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Soma Marik
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Due to his role in creating a structured network, many Anabaptists came to be called Mennonites.

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The Reformation had several strands, including the "Radical Reformation," which refers to all individuals and groups who rejected both the Roman Catholic tradition and the mainstream Protestant alternatives. Many radicals and their leaders, mostly literate ex-clergy, rejected any connection with the state and any state church. They appealed to the same audience and used some of the same anti-Roman or anti-clerical arguments as did the preachers of the mainstream Reformation, but they had a more popular social base. Often called Anabaptists, or "rebaptizers" by their contemporary Catholic and Protestant enemies, they advocated adult rather than infant baptism and saw the church as a body of saints in which membership was voluntary, and the most severe form of discipline was banning or shunning. In their separation from the temporal domain, many Anabaptist groups refused to serve the state as magistrates or soldiers, and some even refused to pay war taxes.

MAIN CURRENTS

In Switzerland, Anabaptism developed from Conrad Grebel's circle and priests from the outlying areas of Zurich. Seeing the Bible as an alternative authority to Rome, these "Swiss Brethren" sought to purify the city's religion of Catholic elements like the mass and establish self-governing people's churches in the rural communities. They opposed tithes, or the payment of one-tenth of produce as tax to the church. In 1525 their meetings were forbidden, and parents were ordered to have their infants baptized within eight days or face expulsion from the city. In response, on January 21, Conrad Grebel, a layman often called the "first Anabaptist," baptized George Blaurock, an ordained priest. The movement spread rapidly. The Brethren began evangelizing the surrounding territories with great success, converting and baptizing many. Leaders were arrested and rebaptism was banned by the council on March 7, 1526. The penalty for disobedience was death by drowning. In De-

cember Blaurock, who was not a citizen of Zurich, was tried and was whipped and banished. Felix Manz was executed by drowning on January 5, 1527, thereby becoming the first Anabaptist martyr. The attempt to emerge as a mass movement failed, and there emerged instead the idea of the church of a separated minority. By 1527, Swiss Anabaptists were being unified through the Schleitheim Confession. Drafted by Michael Sattler, this document attempted to separate congregations of Anabaptist followers from non-believers.

Radical reforming zeal and peasant radicalism also combined in southern Germany. The "Zwickau Prophets," Thomas Dreschel, Nicolas Storch, and Mark Thomas Stübner, claimed to be directly commanded by the Holy Spirit and rejected infant baptism and any authority other than the spiritual command of God. They in turn influenced Thomas Müntzer, a priest who became acquainted with Martin Luther around 1519. During the Peasant Rebellion in 1524–5, Müntzer supported the peasants' cause. Seeing the events of 1525 as resistance to godless tyranny and God's instrument to purify Christendom, he placed his considerable talents at the disposal of the great uprising of the peasants and "common man." Although not its instigator, he became one of its theologically most articulate defenders, ultimately being tortured and beheaded for the cause.

Other German Anabaptists included Hans Hut, who disagreed with the need to form separatist communities, and Balthasar Hubmaier, who believed that the state was ordained by God, envisaged the possibility of a Christian magistrate, and sanctioned capital punishment and just wars. Hut's more radical followers called for common ownership of goods and denied that Christians could use the sword in self-defense, serve as magistrates, or pay taxes.

Another radical faction from Austerlitz, which followed Jacob Hutter and was known as Hutterites, was the first Anabaptist community to form a completely communistic society administered by elected officials. They believed that if all things were held in common, selfishness could be overcome and the true imitation of

Christ attained. Eventually, Ferdinand I succeeded in getting the Hutterites expelled from Moravia. Hutter was arrested by the Austrian authorities in Tyrol, and burned to death on February 25, 1536. Subsequently, Hutterites moved back to Moravia and were given protection by some nobles. Periods of persecution and relaxation followed. By 1572 they had built up flourishing and hard-working communities, but the death of their protector and unrelenting persecution destroyed the communities in Moravia.

THE MÜNSTER REBELLION

Another major Anabaptist movement developed in Münster through the influence of Melchior Hofmann, who died after ten years' imprisonment in Strasbourg. Two lines developed to continue and transform his legacy. Soon after learning about Hofmann's arrest, the Haarlem baker Jan Matthys, in the presence of Low Country Melchiorites, professed to be driven by the Spirit, and claimed to be the second witness of the apocalypse. Meanwhile, in the city of Münster in Westphalia, Bernhard Rothmann, influenced by the Melchiorites, moved to a more radical position, and his followers won the town council, declaring property communal and adopting such biblical practices as polygamy. Adopting a strongly patriarchal line, Rothmann demanded complete obedience of the wife to the husband. All Lutherans and Catholics who refused to join the movement were expelled by early March 1534, but eventually the bishop of Münster, aided by both Catholic and Protestant rulers, captured the city on June 25, 1535. Many of the inhabitants negotiated surrender, only to be executed after they had laid down their weapons.

The survival of Anabaptism after the suppression of the Münster Rebellion was largely the work of Menno Simons, who from 1536 to 1543 worked first in the Netherlands and then in North Germany to reorganize and consolidate the scattered Anabaptist communities.