

CLASSICS
OF THE
RADICAL
REFORMATION

Balthasar Hubmaier

*Theologian of
Anabaptism*



Balthasar
Hubmaier

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Dr. Balthasar Hubmaier

From one of a series of engravings of Anabaptist leaders drawn ca. 1606 by Christoffel van Sichem, presumably without historical basis.

Balthasar Hubmaier

Theologian of Anabaptism

Translated and edited by
H. Wayne Pipkin
and
John H. Yoder



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Classics of the Radical Reformation

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1. *The Legacy of Michael Sattler*. Trans., ed. John Howard Yoder.
2. *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*. Trans., ed. William Klassen and Walter Klaassen.
3. *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources*. Trans., ed. Walter Klaassen.
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Preface to the New Edition

Balthasar Hubmaier was one of Anabaptism's most significant thinkers and leaders during the period of the Reformation. Trained as a Catholic priest, he would become the only early Anabaptist theologian with a doctorate in theology, earned under the German Scholastic theologian and Catholic polemicist Johann Eck. As a subsequent Protestant and Anabaptist Reformer, Hubmaier became recognized for his theological and rhetorical gifts by supporters and opponents alike. In his initial reform efforts, he was befriended by Protestant Reformers Huldrych Zwingli and Johannes Oecolampadius, only to be critiqued later not only by Catholics but, following his rejection of infant baptism, also by fellow Protestants. The great scholar of the northern Renaissance, Desiderius Erasmus, called him the "Doctor of Anabaptism" and cited him with Hus, Wycliffe, Luther, and Oecolampadius as "learned men" who had led innocent Christians to heresy.¹ The Council of Trent specifically listed Hubmaier alongside the three great Protestant reformers Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, as well as Caspar Schwenckfeld, as "heresiarchs" of the church.² Hubmaier authored what is likely the first Christian catechism written for polemical purposes. He penned the earliest appeal for freedom of conscience in the modern era, described the first liturgy for the consecration of children in lieu of baptism, and composed what a number of scholars regard as one of the greatest defenses of believer's baptism in Christian history.

So it seems a considerable omission that, until this volume's publication in 1989, there was no widely available English translation of the major works of Balthasar Hubmaier.³ In part, this may

have been due to the forces of historiography that sidelined such an important Reformer. Though he was a brilliant theologian, contemporary Reformation scholars found Hubmaier difficult to classify. He was eschewed by Catholic and magisterial reformers as a radical because of his distinctive views on the church and its sacraments. Yet he was not particularly favored initially in Anabaptist-Mennonite scholarship because of his magisterially supported reform efforts in Waldshut and Nickolsburg, his nuanced position on the Christian's use of the sword, his positive use of patristic and medieval Catholic sources in his writings, and possibly even his early recantation under torture in Zurich – which all combined to make him not a prototypical Anabaptist theologian or champion.⁴ Nevertheless, as one scholar observed, Hubmaier “significantly influenced the development of the basic Anabaptist/Believers’ Church synthesis of faith and practice” and has only slowly begun to be appreciated by scholars of the Reformation in general and Anabaptism in particular.⁵

One impetus for an English translation of Hubmaier's most significant works was the publication of the critical German collection of those works in 1962, *Balthasar Hubmaier Schriften*, edited by Gunnar Westin and Torsten Bergsten, in the *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer* series. Subsequently, following the English translation of Bergsten's biography of Hubmaier,⁶ students of the Reformation in English-speaking countries desired a translated collection of Hubmaier's works similar to Westin and Bergsten's *Schriften*.

The teaming of John Howard Yoder and H. Wayne Pipkin to serve as co-editors and translators of this project seemed a choice pairing at the time not only because of their previous research and experience with translation work of this period but also because they reflected the confessional parties that, at that juncture, were most interested in Hubmaier studies. Yoder was an internationally acclaimed theologian and ethicist from the Mennonite tradition who had spent most of his career teaching at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and the University of Notre Dame, where he was also a fellow of the Institute for International Peace Studies.⁷ Pipkin, from a Baptist background, was professor of church history at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Rüschtikon, Switzerland, where he served as the first director of the Institute for Baptist and Anabaptist

Studies. In the same year this volume was first published, Pipkin joined the faculty of the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary as professor of Anabaptist and Sixteenth-Century Studies.

The publication of Pipkin and Yoder's translation of Hubmaier's major works has ignited considerable research and historiographical interpretations of the theology and importance of this erstwhile overlooked Anabaptist and Reformation leader and scholar, both in the context of the Reformation era itself and as appropriated within various derivative churches today.⁸ Since the publication of Pipkin and Yoder's translation, numerous studies of aspects of Hubmaier's theology have been produced by English-speaking scholars. Doctrinal studies of Hubmaier's ecclesiology, sacramental theology, spirituality, soteriology, understanding of the Scriptures, church discipline, and communal hermeneutic have all shaped and challenged how Reformation scholars perceive Hubmaier's thought and how Free Church descendants should appropriate it. While Pipkin and Yoder observed how Hubmaier was shaped by his contemporaries Eck, Erasmus, Zwingli, and the Swiss Anabaptists, further research into the origins of and influences on Hubmaier's theology have been exceedingly helpful. These include studies on the possible influences of patristic scholarship, medieval Scholastic theology, and Bernard of Clairvaux. Further study into the influences of Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther have demonstrated how well-read Hubmaier was and how widely he may have drawn from a variety of sources in fashioning his Reformation theology. Additionally, historical studies into his time have informed our understanding of Hubmaier's association with the Peasants' War and have allowed us to form a greater appreciation for his context both in Waldshut and later in Moravia. Yet there still seems to be potential for further research regarding Hubmaier as a catechetical and systematic reformer, sources that have inspired his thought, his views on Christian ethics, his work and influence in liturgical reform, and his understanding of the place of children in the church.

The Pipkin and Yoder volume remains the critical English translation of Hubmaier's chief theological works. However, scholars have subsequently wished that more of Hubmaier's extant correspondence, beside his letters to Oecolampadius and the Schaffhausen and

Zurich councils, had been included in the collection.⁹ Moreover, drawing from the research this volume has produced, subsequent scholarship has observed a few imperfections in some of Pipkin and Yoder's introductory comments and especially in annotations of primary work in the collection.¹⁰ In particular, there are numerous passages in the work regarding Hubmaier's biblical hermeneutics, patristic references, and medieval and German scholastic sources that could all be further clarified by enhanced annotations. Additionally, a number of biblical citations, references, and allusions inserted by the editors are not altogether accurate.

Nevertheless, such minor shortcomings should not detract from the benefits of the work. *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism* remains an important Reformation and Anabaptist resource for teaching and scholarship. As translators, Pipkin and Yoder made Hubmaier's writings accessible both to scholars in the fields of history and theology and to new students in introductory courses of church history, for trained theologians in the academy and for laypeople in congregations. Although Hubmaier remains peripheral to the magisterial Reformers and to those who draw their theology and praxis from the likes of Luther and Calvin, this volume and the research it has enabled have begun to break down the wall of scholarship between those who study exclusively either the magisterial or the radical wing of the Reformation. Moreover, this collection of Hubmaier's works has increased the potential for those in the Free Church to find a predecessor who informs how the church can be present in the world: neither restricted through its allegiance to and reliance on government nor marginalized as a sect with nothing relevant to speak into the contemporary secular context.

Unlike Luther, Zwingli, or even Menno Simons, Hubmaier did not found or organize a denominational tradition. Indeed, it is difficult to assess to what degree his thought was directly appropriated by either magisterial or Anabaptist denominational traditions beyond the early Anabaptist movement. One can only speculate that his influence may well have been enlarged had he not been executed in 1528, cutting short the life of a prolific writer and scholarly Reformer. Nevertheless, Ludwig Keller may not have exaggerated in 1882 when he opined that Hubmaier's writings "contain a fullness of original

and profound thought, which, if they had not proceeded from a marked man, would long ago have been hailed as a distinguished monument of German genius.”¹¹ The extent to which Hubmaier shaped arguments and counterarguments during the Reformation is an ongoing discussion among historians and theologians. That his theology has influenced the contemporary church is evidenced by the continued use of this book in college and seminary classrooms, in pastors’ studies, and within the heritage and liturgy of both radical and magisterial churches derived from the Reformation era. Students familiar with the Reformation period likely recognize the final traditional words of Martin Luther’s hymn “A Mighty Fortress,” which concludes: “Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also; the body they may kill: God’s truth abideth still, his kingdom is forever.” Such a sentiment for living a life of theological conviction regardless of its cost was shared by Luther’s similarly profound but overlooked contemporary Balthasar Hubmaier. Hubmaier validated this principle ultimately in his martyrdom in Vienna but also succinctly encapsulated it in his epigram, “Truth is immortal” (*Die Wahrheit ist untödlich*). For students of history and theology and for seekers of the truth, this volume will continue to make the principles of a significant, unique, articulate, and scholarly Reformer of the sixteenth century available to the church and academy today.

Brian C. Brewer

Notes

1. Erasmus, “Clarifications Concerning the Censures Published at Paris in the Name of the Theology Faculty There,” edited and translated by Clarence H. Miller, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Controversies*, vol. 82 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 135–36.

2. See Rule II among the Council’s “Ten Rules Concerning Prohibited Books Drawn Up by the Father Chosen by the Council of Trent and Approved by Pope Pius.”

3. W. W. Everts published an English translation of F. Hoschek’s biography and a collection of Hubmaier writings from the latter’s *Balthasar Hubmaier a počátové novokřesťanstva na Moravě* (Brünn, 1867) as “Life of Balthazar Hubmeyer, The Founder of ‘New Christianity’ in Moravia,” in several installments in the *Texas Baptist Historical Magazine* in 1891–92. In 1905, Henry Vedder published passages of Hubmaier’s works, much of which had been previously translated by Howard Osgood, librarian at the Rochester Theological Seminary, in Vedder’s biography, *Balthasar Hübmaier: The Leader of the*

Anabaptists (New York: Putnam's / Knickerbocker). Finally, George Diuguid Davidson, a long-time professor of modern languages in the United States, compiled *The Writings of Balthasar Hubmaier* in three volumes (Liberty, MO: reproduced by microfilm, William Jewell College, 1939).

4. Despite Pipkin and Yoder's subtitle of this collection, "Theologian of Anabaptism," even some Hubmaier scholars have refused to classify him as an Anabaptist. See, e.g., Eddie Mabry, *Balthasar Hubmaier's Doctrine of the Church* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), 48–49; Kirk R. MacGregor, *A Central European Synthesis of Radical and Magisterial Reform: The Sacramental Theology of Balthasar Hubmaier* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2006), esp. 9–17.

5. Kenneth R. Davis, review of Pipkin and Yoder, eds., *Balthasar Hubmaier, Sixteenth Century Journal* 22 (1991): 777.

6. Torsten Bergsten, *Balthasar Hubmaier: Anabaptist Theologian and Martyr*, translated and edited by Irwin J. Barnes and William R. Estep (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1978).

7. Unfortunately and tragically, it was not until 1992, three years following the publication of this Hubmaier volume, that Yoder's personal background of decades of sexual violence toward women became publicly and institutionally acknowledged at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and within the Mennonite Church. Although such moral turpitude on Yoder's part should not reflect on the work of Pipkin or of the sixteenth-century reformer they collectively translated, Yoder's misdeeds bear mentioning, and they have more recently been reckoned with in a more survivor-centered way. For more information on this subject, see Rachel Waltner Goossen, "'Defanging the Beast': Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder's Sexual Abuse," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 89 (2015): 7–80.

8. I want to acknowledge and thank fellow Hubmaier scholars Graeme R. Chatfield, Kirk R. MacGregor, Breanna J. Nickel, and Qiuye Zhao for their reflections on the influence of the Pipkin and Yoder volume and whose combined thoughts I have attempted summarily to represent in this preface.

9. Among these are his "Letter to Beatus Rhenanus," which can be found in *Briefwechsel des Beatus Rhenanus*, edited by Adalbert Horawitz and Karl Hartfelder (Leipzig: Teubner, 1886), 263; his "Letter to Johannes Adelphi (23 June 1522)," which can be found in *Über Balthasar Hubmaier, einen derberühmtesten Wiedertäufer zur Zeit der Reformation*, edited by Gustav Veesenmeyer, *Kirchenhistorisches Archiv* 4 (Halle: Renger, 1826), 232–34; his "Letter to Johannes Sapidus (26 October 1521)," which can be found in *Elsass I. Teil. Stadt Straßburg 1522–1532*, edited by Manfred Krebs and Hans Georg Rott, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer Bd. 7* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1959), 40–42 and translated subsequently by Kirk MacGregor as "Balthasar Hubmaier's Letter to Johannes Sapidus," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 84 (2010): 141–46; and a rediscovered (in 1984) fourth letter by Hubmaier addressed to the Schaffhausen council in addition to the three translated in the Pipkin and Yoder volume (35–48), housed in the *Staatsarchiv Schaffhausen*. This fourth letter, according to Hans Lieb and noted by Graeme Chatfield, is the longest of Hubmaier's appeals to that body, *Staatsarchiv Schaffhausen*, AA, 73, 4, 42. See Chatfield, *Balthasar Hubmaier and the Clarity of Scripture: A Critical Reformation Issue* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 73, n. 55. Finally, numerous other writings may potentially be attributed to Hubmaier's authorship, including the book *Ein warhaftig Entschuldigung und Klag gemeiner Stadt Waldshut von Schultheis und Rat aldo an alle christgläubig Menschen ausgegangen anno 1525*, printed by J. Loserth in "Die Stadt Waldshut und die vorderösterreichische Regierung in den Jahren 1523–1526," *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte* 77: 1–149.

10. For example, more could have been articulated in the introduction to Hubmaier's *Theses against Eck* regarding the long relationship between the two theologians. Additionally, references to Zwingli's baptismal work within Hubmaier's *On the Christian*

Baptism of Believers are not nearly as comprehensive as were the references within the *Dialogue with Zwingli's Baptism Book*. Further annotations could also be made at the beginning of *A Simple Instruction* regarding the variety of views on the Lord's Supper outlined by Hubmaier.

11. Ludwig Keller, *The Reformation and the Older Reform Parties* (Leipzig, 1882), 431.

General Editor's Preface

For many years a committee of German and North American historians known as the *Täuferaktenkommission* (TAK) has published source materials of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement under the title *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer* (QGT). More recently a similar organization has begun work in the Netherlands with Dutch source materials. It is known as the *Commissie tot de Uitgave van Documenta Anabaptistica Neerlandica* (CUDAN). These developments have, obviously, been deeply rewarding to scholars and others, as the multitude of articles and books using these documents amply verifies.

There are, however, still relatively few sixteenth-century Anabaptist materials available in the English language, though their number is increasing. It is to meet this need that the Classics of the Radical Reformation (CRR) series was begun some years ago with the aim of making available in the English language a scholarly and critical edition of the primary works of major Anabaptist and free church writers of the late fifteenth, sixteenth, and early seventeenth centuries. The first volume in this series, *The Legacy of Michael Sattler* by John H. Yoder, appeared in 1973. *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck* by William Klassen and Walter Klaassen, appeared in 1978; *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources* by Walter Klaassen, in 1981; and *The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism*, edited by Leland Harder, appeared in 1985.

In preparing these translations it has not been considered essential to the purposes of the series to include every known document of the writers under translation and, unless some contribution can be made to a fuller understanding of the text, it has not been considered essential to pursue at length critical textual issues. Those scholars interested in the details will, in any case, turn to the original language text. Where a choice had to be made between clarity and awkward literalism, the translators were encouraged to favor readability but without compromising the text.

It is a pleasure to express appreciation to translators-editors H. Wayne Pipkin, Director of the Institute for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies, Rüschtikon, Switzerland, and John H. Yoder of Notre Dame University for their careful and exacting work over a good number of years. It is gratifying to have Balthasar Hubmaier, one of the major theologians of sixteenth-century Anabaptism, made available to us in English in this way through the cooperation of a Baptist and a Mennonite. Appreciation is also expressed here to the Mennonite Publishing House (Herald Press), without whose commitment to the work of the church this series could not continue.

*Cornelius J. Dyck, Editor, CRR
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Editors' Preface

Recognition of the unique place of Balthasar Hubmaier among the writers of early Anabaptism has been evident for a century in the number of historians studying his life and works; likewise the enterprise of translation began relatively early. In 1905 Henry C. Vedder included sizable fragments of translation in his first English biography. In the 1920s W. O. Lewis visited libraries in Europe to gather photocopies which were bound and made available to scholars by William Jewell College of Liberty, Missouri, and were translated into English by Prof. G. D. Davidson of William Jewell College. Typescript and microfilm copies of Davidson's work have been used in numerous libraries.

Hubmaier was (after Hans Denck, whose writings are far fewer) the first of the early Anabaptists to have his writings appear in a full scholarly modern German edition. The translators and authors of the present collection have been privileged to work largely from that base, thereby being largely spared the burdens of textual and bibliographical research.

The choice of the title for this book—*Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*—does not intend to suggest that Hubmaier was the only theologian, or the normative theologian, of the Anabaptist movement. Such a movement could by its nature have no normative theologian. At important points Hubmaier was not typical of majority trends in the movement, or of the views which survived. Some other authors like Pilgram Marpeck and Menno Simons were equally prolific, although they came later. Others who wrote less may have been more original, or more profound, or may be thought by some to hold more promise for later generations. Nonetheless, Hubmaier's place in the first generation of the broad movement is unique. He is the only figure of his generation with university credentials, the only one with extensive public activity before joining the Reformation, the most skilled in popular expository writing.

The editors are indebted especially to the Institute of Mennonite Studies for the moral support represented by commissioning this work in the framework of the Classics of the Radical Reformation and for the secretarial services of Evelyn Habegger and Sue DeLeon at Elkhart and Melanie Nogalski, Jeanette Hunter, Andy Chancey, Heather Pipkin, and Angela Byrskog at Rüschtikon. Generous aid in providing draft translations was received from the late Elizabeth Horsch Bender. Several participants in the Hubmaier seminars at Rüschtikon have assisted at various levels in the production and refinement of the translations as well as in the search for sources and annotations: Christoph Weichert, Jürg Rother, Walter Rappold, Margret Tepper-Di Passa, and especially Patrick Mueller and Heinz-Günther Sussdorf. Appreciation is also expressed to the Baptist Theological Seminary for financial support of the project and to the Rüschtikon faculty for support and released time to complete the translations. Finally, Dr. Leland Harder brought to bear on the task of editorial review for style consistency and precision the skills and knowledge already demonstrated in his editing the previous CRR volume, *The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism*.

Both editors have reviewed all of the material in the collection, although for each text one of us took responsibility for initial drafting of the introduction, the translation, and the notes. H. W. Pipkin was primary editor for items 7, 9, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 27, 28, and 29.

Biblical texts are translated from the German, generally without reference either to Greek or Hebrew, or to English versions. In some cases where differences were immaterial the RSV wording has been followed, with permission.

The editors would like to thank the following persons whose reviews or personal communications have made possible several corrections for the second printing: Torsten Bergsten, Dennis D. Martin, Franklin Littell, W. Glenn Jonas, Merle Schlabaugh, and Peter J. Klassen.

*H. Wayne Pipkin
John H. Yoder*

Introduction

Hubmaier's Career

Balthasar Hubmaier was a participant in the Anabaptist wing of the Reformation for less than three years. Baptized in Waldshut on Easter Saturday, April 15, 1525, he met his death at the stake in Vienna on March 10, 1528. In that limited time his writings and public activity gained him a well-earned reputation as the most learned and the most gifted communicator among the Anabaptists. He did not stand in the middle of the Anabaptist movement, but was without contest the most able theologian and the most visible among the leaders of those first years. He was the only Anabaptist leader who had had a public career of any significance in his earlier Catholic experience.

Hubmaier had pursued traditional theological studies to the completion of the doctorate at the University of Ingolstadt. He had also functioned as an exceptionally effective popular preacher, marked especially by devotion to the most common traits of the popular Catholicism of the time: mariolatry, the piety of the pilgrimage, and anti-Semitism. It was from this rootedness in representative Catholicism that Hubmaier was to move, along a path of which we know little, to become first Zwinglian and then Anabaptist. It was this same rootedness which made of him the fluent and effective writer of pamphlets and treatises in the field of church order whose work abundantly merits being gathered in the present volume.

His theological training prepared him for the tactics of point-by-point debate on such matters as free will and original sin, and especially on the most threatening controverted issue of infant baptism. His gifts as a popular preacher and teacher show to the best advantage in his simple polemic tracts and in his writings on church order. His life story is accessible to

English-language readers,¹ and thus we limit our introduction here to the considerations which are indispensable for situating these documents in their context.

Born probably soon after 1480 in Friedberg near Augsburg, he took from there the second surname Friedberger, sometimes latinized as *Pacimontanus*.

During his university studies at Freiburg, 1503-1506, Hubmaier learned to know as a teacher the great Catholic scholar John Eck and as a friend John Faber. Both were later to be among his most bitter Roman Catholic adversaries. Fellow students as well were Urbanus Rhegius, the later Lutheran Reformer of Augsburg, and Wolfgang Capito, later at Strasbourg.

After a brief teaching time in Schaffhausen, Hubmaier returned to Freiburg as a preacher and was ordained as a priest. Early in 1512 he followed his teacher John Eck to the University of Ingolstadt, where he was awarded a doctorate in theology in September. He was employed at Ingolstadt as theology professor, an assignment which brought with it the responsibility of priest in the largest parish church in the city. In 1515/1516 he was prorector of the University, that is, the actual administrative head, since the titular rector was regularly a prince. Before completing the year as prorector he accepted a call as cathedral preacher in Regensburg.

The five years of activity in Regensburg were marked by Hubmaier's participation in an anti-Jewish movement like those which had ravaged other German cities earlier. He became a highly popular preacher to pilgrims at the chapel built at the place where the synagogue had stood. His preaching and the reputation for miracles which the chapel's statues of Mary had acquired led to such massive attendance that the wooden chapel soon needed to be replaced by a larger building. At the end of 1520 Hubmaier left Regensburg for Waldshut.

Thus far the story contributes little to our understanding of Hubmaier's later activity as a radical Protestant theologian.

¹ Bergsten 1978. This work is a translation and condensation by William R. Estep, Jr., of Bergsten's definitive biography (Bergsten 1961), which rendered all earlier biographies obsolete. We shall refer directly to Bergsten's German biography only at those points which Estep has omitted.

His fame as a preacher was growing. His departure from Regensburg is unexplained, as were some of his earlier rapid movements, like his abandoning Ingolstadt at the height of his academic responsibility. Was any of this mobility a sign of what in the future was to lead him to the Reformation? Was there some no longer discernible meaning in his leaving Schaffhausen before finishing the school year, leaving Ingolstadt before finishing the academic term, and now leaving Regensburg at the height of his popularity? None of these questions can be significantly illuminated from the sources that we have.

Nor is the evidence more adequate to explain how and just when his being at Waldshut began to permit the development of sympathies with humanists and with the Zwinglian Reformation. He returned to Regensburg late in 1522, only to leave again for Waldshut in the spring of 1523. From then on he was counted as a friend and ally of Zwingli in nearby Zurich and of Oecolampad in Basel. From then on most of the narrative thread can be carried by the documents in our collection. Hubmaier's movements from late 1524 to the spring of 1526 are recounted below in the respective introduction to texts 3-13.

Upon leaving Zurich sometime after April 11, 1526, Hubmaier stopped first at Constance, where he had some friends.² Soon he went on to Augsburg, where in addition to Lutheran and Zwinglian Reformation styles, there was a more radically inclined circle,³ including the recently arrived Hans Denck (from Nuremberg). It has been assumed on circumstantial grounds that it was Hubmaier who brought the practice of believers baptism to Augsburg, baptizing the Augsburg natives and Denck, thereby connecting South German Anabaptism with the earlier Swiss origins.⁴ Here Hubmaier also encountered Zwingli's friend Peter Gynoraues.⁵

² Cf. in text 12 below, p. 154.

³ ME I, pp. 182ff.

⁴ Werner Packull has objected to this assumption, on the grounds that the baptism of Denck by Hut is not clearly attested. Packull's argument supports his general concern to accentuate the diversity of the several types of Anabaptism. Packull 1973, pp. 327ff.

⁵ Cf. Gynoraues' letter to Zwingli, August 22, 1526, Z 8, pp. 688ff.

By July Hubmaier had moved on to Nikolsburg (Mikulov). The openness of the Liechtenstein family to the Reformation had already made room for the Lutheran Hans Spittelmaier⁶ (early 1524) and the more Zwinglian Oswald Glaidt⁷ (early 1526?). The suffragan bishop Martin Göschl was also friendly to the Reformation.⁸ Hubmaier was not merely welcomed: he seems to have become the prime mover of the Reformation, which soon became Anabaptist. The next few months saw the printing of most of our texts.

The one dimension of Hubmaier's activity at Nikolsburg which does not appear overtly in his writings is his growing separation from other Anabaptists. Hans Hut, once close to Thomas Müntzer, then baptized by Denck, came to Nikolsburg a few months after Hubmaier. Their differences were immediately visible, leading to formal debate(s) and finally to the expulsion of Hut, who went on to be Anabaptism's most effective evangelist from Vienna to the Tyrol, and apparently also of Glaidt. Hut differed from Hubmaier⁹ in many ways: Although Hubmaier baptized only adults, Hut considered his practice too inclusive, and the resulting congregational life insufficiently disciplined.

Hut held very clear convictions about the impending end of the age, for which believers baptism was seen as a preparation. He called for an economic order of equalization after the model of Acts (though he himself never stayed in one place to set up such a community). He seems to have held that *for the present* Christians should eschew violence, thus being recognized by the nonresistant Hutterian Brethren as their predecessor, but expected the saints to wield a righteous sword of judgment in the coming end time. To Hubmaier and his Liechtenstein patrons this was a revolutionary threat.¹⁰

A number of the followers of Hut and Glaidt remained in Nikolsburg. Their views of nonresistance and civil authority

⁶ Later to become an Anabaptist: ME IV, p. 599.

⁷ ME II, p. 522

⁸ ME II, p. 546. See also below the foreword to item 17. The best analysis of why and how Hubmaier came to Nikolsburg is in Zeman 1969, pp. 131-176.

⁹ The conflict with Hut is recounted in Bergsten 1978, pp. 361-517.

¹⁰ See below, pp. 152 and 557, the concentration of Hubmaier's "Recantation" and "Apology" on the theme of revolution as a point of distance between him and Hut.

were not eschatologically conditioned as for Hut but were more like those of the Swiss Brethren, against which Hubmaier directed his "On the Sword." These *Stäbler* (staff-bearers, contrasted to the sword-bearing *Schwertler*) were expelled from Nikolsburg in 1528, presumably at the same time that Lord Leonard had to turn Hubmaier over to the imperial authorities at Vienna. It was these refugees who for the first time pooled their goods, the event out of which the Hutterian Bruderhof evolved.

Only the Anabaptist period of Hubmaier's activity is represented here and only during this period did he have his writings printed. Letters and state records exist which throw light on the very different stories of his earlier activity in Regensburg and Waldshut,¹¹ but we have no writings proven to be from his pen.

Principles of Translation and Editing

For the entire corpus, fresh translations were prepared from the original texts. The translators/editors, however, took account of earlier English translations where such were known to exist. Known prior translations of individual texts are acknowledged in footnotes at the end of the respective introductions. An English version of the entire corpus, prepared in typescript by George Duiguid Davidson, then head of the language department of William Jewell College, and accessioned in the library of that college, was consulted in microfilm, as well as the editorial corrections made to it by Walter Klaassen. Earlier manuscript translations of our items 12, 15, 18, 19, 21, and 24 by Henry C. Vedder are in the library of Colgate Rochester Divinity School.¹²

All of our major texts are based, with permission, on the definitive edition of the writings of Hubmaier edited by Westin and Bergsten, cited hereafter: HS. Only a few supplementary items not in HS needed to be drawn from other sources. The translators have inserted page break numbers enclosed by slashes in the English text, e.g., /717/, to indicate the beginning of a new page in the source volumes (Z, HS).

¹¹ They are summarized in Sachsse 1914, pp. 82ff., and many are listed in Bergsten 1961, pp. 56ff.

¹² Thanks are due to Dr. Patricia Schoelles for this information.

The sequence of texts is chronological as far as the items can be dated.

The original texts were abundantly provided with notes in the margin (see specimen page facsimile, p. 128). Sometimes these functioned like subtitles, with a topic word summarizing the opposite text. Sometimes they indicated sources. Sometimes they corresponded to the function of italics by drawing attention to the most important passages on a page. Though this apparatus of marginal notes was clumsy and sometimes repetitive, nonetheless these notes have been retained in the interest of fidelity, not by reproducing in English the format of the original German page but by printing the marginalia as footnotes indicated by lowercase letters. For all details concerning printers, format, and the library location of originals, the reader will refer to HS.

The reader will note that the typography and page layout of this volume do not conform to modern standards. The editors have chosen to approximate the appearance of the original printed sources.

Hubmaier's abundant use of Scripture citations is an especially indispensable index of his attitude toward the Scripture, and of his knowledge of the biblical text. These are simply inserted into the text. Though the mode of Scripture reference in the original was only by chapter number, verse references are added by the editors where possible. A comma was inserted to separate the reference from the text; and where a Scripture reference was missing but known, we placed it in brackets.

Following the general translation principles of the CRR series, the translators have sought a middle path between strict literalism and the kind of paraphrasing which would prevent the reader from basing interpretation upon specific wordings. The varied spellings of personal and place names have been retained.

Later Protestant thought in the German language has come to make much of the distinction between *Kirche* as referring to the institutional church, visible in and administered by clergy, and *Gemeinde* as the gathered body of true believers. The translation attempts to render differences of this kind; yet the reader should remember that this distinction did not have in the sixteenth century quite the pointed clarity it has come to have since.

1

Statements at the Second Zurich Disputation

The “disputation” was a standard procedure to legitimate innovation in the age of the Reformation. Borrowed from the university promotion procedure, it provided for open debate, impartial chairmanship and record keeping, and a right for all to speak.¹ In a context where the established ecclesiastical order (i.e., the bishop) and teaching authorities (the universities) were not open to new ideas, the disputation was a substitute frequently resorted to by Protestant governments to legitimate change.

Some date Zurich’s Reformation from the disputation held January 29, 1523.² To prepare for that event Zwingli had presented sixty-seven theses. They were not formally debated, since the bishop’s representative Johannes Faber refused to recognize the authority of such an assembly to deal with matters of doctrine. The meeting nonetheless had the effect of confirming the governmental mandate to Zwingli as preacher appointed by the Council.³

The Second Zurich Disputation, convened in October 1523, was an effort to apply this sense of momentum and conviction to the concrete implementation of the Reformation. The public was already agitated about attacks on “images” (i.e., statues

¹ Cf. article *Disputations* in ME I, p. 70, and Jess Yoder 1962, pp. 14-35, 118-46. Hubmaier’s own “Theses Against Eck” (p. 49) begins with the rationale and rules for a disputation. Others of his earlier writings also called for debates to be held.

² E.g., Oscar Farner, who exclaims, “Zürich evangelisch!” (1954, p.356) Jacques Courvoisier prefers November 1522 (1947, p. 91; 1963, p. 20) when the state first claimed the right to name the clergy, making Zwingli “the first evangelical minister.” Dating a Reformation is in any case a dubious enterprise.

³ Zwingli himself greeted the outcome with what Bullinger called “great joy”: “Praise and thanks to God, who wants his will to reign in heaven and on earth!” (Bullinger 1838, I 104). It was Zwingli’s own later appeal to this decision as validation and the publication of his 67 theses which gave the January disputation its symbolic importance.

and paintings used in church and in processions) and the mass. It was at this meeting that the first discussion between Simon Stumpf and Huldrych Zwingli was recorded, in which some historians⁴ have sought to identify the beginnings of Anabaptism. Hubmaier was a participant. His first two contributions were unrelated to Grebel and Stumpf.

After the disputation, someone spread the rumor that Hubmaier had claimed to be a delegate from "the four cities on the Rhine and in the Black Forest." Hubmaier wrote to the Zurich Council asking them to deny that rumor, which the Council did by a minute of early December. The Council further said that Hubmaier's presence at the disputation had been due to the moving of the Holy Spirit, and that his contribution to the disputation, as well as a sermon or two, had been irreproachable.⁵ Hubmaier was clearly counted as a Zwinglian.⁶

On the Concept of Reform

Toward the end of the first day, which had been devoted to the subject of "images", chairman Sebastian Hofmeister (the Reformer of Schaffhausen) stated tentatively the conclusion to which the assembly had come, and asked whether there were any more grounds for objection to the doctrine presented by Zwingli and his colleagues.

As everyone was silent Dr. Baltassar Fridberger, pastor in Waltzhüt, rose and spoke as follows:⁷

The all powerful eternal God commanded us through Moses: If you come across the ox of your enemy or a stray donkey, lead him back to him, that is to say, to his owner; and if you see the ass of someone who hates you lying under his burden, do not go past but lift him up [Exod. 23:4f.]. Christ spoke similarly [Luke 14:5]: Which of you, if his ass or ox would fall in a pit, would not pull him out at the same hour

⁴ Blanke, 1961, p. 8. John Yoder, "The Turning Point...", MQR 32, 1958, pp. 128-46.

⁵ Loserth 1891, pp. 93ff. Köhler 1925, p. 318.

⁶ Cf. Pipkin 1984, pp. 43ff. English translations of the texts have previously been published partially in Hošek 1891, pp. 127f.; Vedder 1905, pp. 58ff.; fully in Estep 1976, 16ff.; and Harder 1985, pp. 238ff.

⁷ Z 2, pp. 716¹³-718.³

even on the sabbath day? So much more should it be taken seriously if a person is in error in matters that have to do with the salvation of his soul, or if he has fallen into a pit of error or abuse, that he should be helped.

Now it cannot be denied, but is rather public, and clearer than the sun, that for several hundred years much error and abuse has been infiltrated into Christian practices and added to them by the devil, who never rests. This has also happened on these two subjects: namely, the images of saints and the abuses of the mass. This is why the worthy, prominent, honorable, and wise /717/ Lords, Mayor, large and small Council, called "the Two Hundred," of this praiseworthy old city of Zürich, my gracious Lords, well esteemed and judged to be Christian, have undertaken to carry out a friendly brotherly conversation so that such quarreling and controversy as had arisen, in that some want to stand by the old and others by the new, might be alleviated without disturbance or disorder. All of which cannot take place more fittingly nor properly than through the proclamation of the clear Word of God as written in both Testaments. For in all divisive questions and controversies only Scripture, canonized and sanctified by God himself, should and must be the judge, no one else: or heaven and earth must fall [Matt. 24:35]. For the merciful God himself has set the judge on the judgment throne as we read in Ezekiel 44:24: "When there is a controversy men will stand in my judgment and will judge." Now the judgments of God can only be known out of the divine Word, as Scripture truly testifies to us. The Word of God judges, John 12:47-49; Deut. 17:8; Exod. 18:13-27; and 28:30.

Therefore Christ points us to the Scriptures: "Search the Scriptures. They give testimony of me, etc.," and pointed us to Moses and the prophets, whom we should hear: for he does not want to have testimony from men, John 5:39, 46.

This usage was held to by Christ himself and also by Paul and the other apostles. When they spoke against the devil or against evil men, they usually stuck Scripture under their nose as the judge of all controversial talk and thereby overcame them. For holy Scripture alone is the true light and lantern through which all human argument, darkness, and objections can be recognized. This the prophet David knew perfectly well as he said to God, "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet" [Ps.

119:105]. Christ also himself taught us the same thing: that we should take the lantern of his salutary Word in our hand, so that when the bridegroom comes we can enter into the marriage feast with him [Matt. 25:1-13]. Thus also the error and the abuses of making images and the mass shall be demonstrated only through the plumb line of the bright clear Word of God, thereby being recognized and /718/ moderated,⁸ and what is built thereupon will remain finally and permanently; for the Word of God is invincible.

Here there is no one who would speak against that.⁹

After another invitation from Chairman Hofmeister, Jacob Edlibach argued that the meaning of Exodus 20 is not that images should not be made or painted but only that they should not be worshiped. He claimed that pictures move the believers to contemplation and good works. A counter question of Frantz Zingk asked how images would move people who would be blind, perhaps meaning to argue the priority of the spoken Word. The debate threatened to degenerate.

To avert this from happening Dr. Balthasar Fridberger arose¹⁰ and read the text which stands written, Deut. 27 [15]: /719/ Moses commanded thus as ordered by God: "The Levites shall proclaim and say with a loud voice to all the people of Israel: 'Cursed is the person who makes a carved or molded image, which is an atrocity before the Lord God, and secretly places this image somewhere.' And the whole people shall say: 'Amen! So be it.' " This text or passage resolved this debate completely. All were satisfied.¹¹

Implementation Through Enlightenment

Toward the end of the second day's deliberations, which had centered on the mass, a point again was reached where Zwingli's opponents no longer dared respond. In this pause Hubmaier returned to the theme of the preceding day.

⁸ The use of the verb *gemassiget* is striking. Might Hubmaier at this time have contemplated less than a radical legal abolition of all abuses?

⁹ This line is a statement by the recorder rather than Hubmaier.

¹⁰ Z 2, pp. 718³⁰-719.⁸

¹¹ Cf. notes 9 and 3.

Then Dr. Balthassar Fridberger arose¹² saying:

Lord Mayor and other dear brothers in Christ! Yesterday it became thoroughly clear from Scripture that there should be no images. I myself would that /761/ no image had ever come into Christendom. For the text of Exodus 20:4-6 is bright and clear. It stands firm as a wall. By means of two distinct prohibitions it expressly forbids not only worshiping the images but also making them. Still more clearly it is said in Deuteronomy 5:6-10, where God speaks by means of three distinct prohibitions: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of servitude." Second: "You shall not make an image or any kind of form of all of the things that are up above in heaven or below on the earth or in the water under the earth." Third: "You shall not honor them, nor serve them, for I am the Lord your God, a jealous God." Thus we find also that God hates not only the adoration which takes place before the images but also the making of the image. Therefore he commands them to be burnt and those who make them he curses, Deut. 7:25 and 27:15. And all the people shall say: "Amen!"

Now some people in the room said: "Amen!"

Now I want to add a mosaic argument, which completely casts down the images with its two horns. That is: either it is commanded to possess images or it is not. If they are commanded, show us the Scripture and there will be no more question. If they are not commanded, then they are worthless. For everything which God has not taught us either with words or deeds is worthless and in vain. For as God alone is good [Matt. 19:17], so everything that is good must come from God alone. He who says otherwise accuses God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and St. Paul of lying. God the Father speaks [Deut. 12:32], "What I have commanded you, do only that, nothing more, nothing less." God the Son has said [Matt. 15:13]: "Every planting that has not been planted by my Heavenly Father will be torn out." Likewise, Paul [Rom. 14:23]: What does not arise from faith contributes to eternal damnation. Just one more thing. One of the two must be true:

¹² Z 2, pp. 760²¹-762.²²

Images are useless, or useful in the church. If they are useless what do you want with them? If they are useful, then God was not telling the truth because he said in Isaiah 44:9 that images are not useful for any purpose. /762/ It is also a blasphemy to tell the people that the images call us, move us, invite us, and draw us to contemplation. For it is Christ who calls the sinner. Only he himself moves him to good deeds. He invites him to the wedding feast. God the Father is the one who draws those who come to Christ.

But now that the pictures have come into the church (which is most lamentable for me because of the manifold abuses which take place), we have to look carefully how to deal with them correctly, so that no one will be scandalized and so that brotherly Christian peace may not be troubled. For there are many persons who mightily adhere to the images. Therefore the clear holy Word of God against images and idols in Old and New Testament must be shown to the people earnestly and often with care and diligence. This will exercise its authority and power and with time will drive all the images out, for it is impossible that the Word of God should be preached and not bring works and fruits in that whereto it was sent from God [Isa. 55:10]. Thus Paul did in Athens and other places, as we find in the Acts of the Apostles. When that happens, every Christian will find in himself and recognize that the images are not any use at all. Then a whole parish congregation will gather and decide unanimously without any disorder that the images shall be moved out and laid to sleep.¹³ Then the powerful Word of God will have borne its fruit, for the sake of which it went forth from God.

At the end of the second day's deliberations, when it seemed that the only remaining issue to discuss was the doctrine of purgatory, Conrad Grebel had requested that attention be given to various abuses related to the practice of the mass, inasmuch as the major issue had been the doctrine of the mass: i.e., whether it should be understood as a sacrifice. That theme became the first order of business when the session of the 28th

¹³ It is noteworthy that Hubmaier calls for the local congregation (not necessarily "Milords" of Zurich) to make the decision in each place.

began. Conrad Grebel again opened the debate but immediately deferred to “those who can speak better.”¹⁴

Then Dr. Baltassar Fridberger arose, speaking as follows:

Concerning numerous abuses in the mass—which I would rather call a testament of Christ or a memorial of his bitter death—without doubt this is the main point of the abuses, that we interpret the mass as a sacrifice. In order to be on record on that subject, which concerns me, and since I want to let myself be taught by all Christian believers according to God’s will but only through Scripture [I conclude that] I have not been taught otherwise than that I must with my dear brothers in Christ HuldricHo Zuinglen and Leone Jud confess that the mass is not a sacrifice but a proclamation of the covenant of Christ, in which there is a remembrance of his bitter suffering and his self-sacrifice, who offered himself once for all on the cross, and never more will again be offered; and that this is done by an outward visible sign and seal through which we are made completely certain of the forgiveness of our sins. And he who celebrates the mass otherwise is sealing a letter that has not yet been written.

The testimonies that move me thus to speak are found in Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19ff; Mark 14:22-24; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Hebrews 7 and 9.

Christ speaks: *Hoc facite* [“do this”]. He does not say, *Hoc offerte* [“Sacrifice this”].

From this it follows, first of all, that the mass as a sacrifice is of no use either to the dead or the living. For as I cannot believe for someone else, so I cannot hold mass for him. Since the mass is established by Christ as a sign whereby the faith of the believing person is confirmed.

Second: Because the body and the blood of Christ are sign and seal of the Word of Christ which is spoken in the

¹⁴ Z 2, pp. 768^o-788.^o Grebel had asked for the floor just before the session closed the previous evening. He now proposed that from the theme of the mass as such the debate should move to “many abuses which the devil has also added to this” and then yielded to “those who can speak better” (Harder 1985, p. 244). Both Conrad Grebel and Felix Mantz were quite open about their not being eloquent. That Hubmaier was ready to speak on the same theme shows how close he was to the Zwinglian movement at that time; it may indicate some prior planning.

mass, therefore /787/ the priest must not preach anything in the mass other than the pure, true, clear Word of God of which they are signs. He who celebrates mass otherwise is not properly holding mass.

Third: He who does not proclaim the Word of God is not celebrating mass. This is testified to by Christ and by Paul who learned it from him, Matthew, Luke, etc., as above: "Do this in my memory. As often as you do this you are proclaiming the death of the Lord" [1 Cor. 11:24b, 26]. The follower must be faithful or Christ is pushed aside.

Fourth: As the mass should be read in Latin to the Latins, therefore also in French to the French, in German to the Germans; for doubtless Christ did not speak Calcuttish¹⁵ with his disciples at the Last Supper but rather aloud and understandably. Furthermore, to celebrate mass is to read a testament letter. It would be ridiculous to read a Latin letter to a German who cannot understand Latin. For to celebrate the mass quietly and not proclaim is to silence the Lord. Paul wants us to speak understandably in the church. He would rather speak five words with understanding for the benefit of the church than ten thousand which are not understood, so that the people might be instructed and might say, "Amen," 1 Cor. 14:19.

Fifth: He who properly holds the mass shall give food and drink not only to himself but also the others who are spiritually hungry and thirsty, who desire it, and that in both forms. This Christ taught us with words and deeds as he said, "Drink ye all of it!" [Matt. 26:27]. He who teaches or behaves otherwise pokes a hole in Christ's testament letter.¹⁶ This not even an angel from heaven has a right to do, much less a human being on earth, Gal. 1:8; 3:15.

Dear pious Christians! These are my convictions, which I have been taught out of Scripture, especially having to do with images and with the mass. If they should not be right and Christian, I beg you all through Jesus Christ our only Savior, I plead and admonish you by reason of the last judgment, please correct me in a brotherly and Christian way with Scripture;

¹⁵ "Calcutta" was a standard symbol for the exotic or alien. It was used as well by Zwingli.

¹⁶ I.e., nullifies the document which "testament" signifies.

for I may err, I am a human being; but a heretic I cannot be.¹⁷ I want—and desire from the heart—to be instructed. /788/ I want to accept that from everybody with great thanks, confess my errors and subject myself to you willingly in all obedience according to the Word of God, and also truly to follow you as followers of Christ.

I have spoken. Judge and instruct me. I pray Christ that he will grant us his grace to do so.

He also said he was never so happy all year than when he learned that there was going to be discussion here of the abuses of the mass, of which there are still many more, as Conrad Grebel had said.

¹⁷ This phrase was an established proverb, cf. p. 46, n.15.

