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"THE SERVANT IS NOT GREATER THAN HIS MASTER"

THE ANABAPTISTS AND THE SUFFERING CHURCH*

"An affectionate salutation in the Lord, to my beloved wife... Hear my admonition... take Jesus Christ for an example, and behold the way in which he went before us, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of heaven... Let the Word of the Lord incite you to all good. Ask him for his Holy Spirit, who can comfort you; for the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us ... Our Saviour had to enter through suffering and anguish into his own glory - how then shall we enter by the broad way?".¹

With these phrases dwelling on the sufferings of Christ and his followers, Jan Claess, an Anabaptist preacher, took leave of his wife.² The crimes for which he was about to be executed were these:

"You are rebaptized". "I was baptized upon my faith", Jan responded, "as all Christians ought to be, according to the Scriptures".

He had "caused to be printed at Antwerp six hundred books which [you] had concluded with Menno Simons, and scattered abroad in this country, containing strange opinions and sectarianism... to introduce errors among the people...". "They are not sectarianisms", Jan retorted, "but it is the Word of God".

"We sentence you to death, to be executed with the sword, the body to be placed upon a wheel, and the head upon a stake".³

Thereupon, on 19th January 1544, along with an eighty-seven year old brother, Jan Claess was beheaded, leaving a legacy of six letters to his wife, two children, and relatives. Jan was one of the approximately 2500 Anabaptists who were executed in the Low Countries in the sixteenth century.⁴ He was also one of the 803 martyrs⁵ whom Thieleman Jansz van Braght included in his massive martyrology, *Martyrs' Mirror*, which is the subject of this lecture.

Van Braght, the Baptist-minded (*Doopsgezinde*)⁶ pastor in Dordrecht between 1648 and his death in 1664, was alarmed by the state of the church in his day.⁷ His Baptist-minded contemporaries, he was convinced, were "proceeding in [their] pilgrimage in the absence of the Lord". Indeed, they were being seduced by Satan. Whereas a century earlier Satan had come in undisguised malevolence, as a persecuting "roaring lion", now he was coming as a "kind, pleasant, even divine messenger", as the bearer of safety and luxury.⁸ The Baptist-minded, whose

Anabaptist forbears had been tortured and burned, were living in "expensive and ornamented houses". They were "wearing... clothes from foreign countries". They - even "those who are considered sober and temperate" - were selfishly consuming large quantities of expensive food, "of which a portion naturally belongs to the poor".⁹ In the light of their now comfortable existence, it is hardly surprising that their theology and ethics had changed. The Anabaptists had gone to the stake for the sake of fidelity to Jesus' hard sayings - "the external commandments and ordinances of Christ"; in contrast, van Braght's contemporaries were comforting themselves that no more was required of the believer than repentance and faith, coupled with respectability ("a so-called irreproachable civil life").¹⁰ By the late 1650s, the Baptist-minded, who a century earlier had set alarm bells ringing in Geneva as well as Rome, had made their peace with the world - from his point of view, on unfavourable terms.

"Be on your guard", van Braght warned. "If Satan gain the mastery over you... [he] will soon put an end to your Christian and virtuous life, without which latter the best of faith is no avail... Faith without the corresponding life, or the life without the faith, can, will, and may not avail before God".¹¹

To incite to fidelity the believers of his day - who were being beleaguered by ease - van Braght appealed to the "bloody army of the spiritual champions" of the past. These martyrs, he contended, could be found throughout Scripture, "the whole volume of [which] seems to be nothing else than a book of martyrs".¹² They could also be found throughout Church history. They could, of course, be found in the Anabaptist movements of the sixteenth century. The Anabaptists, like all Christian traditions which have suffered at all, had from the outset collected "acts and monuments" of their martyrs. Within a few months of Anneken of Rotterdam's burning in 1539, her friends had published her testament to her son.¹³ In 1562 an anonymous Dutch Anabaptist compiled a volume, *Het Offer des Heeren* (The Sacrifice of the Lord), which incorporated similar materials about twenty-one martyrs. Eleven editions of this followed, many of which were expanded to include other martyrs and additional documentation. To all of these was appended the modestly entitled *Een Liedtboeckken* (A Little Songbook), a collection of martyr hymns.¹⁴ In the early seventeenth century full-scale Anabaptist martyr books began to appear, which further increased the number of martyrs, augmented their documentary legacies, and also began to impose an interpretive scheme upon their materials.¹⁵

Initially, van Braght had thought simply of revising the most recent of these - the *Groote Offerboek* of 1631. But upon reflection, he decided to compile a work of his own.¹⁶ To the letters and narratives which he had inherited from earlier martyrologies, van Braght added still more materials, the most important of which are secular documents which he had himself dug out of urban archives. Furthermore, van Braght wrote a ponderous preliminary volume, which took the story of martyrdom

from the beheading of John the Baptist through fifteen centuries of Christian history. But most important of all, van Braght tied all of his materials together with a webbing of myth. His monumental two-volume work - which he published in 1660 as *The Bloody Theatre of Baptist-Minded and Defenceless Christians*¹⁷ and which has come to be known as *Martyrs' Mirror* - is thus his sustained attempt to explain the past in light of "some ultimate truth about human existence", and also to provide an ideological framework enabling his contemporaries to respond creatively to the challenges of their own time.¹⁸

Superficially, van Braght's mythology appears much like that of the English martyrologist, John Foxe.¹⁹ The history of the church, van Braght argued, has been one of incessant warfare between God and Satan. The ecclesiastical manifestations of this combat have been "two different peoples, two different congregations and churches, the one of God and from heaven, the other of Satan and the earth".²⁰ From the earliest days of human history both have had continuous existence.

But at this point differences with Foxe begin to emerge. The one church, according to van Braght, descended from Cain and was a persecuting church; the other church descended from Abel and was a suffering church.²¹ The former had been coercive, inventing and enforcing infant baptism; the latter had been voluntarist, teaching "the article of holy baptism... in the very same manner as the Anabaptists".²² The former sanctioned war and claimed that "one may propagate and defend his religion with the sword"; the latter were a people of peace.²³ The former was the official church, and ostensibly it had been the more successful of the two. Since 413 it - "the highly renowned Latin church, the Roman Babylon" - had persecuted religious nonconformists, especially those who had the temerity to baptize believers who had been initiated as infants.²⁴ And in its persecution it had of late had allies: the "so-called Anabaptists"; who in the 1530s had founded a violent theocracy in Münster; and also the major Reformers - "O sad deformation!".²⁵

The latter church - "the visible church of Jesus Christ (for this is the one in whom the preaching of the holy Gospel, faith, baptism and whatever there is more besides, have place)" - has, in contrast, had an apparently fleeting existence. Its members had at times been seduced by sloth; they had neglected the "manifest commandments of God"; and they had been forced by persecution "as outcasts from mankind [to] seclude themselves in forests, wildernesses, and solitary places; so that its characteristics, light and virtue could not be seen, much less known, by the outside world". But in every century, even when things were darkest, it has had its faithful witnesses. There has thus been an apostolic succession of an alternative church, and, van Braght stated confidently, it shall continue to "exist through all time".²⁶

In his two volumes, van Braght provides a wearisome succession of incidents documenting the interaction of these two churches. Again and again, his materials record the cruelty

with which the persecuting church maltreated its suffering counterpart; they also illustrate the courage and convictions of the martyrs. Not of all martyrs, of course. Just as Foxe, Haemstede and Crespin²⁷ omitted mention of Anabaptist victims, so also van Braght excluded most of the heroes - familiar in the other martyrologists' pages - whom he considered to have been guilty of "gross errors, much less the shedding of blood".²⁸ Van Braght's is thus an alternative - an Anabaptist, Baptist-minded - martyrology. But his is not even an exhaustive treatment of Anabaptist materials. He excluded, for example, Gillis of Aachen, one of the most active preachers and baptizers in the 1550s, who had recanted.²⁹ And one suspects that elsewhere van Braght could have provided more information than he did about Anabaptist infidelity under torture.³⁰

Nevertheless, within the framework determined by his apologetic purpose, van Braght maintained high standards of historical craftsmanship. Repeatedly we observe him evaluating the reliability of his sources, ferreting out new ones, and commenting on materials which he would have used had they not for some reason disappeared.³¹ And some of his sources, far from idealizing the Anabaptists, poignantly indicate just how human they were. He reports, for example, that in 1572 the Dordrecht painter Jan Woutersz van Kuyck allowed himself to be persuaded to do a portrait of the bailiff who was imprisoning and torturing him - of all things, "in the attitude of Solomon". Even this act of artistic dissimulation (or was it enemy-love?), we learn sadly, failed to save the artist's life.³² Thus van Braght's work is of interest not merely as a tract of his times, designed to recall his torpid Baptist-minded coreligionists to radical discipleship. It also is one of the major collections of sources of use to us today as we study the Anabaptist movement of the sixteenth century.³³

Not all of the materials which van Braght amassed are of equal interest or reliability. The stories which he culled from the Hutterite Chronicle, concerning Anabaptist martyrdoms in central Europe, for example, can more profitably be consulted in the original.³⁴ Some of his own reporting of skeletal evidence concerning martyrdoms closer home seems rather over-embellished. And the lengthy, ballad-like hymns, in which the Anabaptists most easily memorized the martyr narratives, are now almost completely absent.

In fifteen hundred and sixty-nine
 On the tenth of June, in the city of Bruges
 Encircled wholly by fiery flames,
 With intrepid spirit, both Jacob and Herman,
 Did testify before all the world
 To the word of God, which they sealed with their
 hearts' blood,
 And thus their sacrifice they did bring
 To the mighty God that inhabits heaven.³⁵

This hymn, the beginning of which van Braght for some reason

failed to delete, has considerably more communicative power than at least some of his pious prose.

Nevertheless, the bulk of the writing in *Martyrs' Mirror* - and arguably the most significant portion of it - was not by van Braght. It was by the Flemish and Dutch martyrs themselves. They had written their confessions and letters at times under impossible conditions, writing in the dark, in pain after having been racked, in haste just before being executed, and with wretched materials - "with a stick cut off a counter, and with ink made of red earth".³⁶ But the martyrs wanted to communicate: "Let me tell you how it went in my imprisonment".³⁷ They wanted to report how their interrogations had gone so that their brothers and sisters would know what questions to expect if they were apprehended, and thus what issues they should be studying among themselves. They wanted to encourage, to admonish, and to share their visions with the people they loved; they wanted to say goodbye. It is the letters of these Flemish and Dutch Anabaptists, writing between 1535 and the 1590s, that constitute the major source for this paper. When I henceforth say "the Anabaptists", I mean *them*.

Most of what they wrote is, as we might expect, unpolished. Many of the letter-writers, even the pastors among them, were unsophisticated; some were recent converts. And although they were influenced by the writings of Menno Simons (and even Martin Luther), they wrote about theology as weavers, fishermen and seamstresses understood it.³⁸ There are, as a matter of fact, a few instances in which the martyrs attempted systematically to set down their beliefs.³⁹ But there is nothing here remotely approaching a systematic theology. Indeed, on occasion rude expressions and bizarre beliefs pop off the page. But are these letters and confessions - taken as a body - an example of poor theology? Stylistically they are as different from the writings of the great theologians that we study so assiduously as are, for example, the letters of the New Testament. Are these prisoners perhaps able at times to see more clearly, able to penetrate closer to the heart of things, than the great theologians? These prisoners' theology was shaped by their experience; and their experience in turn was shaped by their theology.⁴⁰ Their poverty and suffering enabled them to see a whole dimension of biblical truth - the vocation of all believers to suffering and "cross-bearing" - which more learned theologians either overlooked or soon forgot. And this dimension in turn enabled them to find meaning and direction as they suffered at the hands of the power-bearers of their day.

Something had clearly happened to these people to make them choose this road. They had a variety of terms for it: new birth; conversion; illumination; enlightenment; the new creature; "regeneration which is performed by the Spirit of God".⁴¹ As a result of this inward transformation, they now encountered the Scriptures as a living book. "Search the Scriptures", they admonished each other; learn to read and write, parents urged their children.⁴² "Sell your clothes, and buy testaments; attend therein to the words of God: for therein you will find

life".⁴³ There was something unsettling, something socially revolutionary about this. "Why do you trouble yourself with Scripture?" an inquisitor challenged an Antwerp woman. "Attend to your sewing".⁴⁴ Mere cobblers were quoting Scripture; let them remain at their benches!⁴⁵ Women, like Eve, were tasting its forbidden fruit and sharing it with their spouses. "Your damnation will be greater than that of your husband, because you can read, and have seduced him".⁴⁶

"Ah bah!" exclaimed an inquisitor to Jacob de Roore. "What do you understand about St John's Apocalypse? At what university did you study? At the loom, I suppose; for I understand that you were nothing but a poor weaver and chandler before you went about preaching and rebaptizing... I have attended the university at Louvain, and studied divinity so long, yet I do not understand anything at all about St John's Apocalypse; this is a fact".

Jacob: "Therefore Christ thanked his heavenly Father, that he had revealed and made it known to babes, and hid it from the wise of this world, as is written, Matthew 11".

Inquisitor: "Exactly; God has revealed it to the weavers at the loom, to the cobblers on their bench, and to bellows-menders, lantern-tinkers, scissors-grinders, broom-makers, thatchers, and all sorts of riff-raff, and poor, filthy, and lousy beggars. And to us ecclesiastics who have studied from our youth, night and day, he has concealed it. You Anabaptists are certainly fine fellows to understand the holy Scriptures; for before you are rebaptized, you can't tell A from B, but as soon as you are baptized, you can read and write. If the Devil and his mother have not a hand in this, I do not understand any thing about you people".⁴⁷

But the experience which opened the Scriptures was not solely an internal catharsis. It must also, the Anabaptists insisted, result in progressive external "amendment of life".⁴⁸ "True, there are many in the world who say that they love the Lord; but they do not show it by their works, for their works show well enough whom they love; for Christ says: 'He that loveth me will keep my word, or obey my commandments'".⁴⁹ Jesus Christ, in addition to being the Anabaptists' Shepherd and Saviour, was also their example, Captain, Leader and Lawgiver.⁵⁰ Being his disciple meant accepting his authority as teacher, and learning to keep his commandments.

The Anabaptists took seriously Jesus' classical "hard sayings", such as his injunctions to love the enemy and to sell possessions and give to the poor. But still more they were riveted by his even harder sayings - by his summons to the cross. Letter after letter repeated the words: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and... he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me".⁵¹ Solemnly they restated his warnings: "I will send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves... they will scourge you... you shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake... you shall be hated of

all men for my sake... If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you... "52 Jesus' statements, Hendrick Alwijns observed, were not optional; they were not conditional. "Christ in his time assured his servants and disciples of so much sorrow, tribulation, reproach, suffering, and of death, for his name's sake. He did not give it to them as his opinion, not as something which might eventually, or perhaps come to pass, but positively assured them that it should befall them..."53 Paul, as the Anabaptists never tired of pointing out, had taken up the same themes: "It is given unto us not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for him"; "all who live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted".54 So also had Peter: "Jesus Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps".55 But there were no words that the Anabaptists cited more frequently than those of Jesus himself: "The servant is not greater than his master".56

The Anabaptists had thus thoroughly internalized what Ethelbert Stauffer called the "mimesis concept" - which we might rephrase (in more Anabaptist language) as conformity to Christ.57 As Jerome Segers put it in 1551, "It is utterly in vain to bear the name of Christ, so long as we are not conformed to him in word, work and thought; for Paul says: 'Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren'".58 Indeed, conformity to Christ was the leitmotif of their spiritual life. It had many facets. One was gratitude. The Anabaptists were intensely conscious of Christ's saving generosity in emptying himself and suffering pain and humiliation for them. How could they not suffer for him? "Thus, dear wife, follow Christ, and take up your cross with patience and joy, and follow him all the days of your life, for he had to suffer so much for our sakes, to save us. Therefore, let us suffer for his sake..."59 Indeed, as they never tired of saying, the thought (which they shared with the apostles in the earliest days of the church) that they were counted worthy to suffer for him was a source of deep joy to them.60 "If the Lord should count me worthy to testify with my blood to his name, how greatly would I thank him..."61

A second facet of the Anabaptists' conformity to Christ was their sense of participation in him. As they walked in his steps, suffering for his sake, they were (in the words of Peter) being made "partakers in his sufferings".62 And he, they sensed, was living and suffering in them. In one phrase, which is reminiscent of a modern charismatic prophecy, Walter Stoelwijk spoke the words of his Lord: "If I the Lord and Master am poor, it is evident that my servants are poor, and that my disciples do not seek or desire riches... He that would follow me, must follow me in the poverty in which I walk before him".63 Most deeply, of course, the Anabaptists sensed that Christ was suffering in his followers collectively, corporately bound to each other and to himself in his body the Church. "Where you do hear of the cross, there is Christ" in his Church.64 For if Christ had to suffer, "how much more

ought we, who are poor, sinful and frail men to suffer, if we want to be found little members of his body, for the members are surely not better than the head, nor the servant than his Lord...".⁶⁵ That haunting phrase again.

Suffering and living among them as he was, Christ would be with them as they accepted the consequences of a third facet of their conformity to himself - obedience. For suffering came to them not only because of some kind of mystical imperative; it came to them because obedience to his commandments led them inexorably into conflict with both church and state. No reason for believer's baptism, for example, more frequently occurred to the Anabaptists than obedience to the clear command of Christ. And baptism was against the law of the Empire.⁶⁶ Because of obedience, the Anabaptists likewise refused to swear oaths; and the refusal to swear on many occasions led directly to their arrest.⁶⁷ It was partly obedience which impelled the believers to associate with the "poor, simple, cast-off little flock", the Anabaptist congregation; and to do so, once again, was to commit an act which could have capital consequences.⁶⁸

Conformity to Christ thus led to nonconformity to the world; it led to civil disobedience; it led to conflict. This was not surprising to the Anabaptists. The world, they were convinced, was a battleground. On it were antagonistic camps which were struggling for dominance. Darkness was arrayed against light; worldly people against God-fearing people; wolves against lambs; persecutors against persecuted.⁶⁹ These are the terms with which they described the duality of the conflict in which they were engaged. This was no ordinary war; it was a spiritual war - "the war of the Lord" against his Satanic antagonist.⁷⁰ When describing this struggle, the Anabaptists frequently employed the imagery of Ephesians 6.12 ff: "For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers...".⁷¹ But the Anabaptists refused solely to spiritualize the passage or the war which it described. When Jan Hendrickss began to refer to wrestling with principalities, powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world, his interrogator objected: "This Paul says of the devil: he is the prince of this world". Whereupon Hendrickss replied: "It is the magistracy of this world, who rule the world, for it speaks of the principalities and lords of *this world*".⁷² Representatives of spiritual forces they may indeed have been; but the Anabaptists knew that they encountered their spiritual opponents in deadly, physical specificity.

In this struggle the individual Anabaptists did not contend on their own. They did so as members of the Church, the "brotherhood... which springs out of the heavenly regeneration, through the hearing of the divine word...".⁷³ When one of their number was imprisoned, other members - at times at great danger to themselves - sought to bring encouragement and physical necessities to the prisoner.⁷⁴ This mutual support also characterized their common life when a group of them were incarcerated in one prison. When in separate cells, they smuggled letters to

each other "that we may help each other fight in this great conflict...".⁷⁵ And when they were allowed to meet together they had wonderful times. "We exhort each other with the Word of the Lord, as much as God gives each to speak, now by words, now by hymns; yea, I have many hours when I never once think I am a prisoner; such is the joy which the Lord gives us".⁷⁶ Outside the prison, the Anabaptists developed as much common life as conditions of the time allowed. There were times when persecution was light; in Bruges, in fact, in 1568 attendance at the Anabaptist congregation reached seven hundred.⁷⁷ Yet at other times severe persecution necessitated a furtive life for the Anabaptist fellowships. When asked by the inquisitor where he held his church, Claes de Praet replied, "Where Christ and his apostles held it, behind hedges, in the woods, in the field, on mountains, on the seacoast, sometimes in houses, or wherever [we] found a place".⁷⁸ Because of the omnipresence of informers and the realization that if captured they would be racked and roasted for information, it was hard for them to combine the life of mutual support with the dictates of prudence. They were warned not to tell each other their names or what occupations they had.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, they attempted to be supportive as well as secretive. As one prisoner admonished his brethren who were still at large, "And see that you care for one another; and, my dear friends, when you assemble together, make not many inquiries concerning others, or where each particular one lives...".⁸⁰ For reasons of both security and theology, entrance into these congregations was not easy. Would-be members "must be born again and converted"; through a period of novitiate they then submitted themselves to instruction and proved by their comportment that Christ was amending their life.⁸¹ Finally, at their baptism, they entered into the life of a disciplined congregation which, it was hoped, would be like the bride of Christ - "without spot or wrinkle".⁸² And, as a body, in solidarity, this church would be in conflict with devil and the world. As Reytse Aysess put it: "There were from the beginning of the world two classes of people, a people of God and a people of the devil. But the children of God have always been persecuted and dispersed, so that they have always been in a minority, and sometimes very few in number, so that they had to hide themselves in caves and dens... but the ungodly have always been powerful, and have prevailed...".⁸³

Always - a favourite Anabaptist word. "It has always been the case", one brother told his inquisitor, "that those who would live godly in Christ Jesus, have had to suffer persecution...".⁸⁴ Indeed, persecution has been, and will continue to be, a sign of the fidelity of the Church in its belief and in its cross-bearing conflict with the world. Another brother wrote, "It is demonstrable, that those who have the true evangelical doctrine and faith will persecute no one, but will themselves be persecuted".⁸⁵ And a mother wrote to her children, "It has been so from the beginning, that the righteous must suffer, and that the unrighteous always prevail".⁸⁶

This is a theme with which the Swiss reformer Huldrych Zwingli had considerable sympathy in his early years. As he wrote to his friend Myconius in 1520, "Christ said to the apostles, 'in the world you will have tribulation'; and at another time, 'you will be hated by all men for my name's sake', and 'the hour will come when those who kill you will think that they are doing a service to God'. So there will *always* be people who will persecute us Christians because Christ is in us, even though they likewise may boast of coming in the name of Christ. Such, however, as obey the law of men rather than the law of God, manifestly lack the marks of Christ, if they place his commandments lower than their own... *Never* will the world accept Christ, and even the promise of rewards by Christ is accompanied by the promise of persecution. He sent out his own like sheep among wolves".⁸⁷ Martin Luther agreed. "The Church", he wrote in 1520, "was soundest when martyrs suffered death every day, and were accounted as sheep for the slaughter".⁸⁸ Three years later, inspired by two Augustinian monks who were burned at the stake in Brussels, he even wrote a martyr hymn.⁸⁹ Yet before the decade had ended, both of these great theologians - Zwingli and Luther - had changed their perspectives and were justifying the persecution of Anabaptists. And the Anabaptists, echoing the reformers, were claiming to be "sheep among wolves". After all, one of them remarked, lambs "do not pursue the wolf, to devour him, and to shed his blood".⁹⁰

Has it in fact always been true that the godly have been persecuted? Is there an essential, necessary causal relationship between discipleship and suffering? The Anabaptists were convinced that there was. The nature of their thinking - and the dominant voice of Christendom - both emerged from one of the twenty interviews which an Anabaptist merchant, Jacques d'Auchy, had with his inquisitor before being executed in 1559 at Leeuwarden.⁹¹ When Jacques exclaimed, "Where then is the people who must follow their Master through suffering and affliction to eternal life, as Christ has said that they should be hated for his sake", the inquisitor replied flatly, "This was spoken to the apostles only" - a chronological limitation of conflict. But, said Jacques, how about Paul's statement "that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall be persecuted"? That, said the inquisitor, "means that the devil will always cause them enough temptation and affliction" - an internalization and spiritualization of conflict. Jacques returned to his earlier attack. Hadn't Jesus said, "They will scourge you in their synagogues, and persecute you unto death, and will think that they do God service thereby; and ye shall be hated by father and mother... and some of you shall be put to death...?" Jesus, the inquisitor replied, "spoke to the apostles only, who should suffer when going about proclaiming the Gospel; but that afterwards they should cease to persecute them". Jacques then argued from history. The most literate of our martyrs, he proceeded to quote from Eusebius, "one of your ancient teachers... in the eighth chapter of his fourth book". The early Christians, Jacques pointed out, were according to this source "considered seditious persons, accursed

villains, and enemies of God and every creature, and were charged with many other wickednesses imputed to them by the world...". The inquisitor conceded this point, but parried it by the comment that it was pagans - "those who had no knowledge of the gospel" - who were responsible for this persecution of Christians.⁹² But, he exulted, "after they had gained a prince to the faith, they had rest, and might well put to death the heretics". The culmination of the early Christian mission thus came with Emperor Theodosius, "who caused the proclamation of an edict or mandate, to put to death the heretics, namely, those who were then rebaptized, like your sect". But, Jacques objected, this strategy is alien to "the instruction of Christ and his apostles", who never advocated persecution. "That", the inquisitor stated triumphantly, "was because they were not powerful enough, and had neither king, nor prince, nor magistrate".⁹³

In this interchange, the strategy of Christendom was enunciated clearly. Persecution and political suffering are extraordinary experiences for believers. Their occurrences are limited chronologically and are instrumental to the acquisition of power by Christians. Thereafter Christians will continue to suffer, but the sufferings which they will undergo will be either unavoidable - the personal sufferings of illness and death - or internal - the individual's wrestling with temptation.⁹⁴ Persecution will be maintained solely for deviants, those who do not fit into the Christian society. The history of this strategy is impressive. In Jacques' time, as his inquisitor pointed out, it was 1200 years old, and extended from Constantine to Philip II.⁹⁵

Jacques and his Anabaptist brothers and sisters had another strategy, which they called "the way of the cross".⁹⁶ It entailed the voluntary acceptance of avoidable suffering, of outward political suffering, by persons whom the power-holders considered to be dangerous deviants. This strategy also had its history, to which the Anabaptists constantly appealed. Their history, they claimed, was that of "the apostles, prophets and martyrs".⁹⁷ In a manner consciously imitative of Hebrews 11, they told the stories - culled from both testaments and the apocrypha - of the "exemplary adventurers of former times": Abel, Elijah, Micaiah, Jeremiah, Eleazer, Judith, John the Baptist, Stephen, James, Peter, Paul.⁹⁸ Some Anabaptists also suspected that since biblical times, since the early church, there was a continuously existing although virtually unchronicled alternative - suffering - church. "Although she was sometimes extirpated in some countries, through bloodshed and persecution,... she was not... annihilated throughout the world; for the world is great, and she could linger in some corner of the world, and from one to the other, without perishing utterly".⁹⁹ The Anabaptists thus sensed themselves to be surrounded by a "cloud of martyrs". Their own history, which they recounted in hymns and martyr stories, was but a continuation of biblical history and the history of the alternative church. Preeminently, of course, the entire alternative story was an explication of the life and death of Jesus Christ.

"O", exclaimed a woman prisoner, "let us look unto Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, how he went before us in much suffering and reproach".¹⁰⁰ "Behold how he fared", another Anabaptist wrote, "and likewise all the pious before and after him; his birth was poor and miserable; immediately he had to flee from Herod, who sought his life; when he suffered, he had not where to rest his head, and the thanks for all his great and glorious benefits were that they called him a deceiver, wine-bibber, Samaritan, and one who had a devil; besides, he had to expect being stoned by them, until they, when the time was fulfilled, condemned him to the most shameful death".¹⁰¹ As always with the Anabaptists, such reflections upon Christ's life and teachings, and the recounting of the stories of the martyrs, led to a practical end - to the call to discipleship: "Let us have good courage, though we meet with more adversity in the world".¹⁰² "For if the holy men and prophets, and the apostles, had to suffer, yea Christ himself, who is our Head and Master, how much more ought we, who are poor, sinful and frail men to suffer, if we want to be found little members of his body; for the members are surely not better than the head, nor the servant than his Lord".¹⁰³

And suffer they did. Even though van Braght lists 613 Anabaptists who were martyred in the Low Countries, the painstaking researches of A. L. E. Verheyden have added many more.¹⁰⁴ The most common form of execution was burning: in Ghent 71% of the Anabaptist victims were burned, in Bruges 91%.¹⁰⁵ But other methods were also employed: beheading, drowning and the pit (pre-humous burial) - even hanging by one leg.¹⁰⁶ Initially these executions, in order to cow the people into orthodoxy, were held in town squares with maximum publicity. As time went on, however, the authorities learned that this strategy was ill-conceived; the heretics were eliciting a disconcerting depth of public sympathy.¹⁰⁷ As a result, executioners increasingly disposed of their victims either in un-social hours or behind prison walls.¹⁰⁸

Prior to their executions, the Anabaptists were subjected to varying lengths of imprisonment, as inquisitors - some of them specifically trained for the task - sought to entice them back into the fold of orthodoxy.¹⁰⁹ Lengthy battles of wits and Bible knowledge ensued. And, if our sources are to be believed, the Anabaptists - many of whom had been deprived of their Bibles - performed remarkably. "You ... certainly have the Scriptures at your finger ends!" one inquisitor exclaimed.¹¹⁰ The clerics were often assisted in their efforts by what was euphemistically known as "severe examination" - torture.¹¹¹ The letters of the martyrs describe various information-gathering techniques, some of which were exceptionally dehumanizing. The believers had a "great dread" of these; "more", wrote one, "than of death, for it is an excruciating pain".¹¹² Even greater was their dread that they, when subjected to unbearable torture, would incriminate their fellow believers, say where they met, who had baptized them, or who were the "midwives when our sisters lay in childbed...".¹¹³ A few Anabaptists did capitulate under pressure, but very few.¹¹⁴ One

historian has described their courage as "supernatural".¹¹⁵ This is also how the Anabaptists would have described it. For it was in this situation that they claimed the promise of I Corinthians 10.13: "The Lord will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able".¹¹⁶ And, of course, in addition to the victims of execution and torture, there were many thousands of Anabaptists who fled their homes and suffered exile.¹¹⁷

Why did they do it? What was the purpose of all this suffering? Some Anabaptists seem not to have pondered this question very deeply. They were content simply to grit their teeth and die in conformity to their understanding of the teaching and example of their Lord. Cynics of a psycho-analytical inclination might expect to find among them examples of the "martyr complex". And van Braght does provide evidence of some victims who may have been unbalanced.¹¹⁸ One martyr was so eager for death - singing, leaping, praising God and shouting, "This is the only way!" - that he seemed to be unaware that his brother had just been beheaded.¹¹⁹ Another Anabaptist - a young woman both of whose parents and both of whose brothers had been killed for their faith - seems to have lost the will to live.¹²⁰ Yet there are far more examples of believers who tried, at times quite imaginatively, to avoid arrest.¹²¹ As one Anabaptist commented plaintively, "I have no desire to be burnt; it is not convenient to be burnt...".¹²² Why then put up with the inconvenience? Once again we ask, what did they think was the meaning of their suffering?

A number of answers seem to have been common among reflective Anabaptists. For some of them suffering was instrumental, a means whereby God was accomplishing some special purpose. He was using their suffering, for one thing, to purify themselves. One of their favourite passages was Hebrews 12.6, which, according to one believer, makes it clear that "we are chastened of God, to make us better, and not for our destruction... For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth...".¹²³ Many felt that God was also using their suffering to benefit others. This was especially true of their deaths, which many Anabaptists wished to be as public as possible.¹²⁴ Bearing witness to their faith by their executions was not merely a means of defiantly flying the flag - letting "the light shine before this evil, blind, and perverse generation". It was also a means of drawing new converts to the faith.¹²⁵ "You think that by killing us you can suppress the truth of God", one believer challenged his executioners; "but of those that hear and see this, hundreds shall yet come forth".¹²⁶ He exaggerated, but only somewhat. Van Braght records a number of believers who were converted by the confession of the martyrs.¹²⁷

Martyrdom for many Anabaptists also had an eschatological significance, which emerges in the following interchange in 1569 between Herman Vleckwijck and his inquisitor:

Inquisitor: "Ah, you accursed, hardened, petrified Anabaptist, how the devils in hell... will sit in your accursed mouth, with burning pitch, brimstone, tar, and Greek fire; just wait".

Herman responded by quoting a biblical passage - Revelation 6.9-11 - which must occur as frequently in these documents as any which did not come from Jesus himself:

"No; but I shall go under the altar which John saw in his Apocalypse, ... to the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held; who cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?'"¹²⁸

Under the altar Herman and his fellow sacrificial offerings would cumulatively fulfil the number "that must yet be killed for the testimony of Jesus", and thus would usher in the Day of the Lord.¹²⁹ "The present time is short".¹³⁰ "The Day of the Supreme Judge is at the door".¹³¹ And it will be a day of vindication and of reversals. "Now our life is accounted madness", one intrepid woman exclaimed, "and our end to be without honour; but when the Day of the Lord comes it will be found quite different".¹³² When the Judge comes, you earthly judges "will be greatly afraid, and stand in need of help... Have compassion therefore".¹³³ Occasionally something unpleasant, something going beyond the longing for vindication and bordering on vindictiveness, is discernible in the outcries of these pacifist martyrs: "Then they will get their reward for having ... lorded it over the little flock"; "the Lord will avenge the blood of his saints and witnesses, and require it at their hands".¹³⁴

There is another strand - an otherworldly strand - in the Anabaptists' thought about suffering. For them death was the doorway to life. "Look not to death but through death", one of them wrote in 1551.¹³⁵ Whatever else their martyrdom might accomplish, it would be their means of going "home" to "our lodging or resting place", to "the precious land".¹³⁶ Under the altar they would thus not only be crying out for rectifying vindication - "How long?". They also would be waiting - waiting for reunions with brothers and sisters whom they had left on earth.¹³⁷ Under the altar those who had been "burnt, beheaded, pursued and the like" would thus "meet together... with the great number robed in white... who have passed through ... great tribulation... [and are] before the throne of God, and serve him day and night".¹³⁸ The culminating act of the suffering church would be corporate worship in the presence of the Almighty.

We have come to the end of our survey of the Anabaptist materials in *Martyrs' Mirror*. Under the tutelage of the first William of Orange, in the 1570s religious toleration became the norm in the Northern Provinces; the last execution there occurred in 1574.¹³⁹ In the southern Netherlands (modern Belgium) persecution continued, but with a new strategy. In 1585 Allesandro Farnese arrived there as governor. He was as determined as any of his predecessors to stamp out Protestantism (with which he lumped Anabaptism). Yet he pursued his drastic end with both psychological insight (he stopped

executing religious deviants publicly and with apparent moderation - he considerably allowed a two-year period within which the diehard heretics must move house! The Anabaptists, who were accustomed to persecution and unaccustomed to accepting a common identity with the Protestants, continued their activities as if nothing had changed. So soon the executions recommenced. Yet the lure of the north, of Holland, and its relative toleration remained, and by the early seventeenth century Flemish Anabaptists were settling there in large numbers. Although the last execution in the South was as early as 1597, the continuing persecution there - and the relative freedom just a few miles to the north - meant that by 1640 there were virtually no Anabaptists left in Flanders.¹⁴⁰

In the North not everything was auspicious. Without the accustomed discipline of mortal danger, the Anabaptists succumbed to an epidemic of divisiveness.¹⁴¹ And not all was well in their relationship with their neighbours. The arrival of thousands of literate industrious Anabaptists was as irritating to the Dutch Calvinists as the arrival of thousands of literate industrious Calvinists has been to other people elsewhere. The magistrates of various towns, seizing upon the fact that the Anabaptists would neither swear loyalty nor bear arms, attempted to introduce a variety of punitive measures - the shutting of the Anabaptists' shops and the interference with their trade.¹⁴² William of Orange, an advocate of the "liberty of conscience", resisted this, as did his son Maurice.¹⁴³ As a result, by the mid-seventeenth century the Anabaptists - now the Baptist-minded - had become a respected, established quasi-nonconformist element in Dutch society. They still needed to be cautious about their public pronouncements; in 1650 van Braght was haled before the Church Council of Dordrecht to answer charges that he, while preaching on a barge in Rotterdam, had defamed the "teaching and truth" of the Reformed confessions.¹⁴⁴ There were also civil disabilities to which the Baptist-minded were subject. They managed to compensate remarkably well. By mid-century a large proportion of the medical doctors in the Netherlands were Baptist-minded; so also were the food and textile merchants.¹⁴⁵ The burgo-masters of Amsterdam had come to value their Baptist-minded burghers. In 1660, reports arrived in Amsterdam that the authorities in Bern and Zürich (in conservative Switzerland) were expelling their Anabaptist inhabitants and expropriating their property. The burgomasters reacted by writing to the Swiss, extolling the civic respectability of the Baptist-minded, and implying that if the Swiss would only be sensible they too would find their Anabaptists to be admirable citizens.¹⁴⁶ For the Baptist-minded, as well as the rest of Dutch society, the seventeenth was a "Golden Century".

Van Braght knew a lot about persecution, and he hated it; he favoured toleration, and he called tolerant William "The Prince of Worshipful Memory".¹⁴⁷ Yet toleration begat prosperity, prosperity begat self-satisfaction, and self-satisfaction begat what he acutely sensed to be "the absence of God".¹⁴⁸

Without persecution, which he abhorred, his Baptist-minded brothers and sisters were falling prey to a more subtle but spiritually mortal danger - the disguised lethality of crossless Christianity. This is the dilemma, the unsolved problem, of van Braght's thinking.

His problem is also ours. And the solutions which he suggested - to which I have already alluded - are worthy of our consideration as we seek to be faithful disciples in the 1980s. One suggestion is to remember *these* martyrs. There is, I believe, some dispute in learned circles as to whether the English Baptists are lineal descendents of the continental Anabaptists, and this debate shows no sign of waning.¹⁴⁹ But in Christ the final outcome of this controversy is irrelevant. It is a fundamental biblical and Baptist principle that every follower of Jesus must be reborn, and is a first-generation disciple. And yet Jesus tells us that every follower of his also chooses, not a lineal descent, but a spiritual descent. "The children of Abraham are those who did what he did"; that is, they are those who leave the certainties of a settled life and gamble everything on the uncertainties of a pilgrim life.¹⁵⁰ We thus can *choose* our heritage, and we will determine our future by that part of the past that we claim as our own. In our studies, do we concentrate on the spokesmen of the triumphal churches, or of the alternative, suffering church? Is our historical perspective that of the powerful or the powerless?¹⁵¹ I would submit that we ought to read martyr writings - at the risk of imbibing some "heresy" - at least as much as we read the great theologians (such as Augustine and Luther) whose Constantinian heresy we have been happy to overlook.

Remembering the martyrs is one thing. We must also follow a second of van Braght's suggestions and imitate them. "Fix your eyes upon the martyrs", he wrote, "note the steadfastness of their faith, and follow their example".¹⁵² In many parts of the world today that is not a difficult feat to accomplish. One missiologist has estimated that in our century there have been more martyrs for Christ than in all previous centuries put together.¹⁵³ Yet it takes some doing to be persecuted - let alone burned - in twentieth century Westminster. What then do we do with Jesus' statements about cross-bearing and suffering which were so offensive to his first disciples and yet so important to the Anabaptists? How can we bear our cross in a society which asphyxiates religious movements by promiscuous tolerance?

There is, it seems to me, one approach to cross-bearing which we, as biblical Christians, must reject, and three which we must espouse. The approach to be rejected is the conventional approach which exclusively privatizes, personalizes and psychologizes suffering. In countless lives suffering is indeed unavoidable and internal; and it would be perverse to discard pastorally helpful perspectives just because they do not convey the whole truth. One does not want to displace one distortion by its opposite! Nevertheless, Jesus' proclamation of good news, his deeds and lifestyle, and his cross were

political events.¹⁵⁴ The cross to which he called his disciples was, like his, a public one; it was the consequence of socially scandalous faithfulness to the will of the Father which he incarnated and revealed. Similarly public was the suffering of the early Christians - and of the Anabaptists. If the cross really were relevant to our churches' approach to public issues, we might after all have something distinctive to contribute, in numerous areas: renunciation of legitimate rights; suffering with the oppressed; forgiveness of financial debts; sharing of resources; reconciliation with national, racial and class enemies; acceptance of the cost of civil disobedience. What might not happen if Christians took the cross out of the counselling centre and into parliament?¹⁵⁵

There are three additional approaches to cross-bearing that, I am convinced, have enduring validity. One is the meaning, which every generation must rediscover, of what the Anabaptists called "conformity to Christ". In this Easter season we have heard Christ's call to his Father - from the cross - to forgive his enemies because they had no idea what they were doing.¹⁵⁶ And we can see the redemptive power of that forgiveness in the birth of the church and, not least, in the experience of Saul of Tarsus. From the cross Christ also calls us to forgive *our* enemies. The Anabaptist martyrs often spoke about forgiveness; a few of them saw redemption at work in the conversion of their persecutors. And yet, as I read their letters, I do not find that they fully grasped the power of redemptive suffering - as well as, for example, does your Baptist brother Martin Luther King, Senior. God, in the suffering of his children, according to Romans 8.18-25, is redemptively bringing to birth a new, freed creation. A few Anabaptists, such as John Claess, with whose words I began this lecture, sensed that this was happening and rejoiced in the birth pangs.¹⁵⁷ Can we do better than he did in appropriating this vision in our lives?

A second approach to cross-bearing which is perhaps especially important to our time is steadfastness in obedience to what van Braght called "the external commandments and ordinances of Christ".¹⁵⁸ Christ commands us, for example, to simplicity - to be unafraid, but to "sell our possessions and give in charity".¹⁵⁹ He calls us to learn that, in reality, it is the peacemakers, the enemy-lovers, and those who pray for their persecutors who are the children of God.¹⁶⁰ And he weeps over Westminster because it, like Jerusalem, does not know "the way that leads to peace... So your enemies will set up siege-works against you; they will encircle you; they will bring you to the ground... and not leave one stone standing upon another, because you did not recognize God's moment when it came".¹⁶¹ What if Westminster - even those of us here in Westminster Chapel - repented of complicity in the arms race? What if we returned to our congregations to plead that they repent? What if our members began to leave their military-related jobs because they didn't want to be building weapons that are designed to protect *us* (Christians as well as secular

Britons) from suffering? In fact, these weapons are all too likely to be used, inflicting unimaginable suffering on our Russian enemies, some of whom are Baptist brothers and sisters. If we, like the Anabaptists, took Jesus' "external commandments" as seriously as we ought, we - even in our liberal society - might begin once again to discover the inevitable consequences of steadfastness: the way of the cross.

The Anabaptist materials which we have been examining today point us to a final approach to cross-bearing - the relationship between spiritual experience and social nonconformity. Jesus began his public ministry by linking the two:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
 because he has anointed me to announce good news
 to the poor.
 He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives,
 and recovery of sight to the blind,
 to liberate those who are oppressed,
 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.¹⁶²

Renewal and radicalism - the two were inseparable from the start. On Pentecost the same combination was present.¹⁶³ The Anabaptists also knew it. Their experience of the Lord was renewing and radicalizing, as the Lord opened their eyes to his Word and impelled them into genuine nonconformity and suffering. Yet they also spoke of joy and comfort. Ephesians 6.10ff can teach us, as it taught them, that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *conflict*. Remember, it was Satan who tried to dissuade Jesus from the cross; and he is still seducing us with the same argument. There's nothing that he fears more than a cross-bearing church.

Are we open to the illumination of our Bibles, our hearts, and our wills by the Spirit? Are we willing to act upon that illumination in joyful, radical discipleship? Are we willing, as servants, not to be greater than our Master? If so, then we, as Baptists, as Mennonites, will be true descendents of the Anabaptist martyrs and their suffering church.

NOTES

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- 1 Thiéleman Jansz van Braght, *The Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians who Baptized Only upon Confession of Faith*, trans. Joseph F. Sohm (Scottsdale, Pa., Herald Press, 1951) (henceforth *MM*), p.468.
- 2 *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Scottsdale, Pa., Herald Press, 1955-1959) (henceforth *ME*), III, p.71.
- 3 *MM*, p.471.

- 4 N. van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis der Doopsgezinden in Nederland* (Arnhem, Van Loghum Slaterus, 1952), p.77. Cf. A. L. E. Verheyden, *Le Martyrologe Protestant des Pays-Bas du Sud au XVI^{me} Siècle* (Collection d'histoire du Protestantisme en Belgique et au Congo Belge, 8) (Brussels, Editions de la Librairie des Eclaireurs Unionistes, 1960), pp.52-53.
- 5 *ME*, III, p.527.
- 6 In this paper I use the term "Anabaptist" to refer to the sixteenth-century radicals of the Reformation (including the Mennonites); for their seventeenth-century heirs I use the term Baptist-minded (*Doopsgezinde*). Cf. William E. Keeney, *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice from 1539-1564* (Nieuwkoop, B. de Graaf, 1968), p.15.
- 7 *ME*, I, 400-401; *MM*, pp.8-14.
- 8 *MM*, p.8.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p.9f.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p.14.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p.10f.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p.12.
- 13 *ME*, I, p.126f; F. Vander Haeghen, Th.-J.-I. Arnold, and R. Vanden Berghe, *Bibliographie des martyrologes protestants néerlandais* (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1890), I, pp.13-16; *MM*, p.453f. The popularity of Anneken's will is indicated by the fact that another martyr mother, Maeyken of Deventer, in 1573 borrowed large portions of it *verbatim* to express her parting counsel to her children (*MM*, pp.977-979).
- 14 *ME*, IV, p.22. For a scholarly edition of the 1570 version, see Samuel Cramer, ed., *Het Offer des Heeren: De Oudste Verzameling Doopsgezinde Martelaarsbrieven en Offerliederen* (Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica, 2) (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1904).
- 15 *ME*, II, p.518f; Gerald C. Studer, "A History of the Martyrs' Mirror", *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (henceforth *MQR*), 22 (1948), pp.167-169.
- 16 *MM*, p.19.
- 17 *Het Bloedigh Toneel Der Doops-gesinde, En Weereloose Christenen* (Dordrecht, Jacob Braat for Jacobus Savry, 1660). A second edition, with 103 etchings by Jan Luiken, was published fifteen years later: *Het Bloedig Toneel of Martelaers Spiegel der Doops-Gesinde of Weerelose Christenen* (Amsterdam, Hieronymus Sweerts, et al., 1685). For the subsequent editions of *Martyrs' Mirror*, see Vander Haeghen et al., *Bibliographie*, II, pp.23-77.
- 18 G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St John the Divine* (Black's New Testament Commentaries) (London, Adam & Charles Black, 1966), p.66.
- 19 Cf. William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and The Elect Nation* (The Bedford Historical Series, 19) (London, Jonathan Cape, 1963).

- 20 *MM*, p.21.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p.44.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p.18.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p.17.
- 24 *Ibid.*, pp.59, 16.
- 25 *Ibid.*, pp.17, 465.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p.24f. For other proponents of "church history seen from the other side of the barricades" (the phrase is Donald Durnbaugh's, in his *The Believers' Church* [New York, Macmillan, 1968], 9), see Ludwig Keller, *Die Reformation und die älteren Reformparteien* (Leipzig, S. Hirzel Verlag, 1885); E. H. Broadbent, *The Pilgrim Church*, 2nd ed. (London, Pickering & Inglis, 1935); and Amadeo Molnar, *A Challenge to Constantinianism: The Waldensian Theology in Middle Ages* (Geneva, WSCF Books, 1976).
- 27 John Foxe, *The First (-Second) Volume of the Ecclesiasticall History, containyng the Actes and Monumentes of Thynges passed in every Kynges Tyme in this Realme, especially in the Church of England*, 2 vols. (London, John Daye, 1570); Adriaen Cornelisz van Haemstede, *Die Gheschiedenisse Ende Den Doodt der vromer Martelaren, die om het ghetuyghenisse des Evangeliums haer bloedt ghestort hebben* (Antwerp?, 1559); Jean Crespin, *Actes des Martyrs déduits en sept livres, depuis le temps de Wicief & de Hus, iusques à présent* ([Geneva], 1564).
- 28 *MM*, p.174.
- 29 *ME*, II, p.519; *MM*, p.612.
- 30 In the past Mennonite scholars have been reluctant to write about Anabaptist apostasy (e.g., there is no entry in the *ME* for "recantation"). The as yet unpublished researches of Professor John S. Oyer of Goshen College will do much to rectify this. In one instance, the case of Elizabeth Dirks, whose moving responses under interrogation van Braght records (*MM*, p.481f), recently published records indicate that there was a final recantation by which van Braght was either embarrassed or unaware of (A. F. Mellink, ed. *Documenta Anabaptistica Neerlandica; I, Friesland en Groningen (1530-1550)* [Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1975], p.85). Generally I am under the impression that although van Braght did not dwell upon the stories of the recanters, he did not attempt to gloss over their existence (*MM*, pp.448, 451, 487f, 502, 590, 654, 666, 726, 737, 819, 852, 855, 876, 885, 889, 931).
- 31 *MM*, pp.448, 471, 585, 651, 737, 871. Cf. Samuel Cramer, "De Geloofwaardigheid van van Braght", *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen*, 39 (1899), pp.65-164; 40 (1900), pp.184-210.
- 32 *MM*, p.899f.
- 33 The most recent serious study of *Martyrs' Mirror* is almost thirty years old (A. Orley Swartzentruber, "The Piety and Theology of the Anabaptist

- Martyrs in van Braght's *Martyrs' Mirror*", *MQR*, 28 [1954], pp.5-26, 128-142). For usefull popularizations, see T. Alberda-van der Zijpp, "'Het Offer des Heeren': Geloof en Getuigenis van de Martelaren", in S. Groen-veld, J. P. Jacobszoon, and S. L. Verheus, eds., *Wederdopers, Menisten, Doopsgezinden in Nederland, 1530-1980* (Zutphen, de Walburg Pers, 1980), pp.46-61; Cornelius Krahn, ed., "A Martyrs' Mirror Digest", *Mennonite Life*, 22 (April, 1967), pp.49-96; and idem, *The Witness of the Martyrs' Mirror for Our Day* (North Newton, Kansas, Bethel College, [1974]).
- 34 A. J. F. Zieglschmid, ed., *Die älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder* (Philadelphia, Carl Schurz Memorial Foundation, 1943). Van Braght edited his Hutterite material, often by shortening it and deleting specific references to the Hutterites (e.g. *MM*, p.445f; Zieglschmid, p.158f.
- 35 *MM*, p.774.
- 36 *Ibid.*, pp.660, 706, 761, 893, 907.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p.530.
- 38 In 1572 a man from Delft spoke of "the simple fisherman's understanding which the Lord has given me" (*MM*, p.935). A few of our Anabaptists admitted to having read Menno Simons' writings; one even quoted Martin Luther (*Ibid.*, p.1015).
- 39 For examples, see *MM*, pp.750-757, 804-809.
- 40 For this "interactionist perspective" on the sociology of theological knowledge, see Robin Gill, *Theology and Social Structure* (London and Oxford, Mowbrays, 1977), pp.22-25.
- 41 *MM*, p.566, 613, 711, 787, 862, 896. For Jacob de Roore, "water baptism signifies the washing of regeneration in which Christ baptizes with the Spirit..." (*MM*, p.784).
- 42 *Ibid.*, pp.493, 516, 613, 642, 650, 760.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p.961.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p.515.
- 45 *Ibid.*, pp.635, 681.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p.616.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p.775.
- 48 *Ibid.*, pp.449, 507.
- 49 *Ibid.*, p.736.
- 50 *Ibid.*, pp.565, 626, 687.
- 51 Matt. 10.37-38 (*MM*, p.799).
- 52 Matt. 10.16-22; John 15.20 (*MM*, p.747).

- 53 *MM*, p.747.
- 54 Phil. 1.29; II Tim. 3.12 (*MM*, p.604).
- 55 I Peter 2.21 (*MM*, p.458).
- 56 John 15.20 (*MM*, pp.567, 747, 915).
- 57 Ethelbert Stauffer, "Martyrertheologie und Täuferbewegung", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 52 (1933), p.550.
- 58 *MM*, p.508.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p.714.
- 60 Acts 5.41 (*MM*, pp.511, 674, 799, 851).
- 61 *MM*, pp.579, 977.
- 62 I. Peter 4.13 (*MM*, pp.567, 643).
- 63 *MM*, p.457.
- 64 *Ibid.*, p.454.
- 65 *Ibid.*, p.717.
- 66 *Ibid.*, pp.499, 667.
- 67 *Ibid.*, pp.472, 839.
- 68 *Ibid.*, p.454.
- 69 *Ibid.*, pp.628, 902, 605, 469. Cf. Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought*, pp.175-180; Robert Friedmann, *The Theology of Anabaptism: An Interpretation* (Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, 15) (Scottsdale, Pa., Herald Press, 1973), pp.36-46.
- 70 *MM*, p.881.
- 71 *Ibid.*, pp.505, 507, 543, 888, 938.
- 72 *Ibid.*, p.938 (*italics mine*); cf. p.505.
- 73 *Ibid.*, p.682.
- 74 *Ibid.*, pp.531, 852-853, 889.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p.941.
- 76 *Ibid.*, p.566.
- 77 A. L. E. Verheyden, *Anabaptism in Flanders, 1530-1650: A Century of Struggle* (Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, 9) (Scottsdale, Pa., Herald Press, 1961), p.65.
- 78 *MM*, p.557.

- 79 Ibid., p.554.
- 80 Ibid., p.530.
- 81 Ibid., pp.566, 587, 621.
- 82 Ibid., p.625.
- 83 Ibid., p.996.
- 84 Ibid., p.604.
- 85 Ibid., p.1013.
- 86 Ibid., p.668.
- 87 Zwingli to Oswald Myconius, 24th July 1520, quoted in Harold S. Bender, *Conrad Grebel, c.1498-1526* (Scottsdale, Pa., Herald Press, 1950), p.93 (italics mine).
- 88 Martin Luther, "The Pagan Servitude of the Church", in Luther, *Selections from his Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (Garden City, N.Y., Anchor Books, 1961), p.303.
- 89 Ethelbert Stauffer, "The Anabaptist Theology of Martyrdom" (a somewhat abbreviated translation of his "Märtyrertheologie", cited in n.57 above), *MQR*, 19 (1945), p.183.
- 90 *MM*, p.605.
- 91 *ME*, III, pp.66-67; *MM*, pp.591-611.
- 92 *MM*, p.602; cf. p.534.
- 93 Ibid., p.604 f; cf. p.859.
- 94 Although involuntary, internal, suffering has been the central preoccupation of Western theologians since Augustine, a few thinkers have wrestled with the call to voluntary suffering in imitation of Christ. For a recent example of the dominant approach, see John Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970), 42-98; for an example of the minority vision, see John Ferguson, *The Place of Suffering* (Cambridge, James Clarke, 1972).
- 95 *MM*, p.604.
- 96 Ibid., pp.669, 678.
- 97 Ibid., p.454.
- 98 Ibid., p.747.
- 99 Ibid., pp.558, 628, 996.
- 100 Ibid., p.870.
- 101 Ibid., p. 565.

- 102 Ibid., p.870.
- 103 Ibid., p.717.
- 104 ME, III, p.527; Verheyden, *Martyrologe protestant*, pp.171-267, which summarizes the findings of his many local studies.
- 105 A. L. E. Verheyden, *Het Gentsche Martyrologium 1530-1595* (Rijksuniversiteit te Gent, Werken Uitgegeven door de Faculteit van de Wijsbegeerte en Letteren, p.96) (Bruges, "De Tempel" Tempelhof, 1946), xxiv; idem, *Het Brugsche Martyrologium (12 October 1527 - 7 Augustus 1573)* (Brussels, "Wilco", 1944), p.28.
- 106 MM, p.962.
- 107 Ibid., pp.576f, 631,652, 932.
- 108 Verheyden, *Anabaptism*, p.99.
- 109 Ibid., p.43.
- 110 MM, p.780.
- 111 Ibid., p.721.
- 112 Ibid., p.707.
- 113 Ibid., p.519.
- 114 Ibid., p.705.
- 115 Verheyden, *Anabaptism*, 1.
- 116 MM, p.883.
- 117 Verheyden, *Martyrologe*, p.270.
- 118 MM, pp.541, 589.
- 119 Ibid., p.484.
- 120 Ibid., p.762.
- 121 Ibid., p.633, 653, 655, 761, 897, 929f, 1007.
- 122 Ibid., p.937.
- 123 Ibid., pp.658, 905.
- 124 Ibid., pp.540, 662.
- 125 Ibid., pp.839, 913.
- 126 Ibid., p.495.
- 127 Ibid., pp.473, 525, 557, 991. The beheading of Sicke Snijder impelled

Menno Simons to study the biblical teaching on baptism (Menno Simons *Complete Writings*, trans. Leonard Verduin, ed. J. C. Wenger [Scottsdale Pa., Herald Press, 1956] , p.66B).

- 128 *MM*, p.798.
- 129 *Ibid.*, pp.772, 693, 913.
- 130 *Ibid.*, p.798.
- 131 *Ibid.*, pp.926, 469, 491, 496, 515, 745, 755, 812f, 926.
- 132 *Ibid.*, p.613.
- 133 *Ibid.*, p.750.
- 134 *Ibid.*, pp.723, 462.
- 135 *Ibid.*, pp.512, 591.
- 136 *Ibid.*, pp.623, 665, 677.
- 137 *Ibid.*, pp:521, 628, 671, 677, 713, 772.
- 138 *Ibid.*, p.942.
- 139 *MM*, 994; Cornelius Krahn, *Dutch Anabaptism: Origin, Spread, Life and Thought (1450-1600)* (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), p.239f.
- 140 Verheyden, *Anabaptism*, ch.4; *MM*, p.1093f.
- 141 C. J. Dyck, ed., *An Introduction to Mennonite History* (Scottsdale, Pa., Herald Press, 1967), pp.94-100.
- 142 *MM*, pp.1054, 1056f, 1090. Cf. 1106 (persecution in Deventer in 1620).
- 143 *MM*, pp.1054, 1056f, 1090f.
- 144 H. Visscher and L. A. van Langeraad, *Het Protestantsche Vaderland: Biographisch Woordenboek van Protestantsche Godgeleerden in Nederland*, I (Utrecht, Kemink & Zoon, 1903), p.554.
- 145 Dyck, *Introduction*, p.101.
- 146 *MM*, p.1132f.
- 147 *Ibid.*, p.1057.
- 148 *Ibid.*, p.8.
- 149 Recent writings on this controverted subject include L. D. Kliever, "General Baptist Origins", *MQR*, 36 (1962), p.316f; I. B. Horst, *The Radical Brethren: Anabaptism and the English Reformation to 1558* (Nieuwkoop, B. de Graaf, 1972), pp.177-180; B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition: From the Marian Martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers*

(London, Oxford University Press, 1971), pp.161-164; Jarold K. Zeman, *Baptist Roots and Identity* (Brantford, Ontario, Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, 1978), pp.21-24; Goki Saito, "An Investigation into the Relationship between the Early English General Baptists and the Dutch Anabaptists" (thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1975); Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978), pp.7-14; Christopher Clement, "The English Radicals and their Theology, 1535-1565" (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1980). For a thought-provoking discussion of the dynamics which shaped the various interpretations, see Ian Sellers, "Edwardians, Anabaptists and the Problem of Baptist Origins", *The Baptist Quarterly*, 29 (1981), pp.97-112.

150 John 3:39.

151 Edward Bean Underhill, in the introduction to his English Baptist edition of *Martyrs' Mirror (A Martyrology of the Churches of Christ, commonly called Baptists, during the Era of the Reformation)*, trans. B. Millard, 2 vols. [London, Hanserd Knollys Society, 1850-1853], pp.vii-viii), commented upon the necessity to read the actual writings of the martyrs, thereby going beyond the "partial and prejudiced statements" of established historians whose theology and historical views buttress the "national reformed churches".

152 *MM*, 8.

153 Wilbert R. Shenk, Director of Overseas Missions, Mennonite Board of Missions, and Secretary-Treasurer of the American Society of Missiology, in a personal communication, April 1981.

154 John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1972); chs.2 and 6; Richard J. Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics and Society* (Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1979).

155 For different yet compatible attempts to apply the themes of Jesus' life and ministry to the public realm, see John H. Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State* (Newton, Kansas, Faith and Life Press, 1964), pp.71-73; André Trocmé, *The Politics of Repentance* (New York, Association Press, 1953); and Haddon Willmer, "The Politics of Forgiveness", *The Furrow*, April 1979, pp.207-218.

156 Luke 23:34.

157 *MM*, p.468.

158 *MM*, p.14.

159 Luke 12:32-34.

160 Matthew 5:9, 43-45.

161 Luke 19:42-44.

162 Luke 4:18-19.

163 Acts 2:4, 42-47.