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The Roots of Anabaptist Empathetic Solidarity, Nonviolent Advocacy, and Peacemaking

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Introduction

Much of Mennonite nonviolent advocacy and peacebuilding today finds its roots in sixteenth-century Anabaptism. But sixteenth-century Anabaptists were diverse. In keeping with the polygenesis view of Anabaptist origins, this paper assumes diversity in the geography, origins, cultures, shaping influences, spiritual orientations, attitudes to violence, and other expressions of Anabaptists.[1] We define Anabaptists as those who accepted (re)baptism or believer's baptism and the implications of that choice. Various Anabaptists had sectarian, ascetic, spiritualist, social revolutionary, apocalyptic, rationalistic, or other orientations, and the distinctions between them were often blurred. Geographically, they emerged in Switzerland in 1525, in South Germany-Austria in 1526, and in the Netherlands in 1530. Many agree that the Anabaptists displayed

1. Stayer, Packull, and Deppermann, "Monogenesis," 83–121; Coggins, "Definition"; Stayer, *Sword*. Surveys of Anabaptist history that incorporate the polygenesis perspective include Snyder, *Anabaptist,* and Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist*. Works that explore Anabaptist unity beyond polygenesis include Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist*, and Roth and Stayer, *Companion*.

both Protestant and Catholic characteristics in different configurations. "Negatively, there was anger against social, economic, and religious abuses . . . but responses to this discontent varied widely. Positively, the 'Word of God' served as a rallying point for all, but differences . . . emerged over how it was understood and used."[2] While Swiss Anabaptists tended to favor sectarianism after the 1525 Peasants' War, South German and Austrian Anabaptists tended more toward spiritualism, and early Dutch Anabaptists tended toward apocalyptic thinking. As they spread across Europe, there was much religious, intellectual, and cultural cross-fertilization. In the wake of much persecution that decimated the spiritualist and apocalyptic Anabaptist communities, after 1540 an increasingly uniform sectarianism emerged. By 1600 the Anabaptists had crystallized into the Swiss Mennonite, Dutch Mennonite, and Hutterite varieties that continue into the twenty-first century.

Certainly the Anabaptists were not perfect. Some were rigid, narrow-minded, short-tempered, and intolerant. But their legacy continues in Mennonite nonviolent advocacy and peacebuilding today. Why have Mennonites emphasized this? Where did this come from and what are its roots? What sixteenth-century external historical conditions and influences (political, social, economic, religious, persecution, suffering, etc.) gave rise to Anabaptist peaceful responses? What teachings, practices, actions, and experiences emerged from these conditions that inspired later Mennonites to engage in peacebuilding and shaped their peacebuilding approaches? Without being comprehensive, this paper suggests seven multifaceted factors that gave rise to Anabaptist service, solidarity with the marginalized, nonviolent advocacy, and peacemaking: (1) Medieval Catholic spirituality, (2) Renaissance Humanism, (3) the experience of socio-economic, political, and religious oppression, (4) the Protestant Reformation, (5) disillusionment and persecution after 1525, (6) the experience of a healing alternative community, and (7) emphasis on the centrality of Jesus and the New Testament.

Medieval Roman Catholic Spirituality

In the centuries before the Protestant Reformation, the medieval Roman Catholic Church saw many reform movements that sowed seeds for Anabaptism and later Mennonite peacemaking. A number came in the wake of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Avignon schism and scandals that for

2. Derksen, *Radicals*, 15. See Goertz, *Die Täufer*, 40–48; Hillerbrand, "Radicalism," 31–32, 36; Snyder, *Anabaptism*, 48–49.

a time saw the papacy controlled by France and, among other things, two and three rival popes. Reformers urged four major directions:

1. Conservative reformers called on the Catholics, leaders and commoners alike, to repent of sins and live purer lives. They did not challenge institutional structures.
2. Liberal reformers called on the entire church to return to the simpler and purer pattern of Christ and the New Testament church. This implied a dismantling of institutional structures and traditions.
3. Monastic reformers sought a purer faith outside the structures of the institutional church.
4. Lay reformers such as the Waldensians, the Beguines, the Union of the Brethren, and the Lollards sought to live simple, Christlike lives of poverty and service without the interference of the official Church.[3]

Medieval Catholic spiritual traditions that influenced Anabaptists included monastic ascetic traditions, mystical and spiritualist traditions, apocalyptic traditions, a medieval theology of martyrdom, and ethical, *imitatio Christi* traditions.[4] Monastic asceticism set a sharp distinction between the church and the world. Those under the reign of Christ were to keep themselves pure and separate from the world with a holy life. This emphasis appears in the Swiss Anabaptists after the Schleitheim Confession (1527), the Dutch Anabaptists under Menno Simons (1496–1561), and the Hutterites in Moravia. This had an ethical import. To live in the reign of Christ in purity and separation from the world meant to live in love and give up violence, even toward the enemy. These emphases contributed to an Anabaptist ethic of nonresistance and peacemaking.

In the tradition of Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–1327), John Tauler (c. 1300–1361), and an anonymous book entitled *The German Theology* (*Theologia Deutsch*), mysticism and spiritualism emphasized openness and yieldedness to God (*Gelassenheit)*, loving oneness with God and Christ, growth in holiness, and cooperation with God's grace for salvation. Anabaptist leaders with mystical inclinations included Hans Denck (c. 1500–1527), Hans Hut (c. 1490–1528), Leonard Schiemer (d. 1528), and Hans Schlaffer (d. 1528) in South Germany and Austria and Melchior Hoffman (c. 1495–1543) in

3. Davis, *Asceticism*, 54; Ozment, *Reform*; Brock, *Varieties*, 9–12.

4. See Davis, *Asceticism*, 54–63, 109–17, 128, 131–96, 202–92, 297–98; Snyder, *Anabaptist History*, 11–19, 71–79, 159–72; Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist*, 65–77, 111–60; Packull, *Mysticism*, 17–34, 48–61, 66–76; Williams, *Radical*, 73–108; Deppermann, *Melchior*, 160–219, 354–58, 363–65; Hillerbrand, "Anabaptism," 407–18; Gregory, *Salvation*, 198–249, 344–52; Krahn, *Dutch Anabaptism*, 8–79.

Strasbourg and the Netherlands. To be one with Christ in *Gelassenheit* implied submission to God, to the community, and to suffering without violent resistance, even toward enemies.[5] These emphases cultivated a peaceable Anabaptist worldview and ethic.

Medieval apocalypticism, widespread across Europe throughout the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century, also shaped Anabaptist orientations and behaviors. When crises and uncontrollable threats such as war, plagues, famine, and inflation loomed large, apocalypticism offered people meaning in life and helped them cope by asserting that God was in control and would soon save the righteous.[6] It inspired missionary zeal, apathy toward government, and a willingness to suffer and die.[7] Among Anabaptists, Hut, Schiemer, Schlaffer, Hoffman, and Ursula Jost (d. 1530) and Barbara Rebstock in Strasbourg, were widely influential apocalyptic preachers. Their messages expressed solidarity with the suffering and oppressed, an egalitarian thrust that all would come under God's judgment, and an anticlerical note that God would judge clerics and rulers who dominated and exploited the poor.[8]

Related to asceticism and mysticism was the medieval theology of martyrdom—the view that true followers of Christ must expect suffering. Anabaptists found this both in the Bible and in their experience. They found that their dangerous move of (re)baptism to join a separate church threatened the existing alliance of church and state, and often led to suffering and death. Soon after the Peasants' War of 1525, Anabaptists in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and Moravia faced severe persecution, especially from Catholic authorities, as did Dutch Anabaptists after the disastrous 1534 Kingdom of Münster. Between 1525 and 1550 some 2500–3000 Anabaptists died for their faith, and they developed a martyrological mentality.[9] Upper Austrian Anabaptists interrogated in 1527 confessed, "No one may be saved, except through suffering, that is genuine baptism by blood, into which they themselves consent through baptism by water."[10] Hans Hut, who

5. Packull, *Mysticism*, 17–34, 48–76, 159–75; Snyder, *Anabaptist History*, 69, 76–79; Snyder, "Mysticism," 195–215; Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist*, 65–78; Stauffer, "Martyrdom," 234–35.

6. Barrett, "Ursula Jost," 277–78, 282; Petroff, *Medieval*, 6.

7. Williams, *Radical*, 1303–7.

8. Packull, *Mysticism*, 77–87, 101, 106–17; Snyder, *Anabaptist History*, 70–72, 75–77, 143–45, 164–72; Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist*, 65–74; Barrett, "Ursula Jost," 273–87; Deppermann, *Melchior*, 354–58, 363–65; Derksen, *Radicals*, 70–71.

9. Gregory, *Salvation*, 198–99, 207, 211, 249, 344–52; Gregory, "Martyrdom," 477–79.

10. Gregory, *Salvation*, 211.

died in prison in 1528, wrote, "No man can come to salvation, save through suffering and tribulation which God works in him, as also the whole Scripture and all the creatures show nothing but the suffering Christ in all his members."[11] Suffering had purpose because God, salvation, eternity, and Truth were at stake.[12] And so emerged an ethic of Anabaptist nonresistance in the face of violence and solidarity with others who suffer.

In the Netherlands, the ground for Anabaptism was prepared by movements of monastic and lay piety such as the *Devotio Moderna* of the Brethren of the Common Life, and the Sacramentists. Both called for church reform, sought Christlike simplicity, and offered service to the poor. The Brethren of the Common Life educated children and emphasized following Christ in humble service. Many, including Anabaptists, cherished the book *Imitatio Christi* by the well-known Brother, Thomas à Kempis (c. 1380–1471).[13] The Sacramentists, an anticlerical reform movement led largely by clerics and artisans, favored a symbolic interpretation of the Eucharist. Many of them became Anabaptists.[14] For example, Menno Simons, a former Catholic priest, was well aware of sacramentism and the piety of the *Devotio Moderna*.[15] Like the Sacramentists and the *Devotio Moderna*, the Anabaptists expressed solidarity with the laity and the poor, and emphasized following Jesus in purity, humility, and obedience.

Medieval Catholic spirituality sowed seeds for Anabaptist nonresistance, nonviolent advocacy, egalitarianism, service, and solidarity with the marginalized. Like the reforming ascetics, Anabaptists sought to be pure, holy, and close to God apart from the corrupt Church institution. Like the medieval mystics, Anabaptists sought a direct relationship with God without the mediation of priests and the church institution, and growth toward Christ-like love for all. Like apocalypticists of the Middle Ages, Anabaptists preached that with Christ's imminent return, all would come under God's judgment and that God would judge authorities who oppressed the poor. Like Christ and the martyrs who had gone before, Anabaptists displayed a readiness to accept suffering and death without violence, and a hope stronger than death. This stance, and solidarity with others who suffer, implied criticism of the church and lay rulers who administered the suffering and a radical egalitarianism in the conviction that, on judgment day, all stand as

11. Hans Hut, "Mystery," 50–51.

12. Gregory, *Salvation*, 344–52.

13. Davis, *Asceticism*, 55–57, 63, 243–66; Williams, *Radical*, 95–108; 528–34; Ozment, *Reform*, 17, 79, 96–98; Krahn, *Dutch Anabaptism*, 22–25.

14. Waite, "Netherlands," 254–56, 265; Krahn, *Dutch Anabaptism*, 39–40, 44, 58, 71–72, 118–19; Williams, *Radical*, 95–108, 528–34; Davis, *Asceticism*, 55–57, 63.

15. Dyck, "Spirit," 119; Krahn, *Dutch Anabaptism*, 69.

equals before God. Like the *Devotio Moderna*, Dutch Anabaptists sought simplicity, service, purity, and Christ-likeness that challenged the institutional church. Like the Sacramentists, they challenged Church doctrine and stood in solidarity with the oppressed. These seeds that Medieval Catholic spiritual traditions sowed blossomed not only into Anabaptist faith and life but also into later Mennonite peacemaking.

Renaissance Humanism

A number of scholars have identified Renaissance Humanism as formative for Anabaptists.[16] In Italy from the fourteenth century onward, and then in northern Europe, the intellectual and cultural movements that became known as the Renaissance encouraged the revival of classical learning and the concept of human dignity, known as Humanism. The emphasis on human dignity led to a greater emphasis on education, rationalism, and human free will in the moral life. The call to return "to the sources" (*ad fontes*), which included a call to return to the Bible rather than merely church tradition, implied criticism of the Church. Growing literacy, the 1450 invention of printing, and the proliferation of pamphlets spread reforming ideas. Christian Humanism influenced Anabaptists to criticize the corruption and hubris of church and secular leaders, to uphold both the Spirit and the Word of God, to center on Jesus and the New Testament, and to embrace ethical living.[17]

The greatest Renaissance humanist scholar was Desiderius Erasmus (1465–1536), who had studied with the Brethren of the Common Life and cherished "their regard for simple living and simple Biblical truth."[18] Society, he argued, was entangled in corruption because of having lost sight of the simple teachings of the Gospels. To rectify this he offered (1) clever satires to show people the error of their ways, (2) serious moral treatises to guide people toward proper Christian behavior, and (3) scholarly editions of Christian texts. In his satires (e.g., *Praise of Folly*, 1509) he lampooned society (the folly of war, individual and national pride), the church (hair-splitting theologians, ignorant monks, power-loving bishops), and the common folk for their superstitions (fasting, confessions, indulgences, pilgrimages).

16. See, for example, Friesen, *Erasmus*, 20–42, 44, 54, 96, 109; Burger, "Erasmus"; Davis, *Asceticism*, 266–92; Hall, "Possibilities," 149–70; Fast, "Dependence," 104–19; Kreider, "Humanism," 123–41.

17. Davis, *Asceticism*, 266–92; Burger, "Erasmus," vi; Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist*, 28–29.

18. Littell, *Origins*, 50.

Of his serious moral treatises, in *Handbook of the Christian Knight* (1501) he urged a simple life, tolerance, and a Christ-like ethic. In *Complaint of Peace* (1517) he pleaded, especially to the papacy, for an end to Europe's incessant wars and for Christian pacifism. As for scholarly texts, in addition to reliable editions of the Church Fathers, Erasmus produced a new authoritative Greek New Testament (1516) together with explanatory notes and his own Latin translation. Like many humanists, he believed that once people understood Christ's message and the good, they would do it. Piety and charity would become the rule. So steep people in the Word of God.[19]

Many Anabaptists came to rely on Erasmus's translation and explanatory notes for their understanding of Christian baptism and ethical Christian living, and their views of grace, salvation, free will, moral reform, and the authority of Church councils versus that of the Bible.[20] They echoed Erasmus in their pleas for freedom of conscience and faith. In 1534 Leopold Scharnschlager wrote to the Strasbourg city council,

> I am convinced that each one of you who loves the truth desires a free, voluntary access to God, . . . uncoerced, without pressure. And if someone would force you to a faith, which . . . you could not accept in peace of conscience, you would desire to be free in that. Therefore I sincerely request that you remember and take to heart that this is the situation with me and my associates. . . . You urge us to depart from our faith and accept yours. That is the same as if the Emperor were to say to you that you are to give up your faith and accept his.[21]

The Regensburg Anabaptist, Hans Umlauft, pleaded similarly in 1539, "We are people and human as you and those of your kind created in the image of God, a creation of God, having God's law, will and word written in our hearts (Rom. 2:[15]). Therefore you should grant to us a gracious God as well as to yourselves."[22]

For some the plea for freedom of faith implied that others also ought to be free to follow their conscience. Kilian Aurbacher, a preacher in Moravia, wrote in 1534, "It is never right to compel one in matters of faith, whatever

19. Nolan, *Erasmus*, 8–23; Latourette, *Christianity*, 661–62; Krahn, *Dutch Anabaptism*, 25–28.

20. Friesen, *Erasmus*, 20–42, 44, 54, 96, 109; Nolan, *Erasmus*, 8–23; Burger, *Erasmus*, 43–128, 150–54; Davis, *Asceticism*, 266–92; Williams, *Radical*, 42–46.

21. Scharnschlager, "Strasbourg Council," 214–15.

22. Hans Umlauft, "Letter," 294–95.

he may believe, be he Jew or Turk."[23] Hans Denck in 1525 argued that such tolerance would be positive for society:

> Such a security will exist also in outward things, with practice of the true gospel that each will let the other move and dwell in peace—be he Turk or heathen, believing what he will—through and in his land, not submitting to a magistrate in matters of faith . . . I stand fast on what the prophet says here. Everyone among all peoples may move around in the name of his God. That is to say, no one shall deprive another—whether heathen or Jew or Christian—but rather allow everyone to move in all territories in the name of his God. So may we benefit in the peace which God gives.[24]

Influences of Erasmus and Christian Humanism on Anabaptists included (1) critiques of the religious establishment, (2) critiques of the political establishment, (3) an emphasis on the Bible as the fundamental Christian source, (4) a focus on Jesus and the Gospels, (5) alternate interpretations of New Testament texts, (6) a call for moral reform, and (7) a refusal to coerce people on questions of faith and conscience. This led Anabaptists to eschew the wars of their rulers, including those against the Muslim Turks who in the 1520s posed a great military threat. At the trial that led to his 1527 execution, Michael Sattler confessed, "If the Turk comes, he should not be resisted, for it stands written: thou shalt not kill. We should not defend ourselves against the Turks or our other persecutors, but with fervent prayer should implore God that he might be our defense and our resistance."[25] The call of Erasmus and other Humanists to return to the sources, including the Bible and the New Testament church, implied an egalitarianism that invited all to bypass the institution and tradition of the Catholic Church in the search for Truth. Their emphasis on human dignity challenged the church's doctrine of original sin and predestination, and implied free will and tolerance for those who are different.[26] Against the tradition, wealth, and violence of the church institution, Christian Humanism offered a return to the simplicity, service, and peace of Christ. Here lay seeds of Anabaptist egalitarianism, empathetic solidarity with the marginalized, tolerance of others, nonviolent advocacy, peacemaking, and service.

23. Aurbacher, "1534," 293.
24. Denck, "Commentary," 292.
25. Sattler, "Trial," 72.
26. Klager, "Mennonite Religious Values," 139–44.

Experience of Socio-economic, Political, and Religious Oppression

The experience of socio-economic, political, and religious oppression also influenced Anabaptist nonresistance, solidarity with the marginalized, and nonviolent advocacy. The feudal system in medieval society featured two main social classes—the lords and the serfs who worked for them. Despite a population increase and a rise in cities from the twelfth century onward that brought a rise in trade, a money economy, and a merchant class, in the sixteenth century peasants still constituted over 85% of the population.[27] Apart from some leaders before 1530, almost all the Anabaptists came from the artisan or peasant classes. Many were familiar with peasant poverty and they shared in the hardships that common folk shared.

The largest landowner was the church, and many peasants worked church lands. Everyone was aware of peasant unrest, which had much to do with agricultural production and economic conditions. After about 1450 inflation rose sharply as low yields forced prices higher, and church and secular taxes increased. Peasants suffered an ever greater economic pinch. Exacerbating these economic conditions were long-standing grievances against lay rulers, the clergy, and the church over compulsory tithes, rents, usury, and land seizures. Anger over recurrent poor harvests, rising costs, and political powerlessness, targeted at religious and secular landlords, erupted in peasant revolts every few years, as in the 1493–1517 *Bundschuh* movement.[28]

Religious and political abuses also bred anger and social unrest. The church imposed taxes on all parts of Europe to finance the church hierarchy, art collections, luxurious lifestyles, political diplomacy, buildings, and wars. As national consciousness rose, people grew less willing to pay taxes to distant Rome. As taxes did not generate enough revenue for the church, other money raising schemes included simony (buying and selling church offices), indulgences (forgiveness of sins in exchange for a financial donation), annates (the church takes a priest's first year's salary), and reservations (when a bishop dies the church collects his salary but does not replace him),

27. On late medieval and sixteenth-century social conditions, see Kamen, *Iron Century*; Blickle, *Revolution*; Stayer, *German Peasants' War*, 19–60; Scribner, *German Reformation*, 26–32, 37–41; Scribner, "Religion," 2–22; Cohn, "Anticlericalism," 3–31; Ozment, *Reform*, 190–204; 272–85; Williams, *Radical*, 137–74.

28. Brady, Jr., *Ruling Class*, 202; Cohn, "Anticlericalism," 6–28; Derksen, *Radicals*, 21, 38; Rott, "Strasbourg," 199; Ozment, *Reform*, 190–99.

relics of saints, and pilgrimages to holy sites. Further, clergy were often uneducated and/or immoral.[29]

Martin's Luther's 95 theses posted to a church door in 1517 were in response to these church abuses, and many Anabaptists sympathized with these sentiments. For many, economics and theology were inseparable. People who felt oppressed economically concluded that the church's teaching must be off, for their experience was of injustice, often imposed by the church. When preachers such as Luther preached that a true church with true teaching should offer social and economic justice and equality to all, this was music to the commoners' ears. Luther's words on freedom and "the Gospel" gave new vigor to the *Bundschuh*'s concepts of "ancient rights" and "divine right." Meanwhile, apocalyptic preachers, other reformers, and provocative pamphlets exacerbated unrest. So while preachers such as Luther touched a chord with scholars, artisans, and peasants, the mass response of commoners gave power to the reformers' preaching.[30]

In the years 1524–26, economic oppression, political marginalization, ecclesiastical corruption, and disillusionment over the lack of meaningful involvement in religion came to a head. In what is known as the Peasants' War, some 300,000 peasants and artisans rose to protest their grievances, and to pursue visions of a better society inspired by the "Word of God" with its proclamations of justice and freedom.[31] The clearest expression of the commoners' vision was a pamphlet of 1526 or 1527 by a Nuremberg printer named Hans Hergot. Entitled *On the New Transformation of the Christian Life*, the pamphlet describes a Christian society of equality and sharing. With an oft-repeated theme of "for the honor of God and the common good," Hergot offered the following images:

> In order to promote the honor of God and the common good, . . . God will humble all social estates, villages, castles, ecclesiastical foundations and cloisters . . . The villages will be come rich in property and people, and all their grievances will be redressed. The nobility of birth will pass away, and the common people will occupy their houses. Cloisters will lose the four mendicant orders and the right to beg, and the other rich cloisters will lose what they possess in payments and rents . . . All resources—such

29. Ozment, *Reform*, 204–22; Cohn, "Anticlericalism, 3–31; Snyder, *Anabaptist History*, 15–19; González, *Christianity*, 6–13.

30. Baylor, *Radical*, xi; Stayer, *German Peasants' War*, 19–60; Cohn, "Anticlericalism," 3–31; Derksen, *Radicals*, 25–26, 31, 35–42; Rott, "Strasbourg," 199.

31. See Blickle, *Revolution*, 25–67; Baylor, *Radical*, xi–xvii; Stayer, *German Peasants' War*, 5; Gerber, "Sebastian Lotzer," 80–83; Ozment, *Reform*, 272–80; Snyder, *Anabaptist History*, 32–33; Goertz, "Karlstadt," 3–4.

> as woods, water, meadows, etc.—will be used in common . . . And all things will be used in common, so that no one is better off than another.[32]

This new society would also be spiritual: "The people will believe in God, and prove this with works, prayers, fasting, and by reflection on God's suffering, divine mercy, and other matters . . . Then the 'Our Father' will be fulfilled and the word which the lord often uses in the 'Our Father' will be meaningful: our, our, our."[33] More specific grievances and political plans appeared in Peasants' War programs such as *The Twelve Articles of the Upper Swabian Peasants*.[34]

Of course the establishment—the rulers, the upper classes, the Catholic Church hierarchy, and even reforming intellectuals such as Luther—did not like this. They feared that all of society would be overturned. So rulers, supported by the church hierarchy and Luther, brutally crushed the uprising—and the commoners' quest for a social revolution. Some 100,000 commoners were killed.[35] Survivors "were left with a choice either to abandon their dream by returning to Catholicism or the [Protestant] reform, or to pursue it down alternative paths," such as apocalypticism, spiritualism, or sectarianism.[36]

Most Anabaptists were familiar with these developments. Their own experiences of economic hardship and moral, ethical, and theological abuses led to resentment against the church hierarchy, compassion for the suffering, solidarity with other dissenters, a reminder that Christ too had been poor and persecuted, and a commitment to recover the simple, peaceable model of Christ and the New Testament church. Memory of these experiences came to influence Anabaptist peacemaking, egalitarianism, empathetic solidarity with the marginalized, and nonviolent advocacy.

The Protestant Reformation

In several ways the Protestant Reformation was the nest in which Anabaptism was born, and it influenced Anabaptist biblicism, egalitarianism,

32. Hans Hergot, "Christian Life," 210–12.

33. Ibid., 210–13.

34. Other peasant programs included "The Eleven Mühlhausen Articles," "The Memmingen Federal Constitution," "The Document of Articles of the Black Forest Peasants," "The Forty-six Frankfurt Articles," and "Michael Gaismair's Territorial Constitution for Tyrol," in Baylor, *Radical*, 227–60.

35. Snyder, *Anabaptist History*, 32; Ozment, *Reform*, 280–85.

36. Derksen, *Radicals*, 42.

and peacemaking orientations. (1) Reformers such as Martin Luther (1483–1546), Ulrich Zwingli (1481–1531), and Andreas von Karlstadt (c. 1480–1541) articulated the grievances against the Catholic Church and gave commoners a voice. At the same time, the embrace of the masses gave the reformers social power and made the Reformation possible.[37] Anabaptists emerged out of this movement and in some ways carried it further. (2) The Reformation placed new emphasis on the Bible, its availability, and the right of ordinary people to read and understand it. Anabaptists highlighted this. (3) The Reformation placed new emphasis on the grace of God and faith in Christ for salvation, apart from saints, clerics, and the institutional church. While Anabaptists interpreted grace and faith somewhat differently from the mainline reformers, they all embraced the need for God's grace and faith. (4) The Reformation imagined and articulated a new vision for the church, one different from the Catholic Church and closer to the New Testament church, in which all believers were priests.[38] Anabaptists embraced this vision, and when it fell short, they tried to carry it further.

In his 95 theses and in his preaching Martin Luther gave eloquent expression to the widespread criticism of Catholic Church tithes and abuses, and the popular agitation for social justice and meaningful worship. His emphasis on spiritual freedom by faith through the grace of God carried connotations of socio-economic freedom and offered hope to burdened peasants and artisans. His *sola scriptura* principle reinforced peasant demands for justice in line with the "Word of God." His use of the printing press hastened the spread of pamphlets with messages of reform. His translation of the Bible into German encouraged people to read it for themselves. His emphasis on Jesus Christ alone contributed to the criticism of the church's hierarchy, sacraments, confessions, and other forms of social control. Colleagues of Luther such as Karlstadt pushed his reforms further and encouraged image removal and attacks on monasteries. Were it not for Luther's break with the Catholic Church and the popular impetus he offered for reform, the Anabaptist movements might have been stillborn.[39]

The first Anabaptists emerged in the context of the Swiss Reformation, led by the Humanist priest and Bible preacher Ulrich Zwingli. Like Erasmus and Luther, Zwingli's emphasis on the authority of the Bible reinforced the criticisms of the Catholic Church and society. Zwingli's popular Bible-based

37. Stayer, *German Peasants' War*, 43, 60.

38. See Snyder, "Recovering," 12–16; Snyder, *Anabaptist History*, 43–49; Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist*, 224–31; Roth, "Recent Currents," 530–35.

39. Derksen, *Radicals*, 34, 36–39; Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist*, 27, 30–33, 44–49, 53; Pater, *Karlstadt*; Snyder, *Anabaptist History*, 19–22, 25–28; Goertz, "Karlstadt," 1–20.

preaching and his success in persuading the Zurich city council to accept reform (albeit gradually) enabled Humanist intellectuals in the city and priests and commoners in the countryside to hope that thoroughgoing reform, with social justice and meaningful worship might truly be on the way. Only when intellectuals in Zurich and priests in the countryside became impatient with the slowness of Zwingli's reform did they break from him in pursuit of a more radical reformation of the countryside, which became caught up in the Peasants' War.[40]

Although Anabaptists ended up diverging from the mainline reformers, in many ways the Reformation made the birth of Anabaptists possible. By energizing the protests against poverty and church abuses, by giving hope for change, by focusing people's attention on the authority of the Bible rather than church tradition, by energizing peasants and artisans to call for a transformed society in line with the "Word of God," by focusing worshipers' attention on Jesus and the New Testament, by stimulating pamphlets to spread ever more radical ideas of reform, and by spawning other reformers throughout Europe, the Protestant Reformation prepared the way for Anabaptism. Its early call to restore the New Testament church invigorated the Anabaptists. The Reformation's *sola scriptura*, *sola fide*, and *sola gratia* principles opened the way for Anabaptists to approach God and study the way of Christ without saints and priests to mediate Truth for them, and to stand in solidarity with others who sought to ground their lives and societies in "the Word of God." In the Reformation's emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, Anabaptists affirmed the dignity of all, including women, peasants, artisans, and the poor. Thus the Protestant Reformation gave the Anabaptist movements fertile soil in which to take root.

Experience of Disillusionment and Persecution after 1525

Despite the hope engendered by Christian Humanism and the Protestant Reformation, by 1526, many common folk and radicals, including future Anabaptists, were disappointed and disillusioned. The published programs of the Peasants' War movement such as the "Twelve Articles," had justified their demands with "the Word of God." And Martin Luther's movement had disseminated hopeful slogans such as "the pure Gospel," "Christian liberty," and "the priesthood of all believers."[41] Rejecting both secular and

40. Snyder, "Swiss Anabaptism," 48–79; Snyder, *Anabaptist History*, 51–65; Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist*, 27–50; Stayer, *German Peasants' War*, 61–92; Goertz, "Karlstadt," 3–4.

41. Baylor, *Radical*, xi, 231–38; Ozment, *Reform*, 272–87.

ecclesiastical hierarchies, leaders of the rural communal Reformation had envisioned "an egalitarian Christian communalism." Each local community would "hear the gospel preached in pure form and regulate its life according to the gospel." Community members would have rights to manage certain local affairs, oversee the local church, choose their own minister, and allocate their own tithes.[42]

But hopes were dashed. Although Luther had expressed support for such reforms in 1522, by 1524 he opposed them.[43] The commoners' uprising of 1524–26 was crushed. Zwingli was not willing to move his reform faster than the Zurich city council was willing, for like all others, he envisioned not a new, separated church, but a *Volkskirche*, a church of the community that would include the city council. Idealists such as Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and other young Humanist intellectuals in Zurich, wishing to enact the "Word of God" immediately, grew impatient. Rural priests such as Wilhelm Reublin and Simon Stumpf and their parishioners were frustrated by Zurich's continued control over their pastors and the use of their tithes. A public debate on baptism in 1525 resulted in condemnation of the radicals' viewpoint, and in January 1527 Felix Manz became the first Anabaptist to be executed by drowning.[44] The radicals, including the Anabaptists, were disillusioned and marginalized.

Some disappointed radicals persisted in their quest for a social revolution. Other recast it in apocalyptic terms. Others chose a more individualistic spiritualism. Still others, the Anabaptists, "formed separatist communities in which to realize their radical ideals. Whatever the path, to some degree the radical movements from 1526 onward were a sublimated form of the commoners' revolt of 1525."[45]

But even these alternative directions involved disappointment. A broad social revolution never happened. Among the apocalypticists, the predictions of Hans Hut, Melchior Hoffman, and others of Christ's return in 1528, 1529, 1533, and other years were all proven wrong. Those who turned to spiritualism tended over time to die out because they lacked institutional structures for the long term. And Anabaptists had to rethink their view of the church. The first Anabaptists in Switzerland had envisioned a *Volkskirche*, a reformed church of the community. The disastrous Peasants'

42. Baylor, *Radical*, xvi, xxi; Goertz, "Karlstadt," 3–4; Gerber, "Sebastian Lotzer," 82–83.

43. Baylor, *Radical*, xvi; Ozment, *Reform*, 280–85; Cohn, "Anticlericalism," 5–6.

44. Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist*, 27–64; Snyder, *Anabaptist History*, 12–15, 32–34, 51–65; Stayer, *German Peasants' War*, 61–65.

45. Derksen, *Radicals*, 42; Baylor, *Radical*, xx–xxvi; Stayer, *German Peasants' War*, 73.

War led them to question both the method of violence and the possibility of a Christlike *Volkskirche*. Led by men such as Michael Sattler in Switzerland, Jacob Hutter and Peter Riedemann in Moravia, Pilgram Marpeck in South Germany, and Menno Simons in the Netherlands, and as seen in 1527 Schleitheim Confession, many Anabaptists committed to a voluntary church separate from the existing alliance of church and state.[46] This invited the hostility of political and ecclesiastical authorities.

An economic disappointment was the ongoing practice of usury. Fridolin Meyger, a Strasbourg notary who drafted contracts for "rents and debts payable to the aristocracy," confessed that the failure of the Peasants' uprising and the ongoing practice of usury among the upper classes "drove him to the Anabaptists."[47] Hans Pfistermeyer, a Swiss Anabaptist leader, declared in 1531, "I have been offended by [the clergy's] remuneration since it has its source in usury. I know full well that he who serves with the gospel is entitled to a sufficient living from it. However, it may not come from interest or from usury. It is unrighteous gain."[48]

Another disappointment was hostility from the clergy and the lack of moral discipline in the Lutheran and Reformed churches. In the village of Wangen, at the funeral of the Anabaptist Hans Weibel, the pastor permanently alienated Weibel's wife and children by calling him "a godless and hellbound man." According to Hans Hagenawer, in the Reformed church "people lived unethical lives, and the pastor punished the pious, ignored blatant sinners, and slandered people rather than preach the word of God."[49] The Strasbourg Anabaptist, Leonhard Jost, refused to join the Reformed church for fifteen years because morals were not improved. When he finally joined in 1539, it was "because the ban had finally been established in the church and not every blatant, gross sinner [was] admitted to the eucharist."[50] Menno Simons complained in 1539,

> I wish to admonish you in faithful brotherly spirit one and all, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Zwinglians . . . What is your entire ambition and conduct if not world, carnality, belly, and life of luxury? . . . Some of you parade in ermine, in silk and velvet, others live in headlong revelry, others are avaricious and hoard; some disgrace virgins and young women, others defile

46. Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist*, 51–64, 159; Snyder, *Anabaptist History*, 51–63.
47. Derksen, *Radicals*, 49, 96, 112.
48. "Conversation with Pfistermeyer, 1531," 124.
49. Derksen, *Radicals*, 218.
50. Ibid., 124.

> the bed of their neighbor, the chastity of others is like the chastity of Sodom.[51]

Worse than hostility and slander was outright persecution from secular rulers such as Ferdinand II and the Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed clergy. Between 1525 and 1550 thousands of Anabaptists were imprisoned, tortured, exiled, and executed.[52] As seen in *The Martyrs' Mirror*, this bred in the Anabaptists a deep empathy for others who suffer and are marginalized.

The radicals' sense of betrayal in Luther's reversal, the crushing of the peasants, Zwingli's cautious approach to reform, the end of the earliest Anabaptists' dream of a truly Christlike *Volkskirche*, the lack of moral improvement in Protestant churches, and outright persecution from secular and church authorities all shaped the early Anabaptists' worldview. These disappointments bred a commitment to an alternative community in line with the New Testament church. Here members would love each other, be radically equal, stand in solidarity with others who suffered, and accept persecution nonviolently. Thus disillusionment with developments after 1525 influenced early Anabaptist nonresistance, egalitarianism, solidarity with the suffering, and nonviolent advocacy.

Experience of a Healing Alternative Community

In the face of disillusionment and persecution, the support, encouragement, hope, and healing that Anabaptists found in their gatherings empowered them in their commitment and engendered later Mennonite peacebuilding and nonviolent advocacy.

One form of support was economic. Among the Hutterites this meant sharing all things in common. Among the Swiss Brethren, the Marpeck communities, and the Dutch Anabaptists, this generally meant generous sharing with those in need.[53] Swiss Brethren in Strasbourg testified in 1526 that they gathered in homes for worship. Emphasis fell on baptism following faith and mutual ethical obligations, including pacifism and sharing material possessions with the needy.[54] When Pilgram Marpeck, Jakob Kautz, Wilhelm Reublin, and Fridolin Meyger were arrested in 1528, they were collecting money for refugees, foreigners, and the poor in Strasbourg.[55]

51. Menno Simons, "Foundation," 207–8.
52. Gregory, "Martrydom," 478; Stayer, "Swiss-South," 108–9.
53. See Stayer, *German Peasants' War*, 95–106.
54. Derksen, *Radicals*, 46.
55. Ibid., 62.

Another form of support was social and moral. Meyger, distressed that neither the Peasants' War nor the Reformation had eliminated the use of usury against the poor, found "sincere love of God and neighbor" among the Anabaptists.[56] Some who were ostracized in the established churches found acceptance in Anabaptist circles. In Wangen, Simon Bentzen investigated the Anabaptists to see if they were as evil as the pastor had described them. He discovered that "they did good and avoided evil. Earlier he had been godless but now in their circle he sought to do good and be pious."[57] Moral support included a voice for all. All could interpret the Scriptures and contribute their insights. In meetings led by Leonard Schiemer in Rattenberg in 1527 and probably Pilgram Marpeck in later years,

> members met frequently to pray for each other. During meetings persons spoke in order while the others listened and evaluated the message, and they celebrated the Lord's Supper . . . Offerings were used to meet mutual needs. The dissolute were disciplined by the group. Each individual, then, was accountable for the group's life, worship, discipline and ministry.[58]

Participatory worship enabled mutual caring and accountability.

Women, who normally were voiceless in the sixteenth century, often found a voice and a ministry in Anabaptist congregations. Since worshipers usually gathered in homes, women, as hosts, held the congregations and the entire movement together in crucial ways. Ministry opportunities arose especially in communities where the work of the Holy Spirit received emphasis. Ursula Jost and Barbara Rebstock, for example, were known for their preaching and had a loyal following. In places, women taught, preached, evangelized, interpreted Scripture, wrote letters and songs, carried messages, nourished believers in hiding, hosted sewing circles and Bible readings, distributed alms, and housed traveling ministers and refugees.[59] As the examples of Margareta Sattler (1527), Elsbeth Hubmaier (1528), Margret Hottinger (1530), Katherina Hutter (1538), Anneken Jans (1539), and Elisabeth Dirks (1549), and Soetken van den Houte (1560), and others show,

56. Ibid., 49.

57. Ibid., 214.

58. Ibid., 62–63; Boyd, *Pilgram Marpeck*, 61–62.

59. See Roper, *Holy Household*, 253–54; Haude, "Gender Roles," 430–31, 439; Stjerna, *Women*, 15–17; Hecht, "Review," 406–15; Wyntjes, "Netherlands," 276–89; Wyntjes, "Reformation Era," 165–91; Sprunger, "Radical Reformation," 46; Umble, "Women," 135–45; Klassen, "Women," 548–71; Snyder, *Anabaptist History*, 251–74; and, generally, Snyder and Hecht, *Profiles*.

women displayed amazing courage in the face of imprisonment and death. Companions in faith, mission, and martyrdom, they were spiritual equals.[60]

To strengthen each other in the face of torture and death, the Swiss Brethren assembled a biblical concordance with passages pertaining to persecution. Clustered passages under headings such as "'Persecution,' 'Bearing Witness,' 'Be Not Afraid,' and 'Patience'" helped them to internalize the Bible verses with which they answered their interrogators and faced death.[61]

In their church communities, early Anabaptists discovered hope, love, acceptance, equality, inclusion, mutual sharing, and mutual support. Economic support, whether in sharing all things in common, or in generous sharing with those in need, expressed solidarity and equality with all. Social and emotional support communicated acceptance, equality, and solidarity. Radical equality emerged both in the relatively prominent place of women and in the participatory worship where all could interpret the Scriptures and contribute their insights. Here Anabaptists encouraged each other to follow Christ in holiness and service, and in suffering and death if necessary. Thus the experience of a healing alternative community nurtured early Anabaptist nonresistance, service, egalitarianism, and solidarity with the suffering.

Emphasis on the Centrality of Jesus and the New Testament

Finally, the Anabaptist emphasis on the centrality of Jesus and the New Testament shaped later Mennonite peacemaking. Early Anabaptists differed in their geographical and cultural backgrounds, in their patterns of worship, in the degree of their economic sharing, in their attitudes to the state, in their approach to the sword, on the relative importance of the Word and the Spirit, and in other ways. But they agreed on the centrality of Jesus and the New Testament. Whether Swiss, German, Austrian, Moravian, or Dutch; whether Biblicist or spiritualistic; whether peasant or artisan or scholar, they agreed that Jesus and the New Testament were central to their faith. The Swiss Balthasar Hubmaier wrote in 1525, "Now this person surrenders himself inwardly in the heart and intention unto a new life according to the rule and teaching of Christ, the physician who has made him whole, from

60. Van Braght, *Martyr's Mirror*, 481–83; Snyder and Hecht, *Profiles*; Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist*, 57–58, 139–40, 219; Snyder, *Anabaptist History*, 117, 119, 254–58; Stjerna, *Women*, 17; Williams, *Radical*, 762; Sprunger, "Radical Reformation," 53–54.

61. Gregory, "Martyrdom," 471–72.

whom he received life . . . Christ lives in him, is life in him."[62] The Hutterite Peter Riedemann wrote in 1542, "In him and in none other is salvation . . . He is the Saviour who has robbed death of its power, torn its bond and snare asunder and set us, his people, free."[63] The Netherlander Dirk Philips wrote in 1558, "Man does not live by other words which proceed from the will of man, but alone by the words of God (Mt. 4:4), which have been made known to us by Jesus Christ and his apostles. Here is the bread of heaven; here is the water of life."[64]

Influences that nurtured this orientation included Erasmus and the Christian Humanists who called people to return to the sources such as the New Testament, the new availability of the Bible for laypeople in their own language, the long tradition of monasticism that sought the pure pursuit of God, the medieval theology of suffering and martyrdom in identification with Jesus, medieval mysticism that sought oneness with Jesus, the Medieval *Devotio Moderna* emphasis on imitating Christ, and the Anabaptists' rejection of abuses and violence in the Catholic and Reformation Churches.

Biblical inspiration came from the teaching, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and from the New Testament church described in Acts 2–4. The teaching of Jesus, especially the Sermon on the Mount on seeking first God's reign and returning good for evil (Mt. 5–7), undergirded the Anabaptists' determination to be separate from the sinful world. In the Schleitheim Confession, the Swiss Brethren confessed,

> We have been united concerning the separation that shall take place from the evil and the wickedness which the devil has planted in the world, simply in this: that we have no fellowship with them . . . The commandment of the Lord is also obvious, whereby he orders us to be and to become separated from the evil one, thus He will be our God and we shall be His sons and daughters.[65]

Peter Riedemann wrote similarly, "Thus is Christ king of all kings; . . . therefore he says, "My kingdom of not of this world . . . Thus he sets up quite a different kingdom and rule and desires that his servants submit themselves to it and become like him."[66]

One implication of separation from the world and returning good for evil for the Anabaptists was nonresistance in peace and war. In the words of

62. Hubmaier, "Summa," 85.
63. Peter Riedeman, "Account," 29.
64. Dirk Philips, "True Knowledge," 38–39.
65. Yoder, *Michael Sattler*, 37–38.
66. Peter Riedemann, "Account," 261.

the Schleitheim Confession, "Thereby shall also fall away from us the diabolical weapons of violence—such as the sword, armor, and the like, and all of their use to protect friends or against enemies—by virtue of the word of Christ: 'you shall not resist evil.'"[67] Dirk Philips wrote, "True Christians must here be persecuted for the sake of truth and righteousness, but they persecute no one on account of his faith."[68] Many Anabaptists went even further to demand conscientious objection to war. Conrad Grebel wrote to Thomas Müntzer in 1524, "True Christians use neither the worldly sword nor war, for among them killing has been totally abolished."[69] Peter Riedemann repudiated not only military service but also the manufacture of arms: "Now since Christians must not use and practice such vengeance, neither can they make weapons by which such vengeance and destruction may be practiced by others that they be not partakers of the other men's sins. Therefore we make neither swords, spears, muskets nor any such weapons."[70] Anabaptist nonresistance, readiness for martyrdom, conscientious objection, and refusal to make weapons of war all developed in response to the teaching of Jesus.

Aspects of Jesus' life that inspired Anabaptists included his healing, his identity with common folk, and his openness to Gentiles. Menno Simons wrote, "They show indeed that they believe, that they are born of God and are spiritually minded; that they lead a pious, unblamable life before all men . . . They walk in all love and mercy and serve their neighbors."[71] For Menno and others, this commitment was concrete: "True evangelical faith cannot lie sleeping . . . It clothes that naked, feeds the hungry, comforts the sorrowful, shelters the destitute, serves those who harm it, binds up that which is wounded; it has become all things to all people."[72] Further, wrote Menno, Christians extend this service also to enemies: "This is the nature of pure love, to pray for persecutors, to render good for evil, to love one's enemies."[73]

For some Anabaptists, Jesus' openness to Gentiles implied an openness to all including heretics, Jews, and Muslims. Balthasar Hubmaier wrote in 1524,

> The inquisitors are the greatest heretics of all, because counter to the teaching and example of Jesus they condemn heretics to fire

67. Yoder, *Michael Sattler*, 37–38.
68. Philips, "Church," 298.
69. Grebel, "Müntzer," 42–43.
70. Riedeman, "Account," 278–79. See Stauffer, "Martyrdom," 235.
71. Simons, "Confession," 505–6.
72. Simons, "Writing," 307.
73. Simons, "Foundation," 200.

> . . . A Turk or a heretic cannot be overcome by our doing, neither by sword or by fire, but alone with patience and supplication . . . To burn heretics appears to be confessing Christ (Titus 1:16), but indeed it is to deny him . . . The law [which provides] for the burning of heretics is an invention of the devil.[74]

Melchior Hoffman wrote in 1533, "All are created for eternal salvation . . . The holy Paul witnesses in Rom. 11 that God will have mercy on all. Of such witness the biblical Scriptures are full that Christ Jesus did not suffer for half a world but for the whole world, that is the whole seed of Adam."[75] Hans Umlauft wrote in 1539, "We must listen to Christ when he says that many, who are today called Turks and heathen, will come from east and west and eat with Abraham in the kingdom of God."[76] Thus Jesus' life of service, healing, and openness to outsiders inspired Anabaptists to serve the needy, stand with the suffering, and embrace the outcast.

Jesus' suffering and death inspired Anabaptists to accept persecution without resistance and to stand in solidarity with others who suffered. Menno Simons named "oppression and tribulation for the sake of the Lord's Word" as one of the true marks of the Church of Jesus Christ.[77] In a 1534/35 letter to Tyrolian prisoners in Austria, Jacob Hutter wrote, "Do not be ashamed of the bonds and suffering of Christ, but rejoice greatly in your hearts, for you know that nothing else has been promised you for your life on earth except suffering and death, tribulation, anxiety, distress and great persecution, pain, torture, insult and shame at the hands of godless men."[78] This kind of exhortation came not only from Anabaptist leaders. On the morning of her execution, a young mother, Anneken Jans of Rotterdam, wrote in 1539,

> My son, . . . behold, I go today the way of the prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and drink of the cup they all have drunk. Matt. 20:23. I go, I say, the way which Christ Jesus . . . himself went . . . and who had to drink of this cup, even as he said, "I have a cup to drink of and a baptism to be baptized with . . ." Having passed through, He calls His sheep, and His sheep hear His voice and follow Him whithersoever He goes.[79]

74. Hubmaier, "Heretics," 62, 64, 66.
75. Hoffman, "June/July 1533," 59–60.
76. Umlauft, "Letter," 294–95. See also Packull, *Mysticism*, 41–46.
77. Simons, "Reply," 742–43.
78. Hutter, "Letter," 91–92.
79. Van Braght, *Martyr's Mirror*, 453.

The concordance that clustered passages pertaining to persecution and faithfulness helped Anabaptists remain steadfast when interrogated and facing death.[80] Anabaptist songs also helped them internalize the biblical calls to discipleship and suffering. The first stanza of an early hymn that was later incorporated into the first Anabaptist hymnbook, the *Ausbund* (1564), reads as follows: "He who would follow Christ in life / Must scorn the world's insult and strife, / And bear his cross each day. / For this alone leads to the throne; / Christ is the only way."[81] The nonviolent suffering and death of Jesus was a model.

Faith in the resurrection of Jesus and eternal life gave Anabaptists hope and courage to persist in their difficult calling. Jacob Hutter, who was burned at the stake in 1536, wrote to encourage fellow believers, "Whoever battles like a true knight of Christ and is victorious will be crowned and will attain the prize. He will enter upon peace and joy, eternal rest and glory with all the chosen and with the heavenly host. He will be with the Father, his dear Son, and all the saints for ever and ever in the covenant of eternal life."[82] Menno Simons wrote similarly,

> The messenger is already at the door, who will say to us, Come ye blessed, enter into the glory of thy Lord. Then will our brief mourning be changed to laughter, our momentary pain into endless joy . . . All our persecutors, executioners, and torturers will cease . . . Neither ill nor pain nor pangs of death will touch us longer, but we will forever exalt, praise, and thank in expressively great joy and glory the Lamb who sits upon the throne.[83]

The Anabaptists centred on Jesus as teacher, model, and savior. His teaching inspired their separateness, peacemaking, and service for others. His life inspired compassion and service. His death inspired nonresistant service to others and solidarity with the suffering. Faith in his resurrection gave Anabaptists hope and courage to carry on in their path of nonresistance, service, solidarity, and sacrifice.

Also inspiring for Anabaptists was the model of the New Testament church seen in Acts 2–4. Although Hans Hergot was not an Anabaptist, his widely shared vision of a Christian society of equality and sharing echoed aspects of Acts 2–4 and is very close to what Anabaptists imagined in Switzerland and attempted in Moravia:

80. Gregory, "Martyrdom," 471–72.
81. Wagner, "Christo," 88. See also Gregory, "Martyrdom," 474–75.
82. Hutter, "Fourth Epistle," 325.
83. Simons, "Encouragement," 1047–48.

> In order to promote the honor of God and the common good, . . . God will . . . institute a new way of life in which no one will say, "That is mine." . . . All resources—such as woods, water, meadows, etc.—will be used in common . . . And the people will all work in common, each according to his talents and his capacities. And all things will be used in common, so that no one is better off than another . . . The people will believe in God, and prove this with works, prayers, fasting, and by reflecting on God's suffering, divine mercy, and other matters . . . All crafts will also be practiced as they should, and desires for selfish gain will be done away with. And a longing for the common good will prevail over the whole village. Then the "Our Father" will be fulfilled and the word which the lord often uses in the "Our Father" will be meaningful: our, our, our.[84]

To some degree Anabaptists brought this dream to reality. While the Swiss Brethren, Marpeck's followers, and Dutch Anabaptists practiced voluntary sharing with the needy, the Hutterites realized this dream of "our, our, our" "for the honor of God and the common good" more radically.[85] This vision and lived experience laid the groundwork for later Mennonites to nurture a society of equality and sharing, even as Jesus as teacher, model, and savior inspired nonresistance, compassionate service, and hope.

This paper argues that (1) medieval Catholic spirituality, (2) Renaissance Humanism, (3) the experience of socio-economic, political, and religious oppression, (4) the Protestant Reformation, (5) disillusionment and persecution after 1525, (6) the experience of a healing alternative community, and (7) emphasis on the centrality of Jesus and the New Testament gave rise to Anabaptist service, solidarity with the marginalized, nonviolent advocacy, and peacemaking. These, in turn, inspired later Mennonites to engage in peacebuilding and shaped their peacebuilding approaches.

These factors point to external influences, lived experiences, and inner commitments. Among external influences, medieval Catholic traditions of monastic asceticism, mysticism, apocalypticism, practical service, the imitation of Christ, and a martyrdom theology were prominent. Renaissance Humanism influenced Anabaptists to critique the religious and political establishment; to uphold the Word of God as the fundamental Christian source; to embrace ethical living and Christlike peace and service; and to affirm human freedom and dignity, especially in matters of faith and conscience. The Protestant Reformation helped birth Anabaptists by energizing protests against Church abuses, encouraging people to read the Bible,

84. Hergot, "Christian Life," 210–13.

85. See Stayer, *German Peasants' War*, 151–52, 162; Baylor, *Radical*, 210–13.

engendering hope for a transformed society in line with the "Word of God," and proclaiming a church in which God's grace and faith in Christ alone brought salvation, and all believers were priests. Lived experiences included the socio-economic, political, and religious hardships that peasants and most commoners suffered before the Peasants' War; disillusionment with the Reformation and persecution from church and secular authorities after 1525; and belonging, healing, and empowerment in the Anabaptist community. Inner commitments included commitments to follow Jesus in daily life and even in suffering, to relive the New Testament church, and to support others toward healing and hope in the Anabaptist community. Together these influences, experiences, and commitments moulded the character of Anabaptists and their biological and spiritual descendants. Later Mennonites drew on these memories, traditions, and character to engage in peacebuilding.