790) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/39386414>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118558404>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118558404.html>)

Link #b4

- Lutheran Confessional Migration (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/europe-on-the-road/confessional-migration/lutheran-confessional-migration/alexander-schunka-lutheran-confessional-migration>)

Link #b5



- <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/de/mediainfo/die-wanderungen-der-hutterer>
Die Wanderungen der Hutterer

Link #b6

- Melchior Hoffman (ca. 1490–ca. 1543) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/74644642>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118552716>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118552716.html>)

Link #b7

- Jan Mathys van Haarlem (died 1534) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/81596975>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/137400799>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd137400799.html>)

Link #b8

- David Joris (ca. 1501–1556) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/42273658>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/104279850>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd104279850.html>)

Link #b9

- Bernhard Rothmann (ca. 1495–ca. 1535) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/12733471>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/104091061>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd104091061.html>)

Link #ba

- Jan Bockelson van Leyden (1509–1536) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/50016432>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118512234>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118512234.html>)

Link #bb

- Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online: Münster Anabaptists  (http://gameo.org/index.php?title=M%C3%BCnster_Anabaptists)

Link #bc



- <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/the-siege-of-munster>
The Siege of Münster

Link #bd

- Menno Simons (1496–1561) VIAF   (<http://viaf.org/viaf/44385105>) DNB  (<http://d-nb.info/gnd/118580884>) ADB/NDB  (<http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118580884.html>)

Link #be

- The "Dutch Century" (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/models-and-stereotypes/the-dutch-century/dagmar-freist-the-dutch-century>)

Link #bf

- Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online: Congregational Orders and Church Disciplines  ([http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Congregational_Orders_and_Church_Disciplines_\(Gemeindeordnungen\)](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Congregational_Orders_and_Church_Disciplines_(Gemeindeordnungen)))

Link #bg

- Idealisierung der Urkirche (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/de/threads/modelle-und-stereotypen/modell-antike/ulrich-volp-idealisierung-der-urkirche-ecclesia-primitiva>)



-  (<http://www.ieg-ego.eu/en/mediainfo/missionary-and-edificatory-letters-from-prison-to-the-parish-in-moravia>)
Missionary and edificatory letters, from prison to the parish in Moravia

Link #bh

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Link #bi

- Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online: Martyrs Mirror  (http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Martyrs%27_Mirror)

Link #bj

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