

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA

UMI[®]
800-521-0600

EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY MENNONITE CONFESSIONS OF FAITH:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ANABAPTIST TRADITION

by

Karl Peter Koop

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Theology of the
University of St. Michael's College
and the Department of Theology
of the Toronto School of Theology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Theology
awarded by the University of St. Michael's College

Toronto 1999

©Karl Peter Koop



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-46671-X

Canada

EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY MENNONITE CONFESSIONS OF FAITH:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ANABAPTIST TRADITION

Ph.D Thesis, 1999
by Karl Peter Koop

submitted to the Faculty of Theology of
the University of St. Michael's College
and the Department of Theology
of the Toronto School of Theology

Dissertation Abstract

Scholars have long agreed that in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Mennonites in the Netherlands produced a significant number of confessions of faith. Differences of opinion, however, have emerged on the question of the relationship between the confessions and their Anabaptist heritage. Some scholars have understood the adoption of confessional statements by Mennonites as a development inconsistent with Anabaptism, which, it has been argued, was more concerned with moral or social reform than doctrinal precision. Others have observed a degree of correspondence between the confessions and Anabaptism, noting, in particular, areas of doctrinal continuity.

The present thesis--a historical-theological study--concedes that with the advent of fully developed confessions of faith, something essentially new in the Anabaptism tradition emerged. Further, it recognizes that the theological perspectives reflected in the confessions were not necessarily identical to Anabaptist views. Nevertheless, the central argument of the thesis is that the confessions of faith, as represented by the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions--confessions adopted by the largest Mennonite groups in the early seventeenth century--in the main, stand in historical and theological continuity with sixteenth century Anabaptism. The thesis does not disregard the moral and social dimensions of Anabaptism and Mennonitism. It brings into view, however, something that has often been overlooked; namely, that the Anabaptist and Mennonite concern for moral and social reform was in fact deeply rooted in a particular way of believing and thinking about God, Jesus Christ, salvation and the church.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In gratitude to my parents,
Jacob Henry Koop (1914-1982) and Hilda Lodde Koop (b. 1919)
who first taught me the significance of tradition

and to Katharina with
Heidi, Noelle, Rebekah, and Mariette,
who remind me of what is important in life

This Thesis was prepared under the guidance
of Professor A. James Reimer
Gratitude is here expressed for his support
direction and enthusiasm

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT		ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS		iii
CONVENTIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS		vi
I	MENNONITE CONFESSIONS OF FAITH RECONSIDERED	1
1.	Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition	1
2.	Mennonite Confessions of Faith and Scholarly Research	5
3.	Thesis and Method	28
4.	Further Presuppositions of the Study	35
II	ANABAPTISM IN THE LOW COUNTRIES: AN ORIENTATION	40
1.	Historical Background	40
2.	Core Theological Suppositions	48
3.	The Status and Function of Confessional Statements	80
III	THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY DUTCH CONTEXT	90
1.	Political, Social and Economic Developments	90
2.	Religious Developments	95
3.	Responding to the Challenges	109
IV	A HISTORY OF THREE DUTCH CONFESSIONS OF FAITH	114
1.	The Divisive Nature of Mennonitism	114
2.	The First Confessions of Faith	120
3.	The Short Confession	122
4.	The Jan Cents and Dordrecht Confessions	126
5.	The Status and Function of the Confessions	134
6.	Emerging Questions	143
V	GENERAL TEXTUAL AND HERMENEUTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SHORT, JAN CENTS AND DORDRECHT CONFESSIONS	145
1.	Literary and Structural Characteristics	146
2.	Mood	150
3.	Scripture Use	151
4.	Hermeneutical Assumptions	155
5.	Findings	160

VI	DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS	163
1.	Theology (God)	164
2.	Anthropology	170
3.	Christology	178
4.	Soteriology	193
5.	Summary	198
VII	THE CONGREGATION OF SAINTS	201
1.	The Nature of the Church	202
2.	Leadership in the Church	207
3.	Outer Ceremonies	211
4.	Ethics and Discipline	219
5.	Eschatology	228
6.	Summary	230
VIII	THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TRADITION	232
1.	Mennonite Confession of Faith Revisited	232
2.	The Question of Contemporary Applicability	239
APPENDIX I	Tables	241
APPENDIX II	Location of Scripture References in the Confessions	245
BIBLIOGRAPHY		271

CONVENTIONS

Terminology

The term "Anabaptist" is generally applied by scholars to adult baptizers or those who received adult baptism, from 1525 to approximately 1560, in Swiss, South German, Austrian lands, as well as in the north German-Dutch lowlands. After 1560, Anabaptists in the Netherlands referred to themselves primarily as "doopsgezinden," ("baptism-minded"), although the name "menisten" was also applied. Today Dutch Mennonites refer to themselves as "Doopsgezinden," but the term "Mennonite" is widely used in English speaking contexts. In this study, I have used the term "Mennonite" as the only English alternative.

Spelling

In the German language where an *Umlaut* applies, I have inserted the letter "e" following the vowel that normally would receive this accent.

ABBREVIATIONS

SC	Short Confession of Faith
JC	The Confession of Jan Cents
DC	The Dordrecht Confession of Faith
AC	The Augsburg Confession
BC	The Belgic Confession
CWMS	<i>The Complete Writings of Menno Simons</i>
WDP	<i>The Writings of Dirk Philips</i>
ARG	<i>Archiv fuer Reformationsgeschichte</i>
BRN	<i>Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica</i>
CGR	<i>Conrad Grebel Review</i>
CH	<i>Church History</i>
DB	<i>Doopsgezinde Bijdragen</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JMS	<i>Journal of Mennonite Studies</i>
ME	<i>Mennonite Encyclopedia</i>
MGB	<i>Mennonitische Geschichtsblaetter</i>
MQR	<i>Mennonite Quarterly Review</i>
SCJ	<i>Sixteenth Century Journal</i>
SR	<i>Sciences Religieuses/Studies in Religion</i>
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopaedie</i>

I

MENNONITE CONFESSIONS OF FAITH RECONSIDERED

1. Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition

Confessions of faith are a constitutive dimension of religious expression. In the major religions of the world, such as in Buddhism, Islam, Judaism or Christianity, concise as well as lengthy formulations exist, summarizing the essential elements of the faith.¹

In the Christian tradition statements summarizing the faith have existed from the beginning. Early Christians stood in the tradition of the Jewish religion, where the focus was on the recognition and glorification of the one God. One of the oldest confessional statements of Israel is the *Schema*, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). The first Christians knew this confession and accepted it as elemental to their faith.² What differentiated them from Judaism was their additional confession concerning Jesus Christ as the one who was also to be identified with this lordship.

In the Christian scriptures, no precisely defined confessions were authorized, but creed-like formulas exist, usually directing attention to Jesus Christ, his cross and resurrection. These Christological formulas range from charismatic cries, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew. 16:16), to carefully formulated statements as in Romans 1:1-4 which contain the rudiments for a fully developed Christology. In addition to the Christological confessions, there are also two-article formulas affirming both God and Christ and three article formulas that include assertions about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These formulas exist often alongside each

¹TRE 5, s.v. "Glaubensbekenntnis," by Guenter Lanczkowski et al.

²Dennis Slabaugh, "Das Apostolikum: Ein frag-wuerdiges Glaubensbekenntnis," *Bruecke* 9, December 1994, pp. 186-7.

other and contemporaneously.³

In the early church up until the fourth century, no special commissions were designated to formulate confessional statements, but confessions emerged nonetheless. Leading communities tended to formulate their own statements while smaller congregations utilized existing confessions, borrowing them from the larger or more important congregations. In some regions the different confessions of the churches were almost identical, reflecting the interdependent nature of the Christian communities. In other instances confessions were more diverse, indicating greater self-reliance. With time the church's faith in Christ was based on the more detailed witness and explanations of the Canon, and eventually the Bible came to be the confession of the Church.⁴

Still, Christian communities continued to formulate concise or compressed summaries of the faith, and some became standard and normative for the church. In Eastern Orthodoxy the seven ecumenical councils (325-787) became normative statements of doctrine. Of these, the West recognized particularly the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (381), the Chalcedonian formula (451), the Athanasian Creed (sometime after 440), along with the Apostles Creed (which had its origins in the second century but emerged in its final form somewhere between 710 and 724).⁵ Of all the faith summaries, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed alone

³See Edmund Arens, *Bezeugen und Bekennen: Elementare Handlungen des Glaubens* (Duesseldorf: Patmos, 1989), pp. 239-240; J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, third edition (London: Longman Group Limited, 1972), pp. 14-23; John Leith, ed., *Creeds of the Church*, third edition (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), pp. 12-16.

⁴Gerhard Ruhbach, "Aspekte der Bekenntnisbildung in der Kirchengeschichte," in Gerhard Ruhbach, Henning Schroerer and Manfred Wichelhaus, eds., *Bekenntnis in Bewegung* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1969), pp. 52-3; TRE 5, s.v. "Bekenntnisschriften," by Johannes Wirsching.

⁵Leith, *Creeds of the Church*, p. 24.

attained acceptance in both the Eastern and the Western churches.⁶

The Reformation ushered in a new era of confessional writing. The Lutheran confessions were written on German soil between 1529 and 1577 and were brought together in the *Book of Concord* (1580). The *Book of Concord* defined Lutheran orthodoxy, and after 1580, additional confessions were no longer added. It included seven confessional statements as well as the Constantinopolitan and the Chalcedonian creeds thereby indicating continuity with the early and medieval Church.⁷ The most widely recognized Lutheran confession in Lutheranism came to be the Augsburg Confession (1530).

The Reformed church produced more confessions of faith than the Lutherans, over a wide geographical area and over an extended period of time. In contrast to the Lutheran tradition, the Reformed church never defined or canonized a fixed number of confessions for the church. For historical, geographical and theological reasons neither did a single confession become the centre piece of Reformed Protestantism, although the Second Helvetic (1566), Belgic (1561, 1619), and Westminster confessions (1648) along with the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) come close to being the central statements of faith for the Reformed tradition. Nevertheless, "more than sixty creeds would qualify as Reformed, though no number can be exact since the boundaries that distinguish Reformed creeds have never been precisely fixed."⁸

Since the Reformation period, statements of faith have

⁶Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 296.

⁷Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*, pp. 62-3; Horst Georg Poehlmann, ed., *Unser Glaube: Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Guetersloh: Guetersloher Verlagshaus, Gerd Mohn, 1987), p. 29.

⁸Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*, pp. 127-128. See also Paul Jacobs, *Theologie Reformierter Bekenntnisschriften in Grundzuegen* (Duisburg-Ruhrort: Neukirchener Verlag, 1959), pp. 7, 17.

continued to be produced by Catholics, Anglicans, mainline Protestants, and ecclesial bodies of the Free or Believers Church traditions. Statements have been produced by individuals, by local congregations, by denominations and by larger organizations such as the World Council of Churches. In the last several decades, a significant number of confessions of faith have been produced by churches of the so-called two-thirds world.⁹ Indeed, the Christian church, from its origins to the present, has been a confessing church.

In current discussions the terms "creed" and "confession" are often used inter-changeably. In common usage creeds are generally associated with the patristic and pre-Reformation era and confessions to the Reformation and following period. Creeds are often identified as timeless, classic, or universal statements, while confessions are perceived to be more particular, personal, and occasional, written for a special purpose at a particular time and place.¹⁰ These differentiations can be confusing since many creeds, originally, were no more than particular, personal and occasional statements. Conversely, some confessions of the Reformation period, over a period of time, have become timeless and classic statements of doctrine.

Confusion also exists with the term "catechism". In the history of Christianity, catechisms have been viewed both as occasional and as timeless summaries of the faith. In a narrow sense they are summaries of the faith used for instructing believers before their induction into the church, often in the form of questions and answers (the statements are both

⁹Arens, *Bezeugen und Bekennen*, p. 286. See for instance Lukas Vischer, ed., *Reformed Witness Today: A Collection of Confessions and Statements of Faith Issued by Reformed Churches* (Bern: Evangelische Arbeitsstelle, 1982).

¹⁰Cornelius J. Dyck, Foreword to *One Lord, One Church, One Hope and One God: Mennonite Confessions of Faith*, by Howard John Loewen (Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1985), pp. 15-16. Loewen understands these terms similiarly (Loewen, *One Lord*, n. 42, pp. 58-59).

interrogatory and declamatory). Yet creeds and confessions have sometimes been used for the benefit of catechetical instruction, as catechisms have sometimes functioned like formal confessions.¹¹ Evidently, the way in which creeds, confessions and catechisms have functioned in history, and the degree to which they have been authoritative in Christian communities, has varied according to time and place. This has made it difficult to give the various doctrinal texts consistent designations.

In this study I use the term "creed" to refer primarily to the Ecumenical Councils that were accepted by the churches, both in the East and West, from 325 to 787. The Apostles' Creed, which is associated with the church in the West, is also identified in this study as a "creed." When I use the term "confession of faith," I am referring to statements of faith made by individuals, local congregations and Christian groups, but most often to statements of doctrine, summarizing the essentials of the faith, which have been adopted by Christian groups within Protestantism since the beginning of the Reformation period.

2. Mennonite Confessions of Faith and Scholarly Research

Throughout much of their history Mennonites have followed other Christian traditions in formulating or adopting statements of faith. At the outset, Anabaptists, forerunners of the Mennonites, generally recognized creedal formulas such as the Apostles' Creed.¹² It is also likely that oral confessional

¹¹Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 50. "'Catechisms' are structured statements of faith written in the form of questions and answers which in the Reformation era often served the same purposes as formal confessions." So Mark Noll, ed., *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), p. 14.

¹²See C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1995), p. 84; C. Arnold Snyder, "Beyond Polygenesis: Recovering the Unity and Diversity of Anabaptist Theology," in H. Wayne Pipkin, ed., *Essays in Anabaptist Theology* (Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1994), p. 11; Russel Snyder-Penner, "The Ten Commandments, The Lord's Prayer, and

"texts" were operative among the various radical reforming groups, reflecting Anabaptist distinctives.¹³ Before long, however, Anabaptist leaders were writing faith summaries,¹⁴ some Anabaptist groups were uniting around common statements of doctrine or community practice,¹⁵ and frequently Anabaptist confessions of faith were being recorded at court trials or state

The Apostles' Creed as Early Anabaptist Texts," *MQR* 68, no. 3 (July 1994): 318-335; Sjouke Voolstra, *Het Woord is Vlees Geworden: De melchioritisch-menniste incarnatieleer* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1982), p. 129; Sjouke Voolstra, "Doperse belijden," in J. Bruesewitz and M. A. Kreber, eds., *Confessie van Dordrecht, Doperse Stemmen 5* (Amsterdam: Doopsgezinde Historische Kring, 1982), pp. 19-20, 28-29; Abraham Friesen, *Erasmus, the Anabaptists and the Great Commission* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), p. 128.

¹³C. Arnold Snyder, "Orality, Literacy, and the Study of Anabaptism," *MQR* 65, no. 4 (October 1991): 389.

¹⁴Anabaptist leaders such as Balthasar Hubmaier, Pilgram Marpeck, Peter Riedemann, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips wrote summaries of the faith which can be found in their writings. See H. Wayne Pipkin and John H. Yoder, trans. and eds., *Balthasar Hubmaier, Theologian of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1989); William Klassen and Walter Klaassen, trans. and eds., *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck* (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1978); Peter Riedemann, *Account of Our Religion, Doctrine and Faith* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough Publishing House, 1974); Leonard Verduin, trans. and J. C. Wenger, ed., *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1956), hereafter *CWMS*; Cornelius Dyck, William Keeney, Alvin Beachy, trans. and eds., *The Writings of Dirk Philips* (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1992), hereafter *WDP*.

¹⁵The best known early statement uniting the Swiss Brethren was the Brotherly Union sometimes referred to as the Schleithem Articles. See John Howard Yoder, trans. and ed., *The Legacy of Michael Sattler* (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1973), pp. 34-43. A text that appears to have circulated with the Schleithem Articles was the "Congregational Order." See *ibid.*, pp. 44-45. One of the earliest confessional statements in the north German-Dutch context was the Kempen Confession. See J. F. G. Goeters, "Das aelteste rheinische Tauerferbekenntnis," in Cornelius J. Dyck, ed., *A Legacy of Faith* (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1962), pp. 197-212. In the north the Wismar Articles were significant in terms of congregational order. See *BRN*, VII, pp. 51-53.

interrogations.¹⁶ By the end of the sixteenth century, and in the centuries following the Reformation period, Mennonite churches that grew out of the Anabaptist reform movement in Switzerland, South Germany and France, and especially in the Netherlands, Prussia, Poland, southern Russia and North America, continued to produce or adopt statements of doctrine outlining the central tenets of the faith.¹⁷ In the present day, most Mennonites world wide identify with some kind of confessional statement.¹⁸

Between 1577 and 1632 a significant number of confessions of faith were produced by Mennonites situated in the north German-Dutch lowlands.¹⁹ These confessions were of a different quality in comparison to earlier Anabaptist confessions, in that for the first time they exhibited the following three distinct characteristics: They were "comprehensive" in the sense that they included the whole range of Christian belief--Theology (God), anthropology, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology and eschatology; the confessions were "systematic" in the sense that

¹⁶See Frank Friesen, translator, and Walter Klaassen, editor, *Sixteenth Century Anabaptism: Defenses, Confessions, Refutations* (Waterloo: Conrad Grebel College, 1982).

¹⁷ME I, s.v. "Confessions of Faith," by Christian Neff, J. C. Wenger, Harold S. Bender; Dirk Visser, *A Checklist of Dutch Mennonite Confessions of Faith to 1800 6/7* (Amsterdam: Documenta Anabaptistica Neerlandica, 1974-1975); Loewen, *One Lord*.

¹⁸In a relatively recent survey, it was noted that 104 out of 126 Mennonite conferences world-wide indicated that they have a written confession. See Dieter Goetz Lichdi, ed., *Mennonite World Handbook: Mennonites in Global Witness* (Carol Stream: Mennonite World Conference, 1990), p. 324.

¹⁹Towards the end of the sixteenth century the Swiss Brethren also produced at least two confessions, one in Hesse in 1578, and another in Cologne together with the Anabaptists from the north in 1591. See Theodor Sippel, "The Confession of the Swiss Brethren in Hesse, 1578," *MQR* 23, no. 1 (January 1949): 22-36; Leonard Gross and Jan Gleysteen, "The First Mennonite Merger: The Concept of Cologne," in James E. Horsch, ed., *Mennonite Yearbook 1990-1991* (Scottsdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1991): 8-10.

they generally followed the thematic order reflected in other Protestant confessions as outlined in the Apostles' Creed, beginning with the theme of God and ending with the theme of eschatology; and they were "doctrinal" in the sense that they represented consensus or agreement concerning the communally authoritative teachings of one church or another.²⁰ Earlier, Anabaptist confessions may have exhibited one or another of these characteristics, but none reflected all three. Thus the Mennonite confessions of faith, from 1577 onward, represented a new genre of confessional writing in Anabaptist-Mennonite history, although the Apostles' Creed had always been an accepted statement of doctrine within the churches.²¹

Scholarly research, concerning this genre of Mennonite theology from the Low Countries has become conspicuous only in recent years. In the first half of the twentieth century, beyond the introductory encyclopedic summaries of Christian Neff in the *Mennonitisches Lexikon*,²² the only study on confessions to materialize was Emil Haendiges' short monograph, *Die Lehre der Mennoniten in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, in which he examined

²⁰Alister McGrath maintains that "doctrine defines communities of discourse, possessing a representative character, attempting to describe or prescribe the beliefs of a community....(doctrine itself may be defined) as communally authoritative teachings regarded as essential to the identity of the Christian community." So McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundations of Doctrinal Criticism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 11-12. See also his discussion in *ibid.*, pp. 35-80. For further helpful discussions on the meaning of doctrine see Ted Campbell, *Christian Confessions: A Historical Introduction* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p. 2, and Jaroslav Pelikan, *A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 1-3.

²¹The Kempen Confession is both "systematic" and "doctrinal" but lacks the comprehensiveness of later confessions of faith. In this sense it may be seen as a transitional text. See Goeters, "Das aelteste rheinische Taeuferbekenntnis," pp. 197-212.

²²*Mennonitisches Lexikon*, s.v. "Bekenntnisse des Glaubens," and s.v. "Bekenntnisschriften," by Christian Neff.

Mennonite doctrines on the basis of several Anabaptist and Mennonite confessions of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²³ Since the 1940s, however, an increasing number of publications and introductory studies concerning Mennonite confessions of faith have appeared. Introductory surveys have been published in the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* and in a monograph by Dirk Visser.²⁴ On the characteristics and significance of Mennonite confessions, essays or shorter notations have been produced by Nanne van der Zijpp, J. Oosterban, Hans-Juergen Goertz, Gerald Studer and Beulah Stauffer Hostetler.²⁵ Four Waterlander confessions--the Short Confession of 1577, the Middleburg Confession of 1578, the Short Confession of 1610 and the 13 Articles against Socinianism of 1626--have been translated into English by Cornelius J. Dyck.²⁶ Historical

²³Emil Haendiges, *Die Lehre der Mennoniten in Geschichte und Gegenwart nach den Quellen dargestellt nebst einem ueberblick ueber die heutige Verbreitung und Organisation der mennonitischen Gemeinschaft* (Ludwigshafen am Rhein: Kommissionsverlag der Konferenz der sueddeutschen Mennoniten e.V., 1921).

²⁴Dirk Visser, *A Checklist*, pp. 1-14.

²⁵Nanne van der Zijpp, "The Confessions of Faith of the Dutch Mennonites," *MQR* 29, no. 3 (July 1955): 177-187; also found in *Uit het werk von Prof. dr. N. van der Zijpp* (Amsterdam, 1967); J. Oosterbann, "Vlekken en Rimpels: Over Verdeelkheid en Vereniging," in S. Groenveld, J. P. Jacobszoon, S. L. Verheus, eds., *Wederdopers, Menisten, Doopsgezinden in Nederland, 1530-1980* (Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 1980), pp. 62-83; Hans-Juergen Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht: Zur Zweideutigkeit Tauerferischer und Mennonitischer Bekenntnisse," *MGB* 43/44 (1986-1987): 16-46; Gerald C. Studer, "What Place Confessions?" *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* 6, no. 2 (April 1983): 2-6; Beulah Stauffer Hostetler, "The Place of Confessions in the Mennonite Church (MC)," *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* 12, no. 2 (April 1989): 2-6.

²⁶Cornelius J. Dyck, "The First Waterlandian Confession of Faith," *MQR* 36, no. 1 (January 1962): 5-13; Cornelius J. Dyck, "The Middelburg Confession of Hans de Ries, 1578," *MQR* 36, no. 2 (April 1962): 147-154, 161; Cornelius J. Dyck, "A Short Confession of Faith by Hans De Ries," *MQR* 38, no. 1 (January 1964): 5-19; Cornelius J. Dyck, "Hans de Ries, Theologian and Churchman: A Study

research on the Short Confession of 1610 has been carried out by James Coggins.²⁷ Other studies have included an English translation of the Concept of Cologne of 1591 by Leonard Gross and Jan Gleysteen,²⁸ and Wilhelmus J. Kuehler has outlined the historical context of two confessions, the Jacques Outermann Confession of 1626 and the Olive Branch Confession of 1627.²⁹

Of all the confessions written by Mennonites during this time period, the Dordrecht Confession of 1632 has undoubtedly received the greatest scholarly attention. A critical edition with an introduction and theological survey has been advanced by J. Bruesewitz, M. A. Krebber, Irvin Horst and Sjouke Voolstra.³⁰ Numerous editions have been printed in several languages,³¹ and historical and theological overviews have been contributed by Irvin Horst, Hans-Juergen Goertz, Gerald Studer and Hanspeter

in *Second Generation Dutch Anabaptism*," (Ph.D dissertation, University of Chicago, 1962), pp. 308-313.

²⁷James R. Coggins, "A Short Confession of Hans de Ries: Union and Separation in Early Seventeenth-Century Holland," *MQR* 60, no. 2 (April 1986): 128-138; James R. Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation: English Separatism, Mennonite Influence, and the Elect Nation* (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1991).

²⁸Gross and Gleysteen, "The First Mennonite Merger: The Concept of Cologne," pp. 8-10.

²⁹Wilhelmus J. Kuehler, *Geschiedenis van der Doopsgezinden in Nederland, Tweede Deel, 1600-1735, Erste Helft* (Haarlem: H. D. Tyeenk Willink and Zoon N. V., 1940), pp. 177-200.

³⁰J. Bruesewitz and M. A. Krebber, ed. with introductions by I. B. Horst and S. Voolstra, *Confessie van Dordrecht Doperse Stemmen* 5 (Amsterdam: Doopsgezinde Historische Kring, 1982).

³¹One of the latest English translations comes from Irvin Horst, editor and translator, *Mennonite Confession of Faith* (Lancaster: Lancaster Historical Society, 1988). At the back of Horst's edition (pp. 73-80) is a list of the other editions and translations. See also the list in the back of the Bruesewitz and Krebber edition, *Confessie*, pp. 59-63.

Jecker.³²

While scholarly contributions in the last several decades have been forthcoming, it is apparent, however, that beyond new editions and translations, and historical introductions and theological summaries, no comprehensive studies attempting to understand the period of confessionalization in Anabaptist-Mennonite history have appeared, nor have there been any extensive attempts to lay bare the developments in Anabaptist-Mennonite doctrine from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries. Scholarly energies in the twentieth century have been focussed elsewhere, as the following historiographical considerations indicate.

Anabaptist historian, Arnold Snyder, has pointed out that by the end of the nineteenth century and in the first years of the twentieth century, descriptions of Anabaptism had fallen into mainly four categories. Mainstream apologetic historiography viewed the Anabaptists as "fanatical heretics." "The theological description of Anabaptism, thus conceived, emphasized spiritualism and antinomianism."³³ A second view proposed that the Anabaptists were a continuation of the heretical traditions such as the Waldensians, the ascetic traditions of the Franciscans, that they were a continuation of mystical and spiritualist traditions or carried on humanist sentiments.³⁴ A third perspective, held by socialist historiographers "saw in Thomas Muentzer and the Anabaptists the beginnings of a popular

³²See Irvin Horst, "The Dordrecht Confession of Faith: 350 Years," *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* 5 (July 1982): 2-8; Hans-Juergen Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht;" Gerald C. Studer, "The Dordrecht Confession of Faith," *MQR* 58, no. 4 (October 1984): 503-519; Hanspeter Jecker, "Das Dordrechter Bekenntnis und die Amische Spaltung," *MGB* 50 (1993): 81-104; Hanspeter Jecker, *Ketzer-Rebellen-Heilige: Das Basler Täuferum von 1580-1700* (Liestal: Verlag des Kantons Basel-Landschaft, 1998), pp. 457-472.

³³Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 399.

³⁴*Ibid.*

German revolution."³⁵ A fourth view "interpreted Anabaptism in sociological categories as a 'sect type'." Anabaptism was defined in relation to society and the ruling authorities.³⁶

Beginning in the 1920s, it was this fourth view, initially shaped by Max Weber and developed by Ernst Troeltsch, that came to dominate Anabaptist historiography especially in North America. Building primarily on the work of Troeltsch, Mennonite historians as well as scholars sympathetic to the Free Church traditions, set out to rehabilitate the Anabaptists in a vigorous and public fashion.³⁷ Leading the way was Harold S. Bender who argued that Anabaptism was the culmination of the Reformation, fulfilling the original visions of Luther and Zwingli, and thus should be perceived as the consistent evangelical Protestant position which truly sought "to recreate without compromise the original New Testament church, the vision of Christ and the

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷In *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* Troeltsch noted three distinct sociological "types" in the history of Christianity: "the church, sect and mystical types. A key element of this typology for the writing of Anabaptist history was the differentiation it provided between Anabaptism (understood as a 'sect' type) and the 'spiritualistic types' such as Thomas Muentzer and the Zwickau Prophets." So Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 399. See also Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols., trans by Olive Wyon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981; reprint of the 1931 edition, Allen and Unwin), vol. 2, p. 703. It must be noted here that Troeltsch's classifications fit in with church history trends in general, not simply for Mennonite apologists. Thus, Roland Bainton appropriated the phrase "Left Wing of the Reformation" to describe the Reformation's radicals. See Roland Bainton, "The Left Wing of the Reformation," *Journal of Religion* 21 (1941). George Williams use of the term "Radical Reformation," is the classification that gained the widest acceptance. See Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 400; George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, third edition (Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992).

Apostles."³⁸ For Bender, "Anabaptism proper" had its genesis and locus in Switzerland, and from there it expanded to other regions of Europe.³⁹ In his now well-known "Anabaptist-Vision," Bender maintained that the central features of the movement were, namely, "a new conception of the essence of Christianity as discipleship; second, a new conception of the church as a brotherhood; and third, a new ethic of love and nonresistance."⁴⁰ For several decades Bender's "Vision" became the normative text for interpreting Anabaptist and Mennonite self-understanding.⁴¹

Bender's "Vision" was compelling particularly for Mennonite historians and leaders of Mennonite churches in North America. It was not only a description of sixteenth century Anabaptism, but also a treatise that attempted to define contemporary Mennonite identity. In an attempt to stay clear of what seemed to be the two prevailing options for American Mennonites--fundamentalism and liberalism--Bender provided a third option, namely, a return to Anabaptism, which was to provide a helpful alternative for Mennonites struggling with issues related to their identity in

³⁸Harold S. Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision," in Guy F. Herschberger, ed., *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1957), p. 37.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 35, 36.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 42.

⁴¹Initially the "Anabaptist Vision" was a presidential address for the American Society of Church History, delivered on December 28, 1943. It is found in numerous publications. See for instance, Harold S. Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision," *Church History* 13, no 1 (March 1944): 3-24; "The Anabaptist Vision," *MQR* 18, no. 2 (April 1944): 67-88; "The Anabaptist Vision," in Guy F. Herschberger, ed., *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S. Bender* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1957), pp. 29-54. The "Anabaptist Vision" became the "consensus" view, but as Arnold Snyder has pointed out, it did not go completely unchallenged even in its "heyday." See Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, pp. 401ff.

the context of modernity.⁴²

It is significant to note, that Bender's contribution emphasized the ethical dimensions of Anabaptism. As A. James Reimer has pointed out, the "Anabaptist Vision" was couched in more or less ethical terms.⁴³ Accordingly, "the early Anabaptists emphasized not primarily intellectual understanding, doctrinal belief, or subjective experience, but rather a regenerate life best described by the term 'Nachfolge Christi'".⁴⁴ This description reflected the position of a generation of scholars, who saw the Anabaptist tradition making a contribution in ethics rather than in theology. The Anabaptists were hailed for their willingness to challenge Constantinian Christianity, their willingness to form egalitarian communities, and their willingness to obey Jesus Christ and follow him in life. The Anabaptists were studied and admired for their orthopraxis. This emphasis on ethics could not have been better timed for a North American religious environment, which was turning away from doctrinal concerns. "Bender's categories lent themselves to social and political analysis--refreshing for Christians, steeped in words like 'sin' and 'holiness,' which seemed preoccupied with personal ethics."⁴⁵ His emphases counterbalanced "the kind of Christianity that says that Christian faith is merely assent to doctrine (supposedly the case

⁴²Arnold Snyder, "The Anabaptist Vision: Historical Perspectives," *CGR* 12, no. 3 (fall 1994), editorial.

⁴³A. James Reimer, "The Nature and Possibility of a Mennonite Theology," *CGR* 1, no. 1 (winter 1983): 36. See also Alain Epp Weaver who points out that "the Anabaptist Vision paradigm, inaugurated by Harold S. Bender, defined the Anabaptist-Mennonite genius solely in ethical and ecclesiological terms." So Weaver, "Introduction: Mennonite Theology in Face of Modernity," in Alain Epp Weaver, *Mennonite Theology in Face of Modernity: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Kaufman* (Newton: Mennonite Press, 1996), p. xi.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁵Livi Miller, "How the Anabaptist Vision changed the church," *Mennonite Reporter* 24, May 30 1994, p. 9.

in Protestantism), or the kind that says Christianity is primarily an inner spiritual experience (supposedly the case in pietism and revivalism)."⁴⁶

It is not surprising that scholars affected by this climate of opinion did not show extensive interest in Mennonite confessional developments. Confessions were, after all, considered to be a part of that genre that seemed to contradict the early Anabaptist radicals with their emphasis on discipleship rather than doctrine. Moreover, it was recognized that the confessions had emerged primarily at the end of the sixteenth and at the beginning of the seventeenth centuries in the Netherlands--an era judged to be far removed from the golden age of Anabaptist origins; an era and even geographical location perceived to be exhibiting characteristics of decline.⁴⁷ After 1560, the original Anabaptist movement was seen as having lost its brilliance, and for scholars like Robert Friedmann, the Dutch Mennonites were the first to lose the pristine Anabaptist

⁴⁶Stephen F. Dintaman, "The Spiritual Poverty of the Anabaptist Vision," *CGR* 10, no. 2 (spring 1992): pp. 205-208.

⁴⁷John Roth makes the point forcefully that historians of the past have idealized sixteenth century Anabaptism and have simply ignored the later years. According to Roth, "locked between the golden age of Anabaptist origins and the renaissance of those classical ideals by modern scholars, the history of European Mennonites in the intervening years became a literal "Middle Ages". Or worse, it became "the Dark Ages", a period characterized first and foremost by what it was not: by its retreat from the power of ideas into the routineity of structure, by its apostasy from the discipline of Nachfolge into the blissful devotion of Gelassenheit. Stripped of its idealism, and hence its pedagogical value for the present, the story of the Anabaptists after 1550 simply became uninteresting and irrelevant." See John Roth, "From Anabaptists to Mennonites: Prolegomena to a History of European Mennonites" a draft proposal presented at the Anabaptist Colloquium at Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, April 16, 1993, p. 8. Mary Sprunger notes ways in which historians have linked Dutch Mennonite prosperity with the apparent demise of Anabaptist ideals. See Mary Sprunger, "Rich Mennonites, Poor Mennonites: Economics and Theology in the Amsterdam Waterlander Congregation during the Golden Age" (Ph.D dissertation, University of Illinois, 1993), pp. 1-4.

character, their Christianity degenerating into a privatized and individualistic piety.⁴⁸ Clearly, for North American scholars, fed by the presuppositions of the "Anabaptist Vision," studies in Mennonite confessional developments were not very relevant or interesting.

In Europe, particularly in the Netherlands, Bender's "Vision" was never as enthusiastically received as it was in North America. Already in the two decades prior to the Second World War, the Dutch historian, Wilhelmus J. Kuehler, taking a more developmental view, did not see the genius of Anabaptism in Switzerland, but in the Netherlands. He was of the opinion that Dutch Anabaptism at its best, owed nothing to Switzerland.⁴⁹ Rather than positing a normative Anabaptist theology at the source, Kuehler outlined the theological development of Anabaptism and appropriated a reading grid that highlighted "the tension between individual and community, and between the spirit and the letter, which he said characterized the movement from the start."⁵⁰

An examination of Kuehler's writings indicates, interestingly enough, that his bias lay with the more individualistic and spiritualistic character of Anabaptism, viewing it as "Anabaptist proper" in contrast to the congregationalism of the South German-Swiss movement.⁵¹ Kuehler

⁴⁸Robert Friedmann, *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries: Its Genius and its Literature* (Goshen: Mennonite Historical Society, 1949), pp. 92-93, 100-101. See also Cornelius Krahn, "Anabaptism and the Culture of the Netherlands," in Herschberger, ed., *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*, pp. 219-236; Ernst Crous, "Anabaptism, Pietism, Rationalism and German Mennonites," in *ibid.*, pp. 237-248.

⁴⁹James Stayer, "Was Dr. Kuehler's conception of Early Dutch Anabaptism Historically Sound," *MQR* 60, no. 3 (July 1986): 262.

⁵⁰Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 401; see Kuehler, *Geschiedenis I*, pp. 3-6, 357, 364.

⁵¹Stayer, "Was Dr. Kuehler's Conception of Early Dutch Anabaptism Historically Sound?" p. 262.

saw individualistic and spiritualistic characteristics in the early writings of Menno Simons; however, from his view, observed an unfortunate shift taking place in Menno's later writings, towards a more legalistic and ecclesial emphasis.⁵² For Kuehler, as well as the Dutch historian, Hendrick W. Meihuizen, this individualistic and spiritualist character was inherited most faithfully by one particular Mennonite group, the Waterlanders, whose religious expression avoided the legalistic and literalistic pitfalls of some of the other Mennonite groups.⁵³ Meihuizen contended that this spiritualistic religion was often minimized or shunned. Nevertheless, "it was present from the beginning and it often raised its head; it was revived and it conquered."⁵⁴ Accordingly, in Meihuizen's view, the true Anabaptist-Mennonite legacy was a spiritualistic legacy where binding statements or confessions of faith could have no place. He recognized that Mennonites wrote confessions but saw them as being out of character with genuine Anabaptism and would not have seen any need to study them with seriousness.⁵⁵

These sentiments concerning Mennonite confessionalism found perhaps their strongest expression in an article on Mennonite confessions of faith, which was initially a public lecture in 1954 at the University of Amsterdam, by Nanne van der Zijpp upon the acceptance of the position of lecturer at the seminary of the Algemeene Doopsgezinde Societeit. Like Meihuizen, van der Zijpp did not deny that Mennonites went through a period of

⁵²Kuehler, *Geschiedenis*, I, p. 218.

⁵³See Kuehler, *Geschiedenis*, I, p. 374-375; Wilhelmus J. Kuehler, *Geschiedenis van der Doopsgezinden in Nederland II* (Haarlem: H. D. Tjeenk and Zoon, N.V. 1940), pp. 30, 115; Hendrick W. Meihuizen, "Spiritualistic Tendencies and Movements among the Dutch Mennonites of the 16th and 17th Centuries," *MQR* 27:4 (October 1953): 277.

⁵⁴Meihuizen, "Spiritualistic Tendencies," p. 261.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 260, 269-271, 277.

confessionalism, but his inclination to minimize this development in Anabaptist-Mennonite history is difficult to overlook. He claimed that when confessional statements were produced they were intended merely to bring about unity and were applicable only for a particular era.⁵⁶ As to contents, the Mennonite confessions did not strive to present a complete Christian teaching of faith, but only occupied themselves with the dogmatic questions which were the points of difference between the groups that wanted to unite. Finally, van der Zijpp maintained, these confessions were poorly formulated due to the fact that "their originators hardly ever were trained theologians."⁵⁷ It is evident that for van der Zijpp, as well as his Dutch colleagues, a comprehensive study of Mennonite confessions of faith would not be all that worthwhile. Besides, such a study would surely have been out of step with the nonconfessional and undogmatic Dutch Mennonite identity of the times.⁵⁸

In a more recent presentation, the German Anabaptist historian, Hans-Juergen Goertz, has given a more nuanced analysis of sixteenth century Anabaptist confessions of faith as well as

⁵⁶van der Zijpp, "The Confessions of Faith of the Dutch Mennonites," p. 186.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 177.

⁵⁸In his survey of Mennonite history in the Netherlands, van der Zijpp maintained that Mennonites in the Netherlands of his time were, and always have been adverse to confessional and binding formulations. See N. van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis der Doopsgezinden in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Doopsgesinde Historische Kring, 1980), p. 228. For an analysis of this anti-dogmatic development in the history of the Mennonites in the Netherlands see Sjouke Voolstra, "Mennonite Faith in the Netherlands: A Mirror of Assimilation," *CGR* 9, no. 3 (fall, 1991): 277-292; "'The Hymn of Freedom': The Redefinition of Dutch Mennonite Identity in the Restoration and Romantic Period (ca. 1810-1850)," in Alastair Hamilton, Sjouke Voolstra, Piet Visser, eds., *From Martyr to Muppie* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994), pp. 187-202. For background to this development which is linked to the development of confessionalization as well as the *nadere reformatie*, see Andrew Fix, *Prophecy and Reason: the Dutch Collegiants in the Early Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

the development of later Mennonite confessional statements.⁵⁹ Goertz has brought a great deal of new and important material to bear on the subject matter; however, some of his overall conclusions are reminiscent of the older North American and Dutch historiography that tended to view Mennonite doctrinal statements with skepticism, or as a departure from Anabaptism. In Goertz's view, the seventeenth century doctrinal statements are out of character with Anabaptism in that Anabaptists placed far greater importance on verbal and lived confession, than fixed confessional formulae.⁶⁰ While Anabaptists wrote confessions of faith, they tended to reflect the perspectives of individuals; the seventeenth century Mennonite statements of faith, on the other hand, were more ecclesiological and doctrinal in character, functioning similiarly to the confessions of mainline Protestantism.⁶¹ As to theological content, the later seventeenth century confessions reflected a loss in Anabaptist radicality and a shift towards accomodation to the larger Protestant milieu.⁶² Goertz does not deny that there were areas of agreement between the Anabaptists and later Mennonites, but the implicit thrust of his argument is that the seventeenth century Mennonite confessions of faith were neither in historical nor in theological continuity with sixteenth century Anabaptism.

⁵⁹Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht," pp. 16-46.

⁶⁰"Vom taeuferischen Verstaendnis her, dass das ganze Leben des Christen ein Bekenntnis sei, bestand eigentlich gar keine besondere Veranlassung, gemeinschaftlich erarbeitete und gebrauchte Bekenntnisse zu formulieren. Das muendliche Bekennen war wichtiger als die schriftliche Fixierung eines Bekenntnisses....An der Bekenntnisbildung im niederlaendischen Taeufertum laesst sich also eher eine Veraenderung als eine Bewahrung des taeuferischen Erbes feststellen" (italics mine). So Goertz, *ibid.*, pp. 39-40. cf. *ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, pp. 20-21, 41-42.

⁶²See his discussion related to Christology, separation, the ban, feetwashing, free will, justification, baptism, the authorities and pacifism in *ibid.*, pp. 34-47.

Since the 1970s, Anabaptist research--reflecting larger trends in Reformation historiography⁶³--has shifted somewhat away from denominational interests and has moved in the direction of understanding Anabaptism in social-historical terms.⁶⁴ Not Mennonite church historians, but primarily "secular" historians researching in the field of social history, appropriating tools of scientific research, have developed a polygenesis paradigm that has described Anabaptism as a heterogeneous movement with distinctive origins: the Swiss, the south German-Austrian, and the north German-Dutch.⁶⁵ Anabaptism has been understood not only or even primarily in ecclesiastical-religious terms, but in social-political ones, linked closely to the aspirations of the "common man" ("*gemeiner Mann*").⁶⁶ It has been observed that the

⁶³See Werner Packull, "Some Reflections on the State of Anabaptist History: The Demise of the Normative Vision," *Sciences Religieuses/Studies in Religion* 8, no. 3 (summer 1979): 313-323.

⁶⁴In the following summary I am partly indebted to A. James Reimer's overview of Hans-Juergen Goertz's approach. See A. James Reimer, "Mennonite Theological Self-Understanding, the Crisis of Modern Anthropocentricity, and the Challenge of the Third Millennium," in Calvin Wall Redekop and Samuel J. Steiner, eds., *Mennonite Identity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1988), pp. 17-18; Hans-Juergen Goertz, "Das Täufern--Ein Weg in Die Moderne?" in *Zwingli u. Europa Referate u. Protokolle des internationalen Kongresses als Anlass des fuenfhundertsten Geburtstages von Huldreich Zwingli 1984* (Zurich, 1985), pp. 165-181.

⁶⁵The programmatic essay for this thesis came from James Stayer, Werner Packull, Klaus Deppermann, "From Monogenesis to Polygenesis: the Historical Discussion of Anabaptist Origins," *MQR* 43:2 (April 1975): 83-121.

⁶⁶See for instance Werner Packull, "The Origin of Swiss Anabaptism in the Context of the Reformation of the Common Man," *JMS* 3 (1985): 36-59; Werner O. Packull, "In Search of the 'Common Man' in Early German Anabaptist Ideology," *SCJ* 17, no. 1 (spring 1986): 51-67; Arnold Snyder, "The Schleithem Articles in Light of the Revolution of the Common Man: Continuation or Departure," *SCJ* 16, no. 4 (winter 1985): 419-430; James Stayer, "Die Anfaenge des schweizerischen Täufern in reformierten Kongregationalismus," in Hans-Juergen Goertz, ed., *Umstrittenes Täufern 1525-1975:*

reforming visions of the Anabaptists, such as the "separatist peaceful-church concept" as represented by the Schleithem consensus, was not present at the beginning of the Swiss movement, but only emerged over time in the context of changing social and political circumstances.⁶⁷ Finally, it has been noted, that while common elements such as believers' baptism united the Anabaptist groups, their theological presuppositions were so diverse, that the portrait of diversity often appeared greater than that of unity.⁶⁸

The polygenesis paradigm has served to correct earlier assumptions dominating the Bender era--for example, that Anabaptism was primarily a monolithic reforming movement begun in Zurich Switzerland, or that Anabaptism was the culmination of the Reformation, fulfilling the original vision of Luther and Zwingli. The polygenesis paradigm, along with its social-historical perspectives, has been a fruitful corrective in that studies have been directed to more specific geographical areas, resulting in more nuanced and differentiated conclusions. No longer can historians describe Anabaptism credibly, without first making careful distinctions concerning which branch and specific time period is under consideration.⁶⁹ Neither can historians ascribe primacy or normativity to any one tradition. During the Bender era, the Swiss tradition was often viewed as the most pristine or genuine form of Anabaptism. Today the north German-

Neue Forschungen (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1975), pp. 19-49; Hans-Juergen Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, trans. by Tevor Johnson (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁶⁷See for instance Martin Haas, "Der Weg der Täufer in die Absonderung," in Goertz, *Umstrittenes Täuferum*, pp. 50-78.

⁶⁸Reimer, "Mennonite Theological Self-Understanding," p. 17. See for instance James Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword*, second edition (Lawrence: Coronado Press, 1976).

⁶⁹Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 403.

Dutch heritage can stand in its own right.⁷⁰

Still, as helpful as the polygenesis paradigm has been in the last decades of the twentieth century, especially in terms of describing Anabaptist origins and diversity, it appears that here too, as with the monogenesis paradigm, theological studies have been pushed into the background. While studies and doctoral dissertations in Anabaptist theology have continued to be forthcoming, in the main, the scholarly climate has been such, that students of Anabaptism have been more inclined to address the social and historical causes lying behind Anabaptist theological suppositions, than the theological suppositions themselves.⁷¹ This has undoubtedly been a necessary corrective in the state of Anabaptist field of research that has needed to critique the earlier historiography, which tended to idealize Anabaptism and divorce it from its social-political location. The result, however, has been that some important theological fields have been left unploughed.

⁷⁰The following articles, for instance, take up this issue: James C. Juhnke, "Mennonite History and Self-Understanding: North American Mennonitism as a Bipolar Mosaic," pp. 83-99; Rodney J. Sawatsky, "Beyond the Social History of the Mennonites: A response to James C. Juhnke," pp. 101-108; James Stayer, "The Early Demise of a Normative Vision of Anabaptism," pp. 109-116 in Calvin Wall Redekop and Samuel J. Steiner, eds., *Mennonite Identity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1988); Mary S. Sprunger, "The Anabaptist Vision: Reflections from Dutch-Russian Mennonitism," *CGR* 12, no. 3 (fall 1994): 299-307.

⁷¹See Werner Packull, "Between Paradigms: Anabaptist Studies at the Crossroads," *CGR* 8, no. 1 (winter 1990): 10. An almost anti-theological bias is discernible in Hans-Juergen Goertz's position. See Hans-Juergen Goertz, "History and Theology: A Major Problem of Anabaptist Research Today," *MQR* 53, no. 3 (July 1979): 177-189. But note James Stayer, himself a social historian, who disagrees with Goertz "that social history should become the norm in Anabaptist studies from now on, banishing the methods of historical theology and intellectual history." Stayer clearly leaves room for a plurality of perspectives. See James Stayer, "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom and Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend," *MQR* 53, no. 3 (July 1979): 217.

A second consequence of the polygenesis paradigm has been that the research has been mainly focussed in the direction of examining Anabaptist origins, but has not contributed significant insight beyond the developments of the beginning years. As fascinating and certainly crucial as this focus on origins has been for an understanding of radical reform in the sixteenth century, this kind of concentrated investigation has not been particularly helpful in understanding change and development among the various Anabaptist reforming movements over time.⁷² In fairness to polygenesis historians, it must be pointed out that the polygenesis paradigm was never meant to be a comprehensive approach. Nevertheless, it has sometimes functioned like one, with the result that the Anabaptist field as a whole has been weak in producing scholarly material beyond the first decades of the movement. The time therefore appears ripe for some shifting of attention beyond the first generation Anabaptists and also a shift in the direction of taking doctrinal studies more seriously. In actual fact, an openness and perhaps even a sense of urgency and interest for such approaches appear to be emerging on several fronts.

A more developmental approach has already been appropriated by the very scholars who have been largely responsible in the last decades for contributing to the subject of Anabaptist origins. As Arnold Snyder has pointed out, "the two leading North American exponents of the polygenesis paradigm, James Stayer and Werner Packull, have already moved beyond the question of origins into a more developmental mode, with surprising and refreshing results."⁷³ Snyder's own contributions have also taken a

⁷²Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 403.

⁷³Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 403-404. See James Stayer, "The Radical Reformation," in Thomas A. Brady, Heiko A. Oberman, James D. Tracy, eds., *Handbook of European History, 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*, vol 2 (Leiden, New York, Koeln: E. J. Brill, 1995), pp. 249-276; James Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods*

developmental trajectory, and certainly have not shied away from addressing or even utilizing theological and religious categories, as is exemplified in his recent introduction to Anabaptist history and theology.⁷⁴

The urgency to address specifically Anabaptist and Mennonite confessional developments, however, has not so much come from scholars writing in the area of Anabaptist history, as it has from those writing in the area of Anabaptist-Mennonite theology. The Dutch scholar, Sjouke Voolstra for instance, has made important observations concerning continuity between Anabaptist theology in the sixteenth century and Mennonite confessional theology in the seventeenth century, arguing that the Melchiorite-Mennonite teaching of the incarnation in some later Mennonite statements of faith has been maintained.⁷⁵ In North America, Howard John Loewen, writing in a Mennonite historical-theological mode, has called for greater attention to the Mennonite theological tradition, arguing that "the theology of Anabaptism in its origins and the theology of Anabaptism in its confessional developments are not fundamentally different."⁷⁶

(Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1991); Werner Packull, *Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation. A Narrative History of Hutterite Beginnings: 1524-1545* (John Hopkins University Press, 1995).

⁷⁴Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*. See also his article "Beyond Polygenesis: Recovering the Unity and Diversity of Anabaptist Theology," pp. 1-33.

⁷⁵See Voolstra, *Het Woord*, esp. pp. 175-178; "Dopers belijden," esp. pp. 21-29.

⁷⁶Loewen, *One Lord*, p. 46. Sjouke Voolstra alludes to this same thing when he states: "The numerous apologetic writings by which the Anabaptist elders characterized the originally loosely defined Anabaptist movement internally and externally, formed the basis for the confessions of faith and rules governing church life which had started being formulated in the seventh decade of the sixteenth century. They also formed the basis for the development of the Anabaptist doctrine which was to flourish in the seventeenth century." So Voolstra, "'The colony of heaven'": 18.

The Mennonite confessional tradition takes the Anabaptist tradition as a whole more seriously, he maintains, providing "one significant angle of vision on the historical unfolding of Mennonite life and thought."⁷⁷ It can provide a framework for what Anabaptism is, pointing to a common centre, and thus enhance dialogue amidst Mennonite denominational diversity. Loewen believes that in an age of pluralism, the confessions offer a place to stand, and can be helpful in the context of both inter-Mennonite and inter-confessional dialogue.⁷⁸

Perhaps the most persistent Mennonite theologian calling attention to the importance of the Anabaptist and Mennonite confessional tradition has been A. James Reimer.⁷⁹ With particular interests in methodology, Reimer has argued that theologians writing in a Mennonite perspective, must pay greater attention to the classical creeds and confessions, as well as their own confessional tradition. Reimer does not suggest that his proposal for doctrinal-confessional-creedal thinking should

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 47.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 46-48.

⁷⁹Reimer began to articulate his views in this direction as early as 1983 and has continued to affirm them since then. See for instance, "Nature and Possibility of a Mennonite Theology," *CGR* 1, no. 1 (winter 1983): 33-55; "Theological Framework for the Authority of the Scriptures," *CGR* 4, no. 2 (spring 1986): 125-140); 125-140; "Toward Christian Theology from a Diversity of Perspectives," *CGR* 6, no. 2 (spring 1988): 147-159; "Doctrines: What are They, How they Function and Why do We Need Them," *CGR* 11, no. 1 (winter 1993): 21-36; "Mennonite Systematic Theology and the Problem of Comprehensiveness," in *Explorations: Mennonite Theological Self-Understanding, the Crisis of Modern Anthropocentricity, and the Challenge of the Third Millennium*, in Redekop and Steiner, eds., *Mennonite Identity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, pp. 39-62; "Biblical and Systematic Theology as Functional Specialties: Their Function and Relation," in Ben C. Ollenburger, ed., *So Wide a Sea: Essays on Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1991), pp. 38ff; "Time, History, and Ethics in Gordon Kaufman," in Alain Epp Weaver, ed., *Mennonite Theology in Face of Modernity: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Kaufman* (Newton: Mennonite Press, 1996), pp. 227-243.

dominate the field of Mennonite systematic theology, but he maintains that it should contribute to the discipline along with other approaches; not in petrified or absolutizing fashion, but in a way which mediates principles, and helps Mennonites find overarching unity in contemporary theological discourse, while still remaining cognizant and faithful to the biblical traditions.⁶⁰ As to the seventeenth century Mennonite confessions of faith, at least in terms of their ethical orientation, Reimer is in agreement with scholars who suggest that "later Mennonites manifest a continuity with their early Anabaptist ancestry."⁶¹

Reimer's proposal for how Mennonites should do systematic theology has been countered by alternative approaches,⁶² and one of the more prominent Mennonite theologians, Gordon Kaufman, has in fact argued against the very idea that the Mennonite confessional tradition has ever been significant, stating that "Mennonites historically, for the most part, have not insisted on formal subscription to creedal statements; and, though they have formulated communal confessions of faith from time to time, it was the form and quality of life as it was lived that was central to their concern."⁶³ Still, other Mennonite scholars have been

⁶⁰A. James Reimer, "Mennonite Theological Self-Understanding, the Crisis of Modern Anthropocentricity, and the Challenge of the Third Millennium," esp. pp. 27-32.

⁶¹ME V, s.v. "God (Trinity), Doctrine of," by A. James Reimer.

⁶²Alain Epp Weaver surveys the Mennonite theological landscape noting that at least two paradigms currently dominate Mennonite theology besides Reimer's doctrinal approach: a "Politics of Jesus" paradigm, and a "historicist constructivist" approach. See his "Introduction: Mennonite Theology in Face of Modernity," in *Mennonite Theology in Face of Modernity*, pp. xi-xv; See also Mennonite Feminist approaches in the entire issues of CGR 10, no. 1 (winter 1992); MQR 68, no. 2 (April 1994); CGR 14, no. 2 (spring 1996).

⁶³Gordon D. Kaufman, "The Mennonite Roots of my Theological Perspective," in Weaver, *Mennonite Theology in Face of Modernity* p. 3. See also Gordon D. Kaufman, "Mennonite Peace Theology in a

more sympathetic to Reimer's proposal, or have begun to take cognizance of the possible importance of creeds and confessions.⁸⁴

Perhaps where interest in the Mennonite confessional tradition has been as strong as anywhere, has been in the context of ecclesiological developments within the Mennonite church around the world. In 1995 the two largest North American Mennonite conference bodies, the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church, adopted a twenty four article statement of faith,⁸⁵ and more recently the Mennonite Brethren Church in North America has initiated work towards the formulation and adoption of a confessional document.⁸⁶ In recent times, Mennonites in Europe have also shown an interest in confessions and their possible significance for the life of the church,⁸⁷ while developments within the Mennonite World

Religiously Plural World," *CGR* 14, no. 1 (winter 1996): 33.

⁸⁴See for instance Thomas N. Finger, "Still Something Essential in the Creeds," in *Jesus Christ and the Mission of the Church: Contemporary Anabaptist Perspectives* (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1990), pp. 106-114; Karl Koop, "Some Reflections on Mennonites and Postmodern thought," Response to Carl S. Keener, *CGR* 11, no. 2 (spring 1993): 179-181; Ben C. Ollenburger, "Christology and Creeds," *AMBS Bulletin* 52, no. 3 (May 1989): 1-3; Ben C. Ollenburger, "Mennonite Theology: A Conversation around the Creeds," *MQR* 66, no. 1 (January 1992): 57-89.

⁸⁵*Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1995); See also Marlin Miller, "Towards an Inter-Mennonite Confession of Faith," *Ecumenical Trends* 17, no. 6 (June 1988): 80-90.

⁸⁶See *Directions* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1998).

⁸⁷This was suggested by the Dutch Mennonite theologian, Sjouke Voolstra but calls have also come from elsewhere. See Lydia Penner, "Urges new confession of faith as basis for mission," in *Mennonite Reporter*, January 6, 1985, p. 5; For other discussions in the European context see Karl Koop, "Confessions of Faith reconsidered in Germany," *Mennonite Reporter* 24, November 14, 1994, 20; A. James Reimer, "Reden von Gott im Problemhorizont der Gegenwart," in *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch 1996* (Lahr: Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland, 1996), pp. 11-14; Dennis

Conference have shown increasing interest in Mennonite statements of faith world wide.⁸⁸ The Faith and Life Council of the Mennonite World Conference, for instance, has led discussions and reported on the character of Mennonite confessions of faith that have been adopted by congregations and conferences around the world.⁸⁹

All of these activities in the last few years up to the present time, have demonstrated that there is interest in contemporary, confessional statements within the Mennonite church. Moreover, these activities have also prompted questions about the Anabaptist-Mennonite confessional heritage and its significance, historically as well as for the present day. At the very least, an implicit call for further research concerning the Mennonite confessional tradition has taken place.

3. Thesis and Method

An overview of the scholarly research on Mennonite confessions of faith in the Low Countries indicates a need for further work, which attempts to understand the emergence of the confessions of faith as such, and one which takes into account the theological trajectory of the confessional statements. A significant question that has not been resolved in the research is the relationship of the confessions of faith with early Anabaptism.

Emil Haendiges assumed continuity between the confessions

L. Slabaugh, "...der Verbesserung unterworfen," in *ibid.*, pp. 29-34; Julia Hildebrandt, "Mennonitische Bekenntnisschriften-Zeugnisse einer reichen gemeindengeschichtlichen Tradition," in *ibid.*, pp. 35-45; *Algemeen Doopsgezind Weekblad* 51 (May 25, 1996):1; Rainer Burkart, "Bekenntnis des Glaubens in mennonitischer Perspektive," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* 1997, pp. 25-29.

⁸⁸Marlin Miller, "Mennonites: A confessional Christian people," in *Mennonite World Handbook* 1990, pp. 171-177.

⁸⁹See *Courier* 12, no. 4 (Fourth Quarter, 1997): 1-7.

and early Anabaptism, particularly in the area of ecclesiology.⁹⁰ It has already been noted the way in which recent scholars, such as Sjouke Voolstra, Howard John Loewen and A. James Reimer, have emphasized various aspects of continuity between seventeenth century confessional developments and sixteenth century Anabaptist emphases. Voolstra's work has generally concentrated on the Melchiorite-Mennonite doctrine of the incarnation, and he has argued that the doctrine and other basic Anabaptist tenets have been upheld in the 33 article Mennonite confession of 1617, as well as the Dordrecht Confession of 1632.⁹¹ Loewen's study has outlined points of continuity, in areas particularly related to Theology (God), Christology, ecclesiology and eschatology.⁹² Reimer has emphasized that in terms of their ethical orientation, the seventeenth century confessions were in continuity with their earlier Anabaptist ancestry.⁹³

These arguments, it seems to me, require further testing and examination. Indeed they are not self-evident. Scholars, fed by the presuppositions of the "Anabaptist Vision," such as Robert Friedmann, have generally viewed Mennonite developments after 1560 as a period of decline and departure from early Anabaptism.⁹⁴ Dutch scholars, such as Wilhelmus Kuehler, Hendrick Meihuizen and Nanne van der Zijpp, while acknowledging a positive correlation between the spiritualist impulse of Anabaptism and the spiritualism of a seventeenth century

⁹⁰See especially Haendiges, *Die Lehre der Mennoniten in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, pp. 18-19.

⁹¹Voolstra, *Het Woord is Vlees Geworden*, pp. 175-178; "Dopers belijden," pp. 21-28.

⁹²Loewen, *One Lord*, pp.

⁹³ME V, s.v. "God (Trinity), Doctrine of," by A. James Reimer.

⁹⁴Friedmann, *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries*, pp. 92-93, 100-101.

Mennonite group known as the Waterlanders, have perceived seventeenth century confessional developments to be out of character with the nondogmatic quality of genuine Anabaptism.⁹⁵ The views of Hans-Juergen Goertz have run along parallel lines, suggesting that with the writing of confessions, a departure from Anabaptism has taken place.⁹⁶

While the present study recognizes that 1) with the emergence of the Mennonite confessions of faith in the seventeenth century, something essentially new has emerged, and 2) that in the explication of the faith in their confessions, seventeenth century Mennonites did begin to modify their theological suppositions, the argument that I am advancing in this historical-theological study, is that, in the main, the *early seventeenth century Mennonite confessions of faith of the Netherlands stand in historical and theological continuity with north German-Dutch Anabaptism.*

This perspective will be argued by way of an examination of three early representative seventeenth century Mennonite confessions of faith that emerged in the Netherlands: the *Corte Belijdenisse des Geloofs* adopted in 1610 by the Waterlander Mennonites and referred to in this study as the "Short Confession" (SC); the *Corte Confessie* adopted by the Frisian and High German Mennonites in 1630, here referred to as the "Jan Cents Confession" (JC); and finally, the *Confessie ende Vredehandeling*e adopted primarily by Flemish Mennonites in 1632, here referred to as the "Dordrecht Confession" (DC).

It is not accidental that these particular confessions of faith have been chosen as a focus for this study. A number of confessions were produced by Mennonites in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but the three confessions under

⁹⁵See Kuehler, *Geschiedenis*, I, pp. 374-375, *Geschiedenis*, II, pp. 30, 115; Meihuizen, "Spiritualistic Tendencies," pp. 260, 269-271, 277; van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, p. 228.

⁹⁶Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht."

review are the most comprehensive and systematic statements of faith of this era, produced by the three largest north German-Dutch Mennonite denominations. As such, these confessions are an important window through which early seventeenth century Mennonite theology in the Low Countries may be observed, reflecting the heart and centre of Mennonite theological essentials of this time period. The study will proceed with a number of methodological considerations in mind. In the first place, it will be an exercise in historical theology. While it is beyond the scope of the study to uncover at length or in detail the various social and historical forces that may have shaped the confessional texts under investigation, the study will nevertheless assume that theological concepts do not float above history but are always rooted in, and addressed to, particular social circumstances and conditions. This will mean that a theological understanding of the confessions will necessitate taking the broader political, economic, cultural and religious milieu, as well as immediate historical developments into account.

Second, as historical theology, it will not be the task of this study to be evaluative; that is, it will not be the intention of the study to introduce a standard or theological criterion as in the discipline of systematic theology, which measures the confessions of faith according to what is most faithful (to the Bible, creeds, church's teachings) or viable for Christian worship or praxis. Rather, the current study intends to be descriptive, the purpose being to *place* or *situate* the confessional statements historically and theologically, primarily in relation to north German-Dutch Anabaptism.

Third, theological discussions and comparisons in light of Anabaptist theology in this study, presuppose the plurality and diversity of sixteenth century Anabaptism. Even if one's point of reference is limited to the Low Countries, the plurality of the religious views that one encounters among the various Anabaptist leaders in the region is striking and cannot be ignored. While

Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, through their guidance, gave the movement a distinctive definition that may have been the most enduring of all Anabaptist writings of the Low Countries,⁹⁷ it must be pointed out that their leadership was preceded by Melchior Hoffman, the Anabaptists at Muenster of which Bernhard Rothmann was the primary ideologue, and David Joris, whose leadership was primary from about 1536 to 1540.⁹⁸ Hence, while in the following study the primary point of reference for Anabaptism will be Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, the views of other Anabaptists, especially Melchior Hoffman, who brought Anabaptism to the Low Countries in the first place, will be given consideration.

This leads further to a fourth methodological consideration, namely, that it is beyond the scope of this study to analyze in detail the transitional period between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While references to the transitional period will be mentioned from time to time, the primary point of reference for the discussion concerning theological continuity, will be focussed on the north German-Dutch Anabaptist context as noted above.

Fifth, the study will utilize a comparative approach. Similarities and differences between the confessions will be noted, in order to highlight the points of convergence and

⁹⁷See Verduin, trans. and Wenger, ed., *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*; Cornelius J. Dyck, William E. Keeney, Alvin J. Beachy, eds. and trans., *The Writings of Dirk Philips 1504-1568* (Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1992).

⁹⁸Pieter Visser maintains that when one examines the printing history of first-generation Anabaptist leaders, it is apparent "that Menno was the best selling author in the Low Countries." See "Menno Simons: Printed, Read and Debated," p. 89. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, several different Anabaptist authors were being consulted for inspiration. Wilhelmus Kuehler lists Menno Simons, Dirk Philips and David Joris. See Kuehler. *Geschiedenis*, II, p. 2. Sjouke Voolstra also mentions David Joris as an Anabaptist writer that the Waterlanders were reading. See Voolstra, "Path to Conversion," Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism Revisited* (Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1992), p. 102.

divergence and to qualify and nuance the general argument concerning continuity between the confessions and their Anabaptist heritage. Some of the comparative work will also take into account mainline Protestant confessional statements, specifically the Augsburg and Belgic confessions. However, this comparison with the wider Christian tradition will be carried out in a limited way, given the primary scope of the study. The Augsburg Confession has been chosen for comparison because of its central importance in defining Lutheran orthodoxy. Similarly, the Belgic Confession has been chosen for its central role in defining Reformed orthodoxy in the Dutch Netherlands. The Belgic Confession was introduced into the Dutch context already in 1561 and became an official standard of doctrine in a slightly revised form at the Synod of Dort in 1619.

Finally, it must be pointed out that while the following study will take a broad range of bibliographical material into consideration, it will also be necessary at some points to be selective with respect to the choice of source material. Hence, the material relating to the broader Protestant tradition will rely heavily on secondary source material, as will the material that summarizes Anabaptist theological perspectives. Textual analyses will be carried out with the following source considerations in mind: The analysis of the Short Confession will be carried out by utilizing the earliest extant edition of the confession, the *Corte Belijdenisse des Geloofs*,⁹⁹ and the English translations by Cornelius J. Dyck and McGlothlin.¹⁰⁰ Investigations related to the Jan Cents Confession will be based

⁹⁹Supplement to: *Het boeck der Gesangen* (Hoorn: Jan Jochinsz. Byvanck, 1618).

¹⁰⁰Dyck, "A Short Confession of Faith," 5-19; William Lumpkin, ed., *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1974), pp. 44-65.

on the first edition of the confession, the *Corte Confessie*,¹⁰¹ as well as an English translation that is available in the *Martyrs Mirror*.¹⁰² The analysis of the Dordrecht Confession will be based on a facsimilie of the earliest edition of the confession, the *Confessie ende Vredehandelinge*,¹⁰³ a critical edition of the confession edited by J. Bruesewitz and M. A. Krebber,¹⁰⁴ as well as a relatively recent English translation by Irvin Horst.¹⁰⁵

The study will proceed as follows: Chapter two will briefly survey beginnings and core beliefs of Anabaptists in the Low Countries, followed by a general description of the way in which confessional statements functioned and were authoritative for Anabaptist communities. Chapter three will outline the broader political, economic, social and especially religious context in which the seventeenth century Mennonite confessions emerged. Chapter four will trace the historical developments within the Mennonite communities that led to the acceptance of the Short Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions, and will include a description of the way in which the confessions functioned and were authoritative in the Mennonite churches. In chapters three and four, the case for historical continuity between the confessions and Anabaptism will be made.

¹⁰¹"*Corte Confessie Ofte Belijdenisse des Gheloofs*," in *Vrede Handelinghe, Openbaer Gehouden tot Amsterdam den 3. 4. 5. October 1630* (Amsterdam: Jacob Aertsz. Colom, 1630).

¹⁰²Thieleman J. van Braght, *The Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians*, fifth edition (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Mennonite Publishing House, 1950), pp. 33-38.

¹⁰³"*Confessie ende Vredehandelinge*" (Tot Haerlem: Hans Passchiers van Wesbusch, 1633) in *Mennonite Confession of Faith*, translated and edited by Irvin Horst (Lancaster: Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 1988).

¹⁰⁴Bruesewitz and Krebber, eds., *Confessie van Dordrecht 1632*.

¹⁰⁵Horst, "Confession and Peace Agreement," in *Mennonite Confession of Faith*, pp. 19-38.

Chapter five will introduce the confessional texts of the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions, particularly their literary and structural characteristics, mood, use of Scripture and hermeneutical assumptions. Chapters six and seven will focus on the theological doctrines of the confessions. In these chapters the case for *theological continuity* between the confessions and Anabaptism will be made. Chapter eight will conclude the study with summary remarks, and a brief discussion concerning the significance of the confessions of faith for our time.

4. Further Presuppositions of the Study

While the present study is an exercise in historical theology with a specific argument and methodology in mind (see pp. 36-37 above), additional interests and assumptions inform this study and my scholarship generally. As a conclusion to this introductory chapter, I summarize these interests and assumptions as follows.

First of all, I support those scholars who have begun to appropriate a developmental mode in their scholarship.¹⁰⁶ While I believe that research in Anabaptist origins must go on, it is my view that developmental approaches ought to be given attention, in order to shed greater light on the Anabaptist movement as a whole. However, not only the sixteenth century, but also the seventeenth century deserves attention here, not only for the sake of Reformation history but also for Mennonite history generally. Anabaptist and Mennonite history, if it is to be comprehended at all, cannot simply be focussed on one historical period at the exclusion of other periods without serious consequences. A full understanding of any particular history must take into account the so-called "in between" periods

¹⁰⁶I am thinking here of the leading Canadian and North American scholars, James Stayer, Werner Packull and Arnold Snyder, as well as the Dutch scholars, Sjouke Voolstra and Piet Visser, who have appropriated this method for some time already.

if indeed the whole is to be adequately comprehended. Examining Mennonite confessions beyond the early Anabaptist period, as I intend to do, may be seen as one small step in understanding the larger Anabaptist and Mennonite story.

Second, a study specifically of confessions of faith, has in my view, some special contributions to make particularly in the area of intellectual or theological history.¹⁰⁷ Dennis Janz has produced a compendium of Reformation catechisms, and has introduced reasons as to why catechisms should be under consideration in Reformation studies. In the study of any religious history, one is always challenged to discern what is central and what is peripheral to a given community's identity. Janz has noted that catechisms are unique in the sense that they usually do not focus on peculiar preoccupations or abstractions, but tend to address the heart of the matter. They are inclined to highlight what is truly basic and elemental to a community's religious identity. In this respect they should not be overlooked by the student of history¹⁰⁸ Further, Janz has gone on to say that catechisms are important in the sense that they function as a window through which one is able to understand the lay consciousness of an age. While catechisms do not reflect lay piety as such, they do reflect "the religious consciousness of an age and tradition, insofar as the author himself is a product of that age and participates imaginatively in its 'lay spirit."¹⁰⁹ The author is successful particularly if a given catechism is widely accepted and used by the laity. In this respect,

¹⁰⁷Here I am not recommending abandoning social history or going beyond it. I fully agree with Werner Packull who maintains that there is still much to be done in this area of research. See Werner Packull, "Between Paradigms: Anabaptist Studies at the Crossroads," *CGR* 8, no. 1 (winter 1990): 22.

¹⁰⁸Dennis Janz, *Three Reformation Catechisms: Catholic, Anabaptist, Lutheran* (New York and Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982).

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

catechisms "mediate" "between the religious consciousness of the masses and the theological speculation of the elite. They are documents which tend to bridge the gap between religion as it is practiced and religion as it is speculated upon by theologians."¹¹⁰

It seems to me that what Janz is pointing to, with respect to the importance of catechisms, can also be said of confessions of faith. Confessions, I stated earlier, summarize the essentials of the faith. Hence, by reading them, as in the reading of catechisms, we are able to move, usually without distraction, more directly to the stated core elements of a given community. Moreover, if the confession has been adopted by a congregation or by several congregations who are in some kind of association with each other, as many Mennonite congregations were in their history, our reading of the confessions should take us to the heart of the community's theology, as reflected by individual thinkers as well as the congregation as a whole.

A third reason for examining Mennonite confessions of faith is that the results may prove useful for theologians currently engaged in the explication of the Christian faith from a Mennonite perspective. There is of course always the risk, from a historian's point of view, that any theologian looking to the past will run into the danger broadly characterized by Heiko Oberman as developing a "false intimacy with the historical past which tries to bridge the chasm separating different ages through an assumption of ideological comradeship."¹¹¹ There is the additional problem, from a theologian's point of view, of Christian tradition becoming unduly authoritative, and at the same time incapable of addressing the inquiries and issues of the

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 5.

¹¹¹Heiko A. Oberman, "Reformation: Epoch oder Episode," *Archiv fuer Reformationsgeschichte*, 68 (1977): 61, quoted in Hans-Juergen Goertz, "History and Theology: A Major Problem of Anabaptist Research Today," *MQR* 53, no. 3 (July 1979): 177.

present day. Yet an ahistorical approach to theology will simply confirm the individualism and egoism so characteristic of the North American context, which presumes that we have significantly greater wisdom than the generations that have come before us. Beyond that, it must be pointed out that there is in reality no such thing as a Christianity that is unrelated to the past. "Any faith identifiable as Christian bears the earmarks of this or that strand of the long and diverse tradition of Christendom."¹¹² "Even to disown the tradition, one has first--in some sense of the word--to own it."¹¹³

In my view the best elements of the various paradigms which currently appear on the Mennonite theological landscape, need to be taken seriously.¹¹⁴ A plurality of methodologies should be welcomed and is in fact consistent with the Anabaptist legacy. My concern, however, is that Mennonites doing theology will, in fact, pass over their own history and theology of which the confessional heritage is one, albeit an important, dimension. Doing theology from a Mennonite perspective, it seems to me, requires a "dialectic of dependence and independence"¹¹⁵ vis a vis the tradition. From this perspective, the tradition is not some normative externally fixed authority that is narrowly followed; rather it is a constantly changing expression of belief actually representing a plurality of perspectives, that can provide an orientation for theological reflection, and can be an invitation to join a conversation. Because the conversation is a

¹¹²Douglas John Hall, *Professing the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 11. See Hall's discussion on this in *ibid.*, p. 11-12, 33; *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 263-272.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

¹¹⁴See Weaver, ed., *Mennonite Theology in Face of Modernity*, pp. xiii-xiv.

¹¹⁵See Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, pp. 270-272.

Mennonite conversation about the essentials, it may (or may not) define crucial parameters and "rules of grammar" for contemporary Mennonites engaged in the task of reflecting on the grounds, contents and experiences of the Christian faith.¹¹⁶

Finally, motivation for this study is informed by the assumption that the Mennonite confessional tradition--if it is made accessible--has the potential to serve the Mennonite church in its ongoing task of defining the church's identity and mission in the world. As older and younger Mennonite churches around the globe ask about the essentials of the faith that unify, taking cognizance of the common confessional heritage--which will inevitably be diverse in the details--may point to common theological and ecclesial foci, around which the churches may hold a conversation. In addition, as Mennonite churches continue the ongoing task of building bridges with other Christian and religious traditions, their confessional heritage may serve as a place to stand, as well as a point of departure, in the dialogical process. The confessions should never slavishly bind the churches or individuals to the past, but may serve as an orientation and point of reference on the way to Christian faithfulness and unity.

¹¹⁶For these ideas, I am indebted to Arnold Snyder who makes similar arguments for the relevance of Anabaptist history in the context of contemporary discernment. See "'The Anabaptist Vision: a Historical or a Theological Future?' J. Denny Weaver, *CGR* 13, no. 1 (winter 1995): 69-86. A response by Arnold Snyder, " *CGR* 13, no. 2 (spring 1995): 211-212; *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 97.

II

ANABAPTISM IN THE LOW COUNTRIES:
AN ORIENTATION

The general argument of this study is that early seventeenth century Mennonite confessions of faith, specifically the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions, in the main, stand in historical and theological continuity with north German-Dutch Anabaptism. Such an argument cannot proceed without a basic orientation to sixteenth century Anabaptism. This will be the task of the present chapter that will summarize Anabaptist beginnings and theological suppositions in the Low Countries, and outline the role that confessions of faith generally played in Anabaptist communities. Such a summary and outline will form the basis of discussion and analysis in the chapters that follow, which will address more explicitly the general argument of this study.

1. Historical Background

Named after a sixteenth century Dutch reformer, Menno Simons, Mennonites trace their religious roots to the Anabaptists who emerged in the context of the Protestant Reformation as radical reformers in Swiss, South German and Austrian lands, as well as in the Low Countries. The term "Anabaptist" was applied to the reforming movement not long after the first adult baptisms took place on January 21, 1525, in Zurich Switzerland.

"*Anabaptista* was a Latin rendering of Greek words which, when combined, meant 'rebaptizer.'¹ The first Anabaptists emerged under the leadership of individuals such as Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz, former followers of the Zurich reformer Ulrich Zwingli. In the spring of the same year, Anabaptists also emerged in the Swiss city of Waldshut, led by the pastor and theologian, Balthasar Hubmaier, and in a number of rural communities by

¹Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 1.

individuals such as Wilhelm Reublin and Hans Kruesi. Common to the Anabaptists in Waldshut and in the rural communities, were the associations with rebels involved in the German Peasants' War.²

Anabaptist beginnings were volatile, and theological positions were diverse and in flux during a time of social and political unrest. Swiss Anabaptism was never theologically monolithic, but a distinct group in 1527, under the leadership of the former Benedictine prior, Michael Sattler, managed to unite around seven points of agreement in a "Brotherly Union," sometimes referred to as the "Schleitheim Confession". The tenets of the confession "helped formulate the rationale for a separatist, voluntary church, the baptised members of which refused to carry a sword or swear an oath, chose and supported their own pastors, enforced church discipline, and regularly partook of the Lord's Supper as a sign of their membership in the body of Christ."³

In the South German lands a somewhat different kind of Anabaptist reform arose, more closely associated with the radical peasant leader from Muehlhausen, Thomas Muentzer. The first to give leadership to the movement in 1525 were Hans Hut and Hans Denck, the former reflecting strong apocalyptic interests, both exhibiting strong mystical expressions of religiosity.⁴ After 1527, a more mediating posture between mystical Anabaptism and the legalistic separatist Anabaptism of Switzerland emerged in South Germany in the person of Pilgram Marpeck.⁵ While the followers of Marpeck were likely absorbed into Swiss Anabaptism, South German Anabaptism lived on in Moravia, where experiments in

²Ibid., p. 51.

³Gary Waite, *David Joris and Dutch Anabaptism 1524-1543* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990), p. 23.

⁴See especially Werner Packull, *Mysticism and the Early South German-Austrian Anabaptist Movement, 1525-1532* (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1977).

⁵Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, pp. 78-79.

communal organization were carried out, with the Hutterite community surviving and eventually flourishing.⁶

In the Low Countries, Anabaptist beginnings were linked to the activities of Melchior Hoffman, the former Lutheran missionary from the South German Imperial City of Schwaebisch Hall. Born between 1495-1500, Hoffman was a furrier by trade. Beginning in 1523, he was missionizing in the regions of Livonia (1523-1526), Stockholm (1526-1527) and Schleswig-Holstein (1527-1529).⁷ His message was strongly apocalyptic and increasingly spiritualizing in nature, which placed him at odds with more orthodox Lutherans, who disputed his claims, for instance, that the world would end by 1533, and that the three years preceeding the end would be filled with tribulation.⁸ In 1529, Hoffman was in Strasbourg and came into contact with followers of the Anabaptist reformer, Hans Denck, as well as an Anabaptist group known as the "Strasbourg Prophets" led by Leonard and Ursula Jost, and Barbara Rebstock. In this setting Hoffman accepted believers' baptism and first articulated a Christology, which denied that in the incarnation Christ had taken on the flesh of Mary. This perspective, somewhat related to the christological views of the Reformation spiritualist Casper Schwenckfeld, would eventually become "a litmus test for Melchioritism in its various forms."⁹

Melchior Hoffman's stay in Strasbourg was not lengthy. Having demanded from the Strasbourg city council a church for the Anabaptist fellowship, he found himself in danger of being

⁶See Werner Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

⁷Waite, *David Joris and Dutch Anabaptism*, p. 24.

⁸Ibid., p. 24.

⁹Stayer, "The Radical Reformation," p. 267. The most important study on Melchioritism and its functioning as a "litmus test" comes from Voolstra, *Het Woord*.

arrested. Rebaptisms had become a capital offense in the city, and so Hoffman fled to Emden in East Frisia in 1530. In the Low Countries the religious soil had already been prepared for change through late medieval mystical reforming currents such as the *Devotio Moderna* and the Sacramentarian movement.¹⁰ In a setting of increasing social unrest, anti-clerical sentiments and eschatological expectation, Hoffmans's arrival was timely. In a short period he had baptized some 300 persons who accepted his theological tenets and joined him with his message of eschatological hope.¹¹ While Hoffman eventually returned to Strasbourg and was arrested in 1533--where he died in prison in 1543--his brand of Anabaptism became a characteristic feature throughout the German and Dutch lowlands, attracting commoners as well as notables and persons of wealth.¹² Before leaving for Strasbourg, Hoffman had appointed Jan Volkerts Trijpmaker as his primary apostle to the Hapsburg Netherlands, and Trijpmaker, around Christmas time in 1530, began baptizing in Amsterdam.¹³ Within a short time Amsterdam and Muenster in Westphalia became

¹⁰Waite, *David Joris*, pp. 7-12.

¹¹Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 144.

¹²While commoners were more prominent in the Radical Reformation than in mainline Protestantism, their predominance was not absolute. More so in the north and than in the south, notables and persons of wealth were attracted to Anabaptism, possibly due to the fact that Anabaptist reform in the north took place more often in the towns. See Stayer, "The Radical Reformation," p. 275. With respect to Hoffman's fate, Werner Packull has made the suggestion that Hoffman actually might have recanted and then returned to his home village near Schwaebisch Hall. See Werner O. Packull, "Melchior Hoffman--A Recanted Anabaptist in Schwaebisch Hall?" *MQR* 57, no. 2 (April 1983): 83-111; "Melchior Hoffman's Experience in the Livonian Reformation: The Dynamics of Sect Formation," *MQR* 59, no. 2 (April 1985): 130-146; "A Reinterpretation of Melchior Hoffman's *Exposition Against the Background of Spiritualist Franciscan Eschatology with Special Reference to Peter John Olivi*," in Irvin B. Horst, *The Dutch Dissenters: A Critical Companion to their History and Ideas* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), pp. 32-65.

¹³Waite, *David Joris*, p. 25.

the two most important Anabaptist centres in the north German-Dutch context.

The Anabaptist reform movement especially in Muenster received widespread support. First under the leadership of the civic reformer Bernhard Rothmann, and then under the influence of the Melchiorite prophet from Amsterdam, Jan Matthijs, Anabaptists in Muenster took control of the city and prepared themselves for the end of the world.¹⁴ The message of penitence, "the exclusively biblical foundation of the mediation of salvation and the emphasis on the radical purification of life, reinforced by an apocalyptic consciousness," were undoubtedly the explosive mixture of ideas that were capable of producing an event which "ultimately did not shrink from the use of defensive violence in order to achieve the establishment of a visible 'New Jerusalem' on earth."¹⁵ Eventually an apostle of Matthijs, an aspiring 24 year old tailor, salesman and amateur actor by the name of Jan van Leyden, took charge as the "new David," and in 1534 and 1535 called upon Anabaptists throughout the Low Countries to come to the "New Jerusalem," to execute God's judgement upon the unrighteous. Apparently, many in the north supported the prophet's call, with only a minority dissenting from the violent turn of affairs.¹⁶ Thousands travelled toward Muenster only to be met by government soldiers, who confiscated arms and money. Some executions ensued, but the majority returned home, their apocalyptic visions defeated by the strong arm of the state.¹⁷

The events leading to the downfall of Anabaptist Muenster need not be detailed here, nor is it important to investigate the

¹⁴According to Snyder, Matthijs's message had three main points: "1) This is the time of the working of the Spirit, 2) God is about to return and judge, and 3) those who are baptized will be spared." So Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 145.

¹⁵Sjouke Voolstra, "'The colony of heaven'" p. 17.

¹⁶Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 149.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 149.

adventuresome, polygamous activities in Muenster.¹⁸ Suffice to say, the city came under a total blockade in April of 1535, and soon after some 600 to 700 individuals lost their lives attempting to flee the city. Then on June 25, government soldiers took control of the city, initiating a two day bloodbath. "The stench in the city was said to be overwhelming, and the thousands of dead eventually were buried by neighbouring peasants."¹⁹

After Muenster, the Melchiorite movement was reduced to a number of smaller factions: a group that had been pacifist all along gathered around David Joris, and the brothers Obbe and Dirk Philips; a group known as the Batenburgers continued in the Muensterite vein to promote the "sword of righteousness"; some Muensterite refugees gathered under the leadership of Heinrich Krechting; Melchiorites in Rhine and Hessian lands were led by Peter Tasch and Georg Schnabel; and Strasbourg Melchiorites continued under the leadership of Lienhart Jost.²⁰ Attempts to unite the various groups by David Joris at Bocholt, Westphalia, in 1536 failed, although Joris himself emerged with the greatest following until sometime after 1540.²¹ Evidently his style of leadership was not enduring. Already in 1538, concerted efforts to take charge were met with disapproval by Anabaptists in

¹⁸On the details of the Muenster uprising see Karl-Heinz Kirchhoff, *Die Täufer in Muenster 1534/35* (Muenster: Aschendorfsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1973); "Was There a Peaceful Anabaptist Congregation in Muenster in 1534?" *MQR* 44, no. 4 (October 1970): 357-70.

¹⁹Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 150.

²⁰Snyder summarizes the various groups in this fashion following Waite and James Stayer. See Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 150; Waite, *David Joris*, pp. 113-126; James Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword* (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1976), pp. 284-297). For details on Jan van Batenburg and his legacy, see L. G. Jansma, "Crime in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century: The Batenburg Bands after 1540," *MQR* 62, no. 3 (July 1988): 221-235. Unfortunately, we do not have any insight on the Anabaptist groups in Prussia.

²¹Waite, *David Joris*, pp. 113-114.

Strasbourg, and Joris' increasing "spiritualization" of the gospel eventually led him to drop the outward Anabaptist practices of baptism and the Lord's supper. By 1544 he was no longer in the Low Countries but in Basel under a pseudonym, and there he remained until his death in 1556. Nevertheless, some of his followers continued to identify with him even into the seventeenth century.²²

The individual to emerge as primary leader after David Joris' influence subsided was Menno Simons (1496-1561). Ordained as Catholic priest in 1524, Menno²³ embarked on a path of reform, possibly first moving "to a saramentarian position, then to the evangelical position, and finally to Melchiorite Anabaptism."²⁴ He made the decisive break in 1536 when he left the Catholic priesthood to join the Anabaptists. By 1537 he was ordained as elder, and in the 1540s and 1550s, emerged as the prominent leader of the main branch of the north German-Dutch Anabaptist movement. Other leaders also gained prominence during this time. Roelof Martens, better known as Adam Pastor, was an elder until his excommunication in 1547, after being accused of rejecting Christ's deity. Dirk Philips (1504-1568) and Leenaert Bouwens (1515-1582) became dominant in leadership especially after 1555.

By 1560, Anabaptism in the Low Countries had for the most

²²Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 151.

²³In the sixteenth century Netherlands, individuals were addressed by their first or Christian name, while their second name was usually not a surname but a patronym. See John Rempel, *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism* (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1993), p. 247, n. 1. Hence in Anabaptist scholarship, the reformers Menno Simons and Dirk Philips are often addressed by their Christian names, while those Anabaptists of Swiss or south German origin are referred to by their second name.

²⁴Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 151. But c.f. Voolstra, *Menno Simons: His Image and Message*, pp. 77-80; Abraham Friesen, "Present at the Inception: Menno Simons and the Beginnings of Dutch Anabaptism," *MQR* 72, no. 3 (July 1998): 351-388.

part, moved significantly away from the apocalyptic and potentially violent fanaticism of Muenster, in the direction of nonconformist respectability.²⁵ Menno Simons and other Anabaptist leaders denounced Muenster, especially its violent and sexually promiscuous manifestations. Spiritualist and apocalyptic readings or approaches to Scripture were tempered, and a more sober biblicistic hermeneutic was employed. Communal experiments or the sharing of economic goods of a Hutterite or Muensterite nature were rejected and replaced by the practice of mutual aid.²⁶ Nevertheless, the Anabaptists, in the Low Countries now increasingly called *Menists* or *Mennonists* (while some called themselves *Doopsgezinde*) continued to deviate from the norm as defined by the Catholic majority. While espousing the orthodox beliefs of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, Anabaptists baptized adults and not infants into religious communities, led by leaders who derived their authority from other than apostolic succession; the Lord's supper was viewed as a memorial and communal meal involving unconsecrated bread; Melchior Hoffman's peculiar teaching on the incarnation, which held that Christ did not receive his flesh from Mary was maintained; and the view that the life of the true believer should show visible signs of atonement, regeneration and renunciation of sin was increasingly emphasized. This latter emphasis of a purified Christianity, translated into an ecclesiology independent of the state, without "spot or wrinkle," and separated from the world. Ultimately this church ideal was enforced by the practice of rigorous church discipline.

The consequences for these nonconformist views in a predominantly Catholic milieu were high. In the Low Countries, some one thousand adherents of Anabaptism paid the price of

²⁵Bantenburg bands continued to rove about the lowlands throughout the sixteenth century, but their activities did not represent the Anabaptist mainstream. See Jansma, "Crime in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century," pp. 221-235.

²⁶Stayer, "The Radical Reformation," p. 273.

martyrdom during Menno Simon's leadership,²⁷ although Menno himself escaped a martyr's death, spending the last six or seven years of his life until 1561 under the protection of the nobleman, Bartholomaeus von Ahlefeld, at Wuestenfelde near Oldesloe in Schleswig-Holstein.²⁸

2. Core Theological Suppositions

Scholars shaped by Harold S. Bender's "Anabaptist Vision" have generally viewed the Anabaptists as emphasizing the importance of ethics rather than doctrine. The Anabaptists were understood as accentuating "not primarily intellectual understanding, doctrinal belief, or subjective experience, but rather a regenerate life best described by the term 'Nachfolge Christi,'"²⁹ While there is no doubt that the Anabaptist movement was concerned about moral and ethical reform, it must also be pointed out that rudimentary to this emphasis of the regenerate life was belief itself. Anabaptists affirmed the Apostles' Creed³⁰ and placed significant importance on right doctrine. In the Low Countries, when the elder Adam Pastor rejected Melchiorite christology, he was excommunicated from the Anabaptist community for his views. Sjouke Voolstra has pointed

²⁷Stayer, "The Radical Reformation," p. 273.

²⁸For important insight into how geography and politics in East Frisia and Schleswig Holstein played an important dimension for Anabaptists seeking refuge in the Low Countries, see Susanne Woelk, "Menno Simons in Oldersum und Oldesloe: 'Haeuplingsreformation' und Glaubensfluechtlinge im 16. Jahrhundert," *MGB* 53 (1996): 11-33.

²⁹A. James Reimer, "The Nature and Possibility of a Mennonite Theology," *CGR* 1, no. 1 (winter 1983): 36. See also Weaver, "Introduction: Mennonite Theology in Face of Modernity," p. xi.

³⁰See Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 84; Snyder, "Beyond Polygenesis: Recovering the Unity and diversity of Anabaptist Theology," p. 11; Snyder-Penner, "The Ten Commandments, The Lord's Prayer, and The Apostles' Creed as Early Anabaptist Texts," pp. 318-335; Voolstra, "Doperse belijden," pp. 19-20, 28-29; Friesen, *Erasmus, the Anabaptists, and the Great Commission*, p. 108, but also pp. 100, 105, 128.

out that the Melchiorite doctrine of the incarnation--which was the doctrine that Pastor was rejecting--was a mark of "orthodoxy" that the north German-Dutch Anabaptists viewed as an essential belief of the church.³¹ Without question, not only "right" moral conduct but also "right" theology mattered in the Anabaptist context.

The task of outlining or defining Anabaptist theology is not without its difficulties. Scholars since the 1970s, working under the presuppositions of a polygenesis paradigm, have convincingly shown the diverse character of sixteenth century Anabaptism.³² They have pointed out not only that the Swiss, south German-Austrian and the north German-Dutch Anabaptists had distinctive origins, but that within these regions there existed significant diversity in theology and notions of reform. It has, therefore, become difficult to locate what might be considered a coherent north German-Dutch Anabaptist theology that surfaced between the years 1530 and 1560. Nevertheless, between the 1540s and the 1560s, it is evident that Menno Simons and Dirk Philips gave significant leadership to the Anabaptist movement, and their writings were the most coherent and comprehensive among the Anabaptists of the Low Countries, which succeeding generations of Mennonites appear to have recognized.³³ It is thus the theology of these two Anabaptist leaders that will serve as the primary (although not exclusive) point of reference in the following outline that summarizes the core beliefs and perspectives of the Anabaptists in the Low Countries. At the same time, it will also be necessary in the following summary, to take into consideration

³¹Voolstra, *Het Woord*, pp. 67ff.

³²The programmatic essay of the polygenesis paradigm comes from Stayer, Packull, Deppermann, "From Monogenesis to Polygenesis," pp. 83-121.

³³See for instance Pieter Visser, "Menno Simons: Printed, Read and Debated," p. 89; Irvin B. Horst, "The Meaning of Menno Simons Today," in *ibid.*, pp. 163-179; Kuehler, *Geschiedenis*, II, p. 2.

the views of Melchior Hoffman, who introduced Anabaptism to the Low Countries in the first place, and other Anabaptists such as Bernhard Rothman and the followers of David Joris, who played key leading roles in the early phases of Anabaptism.

Scriptural Use and Hermeneutical Assumptions

Along with churches associated with the Reformation tradition, the Anabaptists placed great value on Biblical authority. "The positive side of the Protestant critique of the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic church hierarchy was the insistence on the final authority of Scripture."³⁴ Yet in the north German-Dutch context, variations existed, particularly with respect to the role of the Holy Spirit in the interpretive process.

In the first decade of north German-Dutch Anabaptism, there were reformers, such as Melchior Hoffman, Bernhard Rothmann and David Joris, whose basic hermeneutical framework was informed by the assumption that they were living in the Last Days. "Since the Last Days took place in the age of the Spirit, these Anabaptists expected to receive spiritual revelations (dreams, visions) and considered them to be complementary to prophetic scriptural revelation, in which the secrets of the divine were encoded."³⁵ These Anabaptists tended to assume a sharp distinction between letter and spirit, emphasizing the importance of the "spiritual" or "inward" meaning over a literal meaning of the Biblical text,³⁶ and appropriated figurative readings of texts that could

³⁴Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 86.

³⁵Ibid., p. 164.

³⁶According to Gary Waite, Melchior Hoffman stressed the "spiritual" meaning and Bernhard Rothmann emphasized the "inward" meaning. See Waite, *David Joris*, pp. 90-91.

be either typological or allegorical in nature.³⁷

In the 1540s, the reading of Scripture influenced by apocalypticism had faded although the spiritualist emphasis continued as is evidenced by the writings of the follower of David Joris, Nicolaas Meynderts van Blesdijk.³⁸ Yet as time passed, the trend moved in the direction of emphasizing the literal word, as can be seen in the hermeneutical presuppositions of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. Evidently, this falling away of the pneumatic/ spiritualist side of Anabaptism was a trend reflective of Anabaptist groups everywhere, not only in the north German-Dutch context.³⁹ Thus, while Blesdijk had rejected literal proof-texting with the conviction that love was the "highest summation and foundation of all Scriptures,"⁴⁰ Menno and Dirk took the explicit commands of Christ as positive law to be appropriated by Christians, and tended to emphasize the priority of letter over spirit.⁴¹ On the whole, they started from a Christo-centric position, insisting that the Old Testament must be interpreted according to the intention of Christ.⁴² Menno tended to view Gospel as 'law', making Christ the new law

³⁷This was particularly the case with Melchior Hoffman. See Klaus Deppermann, *Melchior Hoffman: Social Unrest and Apocalyptic Visions in the Age of Reformation*, translated by Malcolm Wren and edited by Benjamin Drewery (Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1987), pp. 241-245.

³⁸Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, pp. 321-323.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 379-381.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 323.

⁴¹Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 40. See also Werner Packull, "Menno Simons und die Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift," *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* 53 (1996): 49; Henry Poettker, "Menno Simons' Encounter with the Bible," in Willard Swartley, ed., *Essays on Biblical Interpretation: Anabaptist Perspectives* (Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), pp. 71-76; Sjouke Voolstra, *Menno Simons: His Image and Message* (Newton: Bethel College, 1997), p. 69.

⁴²Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 37.

giver, and the church (or church elders) the interpreters and enforcers of this law.⁴³ In this connection, the Old Testament was interpreted figuratively; "the holy Israel of God" was understood as a prefiguration of the Bride of the Last Days. Dirk Philips, reminiscent of Melchior Hoffman, viewed the many figures concerning the purification of Israel as portrayals of how holy and pure the "congregation of saints" in the present day must be.⁴⁴

Yet, whereas Menno Simons and Dirk Philips emphasized the letter over the spirit, it must be pointed out that they were not "strict literalists." They insisted that the Spirit must inform an interpreter's reading of Scripture. Moreover, it was assumed that the Spirit's presence could only be assured if the interpreter was already living in obedience to the faith.⁴⁵ While, often reacting against the dangers of antinomianism in favour of literal obedience to Scripture, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips continued to reflect a modified spiritualist approach, not completely dissimilar to the earlier Anabaptist period. Hence, while the "scripture principle" was a point of departure for Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, it is also evident that in their view, theological convictions needed to be based on "*Scripture and Spirit together.*"⁴⁶

This is not to suggest that the "spirit-letter" question was definitively resolved, among the Anabaptists in the Low Countries, by the perspectives put forth by Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. In examining confessional statements later on in this study, it will be shown that the "spirit-letter" tension

⁴³Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 380.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 370-371.

⁴⁵Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 34; Ben C. Ollenburger, "The Hermeneutics of Obedience: Reflections on Anabaptist Hermeneutics," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation: Anabaptist-Mennonite Perspectives*, p. 49.

⁴⁶Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 88.

continued to challenge Mennonites in the seventeenth century.

Theology (God)

For the most part, the Anabaptists in the Low Countries affirmed traditional and orthodox views concerning the doctrine of God.⁴⁷ In 1546-1547, when Anabaptist leaders, Adam Pastor and Francis de Cuiper, raised questions concerning traditional views on the Trinity, the majority of the Anabaptist leaders took a firm position in favour of the orthodox position. In 1547 when it became evident that Adam Pastor would not change his views, he was excommunicated from the main branch of the Anabaptists.⁴⁸ In part to counteract these anti-trinitarian views within Anabaptism, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips set forth a doctrine of God that included the full divinity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Both Menno Simons and Dirk Philips appealed primarily to biblical and nonphilosophical language for their theological formulations. Their formal statements of God were trinitarian with a christological focus that tended to reveal a "practical concern for salvation and its implications for human conduct."⁴⁹ Concerning Menno, it has been pointed out that while his writings and biblical imagery referred to the transcendence of God, his conceptions had a greater emphasis on the immanence of God. His

⁴⁷See Robert Friedmann, *The Theology of Anabaptism: An Interpretation* (Scottsdale and Kitchener: Herald Press, 1973), p. 53..

⁴⁸George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: the Westminster Press, 1992), p. 740. For background on Adam Pastor see J. Alton Templin, "Adam Pastor: Anti-Trinitarian Anabaptist," *Illiff Review* 24:3 (fall, 1967): 25-31; Jacobus ten Doornkaat Koolman, *Dirk Philips: Friend and Colleague of Menno Simons, 1504-1568*, trans. by William E. Keeney and edited by C. Arnold Snyder (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1998), esp. pp. 29-40.

⁴⁹W. E. Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practise from 1539-1564* (Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1968), p. 191; Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), p. 275; WDP, pp. 38-39.

perspectives were not explicitly couched as much in ontological, metaphysical or philosophical terms, as in the historical and narrative language of the Bible, focussing on "'Christ's Word, Spirit and life, and not the transcendental, philosophical Trinity of Father, *Logos* and Holy Spirit'".⁵⁰ Thus, while Menno Simons and Dirk Philips emphasized the importance of the Holy Spirit, this emphasis did not so much arise in connection with their teaching about Godself, but rather in connection with their teachings concerning soteriology and the moral life.

This is not to suggest that they used biblical language exclusively or avoided formal articulations entirely. As already mentioned, along with other Anabaptists, they held firmly to the tenets of the Apostles' Creed, as well as other creedal statements of the Christian past. Their theological language was certainly influenced by the language of the larger Christian tradition, even though the Bible remained their primary source of authority. For instance, in describing the place of the Holy Spirit within the intra-trinitarian relationship, they clearly were utilizing terminology that, interestingly enough, had its origins in Eastern Orthodoxy, which maintained that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father through the Son."⁵¹

⁵⁰John R. Loeschen, *The Divine Community: Trinity, Church, and Ethics in Reformation Theologies* (Kirksville: The Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1981), p. 81, quoted in *ibid.* See also Voolstra, *Het Woord*, p. 166, and *ME V*, s.v. "God (Trinity), Doctrine of," by A. James Reimer.

⁵¹See *CWMS*, pp. 496, 810; *WDP*, pp. 258-59, 362; Voolstra, *Het Woord*, p. 163. How they came to an Eastern formulation of the Trinity is unclear. It is possible that this language was mediated through late medieval theology in the Low Countries. At the Council of Florence (1438-1445), the Christian East and West had focussed significant attention on the *filioque*. In the West it had been common practice, following Augustine and other church fathers of the West, to say that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son," while in the East, the original formulation of Constantinopolitan Creed (381) without the *filioque* was maintained, although sometimes the procession of the Holy Spirit was also understood in terms of "proceeding from the Father through the Son". The Council of Florence concluded that these two phrases

Anthropology

Along with the Magisterial Reformers, Anabaptists in the Low Countries accepted the belief that human beings were created in God's image and likeness, and that after creation, the first human beings fell into sin resulting in the loss of the divine image. They also held that humanity as a whole had been corrupted because of the fall. As a result of the fall, humanity's seed had become impure, and this impurity was transmitted by heredity to all subsequent generations. The Magisterial Reformers viewed original sin primarily in its Augustinian character as the bondage of the will, and it was through this bondage that the total depravity inherited by all persons was manifest most sharply. The Anabaptists--Melchior Hoffman, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips--saw original sin more as a poison or alien corruption in human nature that had been originally good and incorruptible. They concluded, along with the Magisterial Reformers, that the fall was so complete, that humanity, on its own, was eternally cursed and condemned to death.⁵²

Yet in contrast to the Magisterial Reformers, Melchior Hoffman, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips maintained that this impurity or original sin did not make children guilty of sin. They insisted that "children were for Christ's sake in grace, and this grace was considered universal in outreach."⁵³ "To regard children as guilty on account of original sin would be to deny them the death, blood, and merits ("verdiensts") of Jesus

meant the same thing although each Church continued to say the creed in its own way. For further discussion on this development in church history see William C. Placher, *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), pp. 101-102.

⁵²Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 67; Alvin Beachy, *The Concept of Grace in the Radical Reformation* (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1977), pp. 35-37.

⁵³Beachy, *The Concept of Grace*, p. 39.

Christ."⁵⁴ Moreover, condemnation for sin was only possible after the individual had reached the age of understanding and was in a position to "make responsible moral and ethical decisions."⁵⁵ Menno and Dirk believed that only as human beings grew in understanding and were able to distinguish between good and evil, were they then held accountable for their actions.

Anabaptist convictions also diverged from the Magisterial Reformers in that they held to a doctrine of free will, and rejected Reformed understandings of predestination. While Menno and Dirk emphasized that the fall of humanity was drastic, and that only through God's grace was salvation possible,⁵⁶ they followed Melchior Hoffman in his insistence that human beings were capable of responding to, or rejecting the grace of God.⁵⁷ To believe otherwise would suggest that God was the cause of evil.⁵⁸

Christology

i. The Incarnation

For the north German-Dutch Anabaptists, the consequences of

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 39-40.

⁵⁵Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 68.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 69.

⁵⁷Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, pp. 71-72.

⁵⁸See Melchior Hofmann, "The Ordinance of God," in George Hunston Williams ed., *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), p. 198; Beachy, *Concept of Grace*, pp. 53-56; Deppermann, *Melchior Hoffman*, pp. 221-223. According to Depperman, to reconcile the seemingly contradictory ideas of Divine omnipotence and human freedom, Hoffman followed other radical reformers like Karlstadt, Hubmaier and Denck, who made a distinction between God's "eternal" will and his "permissive" will, that is, between what God desires and what he allows. God's own will is that men should come to a knowledge of the truth, do good and be saved. But his 'permissive' will allows men wantonly to fall away from him, to do evil and to damn themselves." So Depperman, *Melchior Hoffman*, p. 222.

the fall were considered such that earthly flesh was thought to be thoroughly corrupted. This led to the question concerning how a Saviour with earthly flesh could ever be a sufficient sacrifice, powerful enough to overcome the power of Satan and evil. On this question Menno Simons and Dirk Philips were shaped by the views of Melchior Hoffman, who maintained that the Word, that is, Jesus Christ, had become flesh but did not receive his flesh from Mary. Hoffman explained that the body of Jesus was pre-existent, and had its origins in heaven and not on the earth. Only this heavenly flesh, "without spot or wrinkle," was sufficient to overcome the poison or alien corruption of the Serpent. Accordingly, Hoffman maintained, "'even as the dewdrop falls into the oystershell and therein is changed into the pearl,' so the eternal Word came into Mary's womb through the Holy Spirit and became flesh and blood without partaking of the flesh and blood from Mary's body."⁵⁹

Both Menno Simons and Dirk Philips accepted Hoffman's position, although they did not hold to his monophysitism, and instead maintained that Christ had two natures.⁶⁰ This is not to suggest, however, that they were in full continuity with Christian orthodoxy as expressed in the Chalcedonian creed, which stressed that Christ was "born of Mary" having two natures, both human and divine concurring in one person.⁶¹ In consonance with Melchior Hoffman, they emphasized that "Jesus Christ was conceived *in Mary through* or *from* the Holy Spirit, ...born out of Mary and not *from* Mary."⁶² They did not deny that Jesus had a true human nature, but understood it to be a prelapsarian Adamic

⁵⁹Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, pp. 89-90.

⁶⁰Rempel, *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism*, pp. 167-168.

⁶¹Leith, *Creeeds of the Church*, p. 36.

⁶²Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 91.

nature, not associated with the human flesh of Mary.⁶³

This Melchiorite conception "with its theological implications was a central organizing concept for much of Menno and Dirk's theology when they attempted to express it systematically."⁶⁴ While it was challenged by the adoptionist views of Adam Pastor and Francis de Cuiper,⁶⁵ throughout the sixteenth century the Melchiorite conception became a distinctive feature of Mennonite orthodoxy.⁶⁶

ii. The Work of Christ

Concerning the work of Christ, that is, the atonement, Anabaptists followed the mainline Reformers in emphasizing that Christ was the sole mediator between humanity and God.⁶⁷ They also tended to hold to all three classical views of the atonement.⁶⁸ According to Thomas Finger, the Anabaptists' sharp

⁶³Ibid., p. 93. While there is little doubt that Menno expressed "Melchiorite" views, Abraham Friesen has recently challenged the close connection between Melchior Hoffman and Menno Simons, arguing that the latter was not really convinced by "Melchiorism," and was more heavily influenced by the humanist from Rotterdam, Erasmus. See Friesen, "Present at the Inception: Menno Simons and the Beginnings of Dutch Anabaptism," pp. 351-388.

⁶⁴William Keeney, "The Incarnation, A Central Theological Concept," in Cornelius J. Dyck, ed., *A Legacy of Faith* (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1962), p. 56.

⁶⁵Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, p. 740. See also Templin, "Adam Pastor: Anti-Trinitarian Anabaptist:" 25-31; Koolman, *Dirk Philips: Friend and Colleague of Menno Simons*, pp. 29-40.

⁶⁶Voolstra, *Het Woord*, pp. 67-84. See also Archie Penner, "Pieter Jansz. Twisck: Second Generation Anabaptist/Mennonite Churchman, Writer and Polemicist" (Ph.D Thesis, University of Iowa, 1971), pp. 245-251.

⁶⁷For the development of this perspective within Protestantism, see Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, pp. 479-482.

⁶⁸By classical views I mean the *Christus Victor* view attributed to the early church and Eastern Orthodoxy, the satisfaction view associated with Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), and the moral influence view, first expressed in its classical form by Peter

sense of conflict with the world, the religious and political powers, the flesh and the devil, led them to appropriate elements from the *Christus Victor* theme. Melchior Hoffman and Bernhard Rothmann, for instance, regarded humanity as the devil's property, and Christ's atonement as bringing liberation from this bondage.⁶⁹ The *Christus Victor* theme appears to have surfaced in those expressions of thought in the Low Countries that viewed salvation as involving 'divinization' and transformation through participation in the divine nature.⁷⁰ The language of Christ's offices (the *triplex munus Christi*) appears also to be interspersed in the thought of the north-German Dutch Anabaptists, although in a somewhat rudimentary and unsystematic

Abelard (1079-1142). According to the *Christus Victor* view, the atonement is a dramatic struggle between God and the forces of evil. In the incarnation, Christ enters into that struggle, his divinity hidden from view. Under the veil of his humanity, Christ battles with the principalities and powers of evil that hold humanity in captivity. Through the cross and resurrection of Christ the powers of evil are defeated and humanity is set free. According to the satisfaction view, human sin has offended God's honour and thus demands satisfaction. While satisfaction is demanded from human beings, only a sinless human being is able to provide genuine satisfaction, and only a divine being has the capacity to provide satisfaction for the sins of all of humanity. In Christ's perfect obedience unto death, God's honour has been satisfied and restored, and sinners are forgiven. According to the moral influence view, Christ neither reconciles humanity by defeating the forces of evil, nor by providing satisfaction. Reconciliation takes place in that God's love is shown in such a compelling way that human beings are motivated to respond in gratitude, obedience and love towards God and each other. See Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 151-156. For a comprehensive treatment of the classical views of atonement and discussion of various biblical metaphors for the atonement, see John Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church* (Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1986).

⁶⁹ME V, s. v. "Atonement, Anabaptist Theology of," by Thomas N. Finger.

⁷⁰Ibid.

form.⁷¹

According to William Keeney, in the theology of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips there was the recognition that "Jesus' death was a sacrifice and a ransom, and that remission of sins (was) through the blood of Christ." From a human point of view "such an atonement was necessary in order to appease the wrath of God and to conquer the power of Satan."⁷² Anabaptist emphases, in Keeney's view, seem to have encompassed elements of the Anselmic substitutionary theory of atonement as well as the emphasis of Christ as "Victor". Keeney, however, also points out that both Menno and Dirk stressed the love of God through Christ's work (i.e., Christ's moral influence). Christ's willingness to voluntarily accept the unmerited death of the cross was understood, not unlike Peter Abelard's perspective, to be an example for humankind that would stir human beings "to repentance and obedience to God."⁷³ Thus Christ's work became a basis for a life of discipleship, of true penance and obedience.⁷⁴

⁷¹See for instance, Menno Simons, "A Solemn Confession of the Triune, Eternal, and True God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," in *CWMS*, pp. 492-493; Dirk Philips, "Confession of Our Faith (Concerning) God," in *WDP*, pp. 63-64. According to Williams, Eusebius of Caesarea was the first to have thought of Christ's offices in terms of being prophetic, priestly and royal, and Innocent III is said to have refined these conceptualizations. During the Reformation period it was Andrew Osiander, who was the first among sixteenth century fashioners to have reflected on the three functions of Christ as an aspect of his office, and later John Calvin was responsible for the European-wide diffusion of the teaching. See Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, pp. 254, 372-377, 1278-1279.

⁷²Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 70.

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴See Marjan Blok, "Discipleship in Menno Simon's *Dat Fundament*," in *Mennon Simons: An Appraisal*, edited by Gerald R. Brunk (Harrisonburg: Eastern Mennonite College, 1992), p. 106. Blok is drawing primarily from previous work by Sjouke Voolstra. See his "True Penitence: The Core of Menno Simons' Theology," in *MQR* 62, no. 3 (July 1988): 387-400. In a more recent publication, Sjouke Voolstra has argued in greater detail concerning the importance of

Soteriology

While Anabaptists tended to express their views of the work of Christ in consonance with one or more of the classical theories of atonement, and in this respect did not diverge significantly from points of view associated with the rest of Christendom, they did take a different position than their mainline Reformation counterparts on what they considered to be the effect of Christ's work on individuals, and how individuals were expected to respond to the Divine initiative. In the theology of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, the faith that would lead to salvation, was an inner knowledge that affected the heart, yet at the same time bore visible fruit in repentance, conversion, regeneration and obedience.⁷⁵ For Menno Simons, repentance and the penitent life was especially emphasized. The work of Christ could only be claimed by believers who "set their steps upon the path toward a renewal in their lives in practice and thought."⁷⁶ While Menno firmly believed that God initiated the salvation process, genuine repentance and the penitent life was conditional for receiving the gift of forgiveness of sins.⁷⁷

true penitence in the theology of Menno Simons. See his *Menno Simons: His Image and Message*.

⁷⁵See Irvin Horst, "Neuer Mensch--Neue Gemeinschaft: Eine Schrift des fruehen Menno Simons," *MGB* 53 (1996): 38. Luther also maintained that "historical faith" was not enough, and that faith must be personally appropriated. He thus emphasized that Christ was given *pro me, pro nobis* but he stopped short of appropriating spiritualistic language. See George, *Theology of the Reformers*, p. 59.

⁷⁶Voolstra, "True Penitence," p. 392.

⁷⁷Voolstra, "True Penitence," pp. 392-393; Voolstra, *Menno Simons*; Marjan Block, "Discipleship in Menno Simons' *Dat Fundament*, p. 108. This active participation in the process of salvation did not mean for Menno Simons that God did not initiate salvation. The order of salvation for Menno, as Marjan Block points out, is that "first is the time of grace, followed by penance, then faith," which is given from above and learned through the Holy Spirit (*ibid.*). For Voolstra's elaboration on this, see his "True Penitence," pp. 392-393.

For both Menno Simons and Dirk Philips (as for most Anabaptists)--consonant with the medieval-soteriological point of departure--forgiveness of sins implied for the individual a transformation that involved *becoming righteous*. Righteousness was not simply imputed to the sinner for Christ's sake; but rather being saved meant *becoming righteous* by the power of Christ through the Holy Spirit.⁷⁸ Luther had described the person who had received the gift of faith as "at once righteous and a sinner" (*simul iustus et peccator*).⁷⁹ This implied that persons being saved were *considered* righteous before God in a forensic sense, even though they continued to have a sinful nature.⁸⁰ The Anabaptists with their pneumatological emphasis, on the other hand, tended to underscore the ontological change in human nature that took place in salvation, whereby believers were simultaneously justified and sanctified, born anew towards a life where no division could exist between faith and works. In being justified, the believer became a new creation, which meant that the old human nature should pass away and the new humanity must come.⁸¹

The division between the old and new life was marked by

⁷⁸Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 88.

⁷⁹Luther continued to use the term *simul iustus et peccator* after 1518-1519 "but did so in the sense of *semper* (always) *iustus et peccator*. The believer is not only both righteous and sinful at the same time but is also always or completely both righteous and sinful at the same time." So George, *Theology of the Reformers*, p. 71.

⁸⁰This is not to suggest that Luther ruled out the possibility of change in the believer after justification. Dennis Bielfeldt, for instance, argues that Luther believed in "real ontic unity" between the Divine and the human, and that believers actually participate in God and experience a form of deification. See Dennis Bielfeldt, "Deification as a Motif in Luther's *Dictata super psalterium*," *SCJ* 28, no. 2 (summer 1997): 401-420.

⁸¹See also Beachy, *The Concept of Grace in the Radical Reformation*, pp. 4-5.

rebirth.⁸² Through rebirth, believers became partakers of the divine nature.⁸³ As human beings were once born of Adam having a sinful and corruptible nature, so in rebirth, believers received another nature, which was Adam's originally, but was now given through the second Adam, Jesus Christ. This new nature was spiritual and divine, granting believers a new moral character capable of doing good works.⁸⁴ The faith that justified one before God was necessarily active in love.⁸⁵ This new moral character had its ontological basis in the heavenly Christ coming in the flesh; for only what was truly heavenly could save and be transforming.⁸⁶ Since God became human, humans could now become

⁸²The concept of rebirth was also a key insight of Western mysticism. See Egil Grisliis, "The Doctrine of the Incarnation according to Menno Simons," p. 25.

⁸³This was an important religious axiom in Eastern theology that made its way into the Western medieval context--borrowed from the secular Greek concept of divinization. According to Steven Ozment where "likeness to God was the indispensable condition of both saving knowledge of him and a saving relationship with him....Medieval theology remained devoted to the proposition that God became man so that men could be godlike." So Ozment, *Age of Reform*, p. 242. Thus justification implied "a new ontological relationship between the divine and the human, 'a belonging to God in the order of being.'" So George, *Theology of the Reformers*, p. 63. Luther, on the other hand, understood justification in terms of extra nos. "Fellowship with God is not the raising of like to like...but rather the acceptance by faith of God's judgment upon the unlike." See Carter Lindberg, "Justice and Injustice in Luther's Judgment of Holiness Movements," Peter Manns and Harding Meyer, eds., *Luther's Ecumenical Significance: An Interconfessional Consultation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 163.

⁸⁴Keeney, *The Development of Anabaptist Thought and Practise*, pp. 73, 98.

⁸⁵William Stoesz, "The New Creature: Menno Simons' Understanding of the Christian Faith," in H. Wayne Pipkin, ed., *Essays in Anabaptist Theology* (Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1994), p. 184.

⁸⁶This is also the reason why patristic theology wanted to emphasize Christ's divinity. From a patristic point of view, "had the divine nature not fully joined itself with ours, we could not be divinized." See Thomas N. Finger, *Christian Theology: An*

god, receive eternal life "and the ethical and moral characteristics of the divine nature."⁸⁷ Salvation was seen "as a dynamic process of the divinization of human nature, and hence as a reversal of the process of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ."⁸⁸

Arnold Snyder has maintained that in early Anabaptism "pneumatology was the *sine qua non* of the movement."⁸⁹ However, where the pneumatological impulse found its most powerful expression for the north German-Dutch Anabaptists (and perhaps among other Anabaptists as well), was in their soteriology. It is not so much the case that in their formal statements concerning God that Menno Simons or Dirk Philips gave the Holy Spirit special recognition; rather it was in their soteriological

Eschatological Approach, vol. I (Scottsdale and Kitchener: Herald Press, 1985), p. 261.

⁸⁷Keeney, *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practise*, p. 98. The notion that God became human in order than humans could become divine can be traced back to the early church theologian from Alexandria, Athanasius, and may be one of the most central and distinctive ideas within Eastern Christianity. See Ted Campbell, *Christian Confessions: A Historical Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p. 50. Both Keeney and Finger view 'divinization' or 'deification' in Anabaptists like Menno Simons as moral, rather than substantialist or ontological terms. See *ibid.*, p. 99 and *ME V*, s.v. "Atonement, Anabaptist Theology of," by Thomas Finger, p. 44. Alister McGrath states that a distinction must be drawn in the Christian tradition between deification as "becoming God" (*theosis*) and "becoming like God" (*homoiosis [sic] theoi*). "The first, associated with the Alexandrian school, conceives of deification as a union with the substance of God; the second, associated with the Antiochene school, interprets the believer's relationship with God more in terms of a participation in that which is divine, often conceived in terms of ethical perfection. The distinction between these approaches is subtle, and reflects significantly different Christologies." So Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), p. 361.

⁸⁸Beachy, *The Concept of Grace in the Radical Reformation*, p. 216; Keeney, "The Incarnation, A Central Theological Concept," p. 59.

⁸⁹Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 379.

understandings that the place of the Holy Spirit was given central attention. Conceptions of "becoming righteous," and the "new birth", as far as Menno and Dirk were concerned, were inextricably linked to, and dependant on, the Spirit of God, who made it possible for human beings to be saved from their sinful and lost condition, and the power of evil.

Yet, it is also true that this pneumatological emphasis diminished over time. A number of scholars have argued that in the development of Anabaptist soteriology, there was a general movement away from a "pneumatic/spiritualist emphasis on personal regeneration, to a more external and communal emphasis."⁹⁰ Arnold Snyder notes that "in the surviving Anabaptist groups, ecclesiology circumscribed soteriology: outside the church, as defined by particular outward marks of obedience, there was no salvation."⁹¹ Evidence suggests that this shift took place in Menno Simons himself, who perhaps through the influence of Dirk Philips and Leenaert Bouwens concerned himself increasingly with the pure community.⁹² In this vein, Irvin Horst has pointed out that in Menno Simon's earliest Anabaptist writings, the spiritualist influences of Melchior Hoffman and David Joris are discernible. In the early writings of Simons, personal regeneration within the inner person were emphasized. Later, this spiritualist impulse faded away as the older Menno Simons becomes occupied with issues surrounding the church.⁹³ Still, it is questionable that this emphasis on the Spirit faded from north German-Dutch Anabaptism to the degree that Arnold Snyder has suggested.⁹⁴ As I will take note in chapters five, six and

⁹⁰Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 371.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 372.

⁹²Ibid., p. 341.

⁹³Irvin Horst, "Neuer Mensch -- Neue Gemeinschaft," pp. 39, 42.

⁹⁴See Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, for instance pp. 172, 220, 341, 347, 351, 363, 368-369, 379-381.

seven, the spiritual impulse may have fallen somewhat out of favour with Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, nevertheless it continued to surface among Mennonites in the early seventeenth century.

Ecclesiology

i. The Nature of the Church

The implications of the Melchiorite christology for the Anabaptists in the Low Countries was that the heavenly flesh of Christ, through the cross and resurrection, enabled the penitent to experience regeneration and the new birth, and the possibility to participate or partake in the divine nature. This was to be expressed corporately in the "community of saints," apart from the *corpus christianum*, whereby the true penitent and regenerated believers could not have anything to do with the nominally committed.⁹⁵ Menno Simons and Dirk Philips understood the true

⁹⁵It is important to note that the Anabaptists were not opposed to the reformation of the whole of society at the outset. Scholars in the Anabaptist field have shown in early Swiss and South German Anabaptism, particularly in 1525 and 1526, Anabaptist reforms at local levels assumed territorial church reform. In North Germany, the Muenster uprising in 1534 and 1535 also presupposed a territorial church. Anabaptist conceptions of a separated community within Christendom only emerged when it became clear that Anabaptist territorial reforms were no longer politically (and even militarily) sustainable. See James Stayer, "Die Anfaenge des schweizerischen Taeufertums im reformierten Kongregationalismus," in Hans-Juergen Goertz, ed., *Umstrittenes Taeufertum 1525-1575: Neue Forschungen* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1975), pp. 19-49; Martin Haas, "Der Weg der Taeufer in die Absonderung," in *ibid.*, pp. 50-78; Werner Packull, "In Search of the 'Common Man' in Early German Anabaptist Ideology:" 51-67; W. J. Bakker, "Bernhard Rothmann: Civic Reformer in Anabaptist Muenster," in Irvin Horst, ed., *The Dutch Dissenters: A Critical Companion to Their History and Ideas* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), pp. 105-116. With respect to Menno Simons, Sjouke Voolstra writes the following: "If Menno had succeeded in finding a local or regional authority which could have implemented a reformation in the Anabaptist style--and the chance of this was quite real in East Friesland for some time--then this would not have been in conflict with his theology. The totalitarian nature of religion at that time and the conviction that the authorities were responsible for religion determined that neither

church to be a voluntary gathering of believers who were spiritually born from above, considered to be the bride of Christ, participating in the Christian life through a renewed life of obedience. The believers were the spiritual body of Christ, whereby the believers were united locally, universally, and even meta-historically with celestial beings--the angels in heaven.⁹⁶

This understanding of the church was unique in the sixteenth century. The position held by the Magisterial Reformers generally, was that a visible church constituted the true elect; however, the visible church might also "include those who were not elect, but who through hypocrisy and deceit were included as members, or who might at a later date be elected."⁹⁷ Spiritualists, such as Sebastian Frank, on the other hand, held that the church was completely invisible, and all attempts to

Menno nor his contemporaries were able to conceive of a fundamental separation of church and state. Two causes, an external one and an internal one, prevented the development of a national Anabaptist reformation and church. The Habsburg repression did not give the required latitude to lower authorities who sympathized with the Anabaptists, while the severe demands made on the moral standard of the purified church by the Anabaptists with their strict discipline made it impossible for the government to enfold all its subjects within such a church without spot or wrinkle. This was something which no government whatsoever could accept, responsible as it was for the unity and peace within society." So Voolstra, *Menno Simons His Image and Message*, p. 95.

⁹⁶Keeney, *The Development of Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, pp. 151, 155; Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction*, p. 360. Walter Klaassen notes that connecting the earthly and the celestial church was traditional Catholic way of defining the church's borders. See Walter Klaassen, *Anabaptism in Outline* (Kitchener and Scottdale: Herald Press, 1981), p. 102. On the Supper, Schwenckfeld also spiritualizes the body of Christ and sees it as manifest in the new born Christians. "Und genau wie Christus sein Fleisch in die himmlische Glorie erholen hat, so vergottet er auch das Fleisch der gläubigen, wiedergeborener Menschen." So Heinrich Bornkamm, *Mystik, Spiritualismus und die Anfänge des Pietismus im Luthertum* (Giessen: Alfred Toepelmann, 1926), p. 7.

⁹⁷Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 149.

establish a visible church was considered superfluous. This stress on the invisibility of the church was also taken up by Melchior Hoffman and David Joris in that they emphasized the inner, spiritual purity of the believer, but de-emphasized its outer manifestations.⁹⁸ By the 1540s, however, Melchoir Hoffman was long gone from the Low Countries and David Joris' influence among Anabaptists was waning. Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, now the dominant leaders in the Low Countries, stressed that the visible church should approximate the invisible church, "insofar as it was humanly possible to make it so."⁹⁹ The congregation of saints was not only made up of those who were spiritually reborn from within, but also those who lived outwardly in conformity to the life and commandments of Christ as witnessed to in Scripture. These Anabaptist leaders thus held in tension the invisibleness and the visibleness (or the inner and outer dimensions) of the church. As institutional concerns became more prominent, and survival of the Anabaptist movement came into question, both leaders tended to emphasize these outer, visible characteristics of the church even more. Increasingly the church was understood as a visible community of saints, the bride of Christ, and a regenerated body of believers "without spot or wrinkle."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 339. On the institutional side, Luther regarded the church as visible, but in terms of faith, invisible. See Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, p. 403; George, *Theology of the Reformers*, p. 84.

⁹⁹Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 150.

¹⁰⁰Piet Visser, *Broeders in de geest: De doopsgezinde Bijdragen van Dierick en Jan Philipsz. Schabaelje tot de Nederlandse stichtelijkde literatuur in de zeventiende eeuw*, I (Deventer: Sub Rosa, 1988), p. 86. According to Voolstra, the "real presence" of Christ was present in Menno's understanding of the church. See Voolstra, *Menno Simons*, pp. 59-81. According to Snyder, the church was understood as "sacrament." See Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, pp. 359-363.

Certain marks of the church followed from this.¹⁰¹ For Menno Simons, the true church exemplified pure doctrine, scriptural use of the sacraments, obedience to the Word, sincere love of one's neighbour, confession of Christ and suffering for the sake of Christ.¹⁰² For Dirk Philips, the true church exhibited pure doctrine and properly chosen ministers, scriptural use of the sacraments, footwashing, use of the ban and separation, love, keeping of the commandments, and suffering and persecution.¹⁰³

ii. Leadership

How were those who had experienced renewal and who had practiced obedience to Christ, to be structured and organized in the community known as the church? Anabaptists in all regions of Europe had been opposed to traditional understandings of church order which held that leadership was bestowed by a clerical hierarchy based on 'apostolic succession'.¹⁰⁴ Leadership was to be chosen by the Spirit of God, while election or commissioning was to take place through the local congregation. Spiritualists such as Sebastian Frank and Caspar Schwenckfeld, and spiritually inclined Anabaptists such as Melchior Hoffman and David Joris had emphasized the immediate call from God, and denied that an

¹⁰¹The marks of the true church in the Lutheran tradition tended to emphasize the maintenance of the pure and unadulterated Word of God and the proper observance of the sacraments, while in the Reformed tradition, the exercise of church discipline was added. Yet both traditions had a longer list of "marks" that went significantly beyond the institutional *notae ecclesiae*. See Berkhoff, *Christian Faith*, p. 414.

¹⁰²"Reply to Gellius Faber," in *CWMS*, pp. 739-742.

¹⁰³"The Congregation of God," in *WDP*, pp. 363-374.

¹⁰⁴Snyder, *Introduction to Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 46.

objective call from a congregation was important.¹⁰⁵ Menno Simons tended to hold to this view, but the trend in the North German-Dutch Anabaptist context was in the direction of congregational involvement in the calling of church leaders.¹⁰⁶ As Anabaptist congregations became more established and institutionalized, the calling of leaders took place within the boundaries of the church structures.

In terms of ministerial identity, Melchoir Hoffman "distinguished four roles for members of his congregations, namely those of Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, and Regular

¹⁰⁵Hans-Juergen Goertz points out that Melchior Hoffman, in his earlier career had supported concepts of leadership whereby congregations determined the selection of ministers. However, in Strasbourg his views changed and he increasingly assumed a hierarchically structured leadership that Klaus Deppermann has described as "charismatically authoritarian." See Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, p. 94.

¹⁰⁶Keeney, *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 46. Historians have been divided on the question of whether the method of choosing leadership shifted from an "aristocratic" to a "democratic" approach or vice versa. Karel Vos maintained that until the 1560s, leadership was chosen by a group of Elders, but that in the course of time, congregations increasingly exercised more authority. W. J. Kuehler argued the reverse, insisting that from the beginning, leaders were called by the congregations with Elders acting only on behalf of the laity. "As the Elders gained more power, however, and particularly as some ambitious Elders, such as Dirk Philips and Leonard Bouwens, arose, these men tended to aggrandize power both to their person and to the office of Elder. Thus, though the congregation retained the power to call a man to the ministry, the Elders held a veto right because they could refuse to ordain anyone who did not have their approval. For these reasons, they tended to move from democratic to aristocratic procedures, and only after the Frisian-Flemish dispute drew attention to the problem did the Brotherhood realize the direction in which it was traveling and restore the democratic procedures. Wessel, a non-Mennonite historian, agrees with Kuehler's interpretation rather than with Vos." So Keeney, *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Through and Practice*, p. 49. Keeney believes that "the development was from a position in which the Elders acted as the natural leaders and obtained informal advice and consent from the congregation, toward another where the church took more formal demoncratic action, as experience convinced the Brotherhood of the need for more control." So *ibid.*, p. 51.

members."¹⁰⁷ These designated roles remained more or less intact with David Joris, but the "apostolic" and "prophetic" offices disappeared after his influence in the Low Countries diminished. Menno Simons and Dirk Philips spoke of a variety of offices in congregational ministry,¹⁰⁸ most often referring to the leaders as "elders", "teachers", "preachers", "pastors", "ministers", or "deacons". The high "apostolic" and "prophetic" offices had no place in a community that took responsibility in interpreting the Scriptures; nevertheless, this "hermeneutical" community, particularly in the Low Countries, was guided by strong leadership.¹⁰⁹ Further, whereas qualifications of the leadership

¹⁰⁷Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 264.

¹⁰⁸For instance, *Apostelen, Propheten, Bischopen, Outsten/Ouden, Herders, Leeraers, Predkers/Predikants, Dienaers, Diakenen/Diaconen, Priesters*. See Keeney, *The Development of Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 53, 64, n. 144).

¹⁰⁹See Werner O. Packull, "Menno Simons und die Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift," *MGB* 54 (1996): 46. The question as to whether the Anabaptists interpreted the Scriptures as a "hermeneutical community" is one that requires more research. There may have been a difference between Anabaptists in the north and south, the former reflecting a congregation polity in which the leaders in the tradition of Melchior Hoffman, took on more authority than the Anabaptists in the south. With respect to the communities in which Menno Simons exercised leadership, Werner Packull maintains that "Die weitlaeufig akzeptierte Auffassung von der Gemeinde als einer hermeneutischen Gemeinschaft scheint eine Modernisierung zu sein." See *ibid.*, p. 54. On the other hand with respect to Anabaptists in the south, Heinhold Fast emphasizes that "Dass in der Täuferbewegung nicht allein die Theologen etwas zu sagen hatten, sondern gleichberechtigt auch die Laien und dass dadurch die Aufspaltung der Gemeinde in Geistliche und Laien geradezu aufgehoben wurde, geht darauf zurueck, dass man das 14. Kapitel des ersten Korintherbriefes ernst nahm." See Heinhold Fast, "Zur Ueberlieferung des Leser-Amtes bei den oberdeutschen Täufern," *MGB* 54 (1997):61. However, the term "priesthood of all believers" does not appear in the Anabaptist literature at all--at least not in reference to ministerial leadership. See Marlin E. Miller, "Some Reflection on Pastoral Ministry and Pastoral Education," Richard A. Kauffman and Gayle Gerber Koontz, eds., *Theology for the Church: Writings by Marlin Miller* (Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1997), p. 123.

in the Magisterial Reformation included a good education, in Anabaptist congregations the anti-clerical sentiment expressed itself critically against those who were educated.¹¹⁰ For the Anabaptists, far more important than education as such, it was essential that their leaders knew the Scriptures, held to a pure doctrine, preached the word correctly, and led a blameless life.¹¹¹

iii. Outer Ceremonies

As noted earlier, a central characteristic of Anabaptism in general was its pneumatological emphasis and rejection of the sacramentalism of the Roman Catholic Church. Anabaptists everywhere were in agreement "that neither priests nor sacraments were capable of conveying God's grace or of initiating the Christian life of the spirit."¹¹² Spiritual reality was distinct and prior to material reality. The outer ceremonies of baptism and the Lord's supper, while corresponding to the spiritual reality were never identical with it. The sacraments were seen as signs or symbols of the spiritual experience that had taken place within the believer. This "inner" emphasis of Anabaptism was

¹¹⁰Anti-clerical sentiments against the educated were common in the Reformation era, and Dirk Philips was evidently aware of the common proverb: "the more learned the more perverted." See *WDP*, p. 199. This was a slogan that Anabaptists and radical reformers, such as Sebastian Franck, were generally aware of. See Heino Fast, "Zur Ueberlieferung des Leser-Amtes bei den oberdeutschen Täufern," pp. 63, 66 n. 10. According to Heiko A. Oberman, the proverb "*Gelehrten und Verkehrten*" had roots in late medieval groups such as the *Devotio Moderna*. See Heiko A. Oberman, *The Impact of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 201-224. See also Oberman, "*Die Gelehrten die Verkehrten: Popular Response to Learned Culture in the Renaissance and Reformation*," in Steven Ozment, ed., *Religion and Culture in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, 1989), pp. 43-62.

¹¹¹Keeney, *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, pp. 52-53.

¹¹²Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 85.

related to a Zwinglian spiritualism, as well as to the mystical traditions of late medieval piety.¹¹³

The anti-sacramental legacy in Anabaptism raised a fundamental question for Anabaptists in terms of the place of the outer "ceremonies" of the church. In the words of Arnold Snyder, "If the external elements contained no saving power of themselves, and the primary saving action was internal, being the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, then what rationale could there be for keeping 'external' ordinances at all?"¹¹⁴ The more "spiritualist" Anabaptists in the Low Countries, such as Melchior Hoffman and Nicolaas M. van Bleskijk, had de-emphasized the role of "outer ceremonies" in the Christian life. During a time of severe persecution in the early 1530s, Melchior Hoffman had in fact suspended the practice of re-baptism for his followers. A decade later, Nicolaas M. van Bleskijk had argued that his group would exercise the proper or biblical practice of the ceremonies whenever possible, "but ceremonies really were not of the essence, since ceremonies did not lead to a change of heart."¹¹⁵

Menno Simons and Dirk Philips did not hold the same perspectives as their more "spiritualist" counterparts. They viewed baptism and the Lord's supper as well as a number of other outer practices as essential marks of the true church.¹¹⁶ These were to be put into practice as an obedient response to the commands of Christ. Menno and Dirk referred to the outer

¹¹³Following Joseph Lortz, John Rempel has observed that Anabaptist views on the sacraments may be understood as part of the larger shift in attitudes during the Reformation period, from objectivism, traditionalism and clericalism, to subjectivism, spiritualism and laicism--an emphasis already manifest in the *devotio moderna* and the sacramentarians of the Netherlands. See Rempel, *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism*, p. 27.

¹¹⁴Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 300.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 320.

¹¹⁶See "The Congregation of God," in *WDP*, pp. 363-374; "Reply to Gellius Faber," in *CWMS*, pp. 739-742.

practices as "sacraments," "sacramental symbols," "ordinances," "signs" and "ceremonies."¹¹⁷ Dirk reserved the term "sacrament" for baptism and the Supper.¹¹⁸

On baptism, Menno and Dirk emphasized that the individual must through faith and the rebirth, first of all experience inner baptism. Faith did not follow from baptism, but baptism from faith, that included penance, and the rebirth.¹¹⁹ Outer baptism came next as a witness to inner baptism, being a necessary step of obedience, commanded by Christ.¹²⁰ Menno emphasized the necessity of obedience to the 'commands of Scripture' as the basis for outward ceremonies,¹²¹ but also occasionally expressed the view that baptism was a confessional act through which God's action could become redemptive reality.¹²²

William Keeney has noted that in the early writings of Menno and Dirk, the connection between baptism and the new birth within the individual was stressed. Later baptism was seen increasingly

¹¹⁷ME. IV, s.v. "Sacrament," by William Klassen and Nanne van der Zijpp; Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 74.

¹¹⁸Rempel, *Lord's Supper*, p. 173.

¹¹⁹George, *Theology of the Reformers*, p. 289; Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, p. 82ff; Miller, "Baptism in the Mennonite Tradition," in Richard A. Kauffman and Gayle Gerber Koontz, eds., *Theology of the Church* (Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1997), p. 41; Voolstra, "Themes in the Early Theology of Menno Simons," p. 46.

¹²⁰Keeney, *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, pp. 75-76. Hans-Juergen Goertz notes that baptism for Menno was more than "a mere symbol of obedience, occasionally speaking of its effects and of the forgiveness of sins in baptism". By this he meant that, through the act of confession, what man confessed was actually effected. See Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, pp. 82-84. Sjouke Voolstra, on the other hand, contends that for Menno "the water of baptism, as an outward element, can never be a means to salvation competing with the forgiveness of sins through Christ himself, who alone may be called a sign of grace." See Voolstra, "Themes in the Early Theology of Menno Simons," p. 46.

¹²¹Ibid., pp. 318-320.

¹²²Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, p. 84.

as a "testimony and as an outward evidence of admission into the visible Church. In neither phase was either aspect wholly absent, or other meanings excluded, but the shift was a part of the growing interest in ecclesiology."¹²³

On the Lord's Supper, Menno and Dirk viewed the ceremony as an important sign and memorial pointing to Christ's salvific sacrifice and work of deliverance, and a proof or pledge of Christ's love for humankind.¹²⁴ It was understood as a bond of Christian unity, reflecting love and peace in the fellowship of believers.¹²⁵ Christ's presence became real, not in the elements of the Supper, materially, but in the believers participating in the Supper, spiritually. Those participating could find true communion with the heavenly Christ and be "'transformed and changed so as to be like Him in kind and nature.'"¹²⁶ For Menno Simons, wherever the Supper was celebrated, there Jesus Christ was spiritually present "'with his grace, Spirit, and promise, and with the merits of his sufferings, misery, flesh, blood, cross, and death.'"¹²⁷ In Dirk Philip's understanding, believers at the Supper fed on Christ's body, not in a material sense, but spiritually, in that eating was an act of believing and experiencing unmediated communion with Christ through the Holy

¹²³Keeney, *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 78. Keeney notes that this shift was even more evident towards the end of the sixteenth century when congregations required rebaptism whenever persons transferred from one congregation to another. See *ibid.* On the other hand, Marlin Miller places Dirk Philips in the more individualist rather than congregationalist view, and notes that the Dutch Mennonite tradition as a whole has tended to take this position. See Miller, "Baptism in the Mennonite Tradition," p. 179.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 293; Keeney, *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 106.

¹²⁶Keeney, *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 102.

¹²⁷George, *Theology of the Reformers*, p. 293.

Spirit.¹²⁸

Beyond baptism and the Supper, Dirk Philips added footwashing as an essential ordinance of the true church. For Dirk, footwashing was important since it was practiced after the example of Christ; it was a sign of the washing of the soul that takes place through Divine work, and it was understood as an act of humility on the part of those participating in the rite.¹²⁹

iv. Ethics and Discipline

The Melchiorite understanding of the incarnation with its soteriological implications demanded that the community of saints should live in obedience "without spot or wrinkle." Regeneration and the new birth resulted in partaking of the divine nature that should manifest itself in ethical acts of obedience, in accordance "to the clear and positive commands of Jesus Christ as given in the New Testament."¹³⁰ It is out of this context that Menno Simons and Dirk Philips stressed the importance of obedience and the works of love in all areas of life.

Menno Simons described the importance of love in the church primarily in terms of love of neighbour, including those within as well as outside the baptized body of Christ.¹³¹ Dirk Philips at one point concretized the meaning of love in economic terms.¹³² Both leaders looked to Christ, his example and teachings, and concluded that Christians should not take up the

¹²⁸Rempel, *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism*, p. 182-184. Rempel notes that Dirk's understanding of the Supper is to be interpreted in light of his spiritualistic interpretation, primarily from the sixth chapter of the gospel of John. See *ibid.*

¹²⁹See George, *Theology of the Reformers*, p. 294.

¹³⁰Keeney, "The Incarnation, A Central Theological Concept," p. 64.

¹³¹CWMS, pp. 740-741; Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 247.

¹³²WDP, pp. 371-372.

sword in warfare, violence or vengeance, nor swear the oath. Menno Simons in all likelihood came to these conclusions gradually as a result of wanting to distance himself from the Muenster fiasco,¹³³ as well as other revolutionary Anabaptist involvements.¹³⁴ For Menno, participation in the office of government did not seem possible either, due to the nature of the work, although he did leave room for the possibility that Christians could be involved in government if they held to the teachings and example of Christ.¹³⁵ As far as swearing the oath is concerned, Melchior Hoffman and Menno Simons were of the opinion that this could not be the practice of Christians since it was contrary to Christ's commandments.¹³⁶

In all questions concerning Christian conduct, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips believed that it was imperative for the true church to follow the demands of the New Testament as preached and practiced by the heavenly Christ who had become flesh on earth. This emphasis led them into conflict with Nicolaas M. van Blesdijk, a son-in-law and follower of the Anabaptist, David Joris. Blesdijk's rejection of literal prooftexting and his conviction that "love was the 'highest summation and foundation of all the Scriptures'"¹³⁷ pointed in the direction of tolerance within the Christian community. His emphasis of Pauline texts

¹³³Voolstra, *Menno Simons: His Image and Message*, pp. 94-95.

¹³⁴The Muenster debacle was the most glaring example of early Anabaptist misdeeds, but the radical Melchiorite take-over of the monastery of Oldeklooster in Friesland in March of 1535, or the activities of the Battenburg Bands even beyond 1540, were also factors that Menno Simons as well as later Anabaptists had to come to terms with. See Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, pp. 145-149; L. G. Jansma, "Crime in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century," pp. 221-235.

¹³⁵Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, pp. 128-135; Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 215.

¹³⁶Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, pp. 204, 216.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 323.

that pointed to freedom of the law, countered "Menno's literalist position, which emphasized 'obedience to the law.'" ¹³⁸ For Menno, as well as Dirk, however, a regenerate life inevitably should lead to outer manifestations in complete harmony with the "laws" of the New Testament. The church, after all, consisted of regenerated and new born Christians who were partakers of the divine nature. The church of the regenerate was the earthly manifestation of the heavenly Christ, and as such was the community of saints that should be "without spot or wrinkle." But what should be done if members of this "saintly" community fell and contaminated the purity of the church? Rejecting what they considered to be a great weakness of the Davidjorist position, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips contended that the Christian community, if it was to have any integrity at all, demanded church order, discipline, and concretely, the ban. Perspectives on the ban hearkened back to the late medieval call for moral reform; "it pointed also to the expectation that the outer behaviour of the Anabaptist churches would accurately reflect the inner state of grace and regeneration of its members." ¹³⁹

This church discipline and the ban should be undertaken in the spirit of love, because one should value the soul of the brother or sister. Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, however, were less sparing with "apostate ones," that is, those who had been baptized but had then later through false doctrine or a carnal life turned their backs on previous commitments. While they counseled patience with those who had fallen, they insisted that Christians should separate themselves from those who had fallen astray. ¹⁴⁰ Specific injunctions followed from this: Church members should neither partake in the Lord's Supper nor eat common meals with those who were banned. Exchanges and

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 324.

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 339.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 342-343.

greetings beyond common courtesy was prohibited as was the act of doing business, although there could be exceptions to the rule, and acts of mercy towards those in need was not forbidden. Both Menno and Dirk even insisted that banned family members, including spouses, were not exempted from this treatment, although in practice exceptions were made for those with a weak conscience.¹⁴¹ As will be noted in the following chapters, this issue would become crucial in matters related to the unity of the Anabaptist and Mennonite churches.

v. Eschatology

Apocalyptic expectation was a primary theme during the Reformation period and served as a central motive for the reforming Anabaptists in the Low Countries.¹⁴² Anabaptist reform was introduced into the Low Countries by Melchior Hoffman, whose theology was punctuated by apocalyptic expectation. His perspectives on the end of time were taken over by Bernhard Rothman in the city of Muenster that opened the door to an even more radical apocalypticism, embodied in the radicals, Jan Matthijs and Jan van Leyden. After the Muenster uprising, David Joris continued with visions and end time predictions.

By the 1540s, the majority of the Anabaptists distanced themselves from those who made radical predictions concerning the coming reign of God. Menno Simons and Dirk Philips were less preoccupied with the immediate return of Christ, although "eschatological hope remained as one of the stronger sustaining ideas in the midst of the trials and persecutions which they experienced."¹⁴³ Menno Simons "lived his entire life in the

¹⁴¹Ibid., pp. 343-344.

¹⁴²See Walter Klaassen, *Living at the End of the Ages: Apocalyptic Expectation in the Radical Reformation* (Lanham; New York; London: University Press of America, 1992).

¹⁴³Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 175.

expectation that the final judgment of the world was at hand."¹⁴⁴ History was punctuated by cosmic conflict, and the congregation of saints was understood to be experiencing this conflict while on earth. For both Menno and Dirk, however, Jesus Christ and the cross were sure signs that good would ultimately triumph over evil. In the interim, suffering was an essential experience of the saints as it had been even for the Old Testament saints, that would be transformed into reward, victory and personal resurrection at the last day.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, in the end, at the great Day of Judgment, Christ would come to judge the living and the dead. The community of saints would experience eternal life with God, while the nonrepentant would experience the torment of hell with the devil and his angels.¹⁴⁶

3. The Status and Function of Confessional Statements

While Anabaptists were concerned that believers truly live a repentant and morally righteous life, it is evident from the preceding section that they also held deep theological convictions. It is true that these convictions, at the outset at least, were not articulated in formal statements of doctrine. As noted at the outset of this chapter, Anabaptist beginnings were volatile and in flux during a time of social and political upheaval. In this context, systematic and comprehensive statements of Anabaptist doctrine, reflecting consensus or agreement on what the church should teach, did not and could not emerge. For the Anabaptists, the central confessional statement of the church was the Bible. It is significant that in debates

¹⁴⁴Voolstra, *Menno Simons: His Image and Message*, p. 92.

¹⁴⁵Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 175.

¹⁴⁶The Last Judgment was portrayed for the late medieval believer in a painting behind the altar, that would be reminder of the options available at the end of time. See Voolstra, *Menno Simons: His Image and Message*, pp. 38-39. Many cathedrals also depicted the Last Judgment in stone relief above the main entrance.

with authorities in places like Frankenthal and Emden, for instance, Anabaptists were reluctant to go beyond the biblical sources to defend their theological points of view.¹⁴⁷ For them, the Scriptures and the Spirit of God were the primary sources of authority in matters related to faith and the Christian life.

This is not to suggest, however, that the Anabaptists were anti-creedal or had a nonconfessional bias. Evidently, they also gave credence to early church statements of doctrine. Recently scholars have pointed out the fact that the early Anabaptists indeed accepted the historic Christian teachings, as summarized in some of the ecumenical Creeds and symbols. The Apostles' Creed, in particular, while not forming a major part of Anabaptist liturgy, was most likely taught and appealed to in all branches of the Anabaptist movement.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, it is evident that Anabaptists themselves, in the first decades of the movement, articulated and formulated confessional statements, although these were not at once comprehensive, systematic or doctrinal in the sense of reflecting consensus of agreement of what the church should teach. The Anabaptists, as part of an underground "heretical" movement, were simply not in the position to formulate such documents, that could then receive wide-spread approval.

In the final paragraphs of this chapter, I want to outline the character of early Anabaptist confessional statements. Such an outline will necessitate, first of all, a brief discussion of confessions of faith in history, including their function and role.

¹⁴⁷Friesen, *Erasmus, the Anabaptists and the Great Commission*, p. 128.

¹⁴⁸Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 84. See also Snyder, "Beyond Polygenesis," p. 11; Voolstra, *Het Woord is Vlees Geworden*, p. 129; Voolstra, "Dopers belijden," pp. 19-20, 28-29; Snyder-Penner, "The Ten Commandments, The Lord's Prayer, and The Apostles Creed as Early Anabaptist Texts," pp. 318-335.

Confessions in Church History

Throughout Christian history confessions of faith have emerged under a variety of circumstances and conditions. The earliest confessional statements originated in local Christian communities in the context of worship, praise, acclamation, repentance, catechetical preparation, baptism, exorcism, persecution, martyrdom, and defense against heresy. The language of the confessions was characteristically doxological, often comprising of simple and verbal pronouncements reflecting a person's or community's commitment to, and trust in Jesus Christ. The form of confession may have been spontaneous, ecstatic speech or repetitive, ritualistic recitation, the latter dependant on fixed literary texts such as the Apostles' Creed.¹⁴⁹

While it is evident that confessions of faith continued to maintain their doxological character throughout the middle ages and on into modern times,¹⁵⁰ due to the intensification of theological controversies in the early church, as well as other ecclesiastical and political developments, the confessions came to function increasingly as documents defining right doctrine; that is, defining what the church should teach regarding its normative beliefs and actions. It was no longer sufficient in the church, for instance, simply to confess that one believed in Jesus Christ; it became necessary to confess in a more specific

¹⁴⁹Walter Kasper, "Bekenntnis und Bekenntnisgemeinschaft in katholischer Sicht," in Harding Meyer and Heinz Schuette, eds., *Confessio Augustana: Bekenntnis des einen Glaubens* (Paderborn and Frankfurt am Main: Bonifatius and Otto Lembeck, 1980), p. 25. For a detailed account of the way in which confessing occurred in the context of worship, see Edmund Arens, *Bezeugen und Bekennen*, pp. 228-263.

¹⁵⁰It is undoubtedly in the context of Orthodoxy that the doxological function of the confessions of faith have been most faithfully maintained. See Damaskinos Papandreou, "Die Bekenntnisse der Orthodox Morgenlandischen Kirche," in Peter Meinhold, ed., *Studien zur Bekenntnisbildung* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980), p. 99.

manner, what it was that one believed about this Christ.¹⁵¹ As doctrine, these confessions of faith were thought of as statements reflecting consensus or agreement on what the church should teach.¹⁵²

As several scholars have pointed out, it was particularly the first council of Nicea (325) which signaled a revolutionary change, in that confessions were no longer the primary possession of the catechumen, but of the bishops. Statements of faith henceforth tended to come from centralized authorities, rather than from local congregations, and in this context, they took on not only an ecclesial but also a political function with the intent of uniting both Church and Empire.¹⁵³ Several consequences followed from this. First, their use in the local context of praise and worship diminished. Second, as already noted, they were directed less to catechumens in local congregations and more to leaders of the Church where they were "devised as a touchstone by which the doctrines of the Church teachers and leaders might be certified as correct."¹⁵⁴ Third, the confessions became more authoritative and were put forth as binding statements of the church that could not be denied by its leadership or lay adherents. Eventually, in both East and West, the seven Ecumenical Councils and other confessional statements became a source of religious authority alongside the Scriptures. Over time Eastern Orthodoxy continued to view the Ecumenical Councils as authoritative; in Roman Catholicism the situation was similar, but also included its papal office and "college" of bishops as part of the essential tradition through which the

¹⁵¹See Gerhard Ruhbach, "Aspekte der Bekenntnisbildung in der Kirchengeschichte," p. 55; Slabaugh, "Das Apostolikum," p. 188; Arens, *Bezeugen und Bekennen*, pp. 265-274.

¹⁵²See Campbell, *Christian Confessions: A Historical Introduction*, p. 2.

¹⁵³Arens, *Bezeugen und Bekennen*, p. 265.

¹⁵⁴Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 205.

Scriptures should be interpreted.¹⁵⁵

In Protestantism, the confessions of faith were given a somewhat different status. The Magisterial Reformers, for instance, wanted to stand in continuity with the tradition of the ancient church and its confessions, but sought to further define and clarify the essential elements of the faith.¹⁵⁶ As in earlier times, the confessions were utilized to define right doctrine.¹⁵⁷ Lutheran confessions tended to have universal authority; the authority of the Reformed confessions tended to be limited to a regional or local area.¹⁵⁸ However, in both cases, the Reformers did not want to give their confessions the same status as their medieval predecessors. While some of the Protestant confessions became legal documents, sanctioned by the state, the Reformers were careful to delineate between the church's confessional tradition and the authority of Scripture. Only Scripture could be understood as having revelatory status. The confessions were the church's commentary and summary of Scripture. They defined its centre, and had binding authority

¹⁵⁵Campbell, *Christian Confessions*, pp. 33ff, 76ff. Jacobs, *Theologie Reformierter Bekenntnisschriften in Grundzuegen*, p. 9; Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht," p. 19. The move toward equating the confessional tradition with Scripture was already evident in the sixth century. "A climax came in 545 during the prolonged conflict over the validity of the Council of Chalcedon (451). In that year Justinian declared that the *dogmata* of the first four councils carried an authority equal to that of the holy scriptures." So Wolfart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), p. 10.

¹⁵⁶Kasper, "Bekenntnis und Bekenntnisgemeinschaft," pp. 28-29.

¹⁵⁷Political unity was also a consideration during the Reformation period. See Edmund Schlink, *Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften* (Muenchen: Albert Lemp, 1940), pp. 43-44; Jacobs, *Reformierter Bekenntnisschriften*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁵⁸Harding Meyer, "Das Augsburger Bekenntnis neu gelesen im gegenwaertigen oekumensichen Kontext," in Harding Meyer, ed., *Augsburger Konfession im oekumenischen Kontext*, LWB-Report, 6/7 (Dezember 1979): vii-viii; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, p. 13.

only in so far as they were in agreement with Scripture.¹⁵⁹ In the centuries following the Reformation, most confessions of faith produced by Protestant churches continued to function and have authority in this way. In recent decades, the young churches of the so-called two-thirds world have produced doctrinal statements, corresponding to the type of confessions emerging from the Protestant tradition.¹⁶⁰

Anabaptist Confessions

Confessional statements of a systematic and comprehensive nature, such as what emerged in other Protestant groups, were never formulated by Anabaptists in the first decades of the sixteenth century. The Schleithem Articles of the Swiss Brethren come perhaps closest to a comprehensive statement, but they clearly do not deal with all the major doctrines of the faith; they tend to focus, rather, on the doctrines that differentiate the Swiss Brethren from the rest of Christendom.¹⁶¹ In the Low

¹⁵⁹Arens, *Bezeugen und Bekennen*, pp. 274ff; Schlink, *Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften*, pp. 24-25; 38ff; Jacobs, *Theologie Reformierter Bekenntnisschriften*, pp. 14-15; Kasper, "Bekenntnis und Bekenntnisgemeinschaft," p. 31. Gerhard Rubach laments that in Protestantism the diverse function of the confessions, that one observes in the early church, comes to an end. See Rubach, "Aspekte der Bekenntnisbildung in der Kirchengeschichte," p. 62.

¹⁶⁰See Arens, *Bezeugen und Bekennen*, pp. 286. Arens identifies confessions that are doxological, doctrinal, and then also those that are "situational" ("*situatives Bekennen*"). He recognizes that all confessions arise out of particular contexts and situations, but notes that in the twentieth century, there have been challenges facing the church that have required specific ethical and political responses. Arens identifies the "Barmen Declaration" (1934) and the "Kairos Document" (1985, 1986) as statements or confessions that may be considered "situational" in that Christians were challenged to claim their exclusive loyalty to God, to take a stand on particular issues facing the church, and to address these issues directly within a particular context at a given time. See *ibid.*, p. 286.

¹⁶¹For the text of the Schleithem Articles, see Yoder, trans. and ed., *The Legacy of Michael Sattler*, pp. 34-43.

Countries, the Anabaptist confession submitted to the authorities at Kempen may have come closest to demonstrating comprehensive, systematic and doctrinal confessional writing at an early Anabaptist period, although the document does not quite reflect the extensive comprehensiveness that one finds in later Mennonite confessions of faith.¹⁶² Even less comprehensive are the Wismar Articles that tend to be limited to the question of church discipline.¹⁶³

Anabaptist confessions of faith on the whole, it seems, took on a different characteristic--than what is evidenced in other Protestant confessions. In view of Anabaptism generally, Hans-Juergen Goertz has outlined five ways in which Anabaptist confessions functioned and may be understood. First of all, he notes, some confessions of faith arose as part of what Anabaptists considered to be inextricably tied to the process of faith and justification. Anabaptists confessed with their mouth as an act of faith, what they believed to be true in their heart--that Jesus was Lord. This was the intention of the paraphrase of the Apostles' Creed by the Anabaptist theologian Balthasar Hubmaier, which was not doctrinal in character, but in the form of a prayer, took on a doxological characteristic.¹⁶⁴ Second, some confessions of faith arose in the context of baptismal vows. Anabaptists were baptized on the basis of their "confession of faith" that was often dependant on the formulation of the Apostles' Creed. In this context, the confession was a witness before others concerning the commitment in life that the believer was prepared to make.¹⁶⁵ Third, Anabaptist confessions were

¹⁶²See Goeters, "Das aelteste rheinische Taeuferbekenntnis," pp. 197-212.

¹⁶³For the text of the Wismar Articles, see *BRN VII*, pp. 51-53.

¹⁶⁴Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht," pp. 21-22. See Pipkin and Yoder, trans. and eds., *Balthasar Hubmaier*, pp. 234-240.

¹⁶⁵Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietrach und Eintracht," p. 22; Pipkin and Yoder, *Balthasar Hubmaier*, pp. 339-365.

given orally by individuals in the context of court trials and interrogations, often simply stating their beliefs on baptism or the Lord's Supper.¹⁶⁶ Fourth, confessional statements were formulated to give a witness to what was to be believed for those on the outside, as well as those within the congregations. Goertz views Pieter Riedemann's "Account" or Bernhard Rothmann's discussion on the sacraments as examples of confessions of this nature.¹⁶⁷ And finally, Goertz points out that confessional statements were produced in the context of religious disputations in places like Zofingen, Bern, Frankenthal, Emden and Wismar, that were used to support certain teachings or church practices.¹⁶⁸

In all of these instances that Goertz describes, it is evident that really no comprehensive or systematic statements of doctrine were formulated by the early sixteenth century Anabaptists. The confessions of the Anabaptists, both in the north and south, were either confessions articulated or formulated by individuals, but lacking formal agreement in the churches (hence they were not doctrinal); or they were statements of agreement by the churches (that is, they were doctrinal), but were by no means comprehensive. Is it possible, then, that the Anabaptists did not want comprehensive and systematic statements of doctrine --as van der Zijpp has claimed?¹⁶⁹ Were confessions of faith, in actual fact, not a part of the true Anabaptist

¹⁶⁶Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht," pp. 22-23. See Frank Friesen, trans. and Walter Klaassen ed., *Sixteenth Century Anabaptism: Defenses, Confessions, Refutations* (Waterloo: Conrad Grebel College, 1982).

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁶⁸Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietrach und Eintracht," p. 23.

¹⁶⁹van der Zijpp, "The Confessions of Faith of the Dutch Mennonites," p. 173.

character as Hendrick Meihuizen has inferred?¹⁷⁰ Were the Anabaptists actually "noncreedal," "anti-creedal" or did they have an "anti-confessional" bias as Cornelius J. Dyck has sometimes noted?¹⁷¹ Is it perhaps the case, as Hans-Juergen Goertz has maintained, that Anabaptists were really far more concerned about verbal confession ("*muendliche Bekennen*"), and "a life of confession" than written, fixed statements of doctrine?¹⁷²

Hans-Juergen Goertz is undoubtedly correct in his assertion that verbal confession and a life of confession was central, or even took precedence for the sixteenth century Anabaptists.¹⁷³ One cannot conclude from this, however, that right belief was somehow unimportant or altogether irrelevant to the Anabaptist majority. After all, the historic Christian *doxa* were taken seriously by the Anabaptist communities. The Anabaptist theological suppositions as summarized in this chapter underscore the fact that Anabaptists like Menno Simons and Dirk Philips held firm beliefs, and moreover, their church practices demonstrate that right belief was not really optional if one wanted to identify with the "true community of saints." In the Low Countries, as in other parts of Europe, "unorthodox" belief among Anabaptist groups led to excommunication. It seems to me, therefore, that systematic and comprehensive statements of doctrine did not emerge among Anabaptists because of some ideological or theological opposition to creedal or confessional statements as such--as some scholars have argued. A more

¹⁷⁰Meihuizen, "Spiritualist Tendencies and Movements among the Dutch Mennonites of the 16th and 17th Centuries," pp. 269-271, 277.

¹⁷¹See Dyck, "A Short Confession of Faith," p. 5; Dyck, Foreword to *One Lord*, p. 16; Cornelius J. Dyck, *An Introduction to Mennonite History* (Scottsdale and Kitchner: Herald Press, 1981), p. 130.

¹⁷²Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht," pp. 39-40.

¹⁷³Ibid.

satisfactory explanation must be found in the Anabaptist *Sitz im Leben*.

I reiterate that Anabaptist beginnings were particularly volatile and disorganized. Anabaptist believing communities were underground and in flux, with no certain or predictable future. Theological ideas were yet unsettled and in an evolutionary stage, often held by an uneducated leadership. Believers were drawn to the Scriptures in matters related to faith and life, and were not yet ready, and perhaps most important, not yet able to commit themselves corporately to a united and comprehensive declaration that all would agree to. Statements such as the Kempen confession or Wismar articles were possible for north German-Dutch Anabaptists to formulate, but the time was not yet ripe for systematic and comprehensive statements of doctrine. As the following chapter will show, the writing and adoption of these kinds of confessions of faith would have to wait until the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, when circumstances and context would allow for such developments.

III THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY DUTCH CONTEXT

As the preceding chapter has indicated, Anabaptists from the Low Countries held identifiable theological convictions concerning the whole range of Christian belief. Yet confessional writing of a comprehensive and systematic nature, reflecting consensus of theological opinion could hardly take place as long as the Anabaptists were underground and disorganized. Confessional writing of this kind would have to wait until circumstances would allow.

In the present and following chapter I will bring to light the contextual conditions that led eventually to the writing of the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions of faith--confessions of faith that were comprehensive, systematic statements of doctrine. In both chapters I will be making the case that the confessions of faith that emerged, while exhibiting a new genre in Anabaptist-Mennonite theological discourse, nevertheless were a natural historical development that took place in the Mennonite communities, and as such, were in historical continuity with Anabaptism. I will begin the discussion in this chapter by focussing on the political, social, economic and religious developments in the Netherlands as they unfolded in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and then proceed with an overview of the religious context.

1. Political, Social and Economic Developments

In the city of Utrecht in 1579 the seven northernmost provinces of the Netherlands came together in a Union that developed into the Dutch Republic. While the independence of these northern provinces from the Habsburg empire in Spain was only officially recognized after an eighty years' war in the treaty of Muenster of 1648, the outcome seemed already certain as early as 1609, the year which marked the beginning of the Twelve

early as 1609, the year which marked the beginning of the Twelve Years' Truce. Already then it was evident that the seven northern provinces--Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Gelderland, Overijssel, Friesland and Groningen--would be independent and Protestant, shaking off Catholic influence and Spanish rule.¹

The events leading to independence cannot be detailed here. It will suffice to note that Spanish and Catholic domination of the northern provinces in the 1550s and 1560s provided an atmosphere of resentment and rebellion. Tensions mounted and in 1566 a group of noblemen later supported by Calvinist radicals broke out in active revolt. While a violent attempt was made to crush the rebels, the resistance was stubborn, eventually bringing the seven northern provinces together that resulted in a long drawn-out war with Spain. Initially turmoil ensued, but by the turn of the century Dutch territory was virtually freed from invading forces and the Dutch experienced a Golden Era.

While other European countries became entangled in the Thirty Years War, the Dutch Republic experienced relative order and peace allowing for unprecedented economic expansion up to the 1630s, and economic stability for at least several more decades.² The growing economy in the Dutch Republic was supported by an advanced scientific community that actively participated in new discoveries and inventions.³ Alongside this community emerged a flowering of artists⁴ and an openness to intellectual currents, providing reading material for an

¹Pieter Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands 1555-1609*, second edition (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1958), pp. 23-24.

²See Charles Wilson, *The Dutch Republic and the Civilization of the Seventeenth Century* (New York and Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968), pp. 24-32; Haley, *The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century*, p. 152.

³Haley, *The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 147-152.

⁴Wilson, *The Dutch Republic and the Civilization of the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 118ff.

increasingly literate and cosmopolitan Dutch culture.⁵ These economic and cultural developments were accompanied by increasingly liberal political policies. Refugees, opportunists, entrepreneurs and freedom seekers converged on the cities of the Republic, prompting one historian to describe the Dutch Netherlands of this period as a "nation of strangers."⁶ Magistrates, desiring economic and political support, recognized the importance of tolerating an increasingly diverse multicultural populace. It is estimated that a city like Amsterdam needed 1700 new immigrants each year to maintain its population at an even level and to sustain its growing economy. As a result, officials cultivated good relations with most groups, including Jews, free thinkers and religious dissidents.⁷ Already in 1579, with the Union of Utrecht, freedom of conscience was meant to apply to most religious groups. While those within the Calvinist tradition were seen in more favourable light, civil leaders tended to treat those outside the Reformed tradition with increasing acceptance.⁸ In this context, Mennonites began slowly to enter into the mainstream of Dutch society, taking advantage of the surrounding political, social and economic developments.

Economically Mennonites prospered. While making up only ten percent of the population, they controlled most of the whale and herring fisheries, a number of lumberyards in Zaandam, Amsterdam and Harlingen, and many business enterprises in Deventer and

⁵Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, pp. 21-22; Wilson, *The Dutch Republic and the Civilization of the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 165-173; Haley, *The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 124-128.

⁶Keith Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982), pp. 4-6.

⁷Jan de Vries, *The Dutch Rural Economy in the Golden Age 1500-1700* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 90, 115.

⁸Haley, *The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 86-89.

Middelburg. In the province of Twente, they laid the foundations for the weaving industry, and elsewhere became involved in textiles and shipbuilding. They were involved in foreign trade, first with the East Indian Company, and later independently in the Baltic regions. In rural areas of Friesland and North Holland, they were recognized leaders in the field of agriculture, and as engineers were largely responsible for draining swampland later utilized for agricultural activity.⁹ They also became actively involved in Dutch cultural life contributing to literature and art. The Mennonite, Arel van Mander (1548-1606), produced a considerable body of literature and works of art. Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679) who has been described as the "Shakespeare of the Netherlands" was a deacon in the Mennonite Church in Amsterdam for a time before joining the Catholic church in 1640.¹⁰

Alongside economic and social success, Mennonites experienced political tolerance. As early as 1566, under the noble Prince William of Orange, Mennonites were treated with

⁹See Cornelius Krahn, *Dutch Anabaptism: Origin, Spread, Life and Thought* (The Hague: Marinus Nijhoff, 1968, and Scottdale: Herald Press, 1981), pp. 228-229; Dyck, *An Introduction to Mennonite History*, p. 134; J. M. Welcher, "Het Dagelijks Brood: De Doopsgezinden, de Economie en de Demografie," in S. Groenveld, J. P. Jacobszoon, S. L. Verheus, eds., *Wederdopers, menisten, doopsgezinden in Nederland 1530-1980* (Zutphen, 1980), pp. 196-200; van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, pp. 149-150; Mary Sprunger, "Waterlanders and the Dutch Golden Age: A Case Study on Mennonite Involvement in Seventeenth-century Dutch Trade and Industry as one of the earliest examples of socio-economic assimilation," in Alastair Hamilton, Sjouke Voolstra, Piet Visser, eds., *From martyr to muppie* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994), pp. 137ff; Piet Visser, "Aspects of social criticism and cultural assimilation: The Mennonite image in literature and self-criticism of literary Mennnonites," *ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁰S. B. J. Zilverberg, "Met Pen, Passer en Penseel: Doopsgezinden en Cultuur," in *Wederdopers*, pp. 181-189; Krahn, *Dutch Anabaptism*, pp. 230-31; Visser, "Aspects of social criticism and cultural assimilation," pp. 69ff.

courtesy and civility,¹¹ and in 1572, Mennonites collected money from various sources for the Prince in exchange for his friendship.¹² The money must have spoken favourably to the Prince because in the same year he formulated a proposal advocating freedom of religious expression. Later, in 1575, he promised to maintain special privileges for Mennonites in exchange for money, as did his successor Maurice in 1593.¹³ In 1577 Mennonite businesses were being closed by local authorities in Middleburg who were attempting to coerce Mennonites into military service. Soon after a letter was sent from the Prince, ordering that the shops be reopened, and that the authorities not "burden the conscience of the Mennonites by requiring of them the oath and military service."¹⁴ Evidently, with the help of Prince William and later Prince Maurice, opposition to the Mennonite exemption from armed service was minimized.¹⁵ By the seventeenth century the Mennonite position had become an accepted fact in Dutch society.

Nevertheless, new challenges and questions emerged as Mennonites began to slip into the mainstream of society. Whereas the Mennonite forbearers of the Low Countries, such as Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, had established themselves along with their followers as a "community of saints" separate from the

¹¹Cornelius Krahn, *Dutch Anabaptism*, p. 239.

¹²John Horsch, *Mennonites in Europe* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1950), p. 239.

¹³Bert Westera, "Mennonites and War in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries: The Brants Family between Pacifism and Trade in Guns," in Hamilton, Voolstra, Visser, eds., *From martyr to muppy*, p. 149.

¹⁴Krahn, *Dutch Anabaptism*, p. 239; S. L. Verheus, "Beleden Vrede-omstreden Vrede: Het Dopers Vredesgetuigenis," in *Wederdopers*, p. 168; B. Westra, "Mennonites and War in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries," p. 150.

¹⁵B. Westra, "Mennonites and war in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," p. 149.

world, Mennonites in the seventeenth century were forced to ask themselves what their new identity should be as they began to enter the mainstream. Did the lines of separation between church and world still obtain in the new emerging context, and if so, in what way? In a friendlier world, did the Anabaptist theological tradition still make sense, and if so, which one? These questions demanded attention and would challenge Mennonites as they made adjustments to their new situation.

2. Religious Developments

Mennonites not only faced major changes in the socio-economic and political realm. In Dutch society religion was becoming increasingly diversified. While Catholics continued numerically to dominate the Dutch religious landscape, by the end of the sixteenth century, Mennonites were most frequently in contact with Calvinists, Arminians (later called Remonstrants), Collegiants (also known as Rijnsburgers) Spiritualists, Socinians, and upper German Anabaptists from the south. All of these groups intersected with north German and Dutch Mennonite faith and experience.

Calvinists, Arminians and Remonstrants

In the first decades following the Muenster uprising Anabaptists had been the dominant reforming group in the Netherlands. However, persecution and lack of cohesion weakened their ranks, and eventually Calvinists surpassed the Anabaptists in numbers and influence.¹⁶ In time, the Reformed Church was dominant in practically all the geographical areas where Mennonites lived.¹⁷ The books of the influential Geneva reformer, John Calvin, entered the Dutch Netherlands around 1546,

¹⁶James Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation: English Separatism, Mennonite Influence, and the Elect Nation* (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1991), p. 69.

¹⁷Horst, "The Dordrecht Confession of Faith," p. 8.

and Calvinist churches were in place by 1555 or 1556.¹⁸ By the 1560s, the influence of Calvinism was widespread. The presence of Huguenots across the border and the availability of training centres in Geneva, Emden, London and Heidelberg, gave the Calvinists support and an edge over other religious groups. The chambers of rhetoric, a curious institution of the Netherlands that included debating clubs, amateur dramatic societies and leisure centres all at the same time, provided a forum for debate and the spread of Calvinist ideas. These ideas seemed to mix well with Dutch aspirations and anti-Spanish sentiments, whereas the nonconformist perspectives of the Mennonites seemed to lose their relevance and appeal. After the outbreak of the Dutch Revolt, Calvinism henceforth assumed a commanding position within Dutch Protestantism, becoming the Dutch Reformed Church.¹⁹

According to the historian, Andrew Fix, in the early stages of Dutch Protestant Reform, Calvinist ideas were moderate in tone and mixed well with the biblical piety and irenic spirit of the Dutch culture. By the end of the sixteenth century, however, immigrants from the southern Netherlands, who tended to represent a confessional and Geneva-oriented point of view, began to challenge the moderate position. Many of these immigrants were influenced by the larger trend in Protestantism that was moving in the direction of a new scholasticism. The strict Calvinists, known as *preciezen*, maintained a strong doctrine of

¹⁸Parker, *The Dutch Revolt*, p. 58.

¹⁹Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, p. 29; Parker, *The Dutch Revolt*, p. 59. Following Alastair Duke, James Stayer plays down the significance of the Dutch Reformed church in the sixteenth century, pointing out that towards the end of the century the Reformed church constituted only about 10 percent of the population of the United Netherlands, barely surpassing the Mennonites who according to Karel Vos numbered 100,000 in hundreds of congregations. See James Stayer, "The Radical Reformation," p. 273; Alastair Duke, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries* (London: 1990); Karel Vos, "Revolutionary Reformation," in Werner O. Packull and James M. Stayer, ed., *The Anabaptists and Thomas Muentzer* (Dubuque, 1980), p. 91.

predestination, were intolerant of dissenting views and stressed the importance of confessions of faith for the religious life. The tension between the two groups gave rise to a significant dispute within Calvinism in the first two decades of the seventeenth century.²⁰ The struggle known as the Arminian controversy took its name from a professor at the University of Leiden, Jacob Arminius (1560-1609), who became the voice of those rejecting the strict tenets found in Calvinism. In particular, Arminius had difficulty with the deterministic concept of election and damnation contained in the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Arminius maintained that "strict predestination was contrary to the wisdom, justice and goodness of God; contrary to the nature of sin as disobedience meriting damnation; and contrary as well to the nature of man, who was created in God's image with the freedom and aptitude for eternal life."²¹

The issue of confessionalism also surfaced. Influenced by Protestant scholasticism, the Reformed congregations and particularly the *preciezen* considered the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism to be authoritative in matters of doctrine. Some held these two documents to be as important as the Bible in determining true belief. Arminius, on the other hand, "called for unity of belief in a few fundamental doctrines of Christianity, toleration with regard to all other doctrines, and a recognition of the supreme authority of the Bible in theological questions."²² As far as Arminius was concerned, the Reformed Confession and the Catechism "were merely human documents liable to error and thus they were inferior in authority to the Holy Scripture in all matters of doctrine."²³

Arminius died in 1609, but in 1610 his supporters set forth

²⁰Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, p. 30.

²¹Ibid., p. 32.

²²Ibid., p. 32.

²³Ibid., p. 32.

central Arminian positions in the "Five Articles of the Remonstrants." The supporters, now called Remonstrants, pleaded for tolerance and summarized the essentials of Arminian belief. The debate was officially resolved at the Synod of Dort (or Dortrecht) between November 1618 and May 1619 with the condemnation of the Remonstrant position and the adoption of the Heidelberg Catechism as well as a revision of the Belgic Confession. Both the Catechism and the Confession were defined as "obligatory rules of belief for the Reformed church."²⁴ Moreover, five doctrines known as the Canons of Dort were promulgated. The first was the doctrine of unconditional election, which maintained that the choosing of the predestined was not based on God's foreknowledge but on his inscrutable will; the second was the doctrine of limited atonement, which claimed that Christ died only for the elect; the third maintained that while humanity may have some vestige of natural divine light, humanity was so corrupted that it could not be properly used; the fourth stressed the irresistible grace of God; and the fifth doctrine maintained that the elect will persevere in grace and therefore cannot fall from it.²⁵

Interaction between Mennonites and Calvinists was frequent. Mennonites were often challenged by the adherents of the Reformed church to give an account of their faith.²⁶ For instance, on the

²⁴Ibid. p. 35.

²⁵Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity II: The Reformation to the Present* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), p. 182.

²⁶See *ME*, I, s.v. "Calvinism and Mennonitism," by Nanne van der Zijpp. The following are summaries and analyses of debates and disagreements between the Reformed church and the Mennonites: N. van der Zijpp, "Gereformeerden contra Doopsgezinden in vroegere Eeuwen," in *Algemeen Doopsgezinde Weekblad*, Dec. 2, 1950; N. van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis der Doopsgezinden in Nederland*, pp. 135-142, 159-162; Krahn, *Dutch Anabaptism*, pp. 238-251; W. H. Kuipers, "In de Wereld, maar niet van de Wereld: De Wisselwerking tussen de Doopsgezinden en de hen omringende Wereld," in *Wederdopers*, pp. 222-224; F. S. Knipscheer, "De Nederlandse Gereformeerde Synoden

advice of the Reformed synod, held at Dordrecht in 1574, some Reformed ministers entered Mennonite meetinghouses to refute the preachers and to convince them of their wrong teachings.²⁷ Occasionally disputations were organized to combat Mennonite teachings. The most important of these was held at Frankenthal in 1571 and in 1578, and at Leeuwarden in 1596.²⁸ Writings were often used to combat Mennonite faith and practice.²⁹ One of the most active Calvinists who wrote against the Anabaptists was Guy de Bres. In the Belgic Confession, which he co-authored, Anabaptists were condemned for their baptismal theology (art.34), their views with respect to the civil authorities, justice and order, community of goods (art. 36), and their view of the incarnation. (art. 18).³⁰

Mennonites, however, did not only interact with the bearers of Calvinist orthodoxy. Their contact with the "heretics" of the Reformed church was also significant. Although relations between Mennonites and Arminius at the beginning of the seventeenth

tegenover de Doopsgezinden (1563-1620)," *DB*, (1910, 1911): 1-40, 17-49; J. Reitsma and S. C. van Veen, *Acta der Prvinciale en Pariculiere Synoden, gehouden in de norrdelijke Nederlande geurende de jaren 1572-1620* 8 volumes (Groningen, 1892-1899); W. van't Spiker, "Het Gesprek tussen Dopers en Gereformeerden te Emden (1578)," *DB* 7 (1981): 51-65; J. H. Wessel, *De Leerstellige Strijd tusschen Nederlandsche Gereformmerden en Doopsgezinden in de Zestiende Eeuw* (Assen, 1945); Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, pp. 1183-1186.

²⁷See also John Horsch, *Mennonites in Europe* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1950), pp. 244-45.

²⁸For the Emden Disputation see Horsch, *Mennonites in Europe*, pp. 245-46; W. van't Spiker, "Het Gesprek tussen Dopers en Gereformeerden te Emden (1578)," *DB* 7 (1981): 51-65.

²⁹*ME* I, s.v. "Calvinism and Mennonitism," by Nanne van der Zijpp.

³⁰See Leonard Verduin for a helpful discussion on this in "Guido de Bres and the Anabaptists," *MQR* 35, no. 4 (October 1961): 251-266; esp. pp. 260-66.

century were never close,³¹ relations between Mennonites and the followers of Arminius, the Remonstrants, appears to have been congenial. Encounters between the Remonstrants and the Waterlander Mennonites were particularly recurrent. Some Remonstrants considered joining the Waterlanders, some appear to have been supporters of the Waterlander leader, Hans de Ries; and evidence indicates that a group of Remonstrants used a confession of faith from the Waterlanders as a guide for matters in faith and life.³²

Spiritualists, Collegiants and Rijnsburgers

Besides Calvinists, and Arminians and Remonstrants, Mennonites encountered adherents of spiritualism. Leading spiritualists during the Reformation period had been Sebastian Franck (1499-1543) and Caspar Schwenkfeld (1489-1561). Unlike the mystics who tended to maintain an appreciation for the institutional church as a means of grace, spiritualists were inclined to reject the importance of external religious institutions, sacraments, and ceremonies as well as the relevance of theological doctrine.³³ They favoured a religion based upon the direct, illuminating and sanctifying inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the soul of each believer. Also unlike the mystics who assumed a unity between the human and Divine, spiritualists tended to emphasize the gulf between the two, which had however

³¹ME I, s.v. "Arminius, Jacobus," by Nanne van der Zijpp; Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), pp. 167-171.

³²Sjouke Voolstra, "Path to Conversion," in Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism Revisited* (Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1992), pp. 100-106; Piet Visser, *Broeders in de Geest* Vol. 1 (Deventer: Sub Rosa, 1988), p. 103; ME IV, s.v. "Remonstrants," by Nanne van der Zijpp. Mennonites were also known to have enrolled at the seminary which the Remonstrants established later in 1634. See ME I, s.v. "Arminianism," by Harold S. Bender.

³³See C. J. Dyck, "Hans de Ries and the Legacy of Menno," *MQR* 62, no. 3 (July 1988): 405.

been bridged by the Spirit.³⁴ This presence of the Spirit, sometimes referred to as the "inner light" or "inner word," could bring the believer perfect religious knowledge as a means of preparing the soul for saving grace."³⁵ The central understanding of spiritualism was that one had direct, unmediated contact with God through the Spirit. The visible church and external religion were unnecessary, and Scripture and doctrinal statements were relegated to a secondary status.

In the second quarter of the sixteenth century the religious ideas of Franck and Schwenkfeld spread first to southern Germany, but eventually found greater acceptance in the Netherlands where the writings of Franck were translated into Dutch. In the sixteenth century the main Dutch supporter of the ideas of both Schwenkfeld and Franck was the Catholic spiritualist, Dirk Volckertsz Coornhert (1522-1590). As a humanist and ecumenist, his ideas were "important for many of the principal religious thinkers in the Netherlands during the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."³⁶

In a debate with Ernst Troeltsch,³⁷ the German historian, Karl Holl, argued that Anabaptists were spiritualistic

³⁴See Packull, *Mysticism and the Early South German-Austrian Anabaptist Movement*, p. 30.

³⁵Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, p. 27.

³⁶Ibid., p. 28.

³⁷Troeltsch did not believe they were spiritualist because of what he saw as a biblicistic and community emphasis (Gemeinde-Christen) among the Anabaptists. He discovered among the Swiss Brethren typical Scriptural features and a community organization that he could not identify among mystical spiritualists. Holl, on the other hand, observed that Anabaptists formed voluntary and autonomous communities, emphasizing the individual and the importance of hearing the inner voice of the Holy Spirit while reading Scripture. Thus he viewed the Anabaptists as mystical spiritualistic Christians. See Meihuizen, "Spiritualistic Tendencies," pp. 260-261.

Christians.³⁸ While Holl wished to link all the Anabaptists with Thomas Muentzer (and in this respect misinterpreted the movement), he was correct in identifying a spiritualistic emphasis, which was present in varying degrees, in Anabaptism.³⁹ In south German Anabaptism, as well as early north German-Dutch Anabaptism, the spiritualist impulse was strong. Leaders in the north like Melchior Hoffman, Jan Matthijs, Jan van Leyden and David Joris reflected a similar kind of spiritualist religiosity that continued to play a role in later inter-Mennonite debates concerning such issues as the nature of the church, the authority and interpretation of Scripture, and the role of the sacraments in the life of the church.⁴⁰ While this early Anabaptist spiritualistic impulse was challenged in the 1540s and 1550s by Anabaptist leaders such as Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, there continued, nevertheless, to be an openness to spiritualist religion among Mennonites.⁴¹ At the end of the sixteenth century, George Williams contends, the spiritualist emphases of Coornhert found particular acceptance among the Waterlander Mennonites and one of their leaders, Hans de Ries.⁴²

In the seventeenth century this spiritualist legacy continued through such groups as the Collegiants. As Remonstrant pastors were suspended from their activities after the Synod of Dort in 1619, congregations in the United Provinces were forced to accept Contra-Remonstrant pastors. When a congregation in the village of Warmond near Leiden refused to accept the appointment

³⁸Karl Holl, "Luther und die Schwaermer," 1922 in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, I (Tuebingen: Mohr, 1948), p. 424 n. 1, taken from Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 99, n. 16.

³⁹Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 96.

⁴⁰See *ibid.*, pp. 299-364.

⁴¹Meihuizen, "Spiritualistic Tendencies," pp. 259-303.

⁴²Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, p. 1187.

of a Contra-Remonstrant pastor, they relied on their former elder, Gisjbert van der Kodde, for leadership. Gisjbert suggested that the congregation meet without a preacher and in secret. The meetings that followed, which included Scripture reading, prayer and discussion, were called "collegiant assemblies" or "colleges".⁴³

At the outset it appeared that the Collegiant movement would become a part of the Remonstrant community. Gijsbert argued, however, that any kind of leadership that the Remonstrants might provide, would interfere with the Collegiant principle of free speech or free prophesying. To escape the pressure of the Remonstrants, Gijsbert and his followers moved to Rijnsburg in 1620. Here the group prospered, and in later years, when the Collegiant movement had spread all over the United Provinces, they were often called "Rijnsburgers".⁴⁴

The Collegiants were born of Remonstrant parentage and incorporated the chief Arminian criticism of the Reformed church. They rejected predestination, confessionalism, and doctrinal rigidity in favor of greater toleration and a greater emphasis on morality.⁴⁵ As inheritors of the spiritual traditions, their vision was characterized by "an emphasis on the universality of true Christianity and on the essentially individual nature of religion."⁴⁶ They opposed confessional divisions within

⁴³Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, p. 37. The term "college" had been used in the Netherlands since the late sixteenth century to refer to gatherings of Protestants who gathered together informally. It is unclear, however, how early the name "college" was given to the gatherings in Warmond, but eventually participants and observers came to use the name "Collegiant" to refer to those who followed the religious principles and practices that developed at the Warmond college. See *ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 116. As their thought evolved they referred to this individual nature of religion as "*innerlijke licht*," "*innerlijke woord*," "*innerlijke waarheyd*," "*Geest*," "*verstand*," and "*rason*"

Christianity, and saw such partitions as a sign of the spiritual corruption of the Church. They adopted no ceremonies or confessions and did not elect preachers. Freedom to prophesy was an essential ingredient of their concept of worship. Baptism "was not considered a sign of entry into any specific church or sect but rather a sign of membership in the *algemene Christielijke kerk*."⁴⁷ The universal Christian church or community was to be united by a few fundamental articles of faith taken directly from Scripture. Beyond these fundamental articles, the Collegiants "insisted on doctrinal toleration and rejected the right of theologians to compose confessions, creeds, and doctrinal belief" which would attempt to separate true from false Christians.⁴⁸ Their only required confession was that one believe in Jesus Christ as the source of salvation and belief in the Bible as the true word of God.⁴⁹ They were part of that Second Reformation which historians have called the *Nadere Reformatie*.⁵⁰

Mennonites, it appears, were the first group to be attracted in large numbers to the colleges, although it is not clear how many attended Collegiant meetings at the outset. A number of Mennonites became involved in the colleges particularly when tensions surfaced in their churches after 1650 over clerical regulation. Galenus Abrahamsz (1622-1706), Jacob Ostens (1630-1678) and others, were Mennonites who gave the Collegiant movement significant leadership in the second half of the

(*ibid.*, pp. 118-119). Fix links the Collegiants with the spiritualist traditions, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 84ff.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 117; 47-48. For a helpful summary of Collegiant beliefs, see also Leszek Kolakowski, "Dutch Seventeenth-Century Anticonfessional Ideas and Rational Religion: The Mennonite Collegiant and Spinozan Connections," *MQR* 64, no. 3 (July 1990): 270-272.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 49.

seventeenth century.⁵¹

Socinians

A further "heretical" group that Mennonites came into contact with in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, were the Socinians. Socinians derived their name from Laelius (1525-1562) and Faustus Socinus of Siena (1539-1604), who came under the influence of Italian humanism and fostered ideas that deviated from Christian orthodoxy.⁵² The Socinian rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity and the satisfaction theory of atonement was unpopular in Catholic Italy and Protestant Germany alike, but gained wide acceptance in relatively tolerant Poland in the last years of the sixteenth century. The Polish antitrinitarian movement, pioneered by Peter Giezek (1530-1571), had already been underway for some time, and Faustus Socinus gave the movement a sense of purpose and direction. The Racovian Catechism of 1605, which became the official document of Polish antitrinitarian belief, reflected Socinus' ideas.⁵³

When Faustus Socinus first arrived at Krakow in 1580 the Polish monarchy was weak and the Polish Catholic church was absorbed in challenging the rise of Calvinism. After 1600, however, the Counter-Reformation gathered momentum and this reinvigorated both church and monarchy leading to an energetic attack on the Socinians. A mass exodus of Socinians from Poland followed, with many going to East Prussia or the Rhineland but the majority ending up in Holland, especially in Amsterdam. Henceforth, Socinianism became primarily a Dutch movement.⁵⁴ Their acceptance into Dutch society, however, took time and they were openly persecuted for much of the seventeenth century. In

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 42-44; 84-112.

⁵²Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, p. 138.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 29, 139.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 29, 135.

light of what we know about a relatively tolerant Dutch society in the seventeenth century, the experience that Socinians had in the Netherlands, as a minority religious group, appears to have been the exception. Socinians were sometimes imprisoned, their books were burned and their meetings often prohibited. Calvinists actively sought to diminish their influence and even the Remonstrants sometimes refused contact with them. Still, their influence continued to rise over time, and the repetition of ordinances against them probably testifies to the limited effectiveness of previous laws.⁵⁵

Evidently Mennonites were impressed by the Socinian emphasis on Christian morality, the freedom of the will, adult baptism, nonresistance, refusal to swear the oath, and their reluctance to accept political office.⁵⁶ When Socinian leaders, Ostorodt and Voydovsky came to the Netherlands in 1598, they visited with Mennonites such as Hans de Ries, Pieter Jansz Twisck and Jacques Outerman. The reception of the Socinians, however, appears to have been mixed.⁵⁷ Both Twisck and de Ris rejected Socinianism. De Ries, who was evidently more orthodox than the Socinians in his doctrine of God, pointed out the impossibility of a union between Socinians and Mennonites, and wrote a book against Socinian doctrine entitled, *Clear Proof of the Eternity and Deity of Jesus Christ*.⁵⁸ De Ries, along with Leenaerdt Clock also

⁵⁵Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, pp. 140-141.

⁵⁶N. van der Zijpp, "Socinianism," *ME IV*, p. 567.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 568.

⁵⁸Horsch, *Mennonites in Europe*, p. 242; Robert Friedmann, "The Encounter of Anabaptists with Anti-Trinitarianism," *MQR* 22, no. 3 (July 1948): 150. Sjouke Voolstra makes the point, however, that de Ries' motivations for opposing the Socinians were not so much theological as they were politically motivated vis-a-vis other Mennonite groups. The High Germans, for instance, had written against Socinian views, and in the context of unity discussions (which we will outline in the next chapter) it was important for de Ries, as a Waterlander, not to offend other Mennonites. See Voolstra, *Het Woord*, pp. 71, 170-171.

wrote letters to the Waterlander/Frisian congregation in Danzig warning them of Socinian influence.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Jacques Outerman, a major leader among the Flemish Mennonites, may have been more sympathetic to Socinian views.⁶⁰ In 1608 Outerman was accused of Socinianism by the Reformed preachers Johannes Zeeuw and Idzardus Nicolai. Later, in 1625, he was charged by the Reformed synod and was compelled by the magistrates to write a confession of faith defending his position before the States of Holland. The confession of faith, which was presented to the court of Holland on October 8, 1626, was also signed by nineteen Flemish preachers. The confession, the "*Belydenisse van den Eenigen Godt, Vader, Soon ende Heyligen Geest*," dealt primarily with the doctrine of the Trinity and the incarnation, and indicated ultimately to the authorities that Outerman's theology was not Socinian in character.⁶¹

Upper German Anabaptists from the South

A final group that Mennonites came into contact with, consisted of Anabaptists originally from the Swiss and South German lands. Menno Simons and Dirk Philips had missionized along the Rhine, in areas as far south as Cologne. Eventually they met Swiss and South German Anabaptists travelling northward. Beginning in the 1550s, interaction between the two groups

⁵⁹ME, IV, s.v. "Socinianism," by Nanne van der Zijpp; Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, pp. 139-140; Kuehler, *Het Socinianisme*, pp. 197-203; C. J. Dyck, "Hans de Ries and Socinianism," in Lech Szczucki et al, *Socinianism and its Role in the Culture of XVIth to XVIIIth Centuries* (Warsaw: Polish Academy of Sciences, 1983), pp. 88-92.

⁶⁰Kuehler, *Het Socinianisme*, pp. 95-104; Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, pp. 177-183.

⁶¹ME IV, s.v. "Outerman, Jacques," by Nanne van der Zijpp; ME IV, s.v. "Socinianism," by Nanne van der Zijpp;; Dyck, "Hans de Ries and Socinianism," p. 87; Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, p. 144.

increased, and a number of theological exchanges took place.⁶² It is perhaps in the context of these exchanges that the Schleithem Articles of 1527 found their way into the Low Countries, and were translated into the Dutch language in 1560.⁶³ John S. Oyer has noted that there were eventually three North-South theological encounters or conferences at Strasbourg (1555, 1557, 1592). Additional meetings outside of Strasbourg were held at Menno's home in Wuestenfelde in 1556, somewhere in the south in 1575, and at Cologne in 1591.⁶⁴ Evidently these meetings were attempts to seek agreement on issues related to theology and church practice.

Controversy arose when the Anabaptists from the south refused to accept certain tenets of faith that came from the north: namely, the Melchiorite doctrine of the incarnation, and the strict practice of the ban which Menno Simons, Dirk Philips and others were advocating. On the incarnation, the Anabaptists from the south believed that the nature of Christ's body was beyond human comprehension, and one should not go beyond the simple statement in the Apostles' Creed.⁶⁵ As far as church

⁶²Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 154.

⁶³See J. A. Oosterbaan and H. B. Kossen, eds., *Broederlijke Vereniging, Doperse stemmen 1* (Amsterdam: Doopsgezinde Historische Kring, 1974), p. 9.

⁶⁴John S. Oyer, "The Strasbourg Conferences of the Anabaptists," *MQR* 58, no. 3 (July 1984): 221, 226-227.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 223. The Anabaptists in the south were probably inconsistent on the issue of the incarnation as Oyer alludes to (see *ibid.*). Moreover, a letter from Strasbourg to Polish Socinians, formulated by a group of Swiss Brethren reflects strong Melchiorite characteristics. See "Ende seecker Antwoordt van de Svvitser Broeders ofte Hoogh-kuytschen, alsoo genoemt; Over-gegeven aende Poolsche, betreffende het punct der menschvveedinghe ende der Godheydt Jesu Christi," in *Handelinge*, pp. 77-81. Were these ideas present in the south through direct contacts with Melchior Hoffman or his followers? See *ibid.*, p. 224. Or did he return to Schwaebisch Hall and promulgate his ideas there? See Packull, "Melchior Hoffman--A Recanted Anabaptist in Schwaebisch Hall?:" 83-111; "Peter Tasch: From Melchiorite to Bankrupt Wine Merchant," *MQR*

discipline was concerned, they maintained that the approach in the north was too stringent. They objected to the harshness in which the ban was exercised by leaders such as Menno Simons and Leenaert Bouwens, and they called out for greater toleration.⁶⁶ The unfortunate outcome of their objections, however, was that "in 1559 Menno and others excommunicated these Upper Germans."⁶⁷ Nevertheless, exchanges between north and south continued, and as concerns for Christian unity emerged, a common statement of faith known as the *Concept of Cologne* was formulated in 1591 by groups from both regions.⁶⁸ While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to outline the *Concept of Cologne* in any detail, it will suffice to say that it reflects the theological tenets of north German-Dutch Anabaptism. However, the influence of the Upper Germans appears to be evident in at least two instances. It is noteworthy that no explicit Melchiorite doctrine of the incarnation surfaces in article two on Christology. And in article eight, which addresses the question of marriage and indirectly spousal separation, the confession appears to take a moderate tone and does not support the view that marriage vows should be broken in a situation where a believer is married to an unbeliever.⁶⁹

3. Responding to the Challenges

The preceding paragraphs indicate that Mennonites, after the 1560s, not only experienced significant changes in the social,

62, no. 3 (July 1988): 276-295.

⁶⁶Oyer, "The Strasbourg Conferences," p. 224.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 219.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 227. The specific groups involved in the writing of this confession were the Young Frisians and the High Germans. See van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, pp. 87-88.

⁶⁹Gross and Gleysteen, trans., "The First Mennonite Merger: The Concept of Cologne:" 8-9.

economic and political realm, but also faced changes in the religious domain. With an increasingly tolerant climate in the Low Countries, a number of different religious groups surfaced, and Mennonites, it seems, had significant encounters with most of them. Mennonites debated with Calvinists, maintained loose affiliations with Arminians and Remonstrants, interacted with spiritualists of various stripes, and made connections with Socinians. Beginning in the 1550s, they also interacted with their Anabaptist relatives from the south. Before the end of the century, some had already collaborated with these Upper Germans in formulating a statement of faith. Altogether these various inter-religious connections provided Mennonites with the opportunity to become acquainted with a variety of different religious perspectives. But the opportunity came with inherent risks. How well, for instance, would Mennonites maintain their theological identity as they debated and conversed with groups holding differing convictions? Would they be able to maintain their Anabaptist-Mennonite identity, or would they ultimately lose their theological distinctiveness by assimilating the theological tenets of the other groups. By the first decade of the seventeenth century, the changing political, social, economic as well as religious climate had provided Mennonites with the opportunity to expand their horizons on many different levels. Yet in this context, the question of how Mennonite identity, including Mennonite theological identity, was changing with the times, remained a critical one.

The Mennonites of the Low Countries were not unaware that their own identity was being challenged, and they in fact took action in at least three ways. First of all, they turned to their own history for orientation. The printing of Anabaptist martyr books, which had begun in the north as early as 1562, was intended, among other things, to remind Mennonites of the true faith which their forbearers had died for. Catholics and Protestants were writing martyrologies, and Mennonites saw this

as an important exercise in their own context.⁷⁰ Second, Mennonites turned to Anabaptist writings, such as those of David Joris, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, to augment their understanding of the beliefs and practices of their tradition.⁷¹ Third, Mennonites began to articulate in the form of confessions of faith, what it was that they believed in the present day. Just as other Protestant denominations were formulating statements of belief, in a time of change, transition and consolidation, Mennonites also began to see the need to summarize the essentials of the faith beyond the summary statement of the Apostles' Creed.

Some Anabaptist historians have concluded that this development in confessionalism was something essentially new in the unfolding of Anabaptist theological practice.⁷² Indeed, the writing of the confessions of faith in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was a new development in that the

⁷⁰See *ME III*, s.v. "Martyr Books," by Christian Neff. Kuehler notes that the motivation of the Waterlander Mennonite, Hans de Ries, in writing a martyrology in 1615, was to unite the various groups around a common heritage. See Kuehler, *Geschiedenis*, II, pp. 97-98, 115. Voolstra makes the point that the martyrology by Pieter Jans Twisck and Syvaert Pietersz in 1617 was intended, on the other hand, to show that what the Anabaptist martyrs died for was something other than what the Waterlanders stood for. See Voolstra, *Het Woord*, p. 75. For further details on this see Penner, "Pieter Janz. Twisck: Second Generation Anabaptist/Mennonite Churchman, Writer and Polemicist," pp. 241-251. For a comprehensive treatment of the development of martyrologies during the Reformation era, see Brad Gregory, "The Anathema of Compromise: Christian Martyrdom in Early modern Europe" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University, 1996).

⁷¹Visser, "Menno Simons: Printed Read and Debated," p. 89; Kuehler, *Geschiedenis*, I, pp. 376, 386-387, 394; Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II* pp. 1-2; Waite, *David Joris*, pp. 25, 109; Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, p. 28. A number of spiritualist writings were also made available such as the *Jorist*, Nicolaas van Blesdijk. See Voolstra, "Path to Conversion," p. 102.

⁷²This may be seen explicitly or implicitly in the following: Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, p. 375; See van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis* p. 228; Meihuizen, "Spiritualistic Tendencies," pp. 270-271, 277; Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht," pp. 41-42.

confessional statements for the first time included all the main characteristics that were reflected in Protestant confessional statements of that time period. The Mennonite confessions of faith were *comprehensive*, that is, they took into account the full range of Christian belief--Theology (God), anthropology, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology and eschatology. They were *systematic* in so far as they followed the sequence of doctrines that had become common in confessional writings since the Apostles' Creed. And these confessions of faith were *doctrinal* in that they represented the communally authoritative teachings of one Mennonite congregation or another. All three of these components had been there in earlier Anabaptist confessional writings--but never all three together. For instance, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips had written comprehensive faith summaries that had addressed the central dimensions of the faith. On the corporate and systematic level, Anabaptists had united formally around certain articles of faith and church practice--the Kempen Confession and Wismar Articles attest to this. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, however, these comprehensive, systematic and corporate dimensions of confessional writing by Mennonites were brought together for the first time.

The formulation and acceptance of confessions in this manner was a natural response by the Mennonites, given their new situation. By the end of the sixteenth century, and the beginning of the seventeenth century, in an age of toleration and cultural flourishing, Anabaptism was no longer an underground movement, but an emerging denominational entity, hoping to consolidate its identity. Definable Anabaptist communities of discourse had surfaced by now, led by leaders who had time and skills to reflect beyond the most basic of all confessions--the Apostles Creed--and who could now think more systematically about the faith than the generation that had come before. In this emerging new situation, the writing of comprehensive doctrinal statements of faith was a historical outcome of an "Anabaptism" that had made the natural transition from the first to the second

generation. In this respect, the confessionalism within Mennonitism that was coming into being in the second half of the sixteenth century, was not at all historically discontinuous with the past, as some historians have suggested. It was rather a natural unfolding of a movement that was fast becoming established, needing to come to terms with the challenges of the second generation, and moreover, requiring instruments of support necessary for survival in a changing socio-economic, political and religious context.

IV

A HISTORY OF THREE DUTCH MENNONITE CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

Mennonites generally began writing confessions in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in response to their changing socio-economic and political as well as religious milieu. While these confessions, as comprehensive and systematic statements of doctrine, reflected a new theological genre that Anabaptists themselves had not produced before, I have been arguing in this study that the writing of the confessions was a natural development within Mennonitism, in historical continuity with Anabaptism.

In turning specifically to the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions, however, it is evident that there were also more immediate reasons as to why these particular confessions came into existence. The Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions certainly surfaced as a response to the changing socio-economic, political as well as religious milieu, but the more immediate occasion for their emergence had to do with facilitating unity between Christian communities that wanted to unite. These circumstances will be brought to light in the present chapter that will trace the developments that led to the writing of the confessions in general, and the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions in particular. In the final section of the chapter, I will turn to the question of function and authority of the Mennonite confessions of faith. Here I will take up the argument of historical continuity between the confessions and their Anabaptist heritage.

1. The Divisive Nature of Dutch Mennonitism

Much of the history related to the writing of the confessions needs to be seen in light of the middle of the sixteenth century, and the divisive nature of the Anabaptists and the Mennonites. It has been noted in early chapters of this study that from the 1540s onward, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips gave a

certain enduring shape and definition to Anabaptism in the Low Countries. Nevertheless, unity did not prevail in the Mennonite communities. The followers of Jan van Batenburg continued to incite unrest although in a significantly weakened form, while followers of David Joris persisted in emphasizing a strong spiritualist religion that had implications for biblical interpretation, the use of sacraments and the moral life.¹ These variants of Anabaptism were clearly at odds with the pacifism and biblicism of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. So also were the views of Adam Pastor (Roelof Martens), an elder among the Anabaptists, who challenged the Melchiorite doctrine of the incarnation, the doctrine of the Trinity, as well as Anabaptist practices of church discipline. In this instance, Menno Simons and his colleagues seemed to be in a position to take concrete action. In 1547, Adam Pastor was excommunicated by the elder Dirk Philips, with Menno Simons' concurrence and banished from the Anabaptist community.²

Disunity, however, continued to be a problem in the north, particularly in relation to the issue of church discipline and how it should be carried out. Mennonite ecclesiology demanded that the church, as the body of Christ, should be "without spot or wrinkle." It was expected that those who were regenerate and had experienced the new birth should live in accordance with the commands and life of Jesus Christ as witnessed to in the New Testament. Those who sinned required discipline; sometimes sinners needed to be removed from the "community of saints" to

¹On Batenburgers and their legacy see Jansma, "Crime in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century," pp. 221-235. On the debates between the followers of David Joris and Menno Simons see Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, pp. 317-326. Other Mennonite representatives reflecting diversity among Anabaptists during Menno's time have not been given serious attention in the Anabaptist field of scholarship. See Visser, "Menno Simons: Printed, Read and Debated," p. 84.

²For details of this episode, See Koolman, *Dirk Philips: Friend and Colleague of Menno Simons*, pp. 29-40.

maintain the purity of the body of Christ. Yet how should this practice of discipline actually function in the life of the congregation?

Leenaert Bouwens, who was an important Mennonite leader alongside Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, had sharpened his views on the use of the ban, taking seriously Paul's injunction not to eat with the faithless (I Corinthians 5:11). He pushed his views to the point where he demanded the practice of shunning or avoidance even in the context of a marital relationship. A crisis erupted in 1555 when Leenaert banned the husband of a certain Swaen Rutgers, "and then demanded (although she was a pious woman and had herself done nothing worthy of discipline) that she shun all contact with her husband under threat of excommunication."³ Menno Simons first took a more moderate position but then evidently gave in to the stricter views of Leenaert and Dirk Philips. The official position of the Anabaptists in the Low Countries now supported spousal separation as a necessary accompaniment to the ban and separation that was to take place in the context of church discipline.

A significant number of more liberal oriented Mennonites could not agree with this, however, and in 1557 left to form a more moderate party that came to be known as the Waterlanders. About this time, those who belonged to the mainstream of the Anabaptist movement were being identified with the person of Menno Simons, and were becoming known as "Mennists," "Mennonists," or "Mennonites."⁴ Wanting to distance themselves from Menno's stricter views, the Waterlanders referred to themselves as "Doopsgezinde."⁵

The Waterlanders, however, were not the only Anabaptists who had problems with the strict views of the Mennonite leadership.

³Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 340.

⁴Dyck, *An Introduction to Mennonite History*, p. 108.

⁵Ibid., p. 127.

In April of 1556, three Upper German leaders from the south (Zylis, Lemke, and Heinrich Krufft) visited Menno at Wuestenfelde to persuade him to take a more moderate position on church discipline. In 1557, these Anabaptists and a number of Swiss Brethren Anabaptists gathered at Strasbourg to address the issue of the ban as it was being practiced in the north. Their more moderate position, however, was seen as a sign of unfaithfulness, and as we have seen, in 1559 Leenart Bouwens and Dirk Philips excommunicated not only Zylis and Lemke, but also the other Swiss Brethren for their more liberal views, refusing to recognize any longer the validity of their baptism.⁶

After the death of Menno Simons in 1561, other controversies arose in the north precipitated by cultural as well as theological misunderstandings. During this time Anabaptist refugees from Flanders were seeking refuge from persecution and were settling in Friesland. These Flemish differed in some respects from the Frisians "in racial traits, in language and in religious customs and practices."⁷ Flanders had been a primary weaving centre for sheeps' wool and dyed cloth. The Flemish preferred brightly colored clothing while the Frisians focussed on other priorities such as agriculture and large farms. Gerald Studer has summarized the points of contention as follows: "The Frisians were offended by the Flemish way of living and dressing, and the Flemish resented the greater stores of linen and household goods possessed by the Frisians. The Flemish were worldly in respect to their dress, the Frisians in their homes. The Frisians accused the Flemish of siding with the world, while the Flemish believed they had proved their world-denying faith in persecution."⁸

⁶See Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, pp. 341, 346.

⁷C. Henry Smith, *Smith's Story of the Mennonites*, fifth edition revised and enlarged by Cornelius Krahn (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1981), p. 111.

⁸Studer, "The Dordrecht Confession of Faith," p. 508.

Eventually these cultural tensions mixed with issues surrounding church polity, and a tragic outcome ensued. The Flemish in the town of Franeker wanted to elect their own minister, Jeroen Tinnegieter, formerly of Flanders, and felt they had the right to do so on the basis of congregational authority. The Frisians did not favour the election and felt that they had the right to intervene on the basis of a decision made by the regional church council to cooperate. Frisian congregations in Franeker, Harlingen, Leewarden, and Dokkum had drafted a nineteen-point statement known as the *Verbond der vier steden* ("Covenant of the Four Cities"), which gave the other congregations the power to intervene in Franeker.⁹ The result was a conflict in which different groups banned each other, and ultimately defied resolution. Attempts to bring about unity between the splintering groups throughout the 1560s to the 1580s ended in failure.¹⁰

Over time further conflicts developed, no longer only between, but also within the Flemish and Frisian groups, so that subsequent divisions fell less along ethnic or geographical lines, and more along ideological and party loyalties.¹¹ In 1586, at Franeker, a certain elder of the Flemish congregation purchased a house, which had allegedly been purchased by questionable means. The quarrel that ensued in the local congregation eventually included all the Flemish congregations, splitting them into two groups. Members belonging to the group in support of the elder who had purchased the house were called "*Huiskoopers*" ("House buyers") and became known as the Old Flemish. Those opposed to the purchase were called "*Contra-Huiskoopers*" ("*Contra House buyers*") and became known as the

⁹WDP, pp. 468-469.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 473.

¹¹Ibid., p. 468.

Young Flemish.¹²

Among the Frisians, division took place in 1589. The issue had to do with church discipline and initially two factions emerged: the conservatives were called Strict or Old Frisians, while the progressives were called Young Frisians. But even within these groups there was a lack of cohesion and further divisions ensued.¹³

By the early part of the seventeenth century it is evident that the Anabaptists of the north German-Dutch lowlands, and their heirs, the Mennonites, were divided in a tragic sense. There were at least ten different groups and few acknowledged the legitimacy of the other.¹⁴ The outcome was devastating and served to weaken the Mennonite reforming movement throughout northern Europe. When a Mennonite congregation near Zierekezee attempted to remain neutral in the debate between the Frisians and the Flemish, it found itself excommunicated by both parties.¹⁵ In Emden, the almost comic point was reached when minister Jan van Ophoorn banned everyone in the congregation except himself and his wife!¹⁶ In 1621, a Reformed preacher referred to the Mennonite divisions as "*Het Babel der Wederdoperen*".¹⁷ N. van der Zijpp, remarking at the many Mennonite divisions, put it this way: "*Zoveel soorten Doopsgezinden, het is om te duizelen!*" ("[There were] so many

¹²ME II, s.v. "Flemish Mennonites," by Christian Neff and Nanne van der Zijpp.

¹³ME II, s.v. "Frisian Mennonites," by Christian Neff and Nanne van der Zijpp.

¹⁴Piet Visser, "Jan Philipsz Schabaelje (1592-1656), a seventeenth century Dutch Mennonite, and his Wandering Soul," in Hamilton, Voolstra, Visser, eds., *From martyr to muppy*, p. 99.

¹⁵ME, II, s.v. "Flemish Mennonites."

¹⁶Dyck, *Introduction to Mennonite History*, p. 129.

¹⁷van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, p. 81.

kinds of Mennonites, that it [was] confusing"')).¹⁸

2. The First Confessions of Faith

In the latter half of the sixteenth century and in the beginning of the seventeenth century, various groups within north German-Dutch Mennonitism began writing and adopting confessions of faith. While a less developed confessional statement had been formulated by Anabaptists in 1545 at Kempen, for the first time confessions of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition were comprehensive, systematic and doctrinal.¹⁹ The first confession of faith with these characteristics came from the Waterlander Mennonites. A confession of twenty four articles was drawn up in 1577 by five leading ministers and was intended to unite the Waterlander congregation, provide guidance for individuals who were contemplating joining the church, and facilitate understanding with other Mennonite groups.²⁰ Other confessions followed. In 1578, Hans de Ries, one of the five who had drafted the confession of 1577, produced a personal statement of faith with seventeen articles, in order to give an account to the authorities of what he and his fellow Mennonites believed.²¹ In 1617, the Old Frisians, under the leadership of Sywert Pieters and Pieter Jans Twisck formulated the confession of thirty-three

¹⁸Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁹The Kempen Confession may be seen as a precursor to the later, more developed confessional statements. It is not likely, however, that the later Mennonites depended or modelled their confessional statements after the Kempen Confession. See Goeters, "Das aelteste rheinische Taeuferbekenntnis," pp. 197-212.

²⁰Williams, *Radical Reformation*, pp. 1188-1189; Dyck, "The First Waterlandian Confession of Faith," p. 6. An introduction and English edition of the confession is found in *ibid.*, pp. 5-13, and in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, pp. 41-66.

²¹Dyck, "The Middelburg Confession of Hans de Ries," pp. 147-149. For a full account to the background of this confession and an English edition of the confession itself, see *ibid.*, pp. 147-154, 161.

articles in order to give an account of the faith over against the Belgic Confession, and to preserve their identity by encouraging unity of doctrine and life within their own faith community.²²

In light of much disunity among the Mennonites, however, a number of the confessions of faith were produced specifically as instruments to facilitate unity between church groups. In 1591, for instance, the *Concept of Cologne* was formulated as a basis of union between the Young Frisians and the High Germans. It was a brief confession with sixteen articles probably formulated by Leenaerdt Clock.²³ The union, which was known as the *Bevredigde Broederschap* ("Conciliated Brotherhood"),²⁴ was expanded to officially include the Waterlander Mennonites in 1602.²⁵ This larger union, however, was short-lived, as it began breaking up sometime between the years 1608 and 1613. "It was mostly the Frisian and High Germans, under the leadership of Leenaert Clock,

²²Voolstra, "Doperse belijden," p. 20.

²³The English text with an introduction can be found in Gross Gleysteen, trans., "The First Mennonite Merger: The Concept of Cologne," pp. 8-10. For details surrounding the writing of this confession see van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, pp. 87-88; Oyer, "The Strasbourg Conferences," pp. 227-228; Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, pp. 71-71.

²⁴See Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, p. 129. Coggins maintains, however, that the *Bevredigde Broederschap* was actually not a union but a voluntary association of still autonomous congregations. See *ibid.*, pp. 81-81. Attempts were made to extend the union to the Flemish, but according to Kuehler, the conservatism of the Flemish prevented this from happening. See Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, pp. 74-91.

²⁵The negotiations that led to the union were somewhat complex and included, among other things, a peace-proposal from the Waterlanders entitled, "Vrede-presentatie aan de Vriessche en Hoogduitsche Doopsgezinden gemeentens van de Waterlandsche gemeentens." See Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, 72-74. See also J.G. de Hoop Scheffer, "Eene Geschiedenis van de Doopsgezinden, van hunne Geschillen en Hereenigingen, door een Doopsgezinden in 1647," *DB*, (1876): 36-37.

who deserted the *Bevredigde Broederschap*.²⁶ They had second thoughts about the tolerance of the *Bevredigde Broederschap*, particularly with respect to the ban and mixed marriages. They may also have had reservations about the way in which the Waterlanders were entering into unity discussions with a group known as the English Separatists. In any case, Clock led most of the Frisians and High Germans out of the union to form a group known as the *Afgedeelde Broederschap* ("Divided Brotherhood").²⁷ The first attempts at unity thus ended in failure in a relatively short period of time.

3. The Short Confession of 1610

At the turn of the century the Waterlanders had found some success in achieving common ground with Frisian and High German Mennonites. The failure to maintain this union is likely connected to their Short Confession of Faith of 1610, as well as their interest in seeking common ground or ecumenical union with a group known as English Separatists.

English Separatism began when dissidents from the Church of England called out for specific reforms: "Bible-based preaching in place of liturgy and the elaborate celebration of the Lord's Supper; presbyterian rather than episcopal church government; a stronger church vis-a-vis the state; the teaching of predestination; and more rigid moral standards."²⁸ When reformation within the Church of England seemed unlikely, a number of reform-minded individuals withdrew to begin their own churches. In 1581, Robert Browne formed a group known as Brownists. Another group calling itself the Ancient Church of

²⁶Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, p. 94.

²⁷Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, p. 130. Kuehler suggests that the Waterlanders were too accepting of the outside world, and this is what led the Frisians and High Germans to break their ties with the Waterlanders. See Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, p. 72.

²⁸Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, p. 29.

English Separatists was formed in 1587, but left England due to persecution and came to the Netherlands, where Francis Johnson assumed the leadership beginning in 1593. A third Separatist congregation, which had formed in 1606 or 1607, also fled to the Netherlands in 1608, under the leadership of John Smyth.²⁹

In the course of time, quarrels ensued among the Separatist churches in the Netherlands. The details and developments leading to a number of schisms cannot be specified here.³⁰ Suffice to say, a faction within John Smyth's congregation came to the conviction that they ought to practice believers' baptism. After having baptized themselves, a number desired to join the Waterlander congregation in Amsterdam (a congregation of primarily Waterlanders but also Frisians). After a number of exchanges, John Smyth's congregation was accepted into the Waterlander church. In this context, the Short Confession of 1610 served as a basis for union.

Union with the English Separatists was not, however, a simple matter. As already noted, the Waterlander congregation in Amsterdam was allied with other Waterlander, Frisian and High German congregations that belonged to the *Bevredigde Broederschap*. The Amsterdam leaders therefore proposed a conference on May 23, 1610, whereby all the groups belonging to the *Bevredigde Broederschap* could be present, and where a union might be achieved with the English Separatists on the basis of some sort of written document.³¹ James Coggins has noted that several Frisian pastors, however, did not support the idea of

²⁹Ibid., pp. 29-34, 43-44. Keith Sprunger estimates that the total number of English Separatists in Amsterdam around 1618 would have been three to four hundred. See Keith Sprunger *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Lieden: E. J. Brill, 1982), p. 45.

³⁰For details, see Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, pp. 48ff.

³¹Ibid., pp. 81-83.

such a conference. They felt it necessary to first consult their allies in Germany and Prussia, and they wanted time to study the Short Confession.³²

While no records show that the conference was actually held, Jim Coggins holds that the conference likely took place as scheduled, that "the Smyth congregation's application to join the Mennonites was officially accepted at that conference,"³³ and that the confession, entitled *Corte Belijdenisse des Geloofs ende der voornaemster stucken der Christelijcke leere* ("Short Confession of Faith and the most Essential Points of Christian Doctrine") served as a basis for union. In addition, forty-three members of the Smyth congregation signed this Short Confession, although "the exact number signing before the May 23, 1610 meeting is difficult to determine, for new members evidently continued to sign up until 1614."³⁴ Further evidence supplied by Coggins suggests that the Friesland Mennonites were sent a copy of the confession for consideration and that they probably received it in May, 1610.³⁵ No Frisian Mennonites, however, attended the May 23 meeting--the only Mennonites outside of the Amsterdam congregation who agreed to attend the May 23 meeting were Hans de Ries and Willem Janszoon.³⁶

The draft of the Short Confession that was prepared for the May 23 meeting, primarily by Hans de Ries, contained 38 articles. By the time of its first publication, sometime in June, 1610, however, it contained forty articles. In the revision, an article on Christology and another on the "new birth" was added, while the final article in the confession on eschatology was enlarged

³²Ibid., pp. 83, 95.

³³Ibid., p. 84.

³⁴Ibid., p. 88.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., p. 84.

somewhat.³⁷ It is likely that at the conference, participants proposed revisions and Hans de Ries in the manner of a recording secretary implemented the revisions.³⁸

The conference at Cologne in 1591 had achieved the alliance known as the *Bevredigde Broederschap* on the basis of a document called the "Concept of Cologne." Other groups eventually had agreed to the document and joined the alliance. James Coggins is of the opinion that the Short Confession was to fill a similiar role for the conference of May 23, 1610. It was to facilitate understanding and achieve an alliance with Smyth and his followers, and it was an invitation for other Mennonites to join the alliance.³⁹ The alliance with the Smith congregation was successful; a merger with the larger Mennonite fellowship ended in failure. According to Coggins, the Short Confession may have had something to do with the break-up of the *Bevredigde Broederschap* between the years 1608 and 1613. The Frisian leaders had called for time and more consultation and made the suggestion that all churches in Prussia and Germany (that is, the High Germans) be further consulted. This was probably not entirely a delaying tactic since churches did work together, with the view that mutual accountability was essential. On the other hand, there were fundamental aspects of the Short Confession that would have caused the Frisian congregations some concern. The confession allowed for marriages between Mennonites and persons outside of the denomination, it forbade the practice of separating spouses from each other should one of them be shunned from the community, and additionally, "the confession's heavy emphasis on Schwenckfeldian concepts was alien to the stream of

³⁷Ibid., p. 92.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., p. 91.

Mennonite theology upheld by the Frisians."⁴⁰ In anycase, the Frisian request to delay was ignored by the Waterlanders, who went ahead with the union and publication of the confession. By doing so, the Waterlanders undoubtedly antagonized their allies, who responded by leaving the alliance to form the *Afgedeelde Broederschap*.⁴¹

4. The Jan Cents and Dordrecht Confessions

While the Waterlanders were unable after 1613 to maintain or expand their affiliations/alliances with other Mennonite congregations, the Frisians, High Germans and Flemish Mennonites began, particularly in the 1620s to move towards conciliation. Already an alliance between a number of Frisian and High German congregations existed in the newly formed *Afgedeelde Broederschap*. The Flemish now felt a strong urge to become a part of the larger fellowship. At the centre of the drive were leaders such as Tobias Goverts, Pieter Jans Mooyer, Abraham Dirk Bierens and Dirk Dirks.⁴² They presented three questions in order to encourage the Flemish congregations to consider unity with the other groups.⁴³ The questions were the following: "(a) What are

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 95. The sin of marriage outside of the faith was serious for the Flemish as well. For some it was more serious than drunkenness, adultery or even murder. "For while the other sinners could reform their evil ways, those who had entered outside marriages could not reenter a state of grace until their spouses had converted." So H[ans] v[an] D[antzich], *Een Vaderlijcke Waerschouwinghe...* (Franeker: Vlderick Douwesz. Balck./Haarlem: Passchier van Wesbusch, 1610), p. 11, quoted in Sprunger, "Rich Mennonites, Poor Mennonites: Economics and Theology in the Amsterdam Waterlander Congregation during the Golden Age," p. 209.

⁴¹Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, p. 95.

⁴²Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, p. 185. Hans die Ries may have also been involved although the nature of his involvement is unclear. See Horst, "The Dordrecht Confession of Faith: 350 Years," p. 5.

⁴³Kuehler and van der Zijpp maintain that in truth, the Flemish did not take the Waterlanders into consideration here. For the Flemish leaders, the Waterlanders were far too open to the outside

the basic marks of a Christian Church? (b) Are these distinctives only found in Flemish congregations? (c) Is making peace forbidden by the Scriptures?"⁴⁴ When inadequate answers were given by the congregations, the leaders proceeded to answer the questions themselves by writing a confession of faith. This confession, called the *Olift-Tacxken* ("Olive Branch"), was then sent with accompanying material dated Sept. 16, 1627, to congregations in the provinces of Groningen, East and West Friesland, Overijssel, Utrecht, Holland, Zeeland and Flanders.⁴⁵ The accompanying material consisted of a "*Brief tot Vreed-Bereyding*" (Letter of Peaceful Intentions) and a *Presentie* (Presentation), indicating a desire for peace⁴⁶ between the Frisians (probably including the High Germans) and the Flemish.⁴⁷ The seriousness of their intentions was underscored when, on January 2, 1628, they called for a united fast and a day of prayer.⁴⁸

The activities were not received favourably by everyone. Conservative Frisians and Flemish continued to regard each other with suspicion. A large gathering held at Zaandam on November 13-15 (1628?) indicates the unwillingness of some to move towards reconciliation. Pieter Jans Twisck, a Frisian leader who had

world, and did not take doctrine seriously enough. See Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, p. 188; van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, p. 92. Coggins notes that in 1626, there was considerable antagonism demonstrated specifically against the "Short Confession" that the Waterlanders had produced in 1610. See Coggins, "A Short Confession of Hans de Ries," p. 137.

⁴⁴ME IV, s.v. "Olijftacxken," by Christian Neff and Nanne van der Zijpp.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, p. 191.

⁴⁷Horst, "350 jaar Confessie van Dordrecht," p. 10; Horst, "The Dordrecht Confession of Faith: 350 years," p. 5; Pieter Visser, "Menno Simons: Printed, Read and Debated," pp. 92-93.

⁴⁸Ibid.

already spoken out against unity in 1622,⁴⁹ noted the impurity of the Flemish church. He regretted the divisions of the past but maintained that the Flemish were becoming lax in their church discipline, and pointed out that they were becoming too worldly in matters of dress. Claes Claesz, a Flemish leader, responded with counter accusations, saying that some Frisians appeared to be more willing to follow their leaders than the will of God. In the end, the Frisians at Zaandam rejected the Olive Branch confession,⁵⁰ and likewise, some Flemish opposed the idea of uniting with the Frisians.⁵¹

The Olive Branch confession, however, received greater attention from the United Frisians and High Germans, the group belonging to the *Afgedeelde Broederschap*. On October 3-5, 1630, they met the Flemish in the *Singelkerk* at Amsterdam. They had worked out a confession of their own a year earlier, to solidify their own theological positions, but they also wanted to formulate a response to the Olive Branch confession.⁵² The Confession entitled "Corte Confessie" ("Short Confession") also came to be known as the "Belijdendenisse van Jan Centsen or the Hoogh-duytsche Confessie des Geloofs" ("Confession of Jan Cents

⁴⁹See *Ibid.*, pp. 133-34

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 192-3, see also pp. 133-134 and 184; van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, p. 93; Visser, "Menno Simons: Printed, Read and Debated," p. 93.

⁵¹See especially *ME II*, s.v. "Groningen Old Flemish," by Nanne van der Zijpp. Van der Zijpp, in his *Geschiedenis* marks the division of the Groninger Oude Vlamingen to be around 1630. He also notes that congregations from Deventer, Zaandam, Haarlem and elsewhere joined the Groninger Flemish. Moreover, from the Groninger Oude Vlamingen, the so-called Dantziger Oude Vlamingen came into existence. Some of these Flemish were from Amsterdam, Haarlem and Rotterdam, and some were from East and West Prussia. See van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, p. 81.

⁵²Voolstra, "Doperse belijden," p. 19; Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, p. 193.

or the High German Confession of Faith").⁵³ Evidently this confession of Jan Cents was received favourably by the Flemish and was considered to be in consonance with the Olive Branch.⁵⁴ Some details concerning the practice of shunning, the recognition of each other's baptisms, and the implications of marrying outside of the faith still needed to be resolved. At the October meeting at the *Singelkerk* the two groups had evidently moved closer together, although further review and testing in the congregations would be needed.⁵⁵ In the next decade negotiations continued until a union was achieved in 1639.⁵⁶

Throughout the 1620s, the Flemish leadership had been at the forefront in bringing the different Mennonite churches together, yet their own problems stemming from the *Huiskooper* fiasco of 1586 were not yet resolved.⁵⁷ For more than a half century internal church strife and schism had been a part of Flemish experience. The slightest irregularity, especially in conduct, made occasion for wrangling and additional schisms. When the Frisian and High German wings of the Dutch Mennonite community were moving toward conciliation, the Flemish wing was hampered by disorder in its own house. Generally the congregations at Amsterdam took the initiative to meet needs of the brotherhood, but the Flemish parties there had reached a standstill in negotiations. At Dordrecht the Flemish congregations had merged

⁵³van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, p. 93. The *Handelinge* entitles the confession "Belijdenisse van Jan Centsen of anders Hooghduytsche Confessie des Geloofs," but then goes on in a major heading to identify it with "Vereenigde Vriesen" and "Hooghduytschen." See *Handelinge*, p. 53. The original title of the confession, however, was *Corte Confessie or Belijdenisse des Gheloofs*. See *Vrede Handelinghe*. The most accessible English translation is found in van Braght, *Martyrs Mirror*, pp. 33-38.

⁵⁴"*Cort Verhael*," in *Vrede Handelinghe*, p. 6.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁶Kuehler, *Geschiedenis* II, pp. 193-198.

⁵⁷van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, p. 94.

under the leadership of Adriaan Cornelisz, an elder in the Old Flemish church, and entered a period of spiritual growth and strength. Thus Dordrecht was in a position to take leadership.⁵⁸ Adriaan Cornelis, with the help of strong Flemish elders at Amsterdam and Haarlem--Tobias Goverstsz. van den Wijngaard and Pieter Grijspeert--and others, appealed for a conference at Dordrecht where the various Flemish parties throughout the land would be represented. The first date had to be cancelled because of misunderstanding about the purpose of the meeting. Also, the town officials were dubious about permitting such a large number of "Anabaptists" the right to assemble there. Organized opposition also took shape within the Flemish congregations, especially by Louwerens Willemszen, a deacon at Rotterdam.⁵⁹ Eventually a meeting was achieved and a confession known today as the Dordrecht Confession of faith was produced as a basis for unity.

Cornelis appears to have taken the leadership in working towards unity and in drafting the confession. He realized that unity talks with the Frisians and the High Germans would be ludicrous if the Flemish themselves were not united. A confession uniting the Flemish was required. Eventually it was decided that the Flemish would come together at Dortrecht (or Dort) to find common agreement. In this city the Flemish were already united, so this seemed to be a logical meeting point.⁶⁰ According to Hans-Juergen Goertz, the confessional-writing process must have required careful considerations. 1)The confession would need to bridge the differences among the Flemish. 2)The formulation could not interfere with the wider unity discussions of the Frisians, Flemish and High Germans, that had come under the inspiration of

⁵⁸Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht," p. 33.

⁵⁹Horst, 350 years, p. 3. See also Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, pp. 194-195; H. Haga, "Eenige Bijzonderheden Omtrent de Vroegere Doopsgezinden te Arnhem," *DB* (1863): 43-74.

⁶⁰Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht," p. 33.

the Olive Branch confession. At the same time the formulation could not weaken the negotiating position of the Flemish.

3) Finally, the formulation could not in any way threaten those belonging to the Reformed church. The Flemish had reason to fear the Reformed, for they had already protested to the civil authorities against so many Mennonites coming together at Dordrecht. Although the meeting did take place, the Mennonites were regarded with suspicion and needed to be on their guard.⁶¹

In the end the confession at Dordrecht was signed by 51 ministers on April 21, 1632. Most of the signatories were Flemish, but some were also Frisian and High German.⁶² "At the close of the sessions the ministers extended to each other the right hand of fellowship, greeted each other with the holy kiss, and observed the Lord's Supper together."⁶³ After the union, the Old Flemish were resolved never to divide again. They met at Utrecht on February 14, 1633, and directed their efforts at points of contention that had arisen in the past.⁶⁴ In the same year, the union led to the compilation and publication of a new hymnbook, based on the eighteen articles of the Dordrecht Confession entitled *Fondament, ofte de Principaelste liedekens over de Poincten des Christelijcken Geloofs* ("Foundational or Principal Songs concerning the Points of the Christian Faith").⁶⁵ The Confession itself was published with a preface

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Some Flemish congregations from the northern provinces of Friesland and Groningen, as well as the Flemish from Franeker were not participants. Some representatives from these regions even attempted to stop the proceedings, but were held back. See Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, p. 193-7; Horst, ed. and trans., *Mennonite Confession of Faith*, p. 13.

⁶³J. C. Wenger, *Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1959), p. 214.

⁶⁴Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, p. 197.

⁶⁵Horst, *Mennonite Confession of Faith*, p. 13.

and introduction at Haarlem in 1633 with the title *Confessie ende Vredehandelinge* ("Confession and Peace Agreement").⁶⁶

The Flemish, Frisians and the High Germans continued to work towards unity in the following years. In 1636 there was a gathering at Amsterdam and all three parties expressed their willingness to unite. At the *Singelkerk* in Amsterdam, on April 26, 1639, unity was finally achieved. According to van der Zijpp and Kuehler, three thousand persons gathered for a five hour meeting that included worship, fellowship and celebration.⁶⁷

This unity was significant for the Mennonites in the Netherlands. For the first time in almost half a century, three of the four major groups were in a union known as the United Flemish, Frisian and High German Mennonites. There was indeed reason for celebration. Yet it must be recalled that the Waterlanders, a numerically significant group, did not take part in the union. In 1647, 41 of the 51 Waterlander congregations met at Amsterdam, to propose a merger with the united Flemish, Frisian and High German group. The proposal was accompanied by a *Vrede-praesentatie* (Presentation of Peace) which suggested "that each group should retain the freedom to formulate its own beliefs, avoid disputes along these lines, but they would have unity through the Word of God in the Bible."⁶⁸ The Short Confession of 1610 was also accepted at the meeting, but with the restriction that the confession was not to be appropriated as a strict rule nor replace the Word of God.⁶⁹ At Haarlem in 1649,

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, pp. 198-99; van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, pp. 93-4. Kuehler also maintains that other Mennonite groups and perhaps Remonstrants and Lutherans were present (ibid). Kuehler also mentions another meeting of the three groups on May 19, 1639 at Utrecht (ibid).

⁶⁸ME II, s.v. "Galenus Abrahamsz de Haan," by Hendrick W. Meihuizen.

⁶⁹van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, p. 84, 96; Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, p. 202.

however, the Waterlander proposal for unity was rejected.⁷⁰ Kuehler maintains that the united group decided to reject the Waterlanders because of their lax attitude towards the confessions and their unwillingness to carry out strict church discipline. Moreover, the conflict with the High Germans and Frisians from 1613 still remained unresolved, and this evidently stood in the way of a union.⁷¹

According to the Dutch Mennonite historian, N. van der Zijpp, by 1650, 120,000 Mennonites lived in the Netherlands and could be divided into the following groups: (1)The Waterlanders; (2)the United Flemish, Frisan and High German group; (3) and a number of conservative groups consisting of the Groningen Old Flemish, the Dantziger Old Flemish, the Jan Jacobsgezinden and the Old Frisians. Van der Zijpp goes on to note that by far the majority of the Mennonites living during this time belonged to the first two groups.⁷² Thus the Short Confession of 1610, the Jan Cents Confession of 1630 and the Dordrecht Confession of 1632 may be seen as important Mennonite confessions of the early seventeenth century in the sense that they reflected the theology of the largest Mennonite denominations of the time.

Yet how significant were the confessions of faith really? How did they function and to what extent were they authoritative in the Mennonite churches? Their significance cannot simply be

⁷⁰At the meeting in Haarlem, one of the last conclusions maintained that anyone who spoke against the confessions should be excluded. Kuehler maintains that this conclusion was directed particularly at the the Waterlanders See Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, p. 207. Irvin Horst emphasizes the point that the three confessions were perceived as one unanimous confession. See Horst, *Mennonite Confession of Faith*, p. 11; van Braght, *Martyrs Mirror*, p. 27.

⁷¹See Kuehler's thorough discussion on how the united group came to the decision of rejecting the Waterlanders, in *Geschiedenis II*, pp. 203-207. Coggins maintains that it was specifically on the basis of the Short Confession that the application of the Waterlanders was rejected. See Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, p. 137.

⁷²van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, p. 96.

assessed on the basis of the size of their constituencies. In light of these questions and considerations, I will now address more intentionally issues related to the function and authority of these confessions of faith.

5. The Status and Function of the Confessions

Historians have long noted the various ways in which the Mennonite confessions of faith were utilized in the seventeenth century. The confessions were used for teaching within the congregation, preserving Mennonite distinctives, witnessing to others, and giving an account to the authorities and other Christian groups what it was that was essential to Christian and Mennonite belief.⁷³ The way in which the Mennonite confessions of faith functioned in Mennonite churches does not appear to have been dissimilar to the way in which confessional statements functioned in Anabaptist communities.⁷⁴ For the Waterlanders, however, the immediate occasion for the writing of the Short Confession, however, was to facilitate unity discussions with the English Separatists. In addition, they hoped that the confession would strengthen inter-church cooperation with other Mennonite groups. As far as the High German, Frisian and Flemish groups were concerned, they also hoped that their confessions would facilitate inter-church discussions.

In the context of these unity discussions, it is evident that giving an account of what each church believed, that is,

⁷³The diverse function of the confessions has also been expressed by other scholars. See for *ME I*, s.v. "Confessions of Faith," by Neff, Werger, Bender; Dyck, "The First Waterlandian Confession," p. 6; Dyck, "A Short Confession of Faith by Hans de Ries," p. 5; Dyck in Loewen, *One Lord*, p. 17; C. J. Dyck, *Introduction to Mennonite History*, p. 130; Dirk Visser, "Woord vooraf," 6, p. 6; Voolstra, "Doperse belijden," p. 20. Voolstra and Visser maintain that in the Frisian, Flemish and Waterlander congregations, the confessions were read to those who were about to be baptized. See Voolstra, *Het Woord*, p. 175; Visser, *Broeder in de geest*, p. 112.

⁷⁴See Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht," pp. 21-23.

giving an account of church doctrine was of utmost importance. Mennonites during this time felt compelled to reflect on the essentials of the faith and state clearly, for themselves and for others, what it was that they believed. Like the early Anabaptists, Mennonites viewed themselves as being in line with the creedal tradition, especially the Apostles' Creed. The written confessions of faith were meant to substantiate this, and to clarify and elaborate what it meant also to be in the Anabaptist-Mennonite (or *Doopsgezind*) tradition.⁷⁵ The confessions of faith were thus more than merely statements of unity as Nanne van der Zijpp has wanted to emphasize.⁷⁶ They were statements reflecting a concern for the essentials of the faith, a concern that they shared with their Anabaptist forebearers. The statements of faith were not simply optional documents that one could choose to ignore. The historian, Cornelius J. Dyck, has noted that the confessions of faith among the Waterlanders were never simply optional documents that one could respond to with a "take it or leave it" attitude. In the controversy between a number of Waterlander leaders and Nittert Obbesz, it was imperative that everyone in the Waterland leadership agree (or conform) to the 13 articles which settled the dispute concerning the two-fold Word of God. Dyck goes on to point out that in the preamble of the first confession of the Waterlanders in 1577, the confession was affirmed to be "the pure, eternal and everlasting truth." Evidently, this was not a document that could be taken lightly.⁷⁷

A similar attitude seems to have prevailed among the High Germans, Frisians and Flemish. In the preamble to the *Vrede Handelinghe* ("Peace Agreement"), the *Cort Verhael* ("Brief

⁷⁵Voolstra, "Dopers belijden," p. 19.

⁷⁶van der Zijpp, "The Confessions of Faith of the Dutch Mennonites," pp. 175-176.

⁷⁷Dyck, "Hans de Ries: Theologian and Churchman," pp. 182-183.

Discussion"), which was the document that contained the earliest edition of the Jan Cents confession, the discussion focussed on the contents of an earlier Flemish confession, the Olive Branch, as well as the Frisian-High German confession, the Jan Cents confession. The inter-Mennonite discussion in the document clearly indicates that there was a genuine concern as to whether or not the Mennonite statements themselves were "confessions of sanctifying faith" ("*Bekentenisse des Salichmaechenden Geloofs*").⁷⁸ The criteria of sanctifying faith had obviously to do with right teaching (right doctrine) about the nature of the church and the practice of church discipline. In the *Cort Verhael* it is evident that doctrine, that is, the church's teaching concerning what is to be believed, was the essential presupposition to the moral behaviour, which was expected for those belonging to the community of faith.

That Mennonites took their doctrinal statements of faith seriously, however, is not to suggest that the statements carried the same authoritative weight in the Mennonite churches as the confessions of churches in the Catholic or Protestant traditions. It may be recalled that in Medieval and Reformation times, the creeds formulated by theologians were eventually sanctioned and enforced by political authorities. The Nicene, Niceno-Constantinopolitan and Chalcedonian creeds were statements designed to guarantee ecclesiastical as well as political unity and were buttressed by state authority. Protestant confessions had similiar authoritative status as seen in the Augsburg Confession, which was presented to the Emperor, Charles V, at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 for approval, and which was politically and legally reinforced in the Peace of Augsburg and maintained with the Peace of Westphalia until 1803.⁷⁹ In contrast,

⁷⁸See *Cort Verhael* in *Vrede Handelinghe*, pp. 2-9.

⁷⁹Wenzel Lohff, "Die Bedeutung der Augsbургischen Konfession fuer die Lutherische Kirche und ihr Verhaeltnis zur roemisch Katholischen Kirche," in Myer and Schuette, ed., *Confessio*

Anabaptist confessions of faith, and doctrinal statements of one kind or another, never had this kind of political or ecclesial status. Without any centralized ecclesial authority and without political approval, confessional statements depended on congregational assent.

This seems also to have been the case for the Mennonite confessions of faith, which, in continuity with Anabaptism, required congregational, rather than political approval. As Piet Visser has noted, the confessions for the Waterlanders had representative, rather than constitutive authority.⁶⁰ By this I take him to mean that the confessions were authoritative only in so far as they reflected agreement in the Waterland congregations; they were not authoritative in the sense that church leaders imposed statements on the congregations from above, as legally binding statements that everyone would be required to believe. They were written "from below" without political sanction. It appears that sometimes widespread congregational approval was necessary for a confession to be adopted. If James Coggins is right in his hypothesis about the Short Confession of 1610, then it was only after conference delegates in Amsterdam proposed specific changes that the Waterlander confession received final ratification.⁶¹ Further, it is to be noted that when a draft of this confession was given to the Frisian congregations, they were hesitant about accepting the Waterlander formulation immediately, because they felt it was necessary to first consult their sister congregations in Germany and Prussia. Evidently confessions of faith among the Waterlanders could not be imposed from above but needed broad based approval before being accepted.⁶²

Augustana, p. 13.

⁶⁰Visser, *Broeders in de geest*, p. 112.

⁶¹Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, p. 92.

⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 83.

This condition was also important for the Flemish in that the Dordrecht Confession needed the approval of most of the Flemish congregations if it was going to be of any use. Eventually the confession did receive broad base support as can be seen by the fifty one signatures that were listed at the back of the confession, reflecting agreement not only from the Flemish throughout the Netherlands but also from areas along the Rhine in north-central Germany. It may be argued that ratification of the Mennonite confessions usually came from the congregational leadership, the elders (*de oudste*), but one must note that the leaders in the Mennonite churches could only give an account of the faith that was believed and acceptable in the congregations.⁸³

The Waterlanders were probably the most concerned about limiting the authority of the confessions, and were, more than the other Mennonite groups, wary of the abusive power that confessional documents could have within the Christian community. While the confessions of faith were not considered optional documents that could be taken lightly, they were always considered secondary to the Scriptures and subordinate to the unity of the Christian community itself. These sentiments can be seen in a statement by the Waterlander leader, Hans de Ries, who in 1626, when in perceptible despair over Mennonite disunity, wrote as follows: "In order to find unity, would it not be better if we forget all about confessions or statements and held ourselves simply to the Word of God?"⁸⁴ A group of Waterlander leaders, writing during this same time period, produced an even more telling statement regarding the relative authority of confessional statements, expressed as follows:

⁸³Voolstra, "Dopers belijden," p. 19.

⁸⁴ Letter of Hans de Ries to Elias Tookey, December 3, 1626. "Inventaris de Archiefstukken berustende bij de Vereenigde Doopsgezinde Gemeente te Amsterdam," II (Amsterdam, 1884), No. 1371 in Dyck, "The First Waterlandian Confession," p. 6.

We agree that the Holy Scriptures are the confession of the Christian church in the sense that they contain all that is necessary for the understanding and knowledge of the believer concerning his salvation. Why then, you may ask, do we need a confession? Not, we answer, to give support to our opinions in the manner of the Scriptures, but to testify to the unity of our teaching with each other and ministers of old, against those who accuse us of teaching falsely and not keeping with the tradition of the church. We do not put our confessional statements upon the same level as the canonical books of the Holy Scriptures. Our confessions are a short summary of that which we believe to find in the Word of God in distinction from others who also find their answers in the Scriptures. We always subordinate our confessions to the Scriptures, knowing that the confessions must themselves be proven from the Word of God.⁸⁵

Two decades later, in 1647, 41 Waterlander congregations met at Amsterdam to affirm their Short Confession. Again the nonbinding character of the confession was explicitly recognized, as well as its subordinate status to Scripture.⁸⁶

As far as the Frisian, Flemish and High German churches are concerned, their confessions of faith were probably given more authority than the Waterlander confessions. While it is not likely that the Jan Cents Confession in 1630 and the Dordrecht Confession in 1632 were initially binding statements of faith that had to be confessed by the leaders or laity of the church, these confessions did in fact become binding at a later date.⁸⁷ In the 1650s, fears of losing the traditional Mennonite identity increased among Frisian, Flemish, High German and some

⁸⁵Rynier Wybrandtsz, Pieter Andriessen en Cornelius Claassen, *Apologia ofte Verantwoordinghe tegen Nittert Obbesz, 1626*, quoted in Dyck, "Hans de Ries: Theologian and Churchman," pp. 180-181.

⁸⁶At Amsterdam the following statement by the Waterlander was made: "*Wij verstaan dat alle stellingen van geloofs belijdenissen zoodanig zijn, dat men daaraan elkander niet behoort te binden, maar dat men allen op Gods Woord moet zien en de confessies slechts zoover mag aannemen als zij met den Bijbel overeenstemmen.*" In Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, pp. 202-203.

⁸⁷Hans-Juergen Goertz recognizes this development as well. See Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht," p. 40.

Waterlander congregations. In search of strong foundations these groups turned to their confessions for support. Eventually they organized under a union, requiring elders of the churches to abide by these confessions. The confessions themselves were brought together along with a *Verbond van Eenigheydt* (Bond of Unity) in a collection entitled *De Algemeene Belydenissen der Verenighde Vlaemsche, Friesche, en Hooghduytsche Doopsgesinde Gemeynte Gods* ("The General Confessions of the United Flemish, Frisian and High German Mennonite Churches of God"), which included the Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions. Thus within certain Mennonite churches after 1650 (at least for a time), the confessions did have a level of authority that one would expect confessions to have had in the Magisterial Reformation churches (although Mennonites confessions of faith never had any legal status or official support from civil authorities). Unfortunately for the Mennonites, the desire to enforce theological unity led to a new schism that took until the nineteenth century to heal.

The function and authority of the Mennonite confessions beyond the 1650s cannot be detailed here.⁸⁸ It is noteworthy, however, that the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions (as well as other confessions of faith) were reprinted several times indicating their ongoing use within Mennonite churches. Comparisons of the texts indicate that later editions did not always precisely mirror the contents of earlier editions. This suggests, further, that Mennonite communities were not at all

⁸⁸While the function and authority of the confessions beyond the 1650s has never been comprehensively examined, Sjouke Voolstra traces the general attitudes of Mennonites in the Netherlands toward their doctrines and confessional tradition in two essays: "Mennonite Faith in the Netherlands: A Mirror of Assimilation," *CGR* 9, no. 3 (fall 1991): 277-292; "'The Hymn to Freedom': The Redefinition of Dutch Mennonite Identity in the Resortation and Romantic Period (ca 1810-1850)", in Hamilton, Voolstra, Visser, eds., *From martyr to muppy*, pp. 187-202. To some extent, although not at every turn, the way in which Mennonite confessions functioned in the Netherlands parallels the way mainline confessions functioned. See Jacobs, *Theologie Reformierter Bekenntnisschriften*, pp. 13-14, 17.

hesitant about changing or "improving" earlier formulations.⁸⁹ Confessional texts evidently were never written in stone, but could be improved upon, or re-shaped for the community they were intended for. According to Dirk Visser's "Checklist of Dutch Mennonite Confessions to 1800", the Short Confession was reprinted a total of twenty-two times, while the Jan Cents confession was reprinted ten times.⁹⁰ Evidently these confessions continued to play a decisive role in forming and reflecting Mennonite theological thinking over several generations. In this respect the confessions may be seen as partial bearers of the Mennonite theological tradition.

There is little doubt that the Dordrecht Confession played a significant role in carrying forward a Mennonite theological tradition throughout the centuries and around the world. While the Dordrecht Confession was utilized primarily by Flemish Mennonites of Dutch extraction for a relatively short period of time, its use beyond the Low Countries has proven to be far more significant. The Swiss Mennonites accepted the confession in 1660, and when it was published in German in 1664, it was used in most German-speaking areas of central Europe. When the Swiss and Germans settled in Pennsylvania, United States, they requested a translation of the Confession and received one from the Dutch in 1712. Later, after 1786, when Swiss Mennonites settled in Upper Canada establishing themselves first of all in the Niagara region, it was the Dordrecht Confession, besides Scripture, that identified the essentials of the faith. Eventually the confession was one of the most commonly used documents among Mennonites of

⁸⁹On changes in the Dordrecht Confession, see Irvin Horst, *Mennonite Confession of Faith*, pp. 14, 74; Leonard Gross, "The Swiss Brethren and the Dutch Mennonites: A Particular Study in Contrasts," *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* 53, no. 1 (January 1993): 2.

⁹⁰Dirk Visser, "A Checklist of Dutch Mennonite Confessions of Faith to 1800," *Documenta Anabaptistica Neerlandica Bulletin* Nos. 6 and 7 (Amsterdam: C.U.D.A.N, 1974-1975), pp. 3-5, 9-10, 13-14.

Swiss origins in North America. It is still used by conservative groups such as the Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonites.⁹¹ More recently, the confession has been used in countries such as Honduras, Kenya and Tanzania.⁹² It has been reprinted many times and translated into several languages. There are at least ten editions in Dutch, 116 in German, and 117 in English, seven in Spanish and five in French.⁹³

The Dordrecht Confession of Faith, however, has not been the only confession of faith used by Mennonites throughout their history. A later Dutch confession that the Swiss and South German Mennonites used in Europe, and even more in the North American context is the confession of Cornelius Ris of 1766, *De Geloofsleere der waare Mennoniten of Doopsgezinden* ("The Doctrines of the True Mennonites or Doopsgezinden"). For Mennonites in the Dutch-Prussian-Russian tradition, the *Confession Oder Kurtze und Einfaeltige Glaubens-Bekentnis* of 1660 ("Confession or Short and Simple Confession of Faith") has played perhaps the most significant role along with the *Glaubensbekenntnis der Mennoniten in Preussen* of 1895 ("Confession of Faith of the Mennonites in Prussia")--a confession that continued to exert its influence among Mennonites in Russia and Canada through additional confessions that it spawned: the *Glaubensbekenntniss der Mennoniten in Russland* of 1896 ("The Confession of Faith of Mennonites in Russia") and the *Glaubensbekenntniss der Mennoniten in Canada* of 1930 ("The Confession of Mennonites in Canada"). However, the document that has undoubtedly carried the Mennonite tradition more than any other, for Mennonites of the Swiss-South German as well as the Prussian-Russian Mennonite tradition, has been the West Prussian,

⁹¹Amos Hoover in Horst, *Mennonite Confession of Faith*, p. 9.

⁹²Dieter Goetz Lichdi, *Ueber Zuerich und Witmarsum Nach Addis Abeba: Die Mennoniten in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Maxdorf: Agape Verlag, 1983), p. 87.

⁹³Horst, *Mennonite Confession of Faith*, pp. 73-83.

Elbing catechism of 1778, the *Kurtze und einfaeltige Unterweisung aus der Heiligen Schrift* ("Short and Simple Instruction from the Holy Scripture").⁹⁴

6. Emerging Questions

In chapter three of this study I have argued that, in the main, the early seventeenth century Mennonite confessions of faith stand in *historical* continuity with north German-Dutch Anabaptism. While the emergence of the confessions of faith, as comprehensive, systematic and doctrinal statements, represented something new in the tradition, the point that I have made is that these developments in confessional writing were really a natural outcome in the Mennonite churches, which were no longer a part of an underground movement, but were rapidly becoming an emerging denominational entity that was in the process of coming to terms with new challenges in a fast changing and evolving historical context. In the present chapter that has reviewed the history of the confessions of faith, I have continued to make the case for historical continuity between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, by noting the way in which Mennonites in consonance with sixteenth century Anabaptists, reflected a concern for articulating the essentials of the faith, and that they did so in the context of the believing community. Like the sixteenth century Anabaptists, the early seventeenth century Mennonites were convinced that right belief was a necessary presupposition of the moral life. But similiar to the Anabaptists, they relied on congregational approval before accepting any doctrinal statements. In this respect the confessions of faith had representative rather than constitutive authority. The confessions were not politically sanctioned statements like those of the mainline Reformation churches, but carried authority in so far as they had been approved and

⁹⁴*Kurze und einfaeltige Unterweisung aus der Heiligen Schrift* (Elbing, 1778).

accepted by leaders and congregations far and near. In this respect, one can speak about *historical* continuity between the early seventeenth century Mennonite confessions of faith and the north German-Dutch Anabaptist heritage.

Yet in what sense do they demonstrate *theological* continuity from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries? In chapter three I have outlined the religiously pluralistic milieu that the Mennonites faced in the early seventeenth century. As I have noted, they were in the process of assimilating economically, socially, culturally and politically. From this apparent historical unfolding--one is led to ask--was not their theology also likely to change in significant ways?

While it will become evident in the next chapters that Mennonite theology in the seventeenth century was shifting and evolving, I will argue that, in the main, the seventeenth century Mennonite confessions of faith, as represented in the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions, stand not only in historical but also in theological continuity with sixteenth century Anabaptism. I will begin this line of argument in the next chapter, which will proceed with a general textual and hermeneutical analysis of the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions.

V

**GENERAL TEXTUAL AND HERMENEUTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE
SHORT, JAN CENTS AND DORDRECHT CONFESSIONS**

Theological reflection of the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions of faith is not a task begun without precedence. As noted in chapter I, introductory surveys and essays on Mennonite confessions of faith, as well as general studies in seventeenth century Mennonite life and thought have contributed in a general sense to the theology of some of the confessions of faith. Nevertheless, systematic and more detailed presentations have not been forthcoming. The intention of the present and subsequent chapters will be to take up this task.

Accordingly, in what follows, I will expand on the findings that have contributed to the scholarship thus far, and will bring my own interpretation to bear on the characteristics and theology of the confessions. Chapters three and four of this study have advanced the argument that the early seventeenth century Mennonite confessions of faith stand in historical continuity with their Anabaptist heritage. Chapters five, six and seven will make the case for theological continuity between the confessions and sixteenth century Anabaptism in the Netherlands. I will begin in the present chapter with a general textual and hermeneutical analysis of the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions. The observations in this chapter will be enhanced by some limited comparisons between the Mennonite confessions and representative Lutheran and Reformed confessions--the Augsburg and Belgic confessions of faith.¹

¹The Augsburg Confession has been chosen as a comparison because of its central importance to Protestant, particularly Lutheran, orthodoxy in the sixteenth century; the Belgic confession has been selected because of its prominence in the Dutch Reformed tradition at the end of the sixteenth and at the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. In the Dutch context, Mennonites would have been fairly well acquainted with the Belgic Confession, especially in their conversations with the Dutch Calvinists.

Data concerning the Reformed and Lutheran confession will be

1. Literary and Structural Characteristics

From even general observations it is evident that the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions (hereafter SC, JC, DC respectively) resemble the literary genre of the confessions produced by mainline Reformation traditions. The Mennonite confessions of faith consist of declamatory statements grouped into article or paragraph form, with Scripture references located in the margins of the texts. Each of the confessions contain a preface, while the JC and DC also contain conclusions.

The 1618 edition of the SC is the only text that is clearly divided into articles with titles for each article.² It is evident from this that the Waterlanders were the first Mennonite group to follow the literary genre of the other mainline Protestant confessions. While clearly differentiated articles and titles also appear in later editions of the JC and DC,³ the earliest editions are in paragraph form without clearly marked divisions separating the different theological themes⁴--although the DC does allude to "*principale Articulen*" ("principle articles") in a paragraph introducing its first article.⁵ Thus,

particularly dependent on the following textual sources: *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch Lutherischen Kirche*, 10th edition (Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1986); J. N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, ed., *De Nederlandse Belijdensgeschriften*, second edition (Amsterdam: ton Bolland, 1976).

²"Corte Belijdenisse des Geloofs," hereafter "Corte Belijdenisse." Cornelius J. Dyck is of the opinion, however, that the first draft of the SC also did not have titles for the articles. See Dyck, "A Short Confession of Faith," p. 10.

³See *Handelinghe Der Ver-eeenigde Vlaemse, en Duytse Doops-gesinde Geemeynten, gehouden Tot Haerlem, Ao., 1649 in Junio* (Vlissinghen: Geleyn Jansz, 1666) and *De Algemeene Belydenissen der Verreenighde Vlaemische, Vriesche, en Hooghduytsche Doopsgesinde Gemeente Gods* (Amsterdam: Pieter Arentsz, 1665).

⁴See "Corte Confessie," p. 1-36; "Confessie ende Vredehandelinghe," p. 41-72.

⁵"Confessie ende Vredehandelinghe," p. 14.

in this study, in referring to the different "paragraghs" of the JC and DC, the term "article" is used in consonance with the structure of later editions.

The length and coverage of the confessions of faith may be examined in terms of the number of articles and the number of words. Here further similarities may be noted between the Mennonite and mainline Protestant confessions. In terms of the number of articles, the SC and the Belgic confession are similar in length with 40 articles and 37 articles respectively. The JC, DC and the first (summary) section of the Augsburg Confession also contain a similiar number of articles, with the JC and Augsburg confessions each containing 21 articles and the DC containing 18 articles (See Appendix, Table 1). As far as the number of words are concerned, the Mennonite confessions contain about the same number, and each contain more words than the summary of the faith of the Augsburg Confession. On the other hand, they contain only half as many words as the Belgic Confession. The SC contains 4,700 words, the JC contains 4300 words, the DC contains 4400 words, the first part of the Augsburg confession contains 3300 words (the second part, 8800 words), and the Belgic confessions contains 9100 words (See Table 2)⁶ From this it may be possible to conclude that Mennonites were following the Protestant churches in a general sense, when they began to think about how they would construct their own theological statements of faith. The Protestant confessions of faith, particularly the Belgic confession which Mennonites in the Low Countries would have been aware of, may have served as a model for how confessional writing in a comprehensive and systematic manner could be achieved.

Further similiarities between the Mennonite and mainline Protestant confessions may be noted by examining their doctrinal outline. Here the similiarities are actually striking in that

⁶These numbers are approximations and exclude the prefaces or conclusions of the confessions.

they generally follow closely the classical confessional and creedal tradition (See Table 1)⁷ In comparing the Mennonite confessions with the Augsburg Confession (i.e. its first 17 articles) and the Belgic Confession, the following doctrinal order generally appears with some minor exceptions: Theology (God), anthropology, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology (which includes church order, the sacraments, ethical issues and church discipline), and eschatology. The exceptions to this order are minor. In the SC, articles focussing on ethical issues follow rather than precede the article on church discipline. The JC lacks an explicit article on soteriology; statements on salvation are found, rather, interwoven with other themes. In addition, the JC contains a specific section or article on the Holy Spirit--an article not found in the other Mennonite confessions. As far as the DC is concerned, its departure from the norm may be found in so far as the article on baptism appears in connection with the discussion on salvation, rather than in the context of the church and its sacraments.

While general observations regarding the doctrinal order in the Mennonite confessions do not point to a doctrinal centre, they nevertheless indicate the primacy of certain doctrinal concerns. The SC and the JC appear to be particularly concerned with christological issues, the former focussing on christology in articles 8 through 19, the latter focussing on the topic in articles 5 to 8. It is possible that the concern surrounding the traditional Melchiorite-Mennonite doctrine of the incarnation was at issue for the Waterlanders, and the Frisians and High Germans, and a full explication of what was to be believed concerning Jesus Christ was required. On the other hand, it is possible that

⁷A. James Reimer draws this conclusion about Mennonite confessions of faith, generally. See *ME*, V s.v. "God (Trinity) Doctrine of," by A. James Reimer. See also Jacobs, *Theologie Reformierter Bekenntnisschriften*, p. 83. This outline is observable in earlier Anabaptist confessions as well. See Arnold Snyder, "The Confession of the Swiss Brethren in Hesse, 1578," in Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism Revisited*, p. 32.

the Flemish hesitated to give a full account of their beliefs in order to avoid offending the Reformed Church, which was dominant in most areas where Mennonites lived. The DC contains only one article explicitly focussed on Christology.⁸

All of the Mennonite confessions clearly indicate a concern or interest in ecclesiology. On the surface there is nothing unusual about this fact, since most Protestant churches of the Reformation, by the end of the sixteenth century were generally occupied with ecclesiological matters. However, the specific articles related to ethical issues--marriage, church discipline, government and oath--which are inextricably tied to the articles on ecclesiology, reflect concerns that Anabaptists dealt with since their beginnings in the Low Countries in the 1530s. The articles specifically having to do with marriage and church discipline reflect the primary points of contention that separated certain Anabaptist groups as far back as the 1550s.

A question remains as to why the JC does not have an explicit article on soteriology? Anabaptist scholars have pointed out that in the surviving Anabaptist groups, there tended to be a shift in emphasis from soteriology to ecclesiology, and that in some instances "ecclesiology circumscribed soteriology"⁹. This development seems to have taken place already in Menno Simons, through the influence of Dirk Philips and Leenaert Bouwens, whose writings reflect a shift in emphasis from the spiritual rebirth of the individual to the purity of the community.¹⁰ It is possible that the JC reflects this latter emphasis of the tradition by not including an article with an explicitly soteriological focus.

⁸See Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht," p. 33; Horst, "The Dordrecht Confession of Faith," p. 8.

⁹Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction*, p. 372.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 341.

2. Mood

In early Christian history confessions often arose in the context of worship, praise and adoration, and consequently appropriated doxological language. Protestant confessions of faith generally did not reflect this kind of language, since their primary concern was to define right doctrine. The Mennonite confessions fall in line with the Reformation and Anabaptist tradition in this regard, although doxological phrases such as in the DC, occasionally appear.¹¹

Clearly distinguishable from the Reformation formulations, however, is the irenic tone found in the Mennonite statements. While articles in the confessions that pertain to church discipline and the judgment of God, contain warnings and describe harsh consequences for the unfaithful, church groups or denominations beyond the Mennonite community are neither condemned nor specifically criticized by name. This is a significant departure from the Augsburg and Belgic confessions, which condemn outright other religious groups including the Anabaptists.¹² The irenic tone is extended in the DC to the state authorities who are even praised for their "laudable rule"

¹¹This is particularly observable in the first article of the DC which includes the following phrase: "There is only one God--none other before him and none other after him--for from, by, and in him are all things. All praise and honor be to him forever. Amen." So "Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 24, article 1.

¹²The condemnations in the Augsburg and Belgic confessions are plainly manifest and need not be detailed here. In this context, it is somewhat of an enigma as to why John Leith describes the tone in the Augsburg confession as "moderate". He was obviously not taking into consideration the wholesale condemnations found throughout the Augsburg confession. See Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*, p. 64. Quite different are the more current observations of those representing the Lutheran Church in Germany who take cognizance of the condemnations in the Augsburg Confession, and state that they no longer obtain. See "Bericht vom Dialog VELKD/Mennoniten," in *Texte aus der VELKD* 53 (Hannover: Lutherisches Kirchenamt, 1993), pp. 15-18.

("Losselijcke Regieringhe").¹³ This attitude toward the state is in keeping with the north German-Dutch Anabaptist tone as reflected in Melchior Hoffman and Menno Simons, who also attempted to maintain positive relations with the state.¹⁴

3. Scripture Use

Along with the churches associated with the Reformation tradition, the Anabaptists and Mennonites who came after placed great value on Biblical authority.¹⁵ Like all the major Reformers they embraced the formal principle of *sola scriptura*. In their opening statements all the Mennonite confessions allude to Scripture as their basis and all provide ample Scripture references in the margins for the purpose of validating their doctrinal views. In one sense at least, Mennonites followed the *sola scriptura* principle to its logical conclusion. While the Augsburg and Belgic confessions substantiate their theological statements with references to church theologians of the past as well as Biblical references, the Mennonite confessions validate their statements only with the latter. The references come most likely from the Bistkens Bible, a Dutch translation widely used by Mennonites after 1560, containing the Apocrypha and the Laodicean Epistle.¹⁶

Quantitative analyses among the Mennonite confessions indicates that the the SC contains 563 biblical references, and the JC and DC contain 395 and 108 references respectively (see Table 3). In comparing the Mennonite confessions of faith with the Protestant confessions, it is evident that the Belgic

¹³"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 33, article 13; "Confessie ende Vredehandelinghe," p. 40.

¹⁴See Voolstra, *Menno Simons: His Image and Message*, p. 95; Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintrach," p. 37.

¹⁵Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 159.

¹⁶ME I, s.v. "Biestkens Bible," by Christian Neff.

confession contains the most biblical references with 689, while the Augsburg confession contains the least with 81. Because of their length in terms of the number of words, however, it is apparent that the SC and the JC actually utilize Scripture references more frequently than the Belgic confession.

There is no clear evidence that would suggest why certain groups included more Scripture references in their confessions than others. A correlation between Scripture frequency and the degree to which Scripture was understood to be normative is not theologically sustainable--certainly not between the Lutheran and Reformed confessions. Likewise, in comparing the Mennonite confessions, it is unlikely that the Waterlanders (in their SC) upheld the normativeness of Scripture above the Frisians and High Germans (in their JC), or that the Flemish (in their DC), among all the Mennonite groups, had the least regard for Biblical authority. The differences in Scripture frequency use, in all probability, has to do with church practices and historical circumstances. It is possible that the Waterlanders were particularly challenged by the English Separatists to demonstrate their faithfulness to the Bible, and thus they included Scripture references with great frequency, while the Flemish, in their internal conversations were not challenged in the same way.

According to one study, Scriptural citations used by Menno Simons and Dirk Philips indicate a clear preference of the New Testament over the Old Testament, and that both occasionally used quotations from the Apocrypha.¹⁷ An examination of the Mennonite confessions, along with the Augsburg and Belgic confessions, indicates that all the confessions are united in their preference for New Testament references (See Table 3.). Further, it is noteworthy that the High German-Frisian confession, the JC, validates a number of its faith statements from Apocryphal

¹⁷Keeney, *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, pp. 38-39.

sources (a total of 8 references come from the Apocrypha). In the SC the difference in authority between the canonical books of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha is explicitly recognized,¹⁸ while in the DC, no position is taken, although the confession utilizes one Apocryphal text. In the JC, the willingness to use Apocryphal sources suggests that the Frisian-High German group was closer to the Anabaptist tradition in its use of Scripture than the other Mennonite groups.

While the Mennonite confessions differ in the frequency of Scripture use, they appear to have a common preference for certain books of the Bible that may point to something like a canon within a canon. The most frequently referenced book of the Old Testament is the book of Genesis. Other frequently referenced books include the Psalms, Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Jeremiah (see Table 6). For the most part, however, the confessions of faith view the New Testament as their primary point of Scriptural reference. In all the Mennonite confessions, the gospel of Matthew is the most frequently used book. In the SC and the JC, the gospel of John is next in frequency followed by Acts and Genesis. In the DC, Genesis is second in terms of frequency followed by the Gospel of John, Acts and I Corinthians (see Table 4). The Augsburg and Belgic confessions give priority to other books in Scripture, although in common with the Mennonite confessions, the Gospels of Matthew and John are books of frequent use. The Augsburg confession contains references primarily from I Corinthians followed by the Gospels of Matthew and John, Acts, Romans and I Timothy. The Belgic confession contains references equally from the Gospel of John and Romans followed by Matthew and I Corinthians. These comparisons between the Mennonite and Protestant confessions indicate in general, that the Mennonite confessions give more priority to the gospel of Matthew, while the Protestant confessions give priority to the

¹⁸Dyck "Short Confession of Faith by Hans de Ries," p. 17, article 29. Hereafter cited as "Short Confession."

Pauline letters.

Further analysis indicates that in the SC and the JC, references to Matthew 25: 32-41 appear most frequently in the margins of the text. In the DC, the Matthew 28:19-20 text is most frequently noted--a Scripture reference that also appears relatively frequently in the SC, the JC (and the Belgic Confession) and has been shown to be one of the most important texts in early Anabaptism. That it appears in the these Mennonite confessions is an indication that the Anabaptist use of Scripture, at least in terms of frequency, has been partially maintained by Mennonites in the seventeenth century.¹⁹ All of the Mennonite confessions also register passages from the first three chapters of the book of Genesis (see Table 4).

In view of these Scriptural texts that are given particular consideration, it appears that Christ's teachings as narrated in the Gospel of Matthew is of primary importance for the Mennonite confessions. Of secondary importance are the Genesis accounts focussing on the creation of humanity and their ability to distinguish good from evil. An examination of the different texts brings to light the following theological foci with a certain anthropological accent: Human beings are free moral agents with the ability to distinguish between good and evil (Genesis 1-3); disciples of Christ and those belonging to the church are called to specific tasks and responsibilities in this world, namely to preach and to baptize (Mt. 28); and at the end of time, those

¹⁹In a recent study the Renaissance and Reformation historian, Abraham Friesen, has argued for the centrality of the Matthean Great Commission text for the Anabaptists, which, he argues, the Anabaptists borrowed from the sixteenth century humanist, Erasmus of Rotterdam. Erasmus's interpretation of Christ's Great Commission, according to Friesen, was an essential pillar upon which post-revolutionary Dutch Anabaptism was built. See Friesen, *Erasmus, the Anabaptists, and the Great Commission*, p. 65. "Erasmus's interpretation provided the Anabaptists not only the structure within which the preaching of the gospel, conversion, baptism, and discipleship were brought into relationship with one another, but also with the content of each of these four categories." So *ibid.*, p. 5.

belonging in the church will have to give an account for their actions while on earth (Mt. 25). Do these anthropological themes reflect the heart and theological centre of the Mennonite confessions? This is difficult to assess.²⁰ It is noteworthy that these themes are inter-related and point more broadly to notions concerning human freedom, responsibility and accountability--notions emphasized in Radical Protestantism generally, and in Anabaptism particularly.²¹ Evidently, the preceding summary regarding Scripture use in the confessions points to areas of continuity with Anabaptism.

4. Hermeneutical Assumptions

Is it possible to take one step further to say that the confessions reflect a Scriptural hermeneutic similar to the hermeneutics of the Anabaptists?

In chapter two, drawing on current Anabaptist scholarship, I have noted the tension between the letter and the spirit in sixteenth century Anabaptist hermeneutics. In the first decade of north German-Dutch Anabaptism, the hermeneutical framework of Melchior Hoffman, Bernhard Rothmann and David Joris was heavily influenced by the belief that they were living in the Last Days. Since the latter days took place in the age of the Spirit, these

²⁰Statistical evidence that has been gathered thus far can give us clues to the theological orientation of our confessional texts, but cannot be seen as conclusive testimony. Sometimes the statistical evidence by itself can be misleading. On the surface, the Matthew 25 text figures prominently for the SC and the JC, yet in both confessions this text is located almost exclusively in the final article dealing with the coming of Christ and the last judgment, where it is used repeatedly to undergird the notion of human accountability. The text is not used frequently to validate other theological claims. On the other hand, the Matthew 28 text is used much more evenly throughout the two confessions and thus may figure more prominently in the theology of the confessions than the Matthew 25 text.

²¹For a theological overview of radical Protestantism and Anabaptism, see Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, pp. 25-49; 83-99.

Anabaptists tended to assume a sharp distinction between letter and spirit, emphasizing the importance of the "spiritual" or "inward" meaning over the literal meaning of the biblical text. In addition they appropriated figurative readings of texts that could be either typological or allegorical in nature.²² Yet, as time passed, a discernible hermeneutical shift took place in the north German-Dutch Anabaptism, whereby the next leaders, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, increasingly emphasized the literal, written Word, particularly the commands of Christ as positive law to be appropriated by Christians. While continuing to interpret Scripture figuratively, and continuing to emphasize the role of the Spirit in all biblical interpretation, both Menno and Dirk, especially in their later years, reflected a biblicism that favoured literal obedience to the commands of Christ in Scripture.²³

Do any of these hermeneutical tendencies resurface in the later Mennonite confessions of faith? In my view a number of hermeneutical assumptions found in Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, continue to govern biblical interpretation and application. A Christocentric reading of the Bible, for instance, is clearly evident in the SC and DC. According to the SC, it is Christ who has revealed and proclaimed the will of God as that which is required of Christians. Specifically, it is Christ's life and teachings that point out the law of Christians, "the rule of life and the path to eternal life."²⁴ Here, Christological presuppositions for the life of discipleship--an important Anabaptist theme--emerge. Further on, Jesus is also identified as

²²Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, pp. 86, 164; Waite, *David Joris and Dutch Anabaptism*, pp. 90-91; Depperman, *Melchior Hoffman: Social Unrest and Apocalyptic Visions in the Age of Reformation*, pp. 241-245.

²³Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 380.

²⁴"Short Confession," p. 11, article 11; *Corte Belijdenisse*, p. 13.

the bearer of the doctrine ("leere") that comes from heaven. This doctrine is described, according to the SC, as being located "in the writings of the New Testament, to which we add all that is contained in the canonical books of the Old Testament and which is in harmony with the teaching of Christ and his apostles"²⁵ In the DC, Christ is described as the author and initiator of the New Testament, who contains "the whole counsel and will of his heavenly Father as far as is necessary for salvation."²⁶ It is this new and eternal covenant that is the bearer of the universally good news that becomes the measure of the true gospel.²⁷ Hence, in both the SC and the DC, it is the New Testament, and particularly, Jesus' teachings and identity that are at the centre of Scriptural understanding and interpretation. It is through a Christological reading of Scripture that the will of God and the way of salvation is understood.

A figurative reading of Scripture as reflected in Menno Simons and Dirk Philips is also evident in the SC and the JC. In the SC this figurative reading is utilized to emphasize the primacy of Christ. While Christ's life and teachings are central for Christian belief and conduct, the "law of Moses, with its shadows and figures, the priestly office of the temple, altar, sacrifice and all else that was a part of the priestly office...(are) the image, the shadow of him who was to come."²⁸ In the JC, this hermeneutical principle is operative in explaining the coming of Christ. In response to the fall of humanity, it is explained that God "...not only frequently promised man to send His only beloved Son as a Saviour, but *prefigured* it by various types" ("*maer oock met verscheyden*

²⁵"Short Confession," p. 17, article 29.

²⁶"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 27, article 5.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸"Short Confession," p. 11, articles 10 and 11.

figuyren gheyrefiguyreert").²⁹ At another point this figurative language in the JC is utilized to explain the relationship between the true church on earth, and the church in heaven.³⁰ Evidently, the figurative language characteristic in early Anabaptism continues here.

A question remaining is the relationship between the spirit and the letter in early seventeenth century hermeneutics. There seems to be little doubt among scholars today, that during the time that Menno Simons and Dirk Philips were in leadership, there was a hermeneutical shift that took place, whereby the literal reading of Scripture became increasingly dominant.³¹ But can one go so far as to say, with Arnold Snyder, that after Menno and Dirk, the spiritualist impulse virtually died out?³² Most scholars have not gone this far and have actually noted the continuing spiritual impulse particularly among the Waterlander Mennonites. While the spiritualist connection has usually been associated with spiritualists such as Casper Schwenckfeld, Sebastian Franck or Dirk Vokertszoon Coornert,³³ linkages have

²⁹Braght, *Martyrs Mirror*, p. 34, article 3 (hereafter cited as *Martyrs Mirror*; "Corte Confessie," p. 7.

³⁰*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 36, article 10.

³¹See Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 341.

³²See for instance *ibid.*, pp. 172, 220, 341, 347, 351, 363, 368-369, 379-381.

³³See Kuehler, *Geschiedenis*, I, pp. 364-365; Meihuizen, "Spiritualistic Tendencies and Movements among the Dutch Mennonites of the 16th and 17th Centuries," pp. 263, 274-275; Dyck, "Hans de Ries: Theologian and Churchman," pp. 196, 221, 252-253, 254, 260; Dyck, "The Life of the Spirit in Anabaptism," p. 324-326; Dyck, "Hans de Ries and the Legacy of Menno," pp. 409-416; Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, pp. 1186-1191; Voolstra, "Path to Conversion," pp. 102-103; Visser, *Broeders in de geest*, I, pp. 97-98, 108, 112-114, 117-122; Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, pp. 95, 123. John Horsch is an example of someone who minimizes the spiritualistic impulse among the Waterlanders, and also the differences between Anabaptism and the Waterlanders. See John Horsch, "Is Dr. Kuehler's Conception of Early Dutch Anabaptism Historically Sound?" p. 114.

also been made between the Waterlanders and Anabaptism.³⁴

As far as the JC and DC is concerned, it appears that the letter of Scripture is normative for an understanding of God's revelation. No other source of revelation is mentioned for Christian faith and life. In the DC, the path to an understanding of truth lies in a Christological reading of Scripture, and there is no criterion outside of the Scriptural witness from which truth claims may be evaluated. In the SC, however, the spiritualist legacy continues in that the knowledge of Christ is found in Scripture, but also *beyond* Scripture. Christian doctrine is not only based on the teachings of Christ and his apostles as noted above, but it is also based on what the Waterlanders would say is "Christ's spiritual kingdom". The doctrine necessary for salvation is that which "is in harmony with the teaching of Christ and his apostles," but it is also that "which conforms to the rule of his spiritual kingdom and is united with it" ("*en met de regeringe van sijnen geestelijcken Rijcke ghemeenschap heeft ende eenich is*")³⁵ Evidently, a spiritualist epistemology is not lost in the SC, but continues to influence how the Scriptures are to be read. This becomes even clearer in the confession when it addresses the topic concerning the knowledge of Christ as evidenced in the following quotation:

He must not only be known according to the flesh, or confessed literally according to historical knowledge . . . we must rise higher and confess Christ also according to the Spirit . . . and as the Scriptures teach, receive this knowledge with a believing heart. . . . We must know Christ according to the Spirit that he may baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire, feed us with heavenly food and drink, making us partakers of the divine nature. . . . This we call a knowledge of Christ according to the Spirit, without which the knowledge of Christ according to the flesh is not

³⁴Kuehler, *Geschiedenis*, I, p. 374-375; Kuehler, *Geschiedenis*, II, pp. 30, 115; Meihuizen, "Spiritualist Tendencies," p. 277.

³⁵"Short Confession," p. 17, article 29; "Corte Belijdenisse," p. 28.

sufficient for salvation.³⁶

Here, in the SC, the radical, prophetic spiritualism of early Dutch Anabaptism is no longer present, but a modified spiritualist epistemology continues with the insistence that the Spirit must inform any true knowledge of God.³⁷ In this instance, not a strict, "legalistic" but a modified, spiritual Christocentric focus is maintained.

As I have noted above, scholars have attributed this spiritualism to the wider non-Anabaptist spiritualism of the Radical Reformation. It is undoubtedly the case that spiritualists like Schwenckfeld, Franck and Coornert may have directly influenced the thinking of the Waterlanders--as scholars have claimed--and this may be demonstrated in the SC. Yet it must be pointed out that this "spiritualist" appropriation was very much in keeping with an Anabaptist hermeneutic that insisted on the presence of the Spirit in Scriptural interpretation. Particularly if one takes into account the spiritualist impulse of the earliest Anabaptists in the Low Countries, it is evident that the hermeneutics as reflected in the Waterlander confession stands in continuity with this north German-Dutch Anabaptist tradition.

5. Findings

In light of the preceding overview some general observations may now be possible. It is evident, first of all, that the literary and structural characteristics as well as the doctrinal outline of the Mennonite confessions of faith resemble the characteristics and outline of the classical confessional and

³⁶"Short Confession," pp. 14-15, article 19.

³⁷Menno Simons and Dirk Philips were certainly inclined to emphasize the letter over the spirit, and in this sense they were part of the trend in later Anabaptism, which emphasized less and less the work of the Holy Spirit. But this is not to say that they categorically no longer used language common to the spiritualists.

creedal tradition of Christian orthodoxy. There is little doubt that through repeated contact with the mainline Protestant churches, Mennonites were "learning" from other denominations, in terms of how to write confessional statements. Yet it would be a mistake to suggest that Mennonites were thus turning their backs on their heritage through the writing of confessions in this literary fashion. The confessional genre was not at all new to the Mennonite tradition. The Anabaptists, and the Mennonites who came after, were well acquainted with the Apostles' Creed. The writing of confessions in a comprehensive and systematic fashion, as I have argued in chapters three and four, was a natural development given the historical context of the Mennonite churches at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries.

In terms of content, preliminary observations suggest that the confessions reflect earlier Anabaptist concerns and emphases. The articles of faith related to specific ethical issues-- marriage, church discipline, government and oath--clearly exhibit the particular concerns of an earlier Anabaptist era. The irenic tone, toward other religious groups and the secular authorities, is also in keeping with an earlier north German-Dutch Anabaptist tone as reflected particularly in Melchior Hoffman and Menno Simons. Finally, the frequent uses of Scriptural texts that focus on theological motifs related to human freedom, responsibility and accountability, as well as the figurative and spiritualist readings of the Bible, are a further indication of a positive relationship to an earlier Anabaptist era.

It is in the area of Scripture use and hermeneutics, however, where some differentiation between the confessions of faith is necessary. The Jan Cents confession, in its frequent use of Apocryphal writings, appears to be in closest proximity to north German-Dutch Anabaptism, whereas the Short Confession has most deliberately opted for the "Protestant" canon. With respect to hermeneutics, both the Frisian-High German and Flemish confessions, in their literal reading of Scripture, are closest

in line with the hermeneutical trajectory of the older Menno Simons and his colleague, Dirk Philips. The Waterlander confession, on the other hand, shows greater affinity to the spiritualist impulse of earlier north German-Dutch Anabaptism, having been influenced by the general spiritualist impulse that was present throughout the Low Countries at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries.

The findings noted above have established certain areas of theological continuity between the seventeenth century Mennonite confessions of faith and their sixteenth century north German-Dutch Anabaptist heritage. The argument for theological continuity, however, cannot simply remain with questions related to textual matters, mood, Scripture use and hermeneutics. It will also be necessary to focus more intentionally on the doctrinal perspectives of the confessions. This will be the task of the next two chapters that will examine specifically the doctrines in the confessions of faith related to Theology (God), anthropology, Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology.

VI DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS

The immediate occasion for the writing of the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions was to facilitate unity discussions. The issues that were of particular concern in these discussions were, above all, ecclesiological in nature. Yet other issues, intrinsically related to ecclesiology could not be overlooked. In the context of an increasingly tolerant and pluralistic culture there was an urgency to address all of the major doctrines of the Christian faith. Since the confessions of faith were generally being utilized in a variety of ways beyond their function of facilitating unity discussions--for catechetical instruction, teaching within the congregations, preserving Mennonite distinctives, witnessing to others, and giving an account to the civil authorities and other Christian denominations, the essentials of Christian and Mennonite belief--it seemed necessary to formulate a comprehensive theological account of the faith, in the sense of including the whole range of Christian doctrine. For this reason, following the other Churches of the Reformation, the Waterlanders, the Frisians and High Germans, and the Flemish began their confessions of faith with articles on the doctrine of God, and then continued with a summary of all the main doctrines of the Christian faith, ending with a discussion on eschatology.

It is the examination of these articles to which I now turn. In the previous chapter I have already noted points of theological continuity between the confessions of faith and their heritage. I will continue this line of argument in the present chapter that will proceed with a more systematic analysis of the content of the faith as reflected in the confessional statements themselves. In this chapter the articles that have to do with God, anthropology, Christology and soteriology will be of primary concern. In chapter VII, I will focus on those articles that are more directly related to ecclesiology; that is, the nature of the

church, the role of church leadership, the sacraments, ethics and church discipline within the congregation, and the destiny of the community of saints at the end of time.

1. Theology (God)

Anabaptism in the Low Countries had tended to affirm classical and traditional views of the doctrine of God. By the seventeenth century, the Reformed Church was the dominant Christian institution, particularly in the regions where Mennonites lived. The Reformed Church strongly affirmed classical and traditional conceptions of God in the face of Socinian views, which emphasized that Christ was God's messenger and the divinely chosen head of the church, but did not constitute the same ontological substance as God.¹ While some Mennonites were attracted to Socinian views,² it is evident that the theology of the largest Mennonite denominations, as expressed in their confessional statements, continued to affirm classical and traditional perspectives on the doctrine of God in consonance with their own theological tradition.

The Waterlander confession--the Short Confession of 1610 (hereafter SC)--uses a combination of Biblical language and language borrowed from the Christian tradition, to articulate a position that affirms both the oneness and triune character of God. In expressing the oneness of God, the SC includes a list of attributes pointing to God's ultimacy, moral perfection and mercy. Employing terminology familiar to Anabaptism,³ God is understood to be "eternal, incomprehensible, everlasting, invisible, immutable, almighty, merciful, righteous, perfect,

¹Fix, *Prophecy and Reason*, p. 143.

²Kuehler, *Het Socinianisme in Nederland*, pp. 95-104; Kuehler, *Geschiedenis*, II, pp. 177-183.

³See Mennon Simons, "A Solemn Confession of the Triune, Eternal, and True God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," in *CWMS*, pp. 491.

wise, alone good a fountain of life, the source of all good."⁴ Further, God is linked with the creation of the world and its preservation. In describing this linkage, the SC appears to borrow terminology originating in the Constantinopolitan Creed,⁵ probably mediated via the Augsburg or Belgic confession. In the words of the SC, God is "Creator and Sustainer of all things visible and invisible"⁶

The term "Trinity" does not appear in the SC as it does in the Belgic Confession,⁷ but a trinitarian theology emerges nevertheless. According to the Holy Scriptures, the SC maintains, God is revealed and differentiated ("*onderscheyden*")⁸ "as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, being three yet, nevertheless, one God."⁹ The SC outlines this differentiation primarily in "immanent" terms, in that the Father is understood as the origin and beginning of all things, the Son being the eternal Word and Wisdom and the Holy Spirit reflecting the power and might of God. Noteworthy is the classical Western formula that describes the Holy Spirit "proceeding from the Father and the Son."¹⁰ Here the SC digresses from its north German-Dutch Anabaptist roots, and particularly with the appropriation of the *filioque* clause, appears to be dependant on the Reformed tradition as expressed in

⁴"Short Confession of Faith," p. 11, article 1.

⁵See Leith, ed., *Creeds of the Churches*, p. 33.

⁶"Short Confession," p. 11, article 1. References to the "invisible" creation most likely refer to angels. See for instance Jan Rohls, *Theologie reformierter Bekenntnisschriften: von Zuerich bis Barmen* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), p. 65.

⁷"The Belgic Confession," in Arthur C. Cochrane, ed., *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century* (Philadelphia: the Westminster Press), pp. 193-194, article 9. Hereafter cited as "Belgic Confession."

⁸"Corte Belijdenisse," p. 4.

⁹"Short Confession," p. 11, article 2.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, article 3.

the Belgic Confession.¹¹

The SC concludes its summary of the doctrine of God with an affirmation of the unity of God. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are understood to be "neither divided nor different in nature, essence, or essential attributes: to wit, eternal, omnipotent, invisible, immortal, glorious, and the like".¹² The language that the SC appropriates comes partly from Scripture, but in using terms such as "Wesen" ("essence"), or "wesentlijcke eygenschappen" ("essential attributes"),¹³ it is likely that the SC, once again, is borrowing vocabulary from the wider Christian tradition.

Similar to the SC, the confession of Jan Cents (hereafter JC) begins its doctrine of God with an affirmation concerning God's oneness, followed by a list of attributes emphasizing God's transcendent character and moral perfection. Like the SC, the wording in the JC uses both Biblical terminology and wording arising out of the Christian tradition. God is described as an "eternal, incomprehensible, spiritual Being ("Geestelijck wesen") . . . to whom alone is ascribed omnipotence, mercy, righteousness, perfection, wisdom, all goodness, and

¹¹See "Belgic Confession," p. 193, article 8. The *filioque* clause in consonance with the Western tradition is maintained even though the *Concept of Cologne* of 1591 continues to reflect the traditional Anabaptist formulation of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. See Gross and Gleysteen, "The First Mennonite Merger: The Concept of Cologne," p. 8, article 3. Interesting to note is the fact that in the traditional Old Flemish confession, the so-called Thirty Three Articles, the *filioque* clause appears. See *Bekentnisse des Gheloofs na Godes Woordt* (Tot Hoorn: Zacharias Cornelisz. Boek-verkooper, 1617), n.p., articles 3 and 4.

¹²"Short Confession," p. 11, article 3.

¹³*Corte Belijdenisse*, p. 4, article 3. "Terms like 'substance,' 'essence,' 'hypostasis,' 'perichoresis,' and even 'person' (as the latter term is employed classically and technically) all derive from the Greek and Roman background of the postbiblical era." So Douglas John Hall, *Professing the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 57.

omniscience."¹⁴ Echoing the phraseology of the Constantinopolitan Creed, God is perceived to have created heaven and earth, out of nothing, "together with all things visible and invisible" ("*Sampt alle sienlijcke ende onsienlijcke dinghen uyt niet gheschapen*").¹⁵

These transcendent and moral attributes of God are augmented through the names which God is called in the Bible such as "a fountain of life, the source of all good, the Creator of all things; and the Preserver of the same . . . the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God Schadai, the God Jehovah, the God of Israel, I am that I am, the Alpha and Omega, etc."¹⁶ Here an emphasis on the historical and narrative conceptions of God, not unlike the language of God's immanence that one finds among Anabaptists such as Dirk Philips.¹⁷ In the confession God is linked to the creation of the world and its preservation, and to God's continuing involvement in sustaining the world and participation in the history of Israel.

However, the primary names of God, according to the JC, come from the New Testament where God is called by three distinguishable (*onderscheydelijcke*)¹⁸ names--"God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."¹⁹ Like the SC, the JC is trinitarian in its theology, differentiating as well as unifying the Father, Son

¹⁴*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 33; "Corte Confessie," p. 3.

¹⁵*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 34; "Corte Confessie," p. 5. The JC in its original edition, calculates creation, before the creation of humanity, to have taken place in 5 days (*viyf daghen*), while the *Martyrs Mirror* wants to insert a corrective and notes that creation took place in "six days." See *ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷The language here appears to be following Dirk Philips. See for instance Dirk's "Confession of our Faith (concerning) God," in *WDP*, p. 62ff.

¹⁸"Corte Confessie," p. 4.

¹⁹*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 34.

and Spirit.²⁰ It maintains that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are differentiated in so far as the names are different; yet as far as their divine nature and attributes are concerned they are one and undivided.²¹

In article 8, where the JC focusses on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, further distinctions between Father, Son and Spirit are illuminated. The Holy Spirit "is a wisdom, strength and power of God, that proceeds from the Father through the Son" ("*die vanden Vater door den Soone uytgaet*").²² Here the terminology regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit clearly shows an affinity to the Anabaptist trinitarian formulations of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips.

In the Flemish confession, the Dordrecht Confession (hereafter DC), the doctrine of God is less detailed than what is observable in the JC or DC. There is no distinguishing between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the confession simply emphasizes the unity and eternal nature of God with the words: "There is only one God--none other before him and none other after him--for from, by, and in him are all things."²³ Hence a trinitarian theology is present but hardly developed. The absence of such a development may be explained by the fact that some voices in the Mennonite tradition, particularly among the Old Flemish, had cautioned against using terminology describing God beyond Biblical terminology.²⁴

²⁰Here parallel phraseology may be found in the Belgic confession as well as an earlier Mennonite confession produced by Jacques Outerman. See "Belgic Confession," p. 193, art. 8; *Martyrs Mirror*, p. 1107.

²¹*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 34.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 35; "Corte Confessie," p. 14.

²³"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 24, article 1.

²⁴In describing God and the intra-trinitarian relations, Jacques Outerman apparently was reluctant in using terminology beyond the Bible. He was particularly critical of terms like *wezen*

The confession does not actually begin with a statement about God *per se*, but rather with a concern about the importance of faith, and the promise of a reward for those who are seeking God.²⁵ Evidently, for the Flemish, belief in God is not merely a cognitive assent to particular teachings, but is a matter that affects the heart and entire spiritual dimension of the believer. This emphasis on faith in the article is reinforced through grammatical accents²⁶ and the doxological phrase that follows the statement on the unity and eternal nature of God which states: "All praise and honor be to him forever. Amen."²⁷

Nevertheless, with these different accents and emphases, the DC eventually goes on to repeat theological emphases found in the other Mennonite confessions. God is "one," "eternal," "almighty," and "incomprehensible," and is recognized as "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."²⁸ This God is linked to the creation of the world and its preservation. While the confession does not appropriate philosophical language with respect to the Trinity, like the other Mennonite confessions, it is not disinclined to appropriate the language of the Constantinopolitan creed: "God is creator of

(being), *natuur* (nature) and *persoon* (person). In the confession by Jacques Outerman the following is stated: "The terms *one essence, trinity, three persons*, we avoid, because they are unknown to the Scriptures, and because it is dangerous, in naming God, to use other words than those of the holy Scriptures." So *Martyrs Mirror*, p. 1107. See also Voolstra, *Het Woord is vlees geworden*, pp. 166, 168.

²⁵"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 24, article 1.

²⁶The confession, for instance, reflects a belief "in" God, rather than a belief that there "is" a God as noted in the other two confessions (*ibid*). This grammatical accent suggests more than the fact that God exists; it presupposes a faith construct with concomitant obligations and commitments to this existing God.

²⁷*Ibid*.

²⁸*Ibid*.

all things, visible and invisible."²⁹

To summarize, it is evident that early seventeenth century Mennonites in their confessional statements, reflect the beliefs held by orthodox Christianity and Anabaptism. The JC and DC reflect Anabaptist characteristics in that they utilize predominantly biblical language. The JC, in particular, with its tendency to stress the immanence of God, and its characteristic trinitarian language appears to come closest to reflecting the theology of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. The SC, while not departing from Anabaptist thought, most readily borrows language from mainline Protestantism, in its use of philosophical language, in following the terminology of the Belgic Confession, and in appropriating the Western formulation of the *filioque*.

2. Anthropology

North German-Dutch Anabaptists, along with the mainline Reformation churches, accepted the belief that human beings were created in God's image and likeness, and at the same time emphasized the fallenness of human nature that all generations had inherited as a result of the Fall. Unlike most Protestants, however, they did not believe that children needed to be baptized in order for their sin to be removed. Children were safe from condemnation through the universal grace of God that had taken place through Christ's death. They also rejected notions of predestination and insisted that human beings had a free will, and were capable of responding to the prevenient grace of God. To believe otherwise would make God the author of sin.

Throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, these Anabaptist views were tested on several fronts. In the debates with the Reformed leadership, Mennonites were frequently challenged to rethink their point of view. As we have seen, eventually within the Reformed church itself, Calvinists and Arminians (later called Remonstrants) battled over issues

²⁹Ibid.

related to predestination and free will. In 1609 and 1610, supporters of Arminius presented to the Dutch government their "Five Articles of the Remonstrance", rejecting the view of unconditional predestination and upholding humanity's free will. The Calvinists replied at the Synod of Dort in 1618 and 1619 with their five "Canons of Dort", affirming opposite conclusions. As Mennonites reflected on the essentials of the faith in relation to sin and human freedom, a number of theological avenues seemed possible.

The SC addresses issues related to anthropology in more detail than the other Mennonite confessions, and it is the only confession under review that deals explicitly with the topic of predestination.³⁰ It is possible that the topic of predestination was a burning issue for the Waterlanders, but it may also have been of particular concern for the English Separatists, who were considering joining the Waterlanders, thus compelling them to deal with the issue directly in their confession.³¹ In any case, the SC stresses at the outset the goodness of humanity at creation, that Adam was created in God's image, that Adam fell into sin and disgrace, and that salvation was made available to Adam and his posterity.³² In terms of the consequences of the fall, the Waterlander confession clearly remains at a distance from mainline Reformation views. The confession emphasizes that none of Adam's descendants "are born with sin or guilt."³³ Rather, it is God's promises or grace, that humanity has inherited. Both Menno Simons and Dirk Philips had differentiated between sin and guilt, taking the view that

³⁰The SC focusses on anthropological issues in four articles (art.4-7), the JC in three articles (art. 2-4) and the DC in three articles (art. 1-3).

³¹So argues Piet Visser. See his *Broeders in de geest*, I, p. 103.

³²"Short Confession," p. 11, art. 4.

³³Ibid.

although children were born with some physical corruption as a result of the fall, they were not guilty of sin, being held safe through Christ's redemptive work on the cross.³⁴ The SC does not reflect this nuanced differentiation, and prefers rather to emphasize that children have neither inherited sin nor guilt.

On the issue of predestination and free will, the SC continues in the Anabaptist tradition upholding the freedom of the will. While grace is prevenient and humanity plays no role in initiating salvation, humanity has the ability to respond to this grace.³⁵ Humanity is fallen but the will is not completely bound. Even as Adam had the freedom to accept or reject evil before the fall, the SC reasons, so also are Adam and his descendants able to hear and accept the good that is offered after the fall. This, however, is not because of some natural ability within the human creature. "This ability to accept or reject the grace of God has remained with the posterity of the first man as a gift of grace" ("*is uyt ghenaden ghebleben by syne nakomelingen*").³⁶ Hence, the doctrine of grace and the freedom of the will are held together. While grace is prevenient and humanity plays no role in initiating saving grace, human freedom is preserved.

Evidently, this emphasis on the freedom of the will was

³⁴Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 68.

³⁵In the Magisterial Reformation the possibility of salvation lay not in humanity's "exercise of a restored free will but in God's electing and invincible grace as the overcoming of a will that remained in bondage." So Beachy, *The Concept of Grace in the Radical Reformation*, pp. 54-55, n. 126.

³⁶"Short Confession," p. 11, art. 5; *Corte Belijdenisse*, p. 6. According to J. A. Oosterbann, the conception that grace begins at creation rather than in Christ's reconciling work, can also be found in Menno Simons. J. A. Oosterbann, "Grace in Dutch Mennonite Theology," in Dyck, *A Legacy of Faith*, p. 81. This grace is not to be viewed, however, in the Thomistic sense as a thing, entity or quality of the soul, or something which is infused into humanity "as a supernatural gift (the *donum supernaturale gratiae*)." So *ibid.*, p. 72.

important to the Waterlanders because it ultimately explained the origin of sin--a theological problem for those holding to a doctrine of unconditional predestination. Similar to the Anabaptist, Melchior Hoffman, the Waterlanders wanted to preserve the sovereignty of God, but did not want to place the origin of sin with God.³⁷

Sin and unrighteousness cannot come from God, the SC states, since he is "author, source and creator of the things that are good, holy, clean, pure, and conformable to his nature."³⁸ Sin must come from elsewhere; it must come from "evil man, through his free choice of sin, together with the spirit of evil within him."³⁹ Since the origins of sin can be found within humanity's free choice (together with the spirit of evil), humanity is guilty, and punishment is a deserving consequence. God "neither predestined ["gepredestineert"], determined ["gheschickt"], nor created anyone for damnation, neither willing nor ordaining their sinful life in order to bring them to destruction."⁴⁰ Rather, God's election was universal. Christ, the SC maintains,

was given over to judgment, sacrificed and died for the reconciliation of all men....All those who now receive this grace of God in Christ (who came for the salvation of the world) with penitent and believing hearts and remain in him are and remain the elect ["uytverkorene"] whom God has ordained [gheordent] before the foundation of the world that they should share his glory.⁴¹

Thus, the SC does not reject the notion that God elects (or ordains) human beings for salvation, but this election is

³⁷See Melchior Hoffman, "The Ordinance of God," in George H. Williams and Angel M. Mergal, eds., *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), pp. 182-203.

³⁸"A Short Confession," p. 11, article 6.

³⁹Ibid., p. 12, art. 6.

⁴⁰"Short Confession," p. 12, article 7; "Corte Belijdenisse," p. 9.

⁴¹Ibid.

ostensibly universal. Those who will not "taste the Supper of the Lord" are those who themselves, out of their own free will, have despised or rejected the grace of God.⁴² In this respect, the SC appears to stand firmly in the tradition of north German-Dutch Anabaptism.⁴³

The JC does not address anthropological issues to the same extent as the SC. There is no direct discussion of predestination and the origin of evil. The topic of predestination may not have been a "hot item" for the Frisians and the High Germans as it was for the Waterlanders. Still, anthropological themes are addressed in the confession and Anabaptist accents are discernible. The JC not only affirms the goodness of humanity at creation, as in the SC, but actually goes further to make a clear distinction between humankind and the rest of creation. Human beings are exalted above all creatures having a living soul, wisdom, understanding and reason. Having the divine image ("*Goddelijcken Beelde*") means being created holy, righteous and for immortality ("*tot onsterflicheyt gheschapen*").⁴⁴

While the SC simply states that humanity "fell into sin and disgrace,"⁴⁵ the JC describes the fall of humanity in greater detail and emphasis, noting the helpless nature of humanity's

⁴²Hans de Ries, who was largely responsible for the formulation of the SC, in 1578 associated predestination of God with God's foreknowledge. The SC points in this direction as well. See Hans de Ries, "Rekenschap van gevoelens afgelegd voor de overheid te Middelburg," April 7, 1578, p. 3 (Archief No. 425) in Cornelius J. Dyck, "Sinners and Saints," in Dyck, *Legacy of Faith*, p. 95.

⁴³The SC certainly stands in the tradition of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, but the emphasis on God's sovereignty as well as the notion that God would not create anything that is not conformable to his nature, may stand even closer to Melchior Hoffman's thought. See Voolstra, *Het Woord*, p. 126; Klaus Deppermann, *Melchior Hoffman*, pp. 220-223.

⁴⁴*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 34, article. 2; "Corte Confessie," p. 5.

⁴⁵"A Short Confession of Faith," p. 11, article 4.

fallen condition, and the inability of humanity to redeem itself. Along with the Anabaptists, it is stressed that not only the first human creature experiences the fall, but all of Adam's posterity fall into death and condemnation. This emphasis is in keeping particularly with north German-Dutch Anabaptist accents that emphasize the radicality of the fall, and original sin as a poison or alien corruption.⁴⁶ Whether children are therefore guilty of this sin, however, is not addressed by the JC.

A further theme in the JC, is the balance between God's justice and human accountability. Here the JC continues its identification with the Anabaptist tradition. On the one hand, the justice of God ("Gerechtigheyt Godts") demands punishment that cannot be satisfied by human means, and thus God "not only frequently promised man to send His only beloved Son as a Saviour, but prefigured it by various types."⁴⁷ On the other hand, humanity has been left, after as well as before the fall, the freedom to accept or reject the proffered grace ("gheyrefenteerde ghenade") of God.⁴⁸ Significant to note here, is that as in the SC, although the freedom of the will is stressed in order to underscore human accountability, God's grace is clearly prevenient and comes prior to human activity.

The JC concludes its anthropological discussion highlighting the implications of humanity's ability to reject or respond to divine grace. As a result of free will, all will receive their due punishment or reward. God "will have just cause, on the last day, to punish the despisers with the pains of hell, and reward the obedient lambs with the joys of heaven."⁴⁹

The DC, at the outset, follows the theological contours of

⁴⁶See Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 67; Alvin Beachy, *The Concept of Grace*, pp. 35-37.

⁴⁷*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 34, article 3; "Corte Confessie," p. 7.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹ "Martyrs Mirror," p. 34.

the JC, and in some instances echoes the ideas, if not the exact terminology of the Frisian-High German confession.⁵⁰ The fall is described in radical terms, although it is unclear whether condemnation is a result of inheritance, that is, inherent sinfulness as a result of Adam and Eve's disobedience, or because of actual sin which individuals commit. The Flemish confession actually holds the two possibilities in balance. Sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, yet "all have sinned and (thus) incurred the wrath of God and fallen under his commendation [sic]."⁵¹

Perhaps the most notable characteristic of the DC with respect to anthropology is its lack of explicit discussion concerning free will. Sjouke Voolstra is certainly right in his observation that in their confession, the Flemish wanted to emphasize humanity's inability to redeem itself because of its radically fallen nature.⁵² This, however, does not satisfactorily explain why the other side of the "Anabaptist coin" is not mentioned--that human beings nevertheless have the ability to respond to God's grace. Is it possible that the

⁵⁰"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 24, article. 1. That humanity was created both in God's "image and likeness" is, however, unique to the DC and reflects the distinction that Thomas Aquinas made between *imago* and *similitudo*--the former being a part of nature and the latter being present as a result of a grace being infused into humanity "as a supernatural gift (the *donum supernaturale gratiae*)." So Oosterbaan, "Grace in Dutch Mennonite Theology," p. 72. It is unlikely, however, that the Flemish wanted to make a distinction between "image" and "likeness". More than likely they were simply borrowing terminology from the Belgic Confession. See "Belgic Confession," p. 198.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 25, article. 2. Sjouke Voolstra maintains that for the Flemish, original sin is understood more in terms of original guilt. See Voolstra, "Dopers belijden," p. 22. Gerald Studer believes it is significant that "in place of the total sinfulness often stressed in Protestant confessions, this article speaks only of total inability to redeem ourselves." So Studer, "The Dordrecht Confession of Faith," p. 513.

⁵²Voolstra, "Dopers belijden," p. 22.

Flemish were being influenced by Reformed theology in this instance? This is not likely, since the confession at other points (as will be indicated further on) clearly emphasizes human accountability and the ability of human beings to freely respond to the Divine initiative. Hence, far more likely, as Hans-Juergen Goertz and Irvin Horst have suggested, is the possibility that social and political factors played a role in how this question of human freedom was addressed. The Flemish were concerned not to offend their Reformed neighbours, and thus wavered or compromised in order to avoid offence.⁵³

The DC concludes with the conviction that all is not lost with the fall of humanity. Underscored is the notion that through the promise of the incarnation, salvation through faith is possible, for the first parents in Paradise, their offspring as well as the patriarchs. Thus while a dismal picture is portrayed of human nature, the incarnation is understood as the key to human hope and restoration.⁵⁴

An examination of the theological anthropology of the confessions of faith in light of the Anabaptist tradition does not suggest uniformity but common emphases emerge nevertheless. For instance, the confessions all acknowledge the created goodness of humanity in creation, as well as a fall through human failure and sin, leading to dire consequences and separation from God. All of the confessions also indicate the possibility of universal redemption for the world in Jesus Christ.

Among the three confessions under review, the SC appears to reflect the most optimistic anthropology. This is evident in its brief attention to human failure, its relatively lengthy emphasis on human freedom, and its rejection of inherited sin and guilt at birth. This is somewhat of a departure from north German-Dutch Anabaptist perspectives that stress the radicality of the fall

⁵³Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht," p. 33; Horst, "The Dordrecht Confession of Faith," p. 8.

⁵⁴"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 25, article 3.

and the hopeless condition of humanity as a result. The other two confessions clearly put a greater emphasis on human fallenness. While the JC highlights the exalted nature of humanity in creation, and makes an argument for a free will in humanity, it leaves no doubt concerning the helplessness and inherited, condemned state of all human beings as a result of the fall. The DC, likewise emphasizes the fallenness of humanity, and in this respect also stands closer to Anabaptist perspectives than the SC. What is somewhat unusual, as far as the DC is concerned, is the seeming reticence of the Flemish to explicitly address the doctrine of free will. Undoubtedly, inter-church relations played a role in this instance.

3. Christology

The Incarnation

Mennonites of the seventeenth century were clearly challenged to reflect on issues related to Christology and particularly the doctrine of the incarnation. The Melchiorite-Mennonite understanding of the incarnation had been a distinctive feature of Mennonite "orthodoxy".⁵⁵ Yet it did not go unchallenged. Early on Adam Pastor and Francis de Cuiper opposed it, and attempted to replace it with views more in line with adoptionist views.⁵⁶ Other Anabaptist groups joined the challenge against the Melchiorite position, although usually nuancing their positions, more in line with classical orthodox views. At the Strasbourg Conferences, where Anabaptists from the Lowlands and South Germany met to discuss theological issues, the Swiss and South Germans favoured the statements of the Apostles' Creed: "...conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin

⁵⁵Voolstra, *Het Woord is vlees Geworden*, pp. 67-84. It was evidently a distinguishing feature of the Old Flemish group. See Penner, "Pieter Jansz. Twisck," pp. 245-251.

⁵⁶Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, p. 740. See also Templin, "Adam Pastor: Anti-Trinitarian Anabaptist," pp. 25-31.

Mary, ...'" They actually hesitated to go beyond the Creed insisting "that the problem was beyond human comprehension, that it was a mystery of God's own choosing which human beings ought not to try to explain."⁵⁷

Challenges to the Melchiorite understanding of the incarnation outside of the Anabaptist milieu came from Calvinists and Socinians, although their positions were by no means similar. The Calvinists held to classical-orthodox views, drawing from the classical creeds of the early church, particularly the Chalcedonian Creed. The Creed concluded that Jesus Christ was of the same essence or reality with the Father, that he was fully divine and fully human having two natures in one person, and that he was born of Mary the virgin.⁵⁸ Calvinists were alarmed about Mennonite christological positions, and in their Belgic Confession, openly accused Mennonites of heresy.⁵⁹

While the Calvinists stressed the two natures of Christ, Socinian views stressed the humanity of Christ at the expense of his divinity. Although Christ's birth was supernatural and his resurrection a historical fact, Socinians maintained that Christ did not have a pre-existent nature nor was it co-essential with the Father. Christ, they argued, was a human being with a godly mission who came essentially as a moral teacher.⁶⁰

Clearly, Mennonites had a variety of options to choose from in articulating a doctrine of the incarnation. What direction would they choose in the early seventeenth century? Sjouke Voolstra has argued that the Waterlanders, in their confession of

⁵⁷Oyer, "The Strasbourg Conferences of the Anabaptists," p. 223. It is interesting, therefore, to see the Melchiorite doctrine of the incarnation emerging in a document authored by Swiss Anabaptists around 1592. See "Ende Seecker Antwoordt," pp. 37-55.

⁵⁸Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*, pp. 35-36, 68; "Belgic Confession," pp. 200-202.

⁵⁹"The Belgic Confession," p. 201, article 18.

⁶⁰ME IV, s.v. "Socinianism," by Nanne van der Zijpp.

1577, were the first Mennonite group to reject the Melchiorite doctrine of the incarnation. According to Voolstra, Jacob Jans, who was the most important leader in the formulation of the confession, was opposed to the Melchiorite position, and his views became the standard interpretation for the Waterlanders.⁶¹ Voolstra, however, points out that not all Waterlanders rejected the Melchiorite doctrine, and some individuals and at least one congregation from Alkmaar, could not go along with the Waterlander consensus.⁶²

As far as the SC is concerned, James Coggins has maintained that the confession reflects the position of the spiritualist, Casper Schwenckfeld, and bases his argument in part on the fact that the English separatist, John Smyth believed this to be the case.⁶³ According to George H. Williams, Schwenckfeld's position was such that he did not deny that Mary was the mother of Jesus Christ, nor that Christ had received his flesh from Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit. "But he insisted that Sonship is not creatureliness, for the Almighty God has the power to bring pure, uncreaturely flesh out of a holy virgin."⁶⁴

The SC summarizes its doctrine of the incarnation in one brief article (article 8), which makes it difficult to situate the confession theologically. It is possible that the

⁶¹Voolstra, *Het Woord is vlees Geworden*, p. 73.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 73-74. The "consensus" at Emden in 1579, stated that the origins of Christ's flesh could not be found in scripture but was an article of faith; that no one should be judged or banned with respect to the doctrine; and that neither damnation nor salvation was dependant on this doctrine (ibid., p. 73).

⁶³Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, pp. 123ff.

⁶⁴Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, p. 496. Piet Visser, who does not evaluate the christology in the SC but comments on de Ries' christology, maintains that the Mennonite leader held a position located between traditional Mennonite and Calvinist views, and notes along with other scholars the influence of Scwenckfeld on de Ries. See Visser, *Broeders in de geest 1*, pp. 108, 118-119, 121; Visser, *Broeders in de geest 2*, p. 60, fn. 180.

Waterlanders were shaped or influenced by Schwenckfeldian views, but it is difficult to ascertain where Schwenckfeld's influence clearly leaves its mark. If anything, the SC masterfully echoes traditional Anabaptist views, rejects Socinian perspectives, and includes affirmations that resonate with the Chalcedonian formula.

At the outset, the SC states that Christ the eternal Word, was sent by God "out of heaven, and became flesh or man in a body of a holy virgin, (whose name was Mary) through his wonderful power."⁶⁵ Here the traditional north German-Dutch Anabaptist accent comes through with the emphasis on Christ's pre-existence and the view that Christ became flesh in the body of the virgin Mary. The reference to the "holy virgin" reflects a certain veneration of Mary found in Waterlander as well as other Anabaptist circles.⁶⁶ The phrase which follows, denying that Christ ceased to be Spirit, is most likely intended to counter Socinian views. The final phrase in the article is an affirmation that parallels the classical orthodox position: "Thus Jesus Christ, our Emmanuel, is at the same time in one Person true God and man born of Mary (*"in eenen persoon/ ware Godt/ ende Mensche van Maria gheboren"*), visible and invisible, external and internal, very Son of the Living God."⁶⁷ In consonance with the Chalcedonian creed, the SC affirms that Christ is, in one person both divine and human, the flesh being of, or coming from, Mary. As far as one can determine, the SC carefully balances elements

⁶⁵"...uyt den Hemel gesonden/ ende in den lichame eener heyliger Maget (met namen Maria) laten vleesch or mensche worde." So "Corte Belijdenisse," p. 10, article. 9.

⁶⁶Voolstra, *Het Woord is vlees Geworden*, p. 74; Kuehler, *Geschiedenis II*, p. 42. This veneration may also be found in Anabaptists like Balthasar Hubmaier from the south. See Pipkin and Yoder, eds and trans., *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, pp. 299, 537-538.

⁶⁷"Short Confession of Faith," p. 12, article 8; "Corte Belijdenisse," p. 10.

from both Anabaptist and orthodox traditions.

In the JC this balancing act is not followed. The confession explicitly leans in the direction of reflecting traditional Melchiorite thought. In the beginning lines of article 5, the Frisians and High Germans acknowledge the fact that the incarnation has been a controversial subject. The confession states that discussions have gone on for years and that there is still daily much disputation. This initial impression is reminiscent of the views of the Swiss and South German Anabaptists in Strasbourg who believed that an understanding of the incarnation was beyond human comprehension.⁶⁸ Yet the JC patently takes a position that is rooted in the north German-Dutch Anabaptist heritage.⁶⁹ Against a Socinianist perspective, the JC maintains that the eternal Word, which was before the foundation of the world, is not the "spoken, but itself speaking, real Word."⁷⁰ Christ was not merely a human being with a special mission from God. The Word "was in the beginning with God, and was itself God."⁷¹ As far as how the Word actually became flesh, the position of the JC is unambiguous:

That this same real word in the fullness of time came forth from the Father and descended from heaven into the lowest

⁶⁸Oyer, "The Strasbourg Conferences of the Anabaptists," p. 223.

⁶⁹See Voolstra, *Het Woord is vlees Geworden*, pp. 78-79; "Dopers belijden," p. 23.

⁷⁰"...geen ghesproken/ maer selfs sprekende/ wesentlijcke woort." So "Corte Confessie," p. 8, article 5. The claim that the Word is not "the spoken Word" but is the "speaking Word", however, also echoes the arguments of the southern Anabaptists in their arguments against the Polish Brethren. See "*Ende Seecker Antwoordt*" p. 39. It also echoes Dirk Philips. See his "The Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, The Only Begotten Son of His Eternal and Almighty Father," in *WDP*, p. 135. Are the origins of this language connected to the debates between Adam Pastor, and Menno Simons and Dirk Philips? See the discussion of these earlier debates in Templin, "Adam Pastor: Anti-Trinitarian Anabaptist:" 30.

⁷¹*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 34, article 5.

parts of the earth, and, according to the prophecy (Is. 7) was conceived in the body of the virgin Mary...through the power of the most high God and the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit...and *did not take on flesh but became flesh, remaining what he had been, namely God and the Son of God, and became what he had not been, man and the son of man.* In this manner, we confess that the child *which Mary carried and was born at Bethlehem...was the one, unique and true Son of God and redeemer of us all* (italics mine).⁷²

Here the origin of Christ's flesh is unmistakably clear. Christ, who was before the foundation of the world and was with God and was God, descended from heaven and did not take on the flesh of Mary but *became* flesh. Christ's human nature is not denied, nor is his divinity. In the incarnation Christ remained divine and at the same time became human. But Christ's flesh does not have human origins. From a traditional north German-Dutch Anabaptist perspective, which the JC manifests, flesh with human origins is tainted and cannot bring genuine redemption to humankind. It is only the Christ whose origins are in heaven, who is able to be the redeemer of all. It is only the Christ with untainted flesh who is able to transform human beings ontologically, so that they can experience true regeneration and "deification," to become partakers of the divine nature and the community of saints, who are without "spot or wrinkle" and are able to live the true life of discipleship.

Whereas in the JC the traditional north German-Dutch Anabaptist doctrine of the incarnation is maintained, in the DC

⁷²Translation based on van Braght, *Martyrs Mirror*, p. 34, article 5 but modified on the basis of the "Corte Confessie:" "...dat selve wesentlijcke woordt inde volheydt des tydts/ vanden Vader uytghegaen/ ende vanden Hemel inde onderste deelen der Aerden neder ghecomen/ ende volghende de Prophetie Esa 7. In dat Maeghdelijcke Lichaem Maria...door de kracht des alder hoochsten Godts/ ende omschijninghe des Heylighen Geestes...ontfangen/ ende geen Vleesch aenghenomen/ maer Vleesch gheworden is/ blyvende dat hy was/ te weten: Godt ende Godts Soone/ ende wordende dat hy niet en was/ te weten: Mensch ende Menschen Soone/ in dier voeghen/ dat wy bekennen/ dat dat kindeken dat dat van Maria ghedragen ende tot Betlehem ghebooren...den Eenigen/ Eygen ende Waren Sone Godts/ ende onser aller Verlosser gheweest is." So "Corte Confessie," pp. 8-9.

it is less identifiable although the Flemish are clearly aware of its existence. At the outset, the debate in Mennonite circles concerning the incarnation is acknowledged, and there is, in addition, an expressed desire to rely above all on the Scriptures for an adequate explanation.⁷³ The DC continues by maintaining that Christ "came in the flesh and revealed himself: the Word itself became flesh and man. He was conceived in the Virgin Mary."⁷⁴ That Christ was conceived "in" and not "of" the Virgin Mary suggests that the language of the traditional Anabaptist doctrine is still alive among the Flemish.⁷⁵ The preposition "in" echoes the language and theological concerns of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. Yet this is not self-evident to the casual observer, and it is apparent, as Hans-Juergen Goertz has observed, that the original structure of the Melchiorite teaching is lost.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, traces of the Melchiorite doctrine emerge in the second paragraph of the article which deals with Christ's pre-existence. The description here seems more than simply an emphasis, attempting to stay clear of Socinianism; rather, it appears to be a re-stating of the traditional north German-Dutch Anabaptist position emphasizing the celestial origins of the Redeemer. Christ is the Alpha and Omega, he preceded Abraham and John the Baptist, who "was David's Lord and the God of all the world."⁷⁷ Yet ultimately, the origins of Christ's body in the DC remain elusive. In the end the formulators of the DC conceal their convictions by repeating the

⁷³"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 26, article 4.

⁷⁴"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 26, article 4. "...in de wereld/jae in't vleesch gekomen/ geopenbaert/ en't Woordt selfs Vleesch ende Mensch ghewordenis/ ende dat hy in de maghet Maria ...is ontfanghen." So "Confessie Ende Vredehandelinghe," p. 21.

⁷⁵See Voolstra, "Dopers belijden," p. 23.

⁷⁶Goertz, "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht," p. 34.

⁷⁷"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 26, article 4.

Apostle Peter's confession that Christ "is the Son of the living God."⁷⁸

As the foregoing pages have indicated, christological issues were central concerns for seventeenth century Mennonites. For Anabaptists, the Melchiorite doctrine of the incarnation had been a central organizing concept, inextricably tied to the doctrines of salvation, the nature of the church, and the ethical expectations that one expected of the regenerated within the Christian community. Nevertheless, the doctrine was being challenged by orthodox Calvinists as well as heretical Socinians. The Melchiorite doctrine of the incarnation, which Menno Simons and Dirk Philips had also adopted was being re-evaluated in a new era. The preceding examination suggests that none of the confessions drifted in the direction of Socinianism, as Socinian views are rejected by all the confessions. On the other hand, the evidence shows that the SC and the DC, in their formal statements concerning the incarnation, move in the direction of accepting mainline orthodox positions. Traces of the Melchiorite doctrine are discernible in both confessions, but explicit phrases suggesting that Christ did not take on earthly flesh, are absent. Only the JC persists in holding on to the doctrine without reserve.

The Work of Christ

Defining the atoning work of Christ was less difficult for seventeenth century Mennonites than defining Christ's identity. The topic as such was less controversial, since Christ's work had never been as precisely defined in Christian history as his identity had been at Chalcedon. As noted in chapter two, it appears that Menno Simons and Dirk Philips had appropriated all three of the classical theories of atonement--the *Christus Victor* theme as well as the perspectives from Anselm and Abelard. In the theology of Menno Simons, the language of Christ's offices (the

⁷⁸Ibid.

triplex munus Christi) also appeared in conjunction with Christ's work, although Menno Simons did not work it out as systematically as other theologians of the Reformation period.

A unique element of the Anabaptist understanding of Christ's work had been the way in which it was understood to have radical significance for the Christian life. The *Christus Victor* motif had led to an understanding that with the victory of Christ over evil, the possibility of a new transformed life in Christ was possible. Moreover, Christ's willingness voluntarily to accept the unmerited death on the cross, led to an understanding that believers should be prepared to follow in Christ's footsteps of radical obedience, discipleship and suffering. Concerning the soteriological affects of the atonement, more will be said in the next section of this chapter. Suffice to say, while Anabaptists shared with mainline Protestants, the classical understandings of the atonement, their views were framed within different contexts, and the implications of the atonement were seen in a different light.

The modified form of the *triplex munus Christi* appears to have become the basic construct for the description of Christ's work in the Waterlander and Frisian-High German confessions. Surprisingly, this theological construct does not appear in the Reformed, Belgic Confession, which had become a main Christological conception in the Reformed tradition through the Reformer, John Calvin. The SC provides a relatively comprehensive and systematic outline of the work of Christ. "Christ came into the world," states the SC, "to save sinners, to reconcile the sinful world to God the Father."⁷⁹ As the true mediator, prophet, priest, king, lawgiver and teacher, Christ has brought an end to the law of Moses, as well as the priestly and kingly office of the Old Testament. Employing a typological reading of Scripture reminiscent of early Anabaptist hermeneutics, the SC refers to the law and the institution of war in the Old Testament

⁷⁹"Short Confession," pp. 12-13, article 9.

as mere shadows, figures and images of the one who was to come. Christ's reconciling work is thus connected with a new ethic of peace, based in Jesus Christ, whom Christians now hear, believe and follow.⁸⁰

Following this, a more detailed and systematic description of the threefold office of Christ emerges in the SC. As prophet, Christ preached the good news and "instituted and ordered the sacraments, offices and services" ("*Sacramenten*," "*Ampten*," "*diensten*").⁸¹ With his teaching and life, he made known the law for Christians, their rule of life, and the path and way to eternal life.⁸² Again a reverberation of the theme of obedience found in the Anabaptist tradition emerges that points to the Abelardian moral influence perspective.

The priestly office of Christ, which the SC describes next, points to Christ's mediating role, and affirms that his death on the cross was a reconciliation ("*versoeninge*") and satisfaction ("*genoechdoeninge*") for all the sins of the world.⁸³ Here the SC disassociates itself from Socinian views that rejected the belief that Christ's death was meant as a satisfaction for the sins of humanity, and affirms central tenets of the Anselmic theory. At the same time, the confession distances itself from Calvinist views that held that Christ's atonement was limited to the elect. The critique against predestination, which the confession addressed earlier in article 7 is taken up again, and the conviction that God's election is universal, is underscored.⁸⁴

Having stated the work of Christ on earth, the Waterlander

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 13, articles 9 and 10. The SC takes its typological reading from Hebrews 8:4-5, 10:1. See "Corte Belijdenisse," p. 11, article 9.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Corte Belijdenisse, p. 14.

⁸⁴"Short Confession of Faith," p. 13, article 13.

confession continues with a description of Christ's death, resurrection, ascension and glorification. In the ascension and glorification Christ's enemies have been conquered, and Christ himself continues to reign as priest and king.⁵⁵ In this description, one cannot help but notice elements of the classical *Christus victor* theory emerging. At the same time, typical Anabaptist and Waterlandian emphases continue to surface. For instance it is Christ who is the sole mediator, who intercedes, teaches, mediates, comforts, strengthens and baptizes. He alone presides over baptism and the spiritual Supper, and only in this direct, unmediated, spiritual sense can the sacraments of baptism and the Supper be appropriated. Furthermore, it is this mediator, and no other, who provides the ultimate foundation for an ethic that rejects all carnal weapons. Christ the King is the spiritual provider who helps the righteous in their spiritual and earthly battles. Their weapons for battle are now spiritual rather than carnal. Following the Anabaptist rejection of violence and war, the SC maintains that for Christians, "their swords have been changed into ploughshares and their spears into sickles. They neither lift a sword, nor teach, nor participate in carnal warfare."⁵⁶ It is Christ the prophet, but even more so the King, who dictates for the Waterlanders the norm for social and political ethics. What seems unusual here is that Christ's work is not limited to his birth, life, death, and resurrection, but continues even in his glorified state.

The Frisian-High German confession structures its argument concerning Christ's work in a fashion similar to the Waterlander confession, beginning with a summary statement and then proceeding in greater detail in terms of Christ's three-fold

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 13-14, articles, 14-16. James Coggins rightly observes that the heavenly Christ is emphasized in the SC, but given the preceding description, here misleads when he states that the confession emphasizes "a wholly heavenly Christ." See Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, p. 125.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 14, article 18.

office. It is possible that the Frisians and High Germans were drawing ideas from the Waterlander confession. While the theological accents fall in a somewhat different fashion, and the line of argument is somewhat circular, the structural and thematic parallels to the SC are conspicuous.

At the outset, the JC begins with the assumption that humanity is in a fallen state and suffers from the burden or consequences of the law. In Anselmic fashion the law is interpreted negatively as a curse because humans continue to sin and cannot live up to the expectations of the law. Hence, Christ came to redeem human beings from the curse and save them from their sins.⁸⁷ Yet Christ's work in his prophetic role is understood, not simply in terms of mediating forgiveness, but in terms of conveying all that is necessary for the new life. Here a form of the Abelardian moral influence perspective is evident. For the Frisian-High German group, particularly Christ's teaching and example in his life and death, gives central orientation that believers are to emulate. This orientation makes it possible to live the regenerate life, and truly participate in the community of the regenerate.

As priest, Christ is seen as the one who came and offered himself as a sacrifice on the cross "by which he obtained eternal redemption for all those who believe in Him."⁸⁸ After the resurrection, Christ is described as sitting at the right hand of God, where he continues as high priest and mediator, pouring out his prayers for the ignorance of the people and obtaining forgiveness for them.⁸⁹ The mention of the cross as sacrifice, and Christ's blood as redemption for humanity, points again to Anselmic perspectives on the atonement.

In his office as King, the JC continues, Christ comes like a

⁸⁷*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 35.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

victorious prince, who has vanquished death, the devil, hell and all enemies. He continues to rule "protecting those who put their trust in Him, helping them to triumph till they receive the everlasting kingdom at His hand."⁹⁰ It is difficult to miss the *Christus victor* motif in this section of the JC. In addition, a particular Anabaptist nuance is present: The way in which Christ overcomes evil is through suffering and tribulation. It is through the suffering Christ, the JC states, that "we are reconciled unto God by the blood and death of His Son, who by Himself purged our sins."⁹¹

The JC concludes by stating further Christ's continuing work in his glorified state. Having been raised and having ascended, Christ as true high priest continues to function as the only mediator and advocate, interceding on behalf of the believers. Through the sending of the Spirit, he continues to teach, lead and guide believers as well as those seeking salvation. It is through the Spirit that Christ's divine action continues to be mediated to the believers.⁹²

The DC, of all the confessions, is least systematic in its outline concerning the work of Christ. Neither does it appropriate the language of the *triplex munus Christi*. The topic concerning Christ's work emerges in the context of the discussion concerning Christ's coming (in article 4) and ascension (in article 5), and at one point follows quite closely the text of the Apostles' Creed.⁹³

While the language in the DC that deals with Christ's work tends to be nondogmatic, substitutionary language emerges in unmistakable fashion. Christ, the DC states, "yielded up the body prepared for him as an offering and sacrifice whose fragrance was

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 35.

⁹³"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 27, article 4.

pleasing to God. This was the solace, redemption, and salvation of all men and women, for the whole human race."⁹⁴ This substitutionary language emerges again at the end of the article where it is combined with the language of the *Christus Victor* motif. In this instance Christ's death and shed blood for all humankind is the way in which Christ "bruised the serpent's head, destroyed the works of the devil, cancelled the bond which pledged us to the decrees of the law, and achieved the forgiveness of sins for the entire human family."⁹⁵ As in the Frisian-High German confession (and implicitly in the Waterlandian), Christ's victory or triumph is achieved primarily in terms of suffering on the cross (*theologia crucis*)--a dimension of Christ's work that earlier Anabaptists had understood existentially as they suffered in Christ on their way to martyrdom.⁹⁶

A further significant dimension of the Christ's work in the DC, is that it is described as universally available to the entire human race. Whereas, in article two, as I have noted earlier, the DC is reticent about articulating a doctrine of free will, in articles four and five, the doctrine emerges implicitly, thus rooting the confession once again in its Anabaptist tradition--at a distance from the Calvinist emphasis of Christ's limited atonement. The Son of God "shed his precious blood for

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 26, article 4.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶During the Reformation period, the *theologia crucis* was a concept that was taken up especially by Martin Luther. Douglas Hall, following Juergen Moltmann, notes that the theology of Christendom was primarily understood in terms of what Luther called *theologia gloriae*. The *theologia crucis*, which was there from the beginning could only with difficulty sustain itself against the dominant theology of Christendom. See his *Thinking the Faith* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), pp. 24-25. Compare with Juergen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. W. Wilson and John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1973), p. 72.

all men...he effected salvation for all, from the time of Adam to the end of the world, who believe in and obey him."⁹⁷ This message, the DC reiterates in article 5, is for all of humanity without distinction.⁹⁸ Accordingly, all are called and are accountable for their own salvation which includes obedience as a necessary response. In the DC, a doctrine of predestination that leads to fatalism and a faith that does not include works is clearly denied.⁹⁹

The preceding interpretation suggests that there is considerable agreement in the Mennonite confessions concerning the work of Christ. In consonance with Protestantism, the confessions assume or explicitly state that Christ is the sole mediator between humanity and God. In addition, the Mennonites stand in the classical as well as Anabaptist traditions, in so far as they utilize the language of *satisfaction* as well as language that resonates with the *Christus victor* theory of atonement. The Anabaptist emphasis that Christ's work is an example intended to stir human beings to repentance and obedience to God (Abelard's *moral influence*) also breaks through in the Waterlander and Frisian-High German confessions, which, in addition, frame their theologies of atonement in terms of Christ's threefold office. In the DC, a response of obedience is also assumed, since Christ's forgiveness of sins was for the whole human race, not only for the elect.

A unique emphasis in the Mennonite confessions, is the link between Christ's work and nonviolence. In the JC and the DC, the connection is linked to the cross. Christ was victorious, but he achieved his goal precisely through suffering and death on the cross rather than through some carnal means (JC). It is through his death and the shedding of his blood that the serpents's head

⁹⁷"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 27, article 4.

⁹⁸Ibid., article 5.

⁹⁹Voolstra, *Dopers belijden*, p. 24.

is destroyed (DC). In the SC, the connection between Christ's work and nonviolence is linked to Christ's prophetic and exalted state. Particularly in the latter, battles against evil continue. But those who are followers of Christ do not use carnal weapons. Consonant with Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, spiritual weapons, or weapons that include ploughshares and sickles are used to overcome evil.

4. Soteriology

Anabaptists had expressed their views of the work of Christ in line with one or more of the classical theories of atonement, and in this respect did not diverge significantly from points of view associated with the Magisterial Reformation. They did, however, take a different position than their Reformational counterparts in terms of what they considered to be the effect of Christ's work on individuals, and how individuals were expected to respond to the Divine initiative.

For both Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, forgiveness of sins implied a transformation whereby the justified were not simply declared righteous (Luther); rather, those who were reborn actually *became* righteous by the power of Christ through the Holy Spirit. The Anabaptists, with their pneumatological emphasis, stressed the ontological change in human nature that took place in salvation, whereby believers were born anew towards a life where no division could exist between faith and works. Through the rebirth, believers became partakers of the divine nature and took on a new moral character, which had at its basis the heavenly Christ coming in the flesh; for only what was truly heavenly could save and be transforming. Since God became human, humans could now become god, receive eternal life "and the ethical and moral characteristics of the divine nature."¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰Keeney, *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practise*, p. 98. Both Keeney and Finger view 'divinization' or 'deification' in Anabaptists like Menno Simons in terms of moral, rather than substantialist or ontological terms. See *ibid.*, p. 99

Salvation was seen "as a dynamic process of the divinization of human nature, and hence as a reversal of the process of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ."¹⁰¹

As noted earlier, scholars have generally argued that in the development of Anabaptist soteriology, there was a general movement away from a "pneumatic/spiritualist emphasis on personal regeneration, to a more external and communal emphasis."¹⁰² In light of this understanding, it is interesting to note that the Frisian-High German confession has no explicit article focussing on soteriology. The JC moves directly from a discussion on the work of Christ to the nature of the church. It appears that the confession indeed reflects this characteristic trajectory of later Anabaptism that tended to subsume its soteriology into its ecclesiology.

Equally interesting is the observation that in the Waterlander confession, the emphasis on personal regeneration is maintained, as well as the pneumatic/spiritualist emphasis characteristic of early north German-Dutch Anabaptism. Scholars have credited this spiritualist impulse to the influence of the broader spiritualist environment of the seventeenth century. While the Waterlanders were undoubtedly drinking from the wells

and *ME V*, s.v. "Atonement, Anabaptist Theology of," p. 44. Alister McGrath states that a distinction must be drawn in the Christian tradition between deification in terms of "becoming God" (*theosis*) and "becoming like God" (*homoiosis [sic] theoi*). "The first, associated with the Alexandrian school, conceives of deification as a union with the substance of God; the second, associated with the Antiochene school, interprets the believer's relationship with God more in terms of a participation in that which is divine, often conceived in terms of ethical perfection. the distinction between these approaches is subtle, and reflects significantly different Christologies." So Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, p. 361.

¹⁰¹Beachy, *The Concept of Grace in the Radical Reformation*, p. 216; Keeney, "The Incarnation, A Central Theological Concept," p. 59.

¹⁰²Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction*, p. 371.

of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century spiritualists, it is also clear that the Waterlanders in their confession were in continuity with the spiritualist impulse of early Anabaptism.¹⁰³ Hence, while the Frisian-High German group appear to have followed the later Anabaptist trajectory of emphasizing ecclesiology, the Waterlanders appeared to have maintained the earlier Anabaptist emphasis. Both groups, in my view, maintained continuity with the tradition, each group having selected a different aspect of that tradition.

Substantively, the thrust in the soteriological section of the SC is the new birth. The new birth, according to the SC, "is an act of God effected in the soul of the truly repentant, a restoring of the image of God in man."¹⁰⁴ The will is free to accept or reject the gospel, yet is too weak to live a victorious life. The new birth transforms the will by putting to death the "old man" and "brings an awakening of new life in God, in true goodness, righteousness and holiness."¹⁰⁵ This newness of life, however, does not come about by natural or creaturely means. Just as Christ was born from above, so also is the new birth in the believer from above, affected by the Holy Spirit with his fire and power. Evidently, a pneumatic/spiritualist emphasis supports and makes possible a life defined by a new moral character and righteous living. From the new birth and God's justification, the believer lives in love, "rejoicing in all good works, in the law, commandments, and morality given him by God through Christ."¹⁰⁶ Salvation comes through Jesus Christ, "by grace through a living faith active in love."¹⁰⁷ Appropriating spiritualist emphases,

¹⁰³Kuehler, *Geschiedenis*, I, p. 374-375; Kuehler, *Geschiedenis*, II pp. 30, 115; Meihuizen, "Spiritualist Tendencies," p. 277.

¹⁰⁴"Short Confession," p. 15, article 22.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 16, article 23.

¹⁰⁷"Short Confession," p. 15, article 20.

the SC points out that faith is not simply cognitive knowledge of the earthly Christ, but rather it is spiritual and inner knowledge received with a believing heart. It is based not only on the Christ who became flesh and who lived and died, but even more so on the heavenly Christ who is exalted and glorified.¹⁰⁸ Through this living faith believers are justified and pardoned ("*quijtscheldinge*") "of all past and present sins through the shed blood of Jesus Christ."¹⁰⁹ Those being saved are not simply declared righteous in a forensic sense, but through the work of the Holy Spirit they experience a transformation "from being evil to being good, from a carnal to a spiritual state, from selfishness to mildness, from pride to humility...from unrighteousness to righteousness."¹¹⁰ This *becoming* righteous in the SC, is based on the new birth and enables believers to partake of the divine nature.¹¹¹

The emphasis on the new birth, reflected in the Waterlander confession, also appears in the Flemish confession. According to the DC, children of God are partakers of God's "image, nature, and being," and are "born again from above by the incorruptible seed."¹¹² Being sanctified ("*gheheylicht*") and justified ("*gerechtverdicht*")¹¹³ is part and parcel of the same process that cannot be severed. The outcome of this, is that believers are not declared righteous but rather through faith and the new birth *become righteous*. Evidently, the anthropological optimism that was noted early (see section on anthropology) follows

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 14, article 14.

¹⁰⁹"Short Confession," p. 15, article 21; "Corte Belijdenisse," p. 21.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹"Short Confession," p. 15, article 19.

¹¹²"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 28, article 6.

¹¹³"Confessie ende Vredehandeling", p. 27.

through in the section of the confession dealing with soteriology. However, whereas the SC brings to the fore the pneumatic/ spiritualist stimulus as that which brings about the new birth, the DC stresses human accountability, specifically expressed in the phrase "repentance and amendment of life" ("*boete en beteringhe des lebens*").¹¹⁴ For the Flemish, repentance and amendment of life is "the first lesson of the new covenant," and defines the faith which justifies.¹¹⁵ According to the DC, "*boete en beteringhe des lebens*" means to believe the Gospel, to depart from evil and do good, to cease to be unjust, and to reject sin. In short, it implies a discarding of the old nature with its deeds and putting on the new nature, which is created after God in righteousness and true holiness."¹¹⁶ By this faith, forgiveness of sins along with justification and sanctification takes place, and those seeking salvation are made children of God.¹¹⁷ Does this understanding imply that justification is dependant on one's own effort and works? Articles four and five in the DC underscore the centrality of Christ's work prior to any redemption of humankind. Yet it is evident that for the Flemish, faith that leads to justification necessarily issues forth in works.

In situating the Mennonite confessions theologically, it is evident that the SC is certainly consonant with early North German and Dutch Anabaptism, traces of which can be found in the early writings of Menno Simons. The epistemological basis is the heavenly Christ who through the Spirit works in a transforming way on the inner person. This leads to a greater emphasis on the personal regeneration of the individual, experienced by the new birth through the power of the Holy Spirit. The accent is on the

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 28, article 6.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

transformative power of Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit. Through divine work the believer experiences an ontological change and is aroused to faith active in love.

On the other hand, in the DC, it is human accountability in the salvation process which is emphasized. It is Menno Simons' emphasis on the penitent life that emerges. The work of Christ can only be claimed by believers who have responded in true repentance and obedience. Here the all-pervasive reality of sin as part of the human condition--a pessimistic anthropology noted earlier among the Flemish--re-emerges. Evidently, the transformative power of God in the human being and the necessity for human response in repentance and obedience, are two sides of the Anabaptist coin that the Waterlanders and Flemish choose to emphasize in different ways.¹¹⁸

5. Summary

At the risk of oversimplification, I believe that some general conclusions can be made concerning the theology of the confessions of faith. The evidence points, first of all, to considerable congruence between all of the confessions under examination. On the doctrine of God, the confessions reflect the beliefs of Christian and Anabaptist orthodoxy, although it is to be noted that the Waterlander confession, in terms of its language, borrows from the Reformed tradition. In the area of anthropology, the Anabaptist rejection of the doctrine of predestination and the affirmation of the free will comes through

¹¹⁸Scholars have pointed out both of these emphases in Menno Simons. See Voolstra, "True Penitence: The Core of Menno Simons' Theology," pp. 387-388; Voolstra, "Themes in the Early Theology of Menno Simons," pp. 49-52. The concept or even phrase "*boete en beteringhe des lebens*," certainly was not limited to Menno Simons and was familiar to other Anabaptists as well. Note the phrase used in the first article of the Schleithem Confession: "*boete en verandering des levens*." See "Broederlijke Vereniging van ettelijke kinderen Gods over zeven punten," in H. W. Meihuizen, J. A. Oosterbaan, H. B. Kossen, eds., *Broederlijke Vereniging, Doperse Stemmen 1* (Amsterdam: Doopsgezinde Historische Kring, 1974), p. 15.

most clearly in the Waterlander and Frisian-High German confessions, while in the Flemish confession, the position is affirmed later in its soteriology section.

In the area of Christology, and specifically those that have to do with the incarnation, it is clear that the Melchior-Mennonite doctrine, in its explicit form, is no longer as visible among the Short and Dordrecht confessions as it was in Melchior Hoffman, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. The Waterlander and Flemish confessions have moved in the direction of obscuring the traditional Melchiorite-Mennonite formulation, while the Frisian-High German confession is alone in maintaining the doctrine in its explicit form. On the other hand, as far as the work of Christ is concerned, all the confessions reflect classical as well as Protestant emphases, and further, in line with Anabaptists, link the atonement to the new life in Christ.

With respect to the subject of soteriology, the Waterlander and Flemish confessions, following Anabaptist perspectives, point to a change that takes place in the believer who has received the gift of salvation. Whereas the Melchior doctrine of the incarnation in the area of Christology has moved into partial obscurity, its effects are maintained in the soteriological sections of the confessions. The Frisian-High German confession moves directly from a discussion on the work of Christ to the nature of the church, where, as will be seen in the next chapter, the Melchiorite doctrine with its concern for ethics is also maintained.

The leap from Christology over soteriology to ecclesiology, in the Frisian-High German confession, suggests further, that the adherents to the confession have moved away from a personal to a more communal emphasis on the meaning of salvation--a shift that one observes earlier in Anabaptism between the 1530s to the 1550s. In the SC, following earlier Anabaptist emphases, believers experience the new birth through the transformative power of Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit. Here pneumatic/spiritualist language characterizes the language of the

SC. In the DC, human accountability, as in later Anabaptism, is more of a factor in the salvation process. The transformation that the SC emphasizes is less pronounced in the DC, and clearly dependant on the individual's response in true repentance and obedience.

As noted throughout this chapter, the Mennonite confessions of faith reflect minor but discernible theological shifts away from Anabaptism. Nevertheless, in the main, their Anabaptist-Mennonite theological identity has remained intact, as they continue to reflect theological continuity with their heritage. Yet that continuity does not take on an identical character. On the whole, the Waterlander confession appears to reflect more strongly the spiritualist-inner impulse of early Anabaptism that one finds in Melchior Hoffman, David Joris and the young Menno Simons. The Frisian-High German and Flemish confessions, on the other hand, reflect more closely the outer-communal emphasis of the Anabaptism that one finds in the older Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. In chapter VII, which analyzes ecclesiology in the confessions, it remains to be seen whether this differentiation within the confessions continues.

VII

THE CONGREGATION OF SAINTS

The ostensible reason for the writing of the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions was to promote unity between the various congregational bodies that had divided on issues related, in large part, to the nature of the church, the role of leadership, and particularly the practice of discipline and matters pertaining to moral integrity among the "community of saints." These issues occupied the centre of discussion as Mennonites began to work at reconciling differences and overcoming the decades of discord that had plagued the Mennonite churches. This was especially true of the Frisians, High Germans and Flemish, who were earnestly trying to find ways of working together to achieve unity. The questions that the Flemish had placed on the agenda in their 1626 "Olive Branch statement," as a way of initiating unity discussions, were explicitly ecclesiological in nature,¹ as were their discussions at an Amsterdam meeting with the Frisians and High Germans in October, 1630.² But this was also true of the Waterlanders, who, in the first decade of the century, were not only attempting to seek common ground with the English Separatists, but were also attempting to preserve their relationship with the Frisians in an alliance of congregations known as the *Bevredigde Broederschap*. Success in church relations depended in large measure on agreement over matters related to church life. Yet after decades of disagreements and bitter disputes, what shape would the Mennonite ecclesiological profile have? In a time of transition

¹The questions were the following: "(a) What are the basic marks of a Christian Church? (b) Are these distinctives only found in Flemish congregations? (c) Is making peace forbidden by the Scriptures?" So *ME IV*, s.v. "Olijftacxken," by Christian Neff and Nanne van der Zijpp.

²See "*Cort Verhael*," pp. 2-9.

and change, and in the context of inter-church discussions, what did it now mean to be the "community of saints"?

In what follows, I will continue to make the case that the confessions of faith--the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions that the Mennonites produced in the early seventeenth century--stand in theological continuity with their Anabaptist heritage. It will become evident, however, as it has in the previous two chapters, that the nature of this continuity is not always the same; that the confessions of faith are not necessarily in continuity with the exact same Anabaptist tradition.

1. The Nature of the Church

As noted in chapter two, Melchior Hoffman, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips had understood the true church to be a voluntary gathering of believers who were spiritually born from above, considered to be the bride of Christ, participating in the divinity of Christ through a renewed life of obedience. The fundamental presupposition of this view was that in the incarnation, the eternal Word had become flesh, enabling the penitent and reborn to become righteous and participate in the divine nature of Christ as the "community of saints." Connected to this ecclesiological perspective was the view that the visibleness of the church should conform to its invisibility. This view had been challenged by spiritualists, who tended to emphasize that the church was invisible, and all attempts to establish its visibility were superfluous. Melchior Hoffman and David Joris were attracted to this spiritualist position, in that the inner spiritual purity of the believer was emphasized, while the outer manifestations were depreciated.

After the 1540s, the spiritualist emphasis, prominent in the earlier period of the Anabaptist movement, appears to have waned. Increasingly for Menno and Dirk, it was important to emphasize that the "congregation of saints" was not only made up of those who were spiritually reborn from within, but also made up of

those who lived outwardly in conformity to the life and commandments of Christ as witnessed to in Scripture. As institutional concerns became more prominent, and the survival of the Anabaptist movement continued to be in question, the visible dimensions of the church became ever more prominent. Increasingly the church was understood as a visible community of saints, the bride of Christ, and a regenerated body of believers without spot or wrinkle.³

One of the marks of the true church in Anabaptism had included suffering for the sake of Christ. In an increasingly tolerant and pluralistic seventeenth century context, this *nota ecclesie* had lost its relevance and no longer appeared in the confessions of faith. On the whole, the other distinctive features in the confessions appear to have been correlated with the particular church's perspective of the inner/outer tension, noted among the north German-Dutch Anabaptists.

In the Waterlander confession, the SC, inner dimensions emerge most prominently through the language of the "new birth." Those belonging to the church are believers who have experienced personal regeneration, who are born again and have become partakers of Christ's divine nature. Members of Christ's church are divinized in the sense that they are his "beautiful bride," and "holy body," who through the new birth have become a part of his flesh and body. Believers are those who are holy and sanctified and have truly become righteous.⁴ While, as we have seen in chapter six, the SC does not explicitly use Melchiorite language in its Christological formulations concerning the celestial flesh of Christ, the soteriological and ecclesiological

³Visser, *Broeders in de geest*, p. 86. According to Sjouke Voolstra, the "real presence" of Christ was present in Menno's understanding of the church. See Voolstra, *Menno Simons: His Image and Message*, pp. 59-81; according to Arnold Snyder, the church was understood as "sacrament." See Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, pp. 359-363.

⁴"Short Confession," p. 16, article 24.

implications of the Melchiorite doctrine emerges in the description concerning regeneration and the church as the "beautiful bride" and "holy body."

This emphasis on the new birth, however, is not translated into a conception of the church that can be understood to be without "spot or wrinkle". Purity and righteousness is expected at the personal level, but it is unrealistic to expect this to be the case in the congregation. It is assumed that there will be hypocrites and pretenders in the church, while only "those who have been born again in Christ and sanctified are true members of the body of Christ and will inherit the promises."⁵ Here it is apparent that the Waterlanders are following their spiritualist tradition. It is not the marks of the *church* that are highlighted, but the marks of the *individual* believer. These marks are not defined in outward, ethical as much as inward, ontological terms. Perfection is not achieved through outward acts of obedience as much as through the new birth that takes place *within* the regenerated believer. The visible church is not negated, but reservations exist as to the purity of its outward, visible manifestations. This perspective is in continuity with the inner, spiritualist emphasis of an Anabaptism that would include the early Menno Simons, but not the later north German-Dutch Anabaptism that emphasized the outer signs of regeneration and a church visibly without spot or wrinkle.⁶

The Frisian-High German confession also mirrors the inner-outer tension of the Anabaptist tradition, but there is a noticeable shift towards emphasizing the outer and visible features. For the JC, the genuine church is not simply a universal church, where the God-fearing are present, where sinners also might be present. The true church is a "penitent and believing" people, a community of genuinely faithful who have

⁵Ibid.

⁶See Horst, "Neuer Mensch--Neuer Gemeinschaft," pp. 38-39.

have "been purchased with His precious blood, and washed and cleansed with the waters of the Holy Ghost."⁷ Such a church shows clear visible signs of its special identity "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."⁸ It bears "the figure of the true church in heaven,"⁹ practicing out in the open "externally in the preaching of the Word, of baptism, the supper, and other Christian ordinances, and internally in the spirit, a true communion, here and also in heaven with God and all the sanctified of the Lord, after which, in the last day, the true reality will follow."¹⁰ The experience of the community of the faith, according to the JC, clearly involves both inner and outer dimensions, but resembles more closely Anabaptism after 1540, in that the emphasis is on the visible church.

In the Flemish confession, this inner/outer tension moves even stronger in the direction of emphasizing the importance of outward perfection. In this respect, the ecclesiology that is reflected in the confessional statement appears to be most consistent with the later ecclesiological emphases of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. The DC mentions at one point the spiritual nature of the "house of God," but in the main, stresses the visiblensness and outward dimensions of the church, pointing out that its members are the ones who "truly repent, believe rightly, and have received true baptism."¹¹ These are the ones who are "the royal priesthood, the holy people"... "the spouse and bride of Christ."¹² This visible church of God ("*sichtbare*

⁷*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 35.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 29, article 8.

¹²*Ibid.*

Ghemeynte Godts")¹³ is built upon the "foundation of the apostles and the prophets--Christ being the chief cornerstone," and is known by her outward visible marks: "Scriptural faith, doctrine, love, and godly life; also by a fruitful living up to, use, and observances of the ordinances of Christ."¹⁴ The church, thus, is recognizable in its outward moral life. Having been redeemed, and having the assurance of God's protection against all evil, this community of faith is known by her fruits and obedience to Christ.

It is evident that all the Mennonite confessions of faith are in agreement with the north German-Dutch Anabaptist tradition, in that the congregation of saints consists of those who have experienced renewal, and practice obedience to Christ. The ecclesiological implications of the Melchiorite-Mennonite doctrine of the incarnation have not faded from view. Yet the ecclesiologies in the confessions are not identical and reflect a similar "inner/outer" tension that marked Anabaptism from the start. In the Waterlander confession the locus of this renewal and obedience is centred on those who, through the new birth, have become inwardly a part of the body of Christ. The true church is invisible in the sense that only God is able to identify those who were spiritually reborn and sanctified in the congregation where saints as well as "pretenders" or hypocrites are actually present. For the Frisians and High Germans, and particularly for the Flemish, the true church is recognizable where the outward manifestations of obedience to Christ are unquestionably present. In these latter two confessions, the true community of saints is the corporate body where the outer works and marks of the church are clearly visible and identifiable.

¹³"*Confessie ende Vredehandelinge*," p. 28, article 8.

¹⁴"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 29, article 8.

2. Leadership in the Church

How is the community of saints to be organized, led and pastored in changing times? In the Low Countries, Anabaptists had maintained that leadership was not based on "apostolic succession," but rather, chosen by the Spirit of God, while the election or commissioning was to take place through the local congregation. Education was not one of the essential qualifications for leadership. Those called to lead were expected, rather, to have a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, to hold to correct doctrine and exemplify moral integrity.

Early north German-Dutch Anabaptists, such as Melchior Hoffman and David Joris, had tended to emphasize the immediate call from God, and denied that an objective call from a congregation was important. Menno Simons had been inclined to hold to this view, but in the decades following Anabaptist beginnings, the trend in the north German-Dutch context was in the direction of congregational involvement in the calling of church leaders. Yet as has been noted in chapter II, Anabaptist leaders continued to exert significant authority in their respective communities, taking leadership in the interpretation of Scripture and the practice of congregation life. Still, no clear standard or process was in place, and the general lack of clarity, and differences of opinion among the churches concerning authority and leadership in general, inevitably led to conflict within the churches.¹⁵

In the Waterlander confession a clear distinction is made between leadership and laity. Leaders in the church have the task of teaching, administering the sacraments, aiding the poor and exercising discipline. While all members within the body of Christ have a work ("werckinge") to perform in the congregation, only the one ordained as teacher ("Leeraer"), elder ("Outste"),

¹⁵The Frisian-Flemish division in the 1560s was rooted in the disagreement over matters related to leadership and authority. See Koolman, *Dirk Philips: Friend and Colleague of Menno Simons*, pp. 115-142.

or deacon ("Diaken") is designated for the leadership tasks listed above.¹⁶ The responsibility of being ordained is a high calling in that the doctrine of the ordained servants is viewed to be the same as that which Jesus brought and taught in word and deed, and which the apostles taught at Christ's command by his Spirit.¹⁷ Yet ordained servants are accountable to the congregation and to each other. The calling or selecting of leaders takes place in the context of the local congregation. Leaders are placed in their offices not through a direct unmediated call from God, but through the congregation. The question of who actually does the calling within the congregation is noteworthy. The Waterlanders tilt in the direction of an "aristocratic" approach of electing their leaders,¹⁸ although they do not exclude the involvement of the laity. The SC states that "the calling or selecting of servants to these offices takes place through the ministers of the church together with the congregation."¹⁹ Clearly, the elders have the first and last word in the election of church leadership. The elders are the ones who initiate the call and it is completed through them "through the laying on of hands."²⁰

In the Frisian-High German confession the congregation has two special ministries ("*sonderlinghe Diensten*"),²¹ "namely the

¹⁶"Corte Belijdenisse," p. 26.

¹⁷"Short Confession," p. 17, article 29.

¹⁸The term "aristocratic call" refers to church leaders being called by the bishops and elders, rather than from the congregational laity. See Keeney, *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, pp. 46-51.

¹⁹"Short Confession," p. 16, article 27.

²⁰Ibid., p. 17, article 27.

²¹"Corte Confessie," p. 15.

ministry of the holy Word, and the care for the poor."²² Those appointed to it are prophets ("Propheten"), pastors ("Herders"), teachers ("Leerers"), helpers ("Hulpers"), and leaders ("Regierders"), "to provide by common counsel wisely for the church of God."²³ While there is no clear indication as to who is ultimately responsible for the choosing of the leadership, the confession emphasizes that leaders are chosen after much fasting and prayer, followed by examination. It is assumed that having passed the (moral) test, the leaders will be respected, loved and obeyed.²⁴ Further, the "inner-outer" distinction is used to describe the ministry of the Word that includes preaching and administering the ordinances. One is reminded of Anabaptist language in this instance. Inasmuch as the church "bears the figure of the true church in heaven," the JC states, those in leadership are to carry out their respective responsibilities. Moreover, the preaching and administering of the ordinances is what takes place "externally" ("uyterlijck"), while the leadership in the church is also called inwardly ("inwendich") in the spirit to be in true communion with believers and also "with God and all the sanctified of the Lord" ("met Godt ende alle gheheylichde des Heeren").²⁵ Also in continuity with the Anabaptist tradition, it is assumed that those in leadership must have a right relationship, both with God and with members of the congregation.

In the Flemish confession, the DC, the ninth article that focusses on church leadership, is the longest single article in

²²*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 35. Whereas, after Muenster, Anabaptists like Menno Simons rejected the notion of legislating "community of goods" within the congregation, he assumed that believers should take care of the needs of others. See Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, pp. 245-246.

²³*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 35; "Corte Confessie," p. 16.

²⁴*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 36, article 11.

²⁵*Corte Confessie*, p. 16.

the confession, signaling the importance of this topic for the Flemish Mennonites. According to the DC, the church cannot exist without "offices and ordination" ("*Diensten ende Ordinantien*").²⁶ It is crucial that each member is regulated according to his/her own work and calling to "do that which is right and necessary."²⁷ The basis of church order is to be found in Christ's identity and work as shepherd who takes care of, reconciles and rescues his sheep, as well as those of the early church, who faithfully followed Christ's example and precepts. In concert with the Anabaptist tradition, the DC maintains that those qualified to do the work are not the educated, but those who take heed according to the doctrines of the church. Those who are true in the faith, exemplify good conduct, and have a good reputation inside as well as outside the congregation, are considered for leadership. Moral standards are important prerequisites for setting an example, faithfully administering the ordinances, and further appointing faithful men for ordination and ministry in the church. The Flemish confession assumes that leadership and organization in the church is to be patterned on the example of Christ and the early church.

By 1632, at the time that the DC was accepted, the pattern of organization appears to be well developed, and the Flemish outline even the details concerning the office of the deacons and deaconesses. While Mennonites were experiencing the positive effects of the Dutch economic boom, it is also evident that they were forced to come to terms with economic issues and problems of poverty.²⁸ Accordingly, the deacons are to be concerned about

²⁶"*Confessie ende Vredehandelinge*," p. 30.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸See Sprunger, "Rich Mennonites, Poor Mennonites;" Mary Sprunger, "Dutch Mennonites and the Golden Age Economy: The Problem of Social Disparity in the Church," in Calvin Redekop, Victor A. Krahn, Samuel J. Steiner, *Anabaptist/Mennonite Faith and Economics* (Waterloo: Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies, 1994), pp. 19-40.

the ministry to the poor, and they are to assist the bishops in word and doctrine and in the task of admonishing. Deaconesses are to assist the deacons in their ministry, as well as concern themselves with widows and orphans who are in need. It is also their responsibility "to help look after the necessities of the church according to the best of their ability."²⁹ We can only speculate about what exactly the "necessities of the church" were. That deaconesses were ordained, suggests that the work of women in the church was openly recognized. Their specific responsibilities in the congregation were likely shaped by the local context and leadership.

The preceding overview of church leadership as reflected in the three confessions of faith, indicates significant agreement among the Mennonite groups. All three confessions suggest that the leadership have a variety of tasks and functions to perform. These tasks and functions are to be distinguished from the work carried out by the laity. These tasks include teaching, preaching, administering the sacraments, disciplining or admonition, general pastoral care and caring especially for the poor. The tasks are numerous, distinguishable from work done by the laity, and appear to be divided up between several individuals. The election and call to ministry of these leaders takes place within the congregation, primarily through existing leadership. No one assumes leadership through a direct unmediated call from God. As in Anabaptist congregations, requirements for those in leadership are not based on education but knowledge of the Scriptures, holding to pure doctrine and leading a blameless life. Leaders are to be in good standing, having a right relationship with God and with those in the congregation.

3. Outer Ceremonies

Baptism and the Supper

The emphasis on pneumatology had led Anabaptists to think of

²⁹"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 30, article 9.

the church as a "community of saints," who, in the power of the Spirit, had become new creatures with the ability to partake of the Divine nature. Pneumatology had also played a key role in the their understanding of the sacraments. Anabaptists everywhere, including those in the Low Countries, rejected the medieval axiom that priests and the outer sacraments mediated grace and salvation. Spiritual reality was distinct and prior to material reality. The outer ceremonies of baptism and the Lord's supper, while corresponding to the spiritual reality were never identical with it. The sacraments were seen as signs or symbols of the spiritual experience that had taken place within the believer. This raised a basic question as to the place of the outer "ceremonies" in the life of the Christian community. The more "spiritualist" Anabaptists in the Low Countries had de-emphasized the role of "outer ceremonies" in the Christian life, and at one point Melchior Hoffman was even willing to suspend the practice of adult baptism in light of the persecution that was taking place as a result of the practice. By the 1540s, however, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips viewed baptism and the Lord's Supper as well as a number of other outer practices as essential marks of the true church. While in their earlier writings, the connection between baptism and the new birth within the individual was stressed, later their writings increasingly viewed baptism as a "testimony and as an outward evidence of admission into the visible Church. In neither phase was either aspect wholly absent, or other meanings excluded, but the shift was part of the growing interest in ecclesiology."³⁰ Concerning the Lord's supper, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips had also understood it as a necessary ceremony--a sign and memorial pointing to Christ's work of deliverance, proof or pledge of Christ's love experienced in the fellowship of believers. Christ's presence became real, not in the elements of the supper, materially, but in the believers

³⁰Keeney, *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 78.

participating in the supper, spiritually. Wherever the supper was celebrated, there Jesus Christ was spiritually present "with his grace, Spirit, and promise, and with the merits of his sufferings, misery, flesh, blood, cross, and death."³¹

Menno Simons and Dirk Philips had referred to the outer ceremonies as "sacraments," "sacramental symbols," "ordinances," "signs" and "ceremonies."³² As far as terminology is concerned, the Waterlanders, in their more ecumenical spirit appear to have preferred the term "*heyliche Sacramenten*" ("holy sacraments")³³ for baptism and the Supper. The Frisian and High Germans in their confession referred to the "*Zeeden, Wetten, ende Ordinantie*" ("customs, laws and ordinances"),³⁴ while the Flemish in their confession limited their language to the term "*Ordinantien*" ("ordinances").³⁵

Typical of early Anabaptist writings on the sacraments, the Waterlander confession explicitly emphasizes the inner and outer dimensions of the sacraments. The two holy sacraments of the church, holy baptism and holy supper ("*het h. Doope ende het heyliche Avontmael*"), are outward visible acts and signs of invisible grace. The outward visible acts and signs reflect the inner and spiritual acts of God that take place through Christ in cooperation with the Holy Spirit.³⁶ Reminiscent of early Anabaptism, the Waterlander confession emphasizes that the inner precedes the outer, and corresponds to the ontological change that happens to the believer, soteriologically. "Jesus Christ himself baptizes the repentant believer inwardly in the bath of

³¹George, *Theology of the Reformers*, p. 293.

³²Rempel, *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism*, p. 173.

³³"Corte Belijdenisse," p. 28.

³⁴"Corte Confessie," p. 17.

³⁵"Confessie ende Vredehandeling," p. 32.

³⁶Corte Belijdenisse, p. 29.

the new birth and renewal through the Holy Spirit, washing the soul from all filth and sin through the merit and shed blood of Christ."³⁷ Through this baptism "the heavenly, spiritual and living water washes the soul, making it heavenly, spiritual, alive in goodness and righteousness."³⁸ Inner baptism in the SC is thus a redescription of the rebirth that takes place within the believer, whereby those being saved are not simply *declared* righteous in a forensic sense, but experience a transformation whereby they are *made* righteous, and take part in the divine nature.

Outer baptism, on the other hand, makes visible what happens inside the believer, and is considered secondary. Outward baptism serves only in bringing Christ's work to the level of remembrance, reminding believers not to rely on externals, but to "ascend to Christ" and receive the gifts that are multiplied in the heart. As in Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, the theological justification for outward baptism is not connected to notions of mediation of divine grace, but primarily with notions of obedience to Christ's commandments and the practice of the apostles.³⁹

This inner-outer distinction is also maintained in the Waterlander understanding of the Lord's supper. The ceremony of the supper "is an external, visible, evangelical act," that takes place because it is commanded by Christ and practiced by the apostles.⁴⁰ In the participation of the supper, Christ's death,

³⁷Short Confession, p. 17, article 32.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹"Short Confession," p. 17, article 31.

⁴⁰"Short Confession," p. 17, article 33. Reference to the fact that the rite is given to those who have been baptized upon their faith, possibly points to the Waterlandian practice of receiving new members without requiring rebaptism. Dyck maintains that "...de Ries received persons of Reformed background into the church without rebaptism, but only if they had earlier been baptized as adults. This practice came under serious fire from other Mennonite

passion and suffering is proclaimed and remembered. It also witnesses and signifies ("*betuycht/ ende beteeckent*") Christ's body which was broken, and his blood which was shed for the forgiveness of sins.⁴¹ This, in turn, brings into the believers consciousness the spiritual meaning of the supper. In line with Dirk Philips' understanding of believers feeding spiritually on Christ's body, believers are reminded of Christ's institution of his "spiritual Supper" ("*geestelijck Avontmael*") and his feeding the believers with truly spiritual food ("*gheestelijcke spijs*").⁴² It is an experience whereby believers are taught to "rise above the external in holy prayer, longing for the reality of the gift of Christ."⁴³ The ceremony of the supper is thus intended not solely as a memorial of Christ's death, nor only as a symbol of Christian unity, but as a means whereby Christ's spiritual presence may be experienced inwardly by the believing community.

Although the Waterlander confession appears to provide a balance between the "inner-outer" dimensions of the ceremonies, in the Frisian-High German confession, this balance is virtually lost as the outer dimensions are accentuated. Baptism is discussed in terms of an "external evangelical act" ("*uytwendighe Evangelische handelinghe*"),⁴⁴ with a focus on the right conditions and requirements for proper baptism and membership in the church. The focus is more in line with concerns related to admission into the visible church--concerns increasingly emphasized in the later writings of Menno and Dirk. According to the JC, only those who are "penitent and believing adults" who

groups." See Dyck, "Hans de Ries and the Legacy of Menno," p. 413.

⁴¹Corte Belijdenisse, p. 32.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³"Short Confession," p. 18, article 34.

⁴⁴"Corte Confessie," p. 17.

truly repent of their sins, who bury their earthly members and arise to a new, penitent life, are qualified for baptism. Baptism needs to take place by an "unblamable minister" (contra *ex opere operato*) and the water is to be "common water" ("*ghemeenen Water*").⁴⁵

On the Lord's supper the accent is along parallel lines. The JC explains the importance of *common* rather than *consecrated* bread and wine.⁴⁶ The meaning and significance of the supper is understood primarily in terms of a memorial. The bitter, suffering death of Christ is to be deplored, and at the same time the Lord is to be praised and blessed for all the benefits that have been received from the sufferings of Christ. While this worshipful response is "an internal, spiritual blessing of thanksgiving" ("*innerlijcke/ Geestelijcke Dancksegginghe*"),⁴⁷ it clearly constitutes an act of remembrance, and not an experience of the spiritual reality of Christ himself. The Frisian-High German confession reflects Anabaptist emphases throughout in terms of listing right conditions and requirements, but the inner-outer dimensions of baptism and the supper, of an earlier Anabaptist period, have receded into the background.

This is also the case in the Flemish confession, the DC. Like the JC, the DC does not try to strike a balance between the "inner-outer" dimensions of baptism or the supper. Instead, criteria for baptism, membership into the church, ethical imperatives and memorial aspects of the meal are brought to the fore. The DC emphasizes that those considered for baptism are individuals who "by faith, the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Ghost" have been made one with God.⁴⁸ This is the baptism "upon a Scriptural confession of faith and amendment of life,"

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 36.

⁴⁷"*Corte Confessie*," p. 18.

⁴⁸"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 28, article 7.

based on the doctrine and command of Christ and the practice of his apostles. The outcome is linked to the "burial of sins" ("*begravinghe haerder Sonden*"), incorporation into the fellowship of the saints, and a life directed towards keeping the teachings and commandments of Christ.⁴⁹ Clearly the DC holds central Anabaptist themes together: faith and the new birth, baptism, the fellowship of the saints, and the life of discipleship. But the inner-outer balance in relation to the ceremony of baptism has receded into the background.

As far as the Lord's supper is concerned, the JC continues in a similiar vein. The supper is a memorial meal, with ethical components, instituted through Christ's command and the example of the early, apostolic church. The act of remembering Christ's death and suffering, point believers to his love. This reminds believers of the fellowship which they have with God and each other. Love and forgiveness towards the neighbour and a sense of unity, "represented and signified in the breaking of bread,"⁵⁰ are the byproducts of a meal that is memorial in nature.

The "inner-outer" dimensions of the ceremonies in the Jan Cents and Dordrecht confession no longer appear. The confessions, in this respect reflect the shift in emphasis of later Anabaptism toward the outer dimensions of the church. The Frisian-High German group and the Flemish are more willing to pick up Anabaptist themes that have to do with conditions and requirements of the ceremonies--concerns that frequently emerged in later writings of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips as they became more preoccupied with ecclesiological issues. The SC, on the other hand, maintains the spiritualist impulse, but is less inclined to emphasize the "right" conditions and requirements for participation in the ceremonies.

⁴⁹"*Confessie ende Vredehandelinge*," p. 28.

⁵⁰Horst, "Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 31, article 10.

Footwashing and Works of Love

In view of these conclusions, it is not surprising that the Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions also included footwashing in their list of outer ceremonies. In addition the JC includes an article on "the works of love". Clearly, visible dimensions of the ceremonies are emphasized in these two confessions. Visible expressions and ceremonies are important because they serve to verify the church's authenticity.

Two aspects of the article on the "works of love" in the JC are striking. First of all the article associates the works of love with economics. The works of love include: giving alms to the deacons of the church so that the poor may be supported; visiting and caring for "the sick, imprisoned and sorrowing hearts"; and assisting with "advice and in deed" fellow believers who are in need.⁵¹ The JC views the "works of love" in the same vein as Dirk Philips did. Second, it is evident that these "works of love" are to be directed primarily to those within the fellowship of believers. Believers in the body of Christ are the ones that receive love in "preference to a stranger."⁵² Is this typically Anabaptist or does it represent an inward shift among the Frisians and High Germans, who may have lost their passion for helping those outside of the Mennonite fold? The latter seems to be the case, since Anabaptist concerns for the neighbour extended beyond the confines of the believing community.

With respect to footwashing, only Dirk Philips had maintained the view that footwashing was an essential ordinance of the true church.⁵³ The practice as described in the JC appears to be one of hospitality rather than a rite practiced

⁵¹*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 36.

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³See George, *Theology of the Reformers*, p. 294.

within congregational worship.⁵⁴ Yet the reasons for the practice echo those of Dirk Philips. It is practiced after the example of Christ; it is a sign of the washing of the soul that takes place through Divine work, and it is understood as an act of humility on the part those participating in the rite.⁵⁵ Similarly in the DC, where footwashing is considered more than simply an act of hospitality, and is understood in the the context of worship, the reasons echo those of Dirk Philips.⁵⁶

4. Ethics and Discipline

Issues surrounding the nature of the church were fundamental to the question of denominational unity for early seventeenth century Mennonites. The points at which differences between ecclesiological conceptions mattered, however, were not simply lodged in the theoretical formulations concerning the nature of the church as such. Far more critical were the practical questions concerning moral behaviour of those belonging to the Christian community, and the way in which discipline should be carried out when individuals or groups failed to live up to the community's ethical norms.

It is not coincidental that the Mennonite churches, in their confessions, focussed on ethical issues surrounding the sword, the oath and certain practices related to marriage. The memory of the Muenster uprising (1534-1535),⁵⁷ where Anabaptists took up

⁵⁴Sjouke Voolstra sees footwashing as a preparation for communion among the elders in the Frisian-High German context. See Voolstra, "Dopers belijden," p. 26.

⁵⁵*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 36. Compare George, *Theology of the Reformers*, p. 294.

⁵⁶Horst, "Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 31, article 11.

⁵⁷The Muenster debacle was the most glaring example of early Anabaptist misdeeds, but the radical Melchiorite take-over of the monastery of Oldeklooster in Friesland in March of 1535, or the activities of the Bandenburg Bands even beyond 1540, would not have improved the reputation of early Anabaptists or later Mennonites,

the sword and instituted polygamy, required Mennonites who came after, to give an account of their views on the sword and on marriage. The non-Mennonite world needed to be reassured that second and third generation Anabaptists of the seventeenth century were not to be confused with immoral, radical revolutionaries of former times.

But ethical issues surfaced among Mennonites also because of internal considerations. During a time when Mennonites were experiencing the pressures of assimilation, they needed to state for themselves anew, their views on the sword and oath, as well as the place of the Christian in society. Both Menno Simons and Dirk Philips had looked to Christ, his example and teachings, and concluded that Christians should not take up the sword in warfare, violence or vengeance, nor swear the oath. Participation in the office of government for these Anabaptist leaders did not seem possible either, due to the nature of the work, although, as we have observed earlier, Menno did leave room for the possibility that Christians could be involved in government if they held to the teachings and example of Christ.⁵⁸ With respect to the oath, Melchior Hoffman had taken the position that Christians should not swear civil oaths since this would mean going against the command of Christ. Menno Simons appears to have held this same position. While seventeenth century Mennonites on the whole would not have entertained the possibility of reverting to a "Muensterite" appropriation of the sword,⁵⁹ the real

regardless of how peaceful they may have been. See Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, pp. 145-149; Jansma, "Crime in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century," pp. 221-235.

⁵⁸Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, pp. 128-135.

⁵⁹Apparently there was some resurgence of Muensterite ideas such as the "community of goods" idea, at the fringe of Mennonite communities, sometime around 1607 or 1608. It is not clear, however, whether these ideas were connected with apocalyptic interpretations that would include the use of the sword. See Sprunger, "Rich Mennonites, Poor Mennonites," p. 53.

temptation was to abandon the "orthodox" Mennonite views of Menno and Dirk in favour of a Calvinist position, that would leave open the possibility of taking greater responsibility in the affairs of society and government. Such a stance could include the use of the sword and the practice of oath-swearing. Mennonites working through issues of self-identity, therefore, needed to reiterate what it was that they believed about such issues.

Within the Mennonite churches, however, issues surrounding marriage and church discipline may have been the most crucial of all. The issue of marriage, particularly "marital avoidance" and church discipline were inseparably linked and lay at the heart of some of the Mennonite schisms that had taken place in the 1550s. It will be recalled that the Anabaptist elder, Leenaert Bouwens had banned the husband of a woman by the name of Swaen Rutgers, and then demanded, even though she had done no wrong, "that she shun all contact with her husband, under threat of excommunication."⁶⁰ At that time Dirk Philips and eventually Menno Simons, supported Leenaert Bouwens' position, with the view that the purity of the church must be maintained.⁶¹ This resulted in a major split among the Anabaptists, with those taking a more moderate position forming the Waterlander group.⁶²

This episode had taken place in the mid-sixteenth century, but the issue of marital avoidance did not simply go away with the passing of the Swaen Rutgers incident. In the seventeenth century the issue of "marital avoidance" persisted and continued to be a factor in unity discussions. James Coggins links the more liberal position on marital avoidance of the Waterlanders to the

⁶⁰Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, p. 340.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 341-344. Keeney takes the position that Menno was more lenient and that "in actual practice he was usually ready to recognize extenuating circumstances." So Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 164; see also *ibid.*, p. 163.

⁶²Ibid.

breakup of the *Bevredigde Broederschap* (the association that had included Waterlanders, Frisians and High Germans, but no longer remained intact after 1613).⁶³ Further evidence suggests that marital avoidance also brought into question the relationship between the Frisian-High German and the Flemish Mennonites. In the preface of the Jan Cents confession, the *Cort Verhael*, the Frisians and High Germans addressed the issue directly, and raised the concern that Mennonite unity was at stake. While the Frisians and High Germans no longer encouraged the practice of marital avoidance, the Flemish had apparently taken up the practice again.⁶⁴ Accordingly, the lines demarcating the different positions held by the Mennonite groups were drawn, although the Flemish had stated that they would continue to work on the issue, and that it would not hold them back from accepting fellowship with the Frisians and High Germans.⁶⁵

Sword and Oath

On issues related to the sword and oath, the SC, JC and DC appear to be of one mind. In continuity with Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, all three confessions view the government as a necessary institution to protect the good and punish the evil. The Waterlanders and the Flemish, in their confessions, place special emphasis on the importance of respecting and honouring government, and in supporting the authorities in a number of ways including through prayer. On the other hand, the use of the sword is not an option for Christ's followers; in fact all three groups categorically reject the view that Christians can be involved in the use of the sword in defense or in punishing the enemy, while the Waterlanders and Flemish elaborate their views at some

⁶³Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, pp. 71, 94-95.

⁶⁴"*Cort Verhael*," p. 5.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 5-6, 7-9.

length.⁶⁶ In the SC, the new life in Christ is far removed from "the waging of war, the destroying of life and property of the enemy." Honest government is not to be despised, but offices and services of government that have to do with the wielding of the sword are not for Christians.⁶⁷ Likewise, the swearing of oaths for Christians is forbidden, since Jesus Christ, lawgiver of the New Testament ("*Wetghever des nieuwen Testaments*"), forbids believers to do this.⁶⁸ In the DC, on the basis of Christ's example, life and teachings, as well as on the basis of the teachings of Christ's disciples and followers, true believers are not permitted to use the sword. "We have been commanded," say the Flemish in their DC, "to recompense no man with evil for evil, not to return curse for cursing, but to put the sword into its sheath or in the words of the prophet beat the swords into plowshares."⁶⁹ Speaking undoubtedly out of their immigration experience having recently left the land of Flanders, the Flemish maintain that it is better to flee from one country to another and suffer material loss than bring harm to another. Enemies are to be prayed for, the hungry and thirsty are to be fed and given

⁶⁶"*Corte Belijdenisse*," p. 35; *Martyrs' Mirror*, p. 36; "Confession and Peace Agreement," pp. 32-33, article 13.

⁶⁷It is likely that the Waterlanders did not categorically reject all participation in government, but only that level of participation that would go against their understanding of New Testament teachings, namely participation in warfare. In this respect, they reflected the views of Menno who also did not reject the office of government *per se*, although he believed it would be difficult for Christians to take the office if they had the opportunity. Already in 1581, the Waterlanders agreed that members of the congregation could accept public office, and there is no reason to believe that they had changed their position on this question some thirty years later. See Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, p. 1190.

⁶⁸"*Corte Belijdenisse*," p. 37.

⁶⁹"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 33, article 14.

drink, on the basis of the law of Christ and the "golden rule".⁷⁰ This loyalty to Christ also precludes the swearing of oaths. On the basis of the words of Christ, James and Paul, bearing witness ought to be simply confirmed with a "yes" or a "no".⁷¹

Marriage and Discipline

On questions related to marriage and discipline, the source of the most tension among the groups, the confessions reflect less unanimity. The Waterlanders in their confession clearly maintain their more liberal position that was already apparent in the 1550s. In the SC, while it is held that believers should not marry unbelievers who do not belong to the church, those who are already married to unbelievers should not be separated from their unbelieving spouse. Separation should only take place for reasons of adultery.⁷² For the Waterlanders, the exercise of banning a member from the church has its place, but it is viewed as an extreme punishment ("*uyterste straffe*") which can only be exercised after due Christian admonition and exhortation, following the precepts of Matthew 18. Thus, in contrast to the stricter positions of Menno Simons and Dirk Phillips, and more in line with spiritualists like Melchior Hoffman and the David Jorists,⁷³ the SC emphasizes that the criteria for judging cannot come from the members of the church, but must come from the Word of God.⁷⁴ While the exercise of banning members of the church who have fallen away, means that they can no longer take part in the Lord's Supper and other spiritual activities of the

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 34, article 15.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 37-38, article 39.

⁷³Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, pp. 353-363.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 18, article 35.

church (for the sake of maintaining purity), this does not imply that marriage partners are to be separated from each other. In the marriage context--it is emphasized--love, mercy, human needs and promises take precedence over church practices related to the ban.⁷⁵

Whereas the Waterlanders emphasized love and tolerance, a different attitude is prevalent in the Frisian and High German confession. The JC emphasizes the importance of believers uniting with believers, since through baptism, believers are united with Christ, and marriage with an unbeliever would sever this union.⁷⁶ "Marrying out of the Church is sinful," the JC states, "since it is contrary to the command of the Lord..."⁷⁷ Where ethical standards are not adhered to, discipline must follow. For the Frisian-High German congregation of saints, the purpose of discipline is to bring about conversion, to keep the community pure, and to serve as a warning to others, demonstrating what may happen should they also fall into sin. The church itself has the authority to do this, having possession of the keys of the kingdom of heaven and the authority to "bind or to loose," according to Matthew 18.⁷⁸ Marrying outside of the church is seen as a particularly serious sin since it is committed with premeditation. Hence, neither the disciplinary procedures of Matthew 18 nor of Galatians 6 (a restoring of the sinner in a spirit of meekness) apply, and the sinner is necessarily removed from the fellowship without hesitation (according to Numbers 15!).⁷⁹ The Frisian-High German group, with their conception of a pure church are clearly stricter in their practice of shunning

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 18, article 36.

⁷⁶*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 36.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 37.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

than the Waterlanders. Those who are shunned are not only prohibited from participating in the spiritual life of the church; they are also to be avoided in terms of social interaction and economic transactions. Yet the issue of "marital avoidance" is not taken up, and one may conclude from the foreword to the confession, the *Cort Verhael*, that this practice has been dropped.⁸⁰ Moreover, it appears that those marrying outside of the church, may be reinstated without waiting for the spouse to also be converted.⁸¹ The JC takes a stricter position than the Waterlander congregation in its exercising of the ban, but in the end, the exercise of love "without contention or disputing," appears to be the final appeal.⁸²

The Flemish in their DC, are perhaps the most cautious in accepting outsiders into the fellowship. All the Mennonites groups under review were in agreement that it was a grave sin when believers married nonbelievers. But the issue for the more conservative Mennonites, was whether it was possible to marry outside of one's denomination.⁸³ For the Waterlanders, the evidence indicates that inter-Mennonite marriages were acceptable whereas in the more conservative groups like the Old Frisians or Old Flemish, it was not.⁸⁴ In the DC, after some brief statements in defense of monogamy, the more conservative position is taken. Referring back to the practice of the patriarchs who only permitted marriages among their relatives or kindred, the Flemish underscore the stricter view that one should not marry

⁸⁰"*Cort Verhael*," p. 5.

⁸¹*Martyrs Mirror*, p. 37. See however Sjouke Voolstra, who appears to take a different position in "*Dopers belijden*," p. 28.

⁸²*Ibid.*

⁸³Voolstra, "*Dopers belijden*," p. 26.

⁸⁴Sprunger, "*Rich Mennonites, Poor Mennonites*," p. 209.

outside of one's faith.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, with respect to discipline, the Flemish appear to have arrived at some level of tolerance in not mentioning "marital avoidance." The purpose of discipline is to maintain the purity of the church, to bring the sinner to repentance, to avoid dishonouring the Lord's name, to warn others of the consequences of sin and to prevent those outside of the church from being offended.⁸⁶ Believers are not to eat and drink with those who have been shunned. However, unlike the JC, nothing is said about believers being prohibited from having economic exchanges with such persons. If anything, the mood of the article leans in the direction of showing concern for the sinner. Shunning, the Flemish say, "ought to be used in Christian moderation so that it may have the effect not of destroying but of healing the sinner. If he is in need, hungry, thirsty, naked, ill, or in any form of want, then we ought...to give him assistance." The overall purpose of discipline is to bring people to repentance; the approach is through love.⁸⁷

I began this section by pointing out that practical questions concerning moral behaviour and how one should go about disciplining in the Christian community, lay at the heart of the unity discussions among the Waterlanders, Frisians and High Germans, and the Flemish. Having examined the confessions, it is evident that on the sword and oath, as well as on the question of marriage, the confessional statements generally appear to display a unified voice in continuity with the thinking of Menno Simons and Dirk

⁸⁵"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 32, article 12.

⁸⁶This reflects a concern on the part of the Flemish to have a good standing in society--a concern also taken up by Menno Simons and Dirk Philips who were interested in, among other things, disassociating themselves from the Muenster uprising. See Keeney, *Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice*, p. 159.

⁸⁷"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 35, article 17.

Philips: marrying outside of the Christian community is not to be tolerated. On the question of "marital avoidance" there also appears to be agreement, although the emerging consensus is at odds with what Menno Simons and Dirk Philips eventually advocated: here, the practice of "marital avoidance" which the Waterlanders firmly opposed all along, is now also rejected by the Frisian-High German and Flemish Mennonites. Still, the Frisian-High German confession does not really reflect the same kind of tolerant attitude that one finds in the other confessions. Discipline is to be carried out with efficiency. The details and tone of the confession make clear that the Melchiorite-Mennonite doctrine--with its concomitant ecclesiological implications that the community is without spot or wrinkle--is still strongly in place, and even more so than in the other confessions of faith.

5. Eschatology

How are the congregation of saints to view the coming reign of God? What can the truly faithful anticipate on the Day of Judgment, and what will happen to those who have fallen by the wayside?

In a more tolerant era, Mennonites were beginning to experience the benefits of an open and liberal society. In this context, the expectation that the final judgment of the world was at hand was not nearly as strong as it had been during the time when Menno Simons and Dirk Philips were in leadership. Neither did Mennonites inextricably connect suffering and martyrdom with the rewards of eternal life, as Anabaptists frequently had during their times of persecution. Nevertheless, concerns about the final judgement and moral sufficiency dominate the confessional statements.

According to the SC, it is expected that Jesus Christ will return with his holy angels "in a manner like unto his

ascension...to judge the living and the dead."⁸⁸ At this time bodies and souls will be reunited, and those living will be changed into an eternal state, all to appear before the Judgment seat of Christ, to receive according to their works, either good or evil. Here the sheep and the goats will be divided. Those who have led a holy life and have done works of mercy will unite with Christ the bridegroom and receive eternal life; the unrighteous who have not known God nor have obeyed the gospel of Christ are damned. The criteria for entrance into eternal life is related to knowledge of God, but is mostly related to how the believers have lived their life. Those who have practiced holiness in living, works of love and mercy and obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ will in the end be saved.⁸⁹ Along with the Anabaptists, the confession is unambiguous in asserting that human beings who have a free will and are held morally responsible for their actions, will be judged accordingly.

These themes re-surface in the Frisian-High German confession in even greater detail. According to the JC, the Christ who ascended to heaven, will again appear, not as he did humbly "in his Holy incarnation" ("*H. Menschweerdinge*"),⁹⁰ but with the power and glory of all his angels. The righteous sheep will be divided from the goats, and each will receive their due reward "according to what they have done, or how they have lived."⁹¹ The confession of faith does not hold back in describing the two destinies of righteous and the wicked. This judgment, moreover, coincides with apocalyptic occurrences, at which time the heavens are said to pass away, the heavenly bodies are transformed and obliterated and Satan receives his irrevocable sentence of execution. While the wicked receive their

⁸⁸"Short Confession," p. 19, article 40.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰"*Corte Confessie*," p. 28.

⁹¹Ibid.

condemnation, the community of saints join the angelic chorus in praise of the Lamb who sits on the throne."²²

In less detail, the DC describes the final judgment like the other Mennonite confessions, where the living and the dead are described as coming before the judgment seat of Christ. Consistent with Anabaptism, it is how human beings have responded to the gospel in their deeds, which determines their final destiny. "The good or the devout shall be taken up with Christ as the blessed....On the other hand, the wicked or the ungodly shall be driven away as accursed and thrown into great darkness, into the eternal pains of hell,..."²³ In closing, the Flemish confession voices the hope of deliverance, and corresponding to the language of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, expresses the desire that the church be "without spot, and blameless" in anticipation of the coming judgment."²⁴

6. Summary

In this chapter I have been making the case that the ecclesiology articulated in the confessions is in continuity with Anabaptism. This does not rule out the possibility that some shifts in ecclesiological thinking and practice from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century have taken place. The confessional statements do not, for instance, insist that suffering is an essential mark of the church, nor do they tie in suffering and martyrdom with eschatological hope as the Anabaptists did. Neither do they insist on the practice of "marital avoidance"--it will be recalled that this was "orthodox" practice as far as Menno Simons and Dirk Philips were concerned. Evidently, in the seventeenth century, the confessions of faith reflect changing patterns in word and deed, and the change in

²²Ibid.

²³"Confession and Peace Agreement," p. 36, article 18.

²⁴Ibid.

context had much to do with this.

Still, the confessions of faith, in the main, reflect continuity with their heritage--yet a continuity that must be differentiated. As noted in the two previous chapters, the confessions of faith of the early seventeenth century are not always in continuity with the same (Anabaptist) tradition. The Waterlander confession appears more clearly to be oriented towards the "spiritual" Anabaptist tradition where a pneumatological emphasis was most clearly visible. This is evident in the SC that recognizes an "invisible" as well as "visible" quality to the church, a balanced "inner-outer" dimension to the ceremonies, and a church discipline that is not so legalistically bound to the practices of banning church members. On the other hand the Frisian-High German and Flemish confessions reflect that tendency in Anabaptism in the 1550s that was moving in the direction of emphasizing the outer dimensions of the faith. For the JC and the DC, the visible nature of the church is important; the external features of the ceremonies emerge as crucial, which leads to a church practice that emphasizes strict discipline.

All of this suggests continuity between the early seventeenth century Mennonite confessions of faith and the north-German Dutch Anabaptist tradition. At the same time it explains a diversity that presented a challenge to Mennonites who were working towards Christian unity--a diversity mirrored in Anabaptism itself.

VIII

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TRADITION

1. Mennonite Confessions of Faith Revisited

On April 26, 1639, a meeting at the *Singelkerk* in Amsterdam signalled a high point in inter-Mennonite cooperation as three thousand Mennonites, representing Flemish, Frisian and High German churches, gathered for five hours of worship, fellowship and celebration. Evidently the inter-Mennonite discussions and the vigorous theological work that had taken place over the years in the formulation and adoption of the confessions of faith, had paved the way towards ecclesial integration. The major divisions that had plagued the Mennonite churches for almost a century seemingly had been overcome; Mennonites could now meet together and celebrate their unity in Christ.

Yet, the Amsterdam meeting did not symbolize full Mennonite ecumenicity. A number of smaller conservative Mennonite groups were not included in the emerging integrated Mennonite church¹-- nor were the numerically significant Waterlanders. An attempt by the latter group to join the larger union appears to have ended in failure. In 1647 the Waterlanders met in Amsterdam to work towards a merger with the larger united group, but in 1649 at a meeting in Haarlem, their proposal, along with their Short Confession of Faith, was rejected.² The Dutch historian, Wilhelmus Kuehler notes that the Waterlanders were turned away because of their lax attitudes concerning the status of confessions of faith, and what was perceived as an unwillingness on their part to carry out a sufficiently strict church discipline. It is also possible that the Waterlander confession, the Short Confession of 1610, with its spiritualist leanings, may have been a factor in the decision of the united group to keep

¹See van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, p. 96.

²Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, p. 95.

the Waterlanders out of the integrated church.³

Unfortunately, even the partial union that the majority of Mennonites were able to achieve in the mid-seventeenth century, ended in failure. The disagreement with the Waterlanders concerning the status of the confessions appears to have been a contentious issue within all the Mennonite groups in question. Frisians, High Germans and Flemish themselves were divided on the function and place that confessional statements should have in the life of the church. The inability to reach consensus eventually led to open conflict and a new schism--the entire debacle came to be referred to as the "War of the Lambs" (the "*Lammerenkrijgh*").⁴ The group in support of the confessions of faith were known as the "Zonists"; the anti-confessionalists were known as "Lamists."⁵ The tragic conflict had a penetrating effect on all the Mennonite churches, including the Waterlander congregations, first dividing the Mennonites in Amsterdam, and then bursting apart the previous unions that had been achieved just a few years earlier. It took the Mennonites in the Netherlands until 1811 before they could finally overcome their differences and become a united church known as the *Algemeene Doopsgezinde Societeit*.

In light of this historical development it is perhaps not suprising that Dutch historians in the twentieth century--with

³See Kuehler, *Geschiedenis*, II, pp. 201-207; Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation*, p. 137.

⁴"The name is a derisive epithet for the unpleasant bickering of the lambs of God, borrowed from one of the innumerable polemics of the time." So *ME* III, s.v. "*Lammerenkrijgh*," by Nanne van der Zijpp.

⁵The Zonists were named after the church building "the Zon" in Amsterdam, to which the group moved into in 1664, shortly after the Mennonite division was complete. The Lamists were named after the church building that was called "bij 't Lam". See van der Zijpp, "The Confessions of Faith of the Dutch Mennonites," p. 182, n. 39.

their own "antidogmatic" biases⁶--viewed the Mennonite confessions with a good deal of skepticism. The notion of mid-seventeenth century Mennonites arguing about the status of the confessions, and the image of one group wanting to raise the authority of the confessions to that of binding statements of doctrine that all church leaders would have to strictly adopt,⁷ was seen to be incompatible with sixteenth century Anabaptism, which, it was determined, was concerned first and foremost with moral, not doctrinal reform. In North America, historians in this century shaped by Harold S. Bender's "Anabaptist Vision" with its ethical import, likewise could not see a connection between confessional developments in Mennonite history and sixteenth century Anabaptism. After all, it was assumed, Anabaptism was first and foremost concerned about discipleship and nonresistance, not doctrine.

To be sure, the "War of the Lambs" was a disastrous episode in Mennonite history. It cannot, however, be the main interpretive framework through which one "reads" Anabaptist-Mennonite confessional developments. Neither is the North American "Anabaptist Vision," with its focus on the ethical dimensions of Anabaptism, a fully adequate lens through which the confessions of faith may be viewed--although these Dutch and North American perspectives have their merit.

Throughout this historical-theological study I have tried to give a sympathetic interpretation of Mennonite confessional developments, and moreover, have been disposed to view the confessions as continuous with their Anabaptist heritage. In doing so, it has not been my intention to diminish the significance of the ethical and moral dimensions of the religious life, of either the Anabaptists or the Mennonites who came after. Rather I have been interested, among other things, in pointing

⁶See van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis*, p. 228.

⁷See *ME IV*, s.v. "Verbondt van Eenigheydt," by Nanne van der Zijpp.

out something that has often been overlooked; namely, that the Anabaptist-Mennonite concern for the practical Christian life was, in fact, deeply rooted in a particular theology, a particular way of believing, and thinking about God, humanity, Jesus Christ, salvation and the church.

To sum up, my central argument has been that the early seventeenth century Mennonite confessions of faith, as represented by the Short, Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions, in the main, stand in historical and theological continuity with north German-Dutch Anabaptism. This argument has required some careful explanation. In terms of the historical question, it is certainly the case that the confessions of faith that emerged in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries represented something new in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. For the first time, Mennonites were writing confessions of faith that were comprehensive, systematic and doctrinal. In the past, Anabaptists had not written confessions quite this way. As I have noted, one or another characteristic had existed in earlier Anabaptist writings, but never all three together in one confessional statement.

My argument, particularly in chapters two, three and four, has been that systematic and comprehensive statements of doctrine, reflecting consensus on what the church should teach did not emerge among first generation Anabaptists because historical conditions in the Anabaptist period would not allow for such developments. In the first years of the movement, Anabaptists were in theological disarray, on the run from persecutors, and disconnected from any coherent and stable communal life. By the seventeenth century, however, the context had changed dramatically. Mennonitism was no longer an underground movement, but an emerging denominational entity, aspiring in the new spirit of toleration and pluralism, to demarcate and consolidate its identity. Definable communities of discourse had emerged within Mennonite churches with competent leadership, able to reflect theologically, in ways and methods

that had not been possible and tried before. In this new *Sitz im Leben*, the writing of confessions of faith as they appeared in the seventeenth century was a historical outcome of an "Anabaptism" that had made the natural transition from the first to the second generation. In this respect, the emergence of the confessions may be seen as *historically* continuous with Anabaptism. That the confessional statements required broad based approval from the congregations in order to be accepted, that the confessions had representative, rather than constitutive authority, and that Mennonites were quite willing to modify and rewrite their confessional statements in subsequent years--as I have given evidence of in chapter four--is yet another indication of the historical continuity between the confessions and their north German-Dutch heritage.

In chapters five, six and seven I have argued specifically for *theological* continuity between the confessions and Anabaptism. This argument has also required some careful explanation. It is certainly the case, for instance, that the Mennonite confessions were shaped and influenced by the broader theological milieu of the times. In textual matters the confessional statements reflect the influence of the mainline Protestant traditions. Sometimes they appropriate language directly from the Reformed tradition. The language of the Short Confession of 1610, undoubtedly also reflects the broader spiritualism of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century milieu. In the area of Christology, the Waterlander and Flemish confessions have suppressed explicit references to the Melchiorite-Mennonite doctrine of the incarnation. In the area of ecclesiology, the mark of suffering, an essential *nota ecclesiae* for the Anabaptists, no longer seems to have been important in a more tolerant and pluralistic situation.

Nevertheless, as I have argued, the confessions of faith reflect, in the main, theological continuity with their tradition-- not discontinuity. In making this point I have found it necessary to make a distinction between early Anabaptism, with

its "inner-spiritualist" and personal emphasis, and later Anabaptism, with its accent on the more "outer-literalist" and communal dimensions of the religious life. Accordingly, I have shown that the Short Confession of Faith is more closely related to early Anabaptism; the Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions of faith are more closely related to later Anabaptism. This differentiation has become especially evident in the area of hermeneutics, soteriology and ecclesiology.

As I have noted in chapter five, the articles addressing marriage, church discipline, government and the oath, and the Scripture texts that focus on human freedom, responsibility and accountability, are all related to specific concerns and emphases that one finds in the north German-Dutch Anabaptist context. The irenic tone in the confessions of faith, and the respect that is shown toward secular authorities, is likewise in keeping with an Anabaptist tone that was prevalent especially after 1535.

The figurative hermeneutics that one finds throughout the confessions of faith is also consistent with sixteenth century north German-Dutch Anabaptism, where Scripture was constantly read in figurative ways. The "spiritualist" reading of Scripture that one finds in the Waterlander confession of faith is more commensurate with early Anabaptism; the concern for the external Word in the Jan Cents and Dordrecht confessions, suggests a greater affinity to later Anabaptism.

As noted in chapter six, on the doctrine of God, all the confessions under review, reflect Anabaptist perspectives--which were not substantially different from the general Christian orthodox tradition. The doctrine of the Trinity, and particularly the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son as formulated in the Jan Cents confession, is remarkably similar to the formulations that one finds in the writings of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. In anthropological matters the confessions also remain in line with their tradition in that they reject the doctrine of predestination and affirm human free will. In matters related to Christology, the Frisian confession unreservedly

articulates the Melchiorite-Mennonite doctrine of the incarnation. Implicitly, remnants of the doctrine are visible in both the Waterlander and Flemish confessions. As far as the work of Christ is concerned, all of the confessions remain true to their tradition in linking the atonement to the new life in Christ. In the area of soteriology, personal regeneration and an emphasis on the new life in Christ comes through particularly in the Waterlander confession. In the Jan Cents confession, regeneration is more clearly linked to the community, as it was in later Anabaptism.

In chapter seven, which focusses on ecclesiology, the close relationship of the Waterlander confession to the "spiritual" Anabaptist tradition shows through in distinct ways. In the Short Confession the "invisible" as well as "visible" qualities of the church are recognized, both in terms of the essential nature of the church, and in the nature of the ceremonies as they are experienced in the life of the church. In the area of church discipline, consistent with the spiritualist emphasis, it is love and tolerance that must presuppose any actions that might lead to excommunication.

In the Frisian-High German and Flemish confessions, on the other hand, it is the outer dimensions of faith, as in later Anabaptism, which come to the fore. In these two confessions, the visible purity of the church is especially emphasized, as are the external features of the ceremonies. The emphasis on the purity of the church, in turn, is then also linked to the importance of strict church discipline. Accordingly, a visible regenerate body of believers, "without spot or wrinkle," exercises strict disciplinary measures to ensure the obedience that is expected from the body of Christ.

Finally, with reference to eschatology, it is evident that in a tolerant milieu, the confessions do not link the community of saints on earth with inevitable suffering and martyrdom, as the Anabaptists supposed. Nevertheless, continuity with the Anabaptist heritage is apparent, especially with reference to the

final judgment, where a strong link is posited between moral behaviour and one's eternal destiny. All the confessions, in varying degrees emphasize the fact that at the final judgment, everyone will receive according to what they have done, commensurate with how they have lived.

These various aspects characterizing the theology in the confessions, suggest continuity between the early seventeenth century Mennonite confessions of faith and the north-German Dutch Anabaptist tradition. At the same time the diversity among the confessions, particularly between the Waterlander confession on the one hand, and the Frisian-High German and Dordrecht confessions on the other, explains in part why Mennonite integration was so elusive for the churches in the seventeenth century--a diversity that mirrored in some respects the heterogeneity of sixteenth century Anabaptism.

Dutch historians in the twentieth century have stressed different lines of continuity between seventeenth century Mennonites and sixteenth century Anabaptists. On the one hand, Wilhelmus Kuehler, Hendrik Meihuizen and Nanne van der Zijpp have tended to emphasize ways in which the Waterlanders, with their "spiritualist" character, were the true inheritors of the Anabaptist "spiritual" tradition. On the other hand, Sjouke Voolstra has noted ways in which the Flemish and Frisian-High German groups are most closely related to the "Melchiorite-Mennonite" tradition within Anabaptism. The theological examination of early seventeenth century Mennonite confessions of faith has given validity, it seems to me, to both perspectives.

2. The Question of Contemporary Viability

Do confessional documents of the past have any relevance for those currently involved in the explication of the Christian faith--particularly for those who are attempting to do theology from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective?

Mennonites, from Anabaptist beginnings to the present day are a part of a creedal and confessional heritage. They have

shared the essentials of the faith ecumenically with the Christian West through their common assent to the Apostles' Creed. Throughout the centuries, primarily in local and regional settings, they have continued to write and adopt confessions of faith, which have been intended to reflect in greater detail the particular core beliefs of the Mennonite faith. Unlike many other Christian denominational traditions, Mennonites have been reluctant to give their confessional statements unquestioning allegiance or constitutive authority. They have rarely been hesitant to formulate the contents of their faith in new ways.

Nevertheless, the confessions of faith have played an important role in the development of Anabaptist and Mennonite identity. While the confessions have not had constitutive or even legal authority, they have exhibited representative authority, serving as an orientation or point of reference for Mennonite communities in a given time and place. Unfortunately, theologians explicating the faith from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective have all too seldom recognized this, or have rarely given direct consideration to this extensive, rich and variegated tradition.

The discipline of theology from a contemporary Mennonite perspective should never be rigidly bound by ecclesiastical history. Avoiding the past, however, represents a serious lacuna for the discipline. Current and future theological conversations would benefit from keeping the development of the tradition in view.

APPENDIX I

Table 1. Articles and themes in the Mennonite confessions

Art. SC	JC	DC	AC	BC
1. God	Oneness of God	God and Creation	God	God
2. Trinity	Creation	Fall	Original Sin	Revelation
3. Trinity	Fall and Restor.	Restoration	Son of God	Scriptures
4. Cr., Fall, Redempt.	Free Will	Incarnation	Justification	Canon
5. Fr. of the Will	Incarnation	Law of Christ	Ministry	Author. of Scrip.
6. Origin of Sin	Offices of Christ	Rep. a. new life	New Obedience	Apocrypha
7. Predestination	Life a Death of Ch.	Baptism	Church	Scripture
8. Incarnation	Resurr. and Asc.	Church	Church	Trinity
9. Offices of Christ	Holy Spirit	Church Leadership	Baptism	Trinity
10. The Law	Church	Lord's Supper	Lord's Supper	Jesus Christ
11. Prophetic Office	Baptism	Footwashing	Confession	Holy Spirit
12. Priestly Office	Lord's Supper	Marriage	Repentance	Creation
13. Obedience of Christ	Footwashing	Secular Authorities	Sacraments	Providence
14. Kingly Office	Works of Love	Defense by Force	Church Order	Cr. of Humanity
15. Resurrection	Marriage	Oath Swearing	Church Usages	Original Sin
16. Ascension-Glorific.	Secular Author.	Church Discipline	Civil Government	Redemption
17. Priestly Office	Oath Swearing	Avoidance	Last Things	Redemption
18. Kingly Office	Church Discipline	Last Things	Free Will	Incarnation
19. Knowing Christ	Avoidance		Cause of Sin	Nat. of Christ
20. Saving Faith	Forgive. of Sins		Faith and Works	Death and Resurr.
21. Justification	Last Things		The Saints	Priestly Work
22. The Reditrh			Sacraments	Saving Faith
23. Good Works			Mar. of Priests	Sal. through Grace
24. The Church			Mass	Good Works
25. Off. of Church lead.			Confession	Law and Ceremonies
26. Leadership and laity			Foods	Priestly Office
27. Calling of Leadership			Monastic Vows	Unity of the Church
28. Ordination			Power of the Bish.	True Church
29. True Doctrine				Works of the Church
30. The Sacraments				Church Leadership
31. Baptism				Blection of Leaders
32 The Significance of Baptism				Church Order
33. The Lord's Supper				Sacraments
34. The Significance of the Supper				Baptism
35. Church Discipline				Communion
36. Avoidance				Civil Government
37. Secular Authorities				Last Things
38. Oath Swearing				
39. Marriage				
40. Last Things				

These do not precisely reflect the actual heading of the article in the earliest editions, but reflect either the titles given in the English edition or the theme discussed in the article.

Table 2. Approximate number of words in each confession

Short Confession	4,700
Jan Cents Confession	4,300
Dortrecht Confession	4,400
Augsburg Confession	3,300 (Part 1); 8,800 (Part 2)
Belgic Confession	9,100

Note: The figures exclude prefaces and conclusions.

Table 3. Use of Scripture References

	SC	JC	DC	AC	BC
OT	111	90	34	8	156
Apoc	0	8	1	0	1
NT	452	297	73	73	532
Total	563	395	108	81	689

Table 4. Most frequently used Books of the Bible

SC	JC	DC	AC	BC
Mt. (83)	Mt. (57)	Mt. (26)	ICo. (12)	Joh. (70)
Joh. (73)	Joh. (36)	Gen. (21)	Mt. (10)	Rom. (70)
Acts (37)	Acts (34)	Joh. (17)	Joh. (07)	Mt. (51)
Gen. (34)	Gen. (26)	Act/(13)	Act/ (06)	ICo. (47)
		ICo.(13)	Rom/ (06)	
			ITi. (06)	

Table 5. Chapters in the Bible most frequently cited and the verses that receive frequent focus

SC	JC	DC
Mt. 25 [32-42] (12)	Mt. 25 [31-41] (08)	Mt. 28 [19-20] (05)
Gen. 3 [1-15] (11)	Gen.1 [*] (07)	Gen.2 [17-22] (05)
Mt. 28 [18-20] (09)	Joh.1 [*] (06)	Mt. 5 [34-44] (04)
Joh. 1 [12-14] (09)	Mt. 28 [19-20] (05)	Act.2 [28-46] (04)
Joh. 17 [1-15] (09)		ICo.5 [5-12] (04)
		Gen.3 [v.15] (04)
AC	BC	
Mt. 15 [1-14] (05)	Rom. 8 [*] (12)	
ICo.11 [20-27] (04)	Mt. 28 [19-20] (09)	
Act.15 [10-29] (04)	Jn. 1 [1-14] (09)	
ITi.4 [1-3] (04)	Col. 1 [11-16] (09)	

Note: * = no specific verses

Table 6. Book Frequency Summary
(does not include references in the prefaces or conclusions of the confessions)

Old Testament Writings						Apocryphal Writings					
Books	SC	JC	DC	AC	BC	Books	SC	JC	DC	AC	BC
Gen.	34	26	21	2	19	Wisdom	-	2	-	-	1
Exod.	2	7	-	1	7	Sirach	-	2	-	-	-
Lev.	1	1	-	-	-	Baruch	-	2	-	-	-
Num.	-	3	-	-	-	4 Esd.	-	2	1	-	-
Deut.	16	10	1	-	13	Total	0	8	1	0	1
Joshua	-	-	-	-	-	New Testament Writings					
Judges	-	-	-	-	1	Books	SC	JC	DC	AC	BC
Ruth.	-	-	-	-	-	Matt.	83	57	26	10	51
I Sam.	-	-	-	-	2	Mark	11	4	6	2	4
II Sam.	-	-	-	-	2	Luke	21	20	11	5	16
I Kin.	3	-	-	-	3	John	73	36	17	7	70
IIKin.	-	-	-	-	1	Acts	37	34	13	6	46
I Chro.	-	-	-	-	-	Romans	29	22	11	6	70
IIChro.	1	-	-	-	-	I Cor.	28	17	13	12	47
Ezra	-	-	-	-	-	II Cor.	16	7	6	4	10
Neh.	-	1	-	-	-	Gal.	9	10	3	3	17
Ester	-	-	-	-	-	Eph.	27	9	5	2	27
Job	1	1	1	-	2	Phil.	10	2	-	1	6
Psalms	17	12	2	4	43	Col.	13	3	4	3	17
Prov.	-	-	-	-	6	IThess.	1	3	1	-	5
Eccles.	-	-	-	-	2	IIThes.	5	9	2	-	3
S.S.	-	-	-	-	-	ITim.	7	8	12	6	18
Isaiah	12	11	3	-	25	IITim.	7	4	1	-	11
Jer.	12	6	1	1	13	Titus	7	5	6	1	10
Lam.	-	-	-	-	-	Philemon	-	-	-	-	-
Ezekiel	4	1	1	-	2	Hebrews	29	14	8	3	41
Daniel	-	5	1	-	3	James	6	4	4	-	5
Hosea	1	-	-	-	2	I Pet	9	4	6	-	14
Joel	1	-	-	-	1	IIPet	2	3	-	-	9
Amos	-	-	-	-	2	IJohn	13	4	3	1	16
Obediah	-	-	-	-	-	IIJohn	-	-	-	-	2
Jonah	-	-	-	-	-	IIIJo.	-	-	-	-	-
Micah	4	3	2	-	2	Jude	-	1	-	-	2
Nahum	-	-	-	-	-	Rev.	10	17	6	-	15
Hab.	-	-	-	-	1						
Zeph.	-	-	-	-	1						
Haggai	-	3	-	-	-						
Zech.	2	-	1	-	-						
Mal.	-	-	-	-	3						
Total	111	90	34	8	156	Total	453	297	73	73	532

APPENDIX II

LOCATION OF SCRIPTURE REFERENCES
IN THE CONFESSIONS

Scripture Use: Short Confession

Book	Article
Gen.: 21:33; 17:1; 1:1.....	01
(34) 1:31; 1:27; 3:9; 3:15; 3:21; 12:3; 22:18; 26:4.....	04
1:31; 3:1; 3:4; 3:6; 3:8; 3:10-12; 3:6; 3:8-10;	
3:15; 4:6-7; 6:2-3; 6:12.....	05
2:17; 4:6; 8:19; 8:24.....	06
1:27; 12:3; 22:18.....	07
3:15; 22:18; 26:4.....	08
2:22.....	39
Exodus: 34:6-7; 20:11.....	01
(2)	
Lev.: 19:2.....	01
(1)	
Deut.: 6:4; 32:39.....	01
(16) 11:26.....	05
5:29; 32:29; 28; 27:15; 28.....	06
18:16.....	08
18:15; 18:15.....	09
18:15; 18:18.....	11
18:15.....	14
4:1-2.....	29
7:2.....	39
I Kings: 8:27.....	01
(3) 15:23; 30:2.....	07
II Chro.:15:2.....	07
(1)	
Job: 28:24-27.....	06
(1)	
Psalms: 11:7; 103:8.....	01
(17) 81:14.....	05
103:8; 36:9; 7:12.....	06
110:4.....	09
121:4-5; 18:3; 91:2.....	14
2:6; 110:2-4.....	16
2:9.....	18
32:1.....	21
103:2; 10:2; 103:1.....	23

Isaiah: 1:19-20; 42:18-21.....	05
(12) 41:14-16; 48:3.....	06
9:5; 11:1; 7:14.....	08
2:4.....	10
2:4.....	18
53:4-5.....	19
61:3.....	23
2:10.....	40
Jer.: 2:13.....	01
(12) 8:7; 25:4.....	05
1:5; 2:13.....	06
23:5.....	08
33:15.....	09
23:6; 33:15; 23:5.....	14
31:38.....	22
22:7.....	37
Ezekial: 33:11.....	07
(4) 36:26; 36:26.....	22
39:27.....	32
Hosea: 13:9.....	06
(1)	
Joel: 2:28.....	32
(1)	
Micah: 5:2.....	03
(4) 6:2.....	06
4:3.....	10
4:2-3.....	18
Zech.: 9:10.....	10
(2) 9:9.....	14
Matt.: 5:34; 5:48; 19:17.....	01
(83) 3:16-19; 28:19.....	02
11:17; 22:3; 23:36.....	05
19:17; 24:13; 3:12; 25:47.....	06
19:17; 28:19; 24:13; 22:14; 25:34; 22:5; 22:3.....	07
1:20; 1:23; 19:16.....	08
16:16; 9:15; 21:5; 17:5; 28:20; 17:5.....	09
20:25-27; 5:38.....	10
13:35; 1:14; 26:25-26; 5.....	11
27:49.....	12
18:1; 3:23.....	14
27:58-59; 28:6.....	15
3:11.....	17
23:36; 28:18.....	18
12:50; 9:12; 3:11.....	19
7:12.....	20

	5:8; 5:16.....	23
	8:11; 24:3; 21:5; 13:24-25; 13:47-48; 25:1.....	24
	28:19; 18:15; 17:5.....	25
	28:19.....	29
	28:19; 26:25; 3:15.....	30
	28:19; 3:15.....	31
	3:11.....	32
	18:15-18.....	35
	22:17; 20:25-28; 17:5.....	37
	28:20; 5:34.....	38
	19:4; 19:9.....	39
	24:30; 25:31; 25:32; 25:32; 25:32; 25:47; 25:35-38; 25:10; 25:47; 25:34; 25:42.....	40
Mark:	16:15; 16:15-16.....	07
(11)	10:43-45.....	10
	15:39.....	12
	16:19; 16:19.....	16
	18:15.....	25
	16:15.....	29
	16:15.....	30
	16:15.....	31
	14:24.....	34
Luke:	1:31.....	03
(21)	13:32.....	05
	19:42.....	06
	14:16-17; 14:24.....	07
	1:27; 1:31.....	08
	1:28; 1:29.....	10
	23:33.....	12
	1:29.....	14
	24:25.....	16
	1:69.....	18
	6:23.....	23
	14:24.....	24
	17:3.....	25
	22:19.....	30
	22:19; 22:19.....	33
	22:19.....	34
	22:25-27.....	37
John:	4:24; 5:17.....	01
(72)	5:7.....	02
	1:1; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7.....	03
	5:34; 5:40 (?).....	05
	3:19; 3:16; 4:14; 1:12; 3:19.....	07
	13:3; 16:28; 17:18; 1:14; 1:14; 8:40; 6:69; 9:35-37.....	08
	8:40; 3:36; 8:12.....	09
	18:33.....	10
	17:8; 10:27-28; 8:12.....	11
	17:9; 17:11; 17:15; 17:23.....	12

17:5.....	16
14:26; 16:13; 1:33; 6:32-34.....	17
10:28.....	18
17:5; 14:11; 14:23; 6:48-50.....	19
3:16; 3:36; 17:3; 16:23.....	20
8:32; 8:47; 1:4; 2:6-7; 3:5-6; 1:13; 1:12; 3:3; 3:5.....	22(?)
14:21; 14:23.....	23
10:11; 13:15; 2:29; 10:16.....	24
1:33; 7:38; 7:38.....	32
6:51; 6:55.....	34
5:22; 12:48.....	35
8:12; 10:27.....	37
5:28; 5:29.....	40
Acts: 7:48.....	01
(37) 13:46.....	07
15:10.....	10
4:11.....	14
10:40; 2:24.....	15
1:3; 1:9; 2:36.....	16
2:36; 2:33.....	17
15:9.....	20
6:2-4.....	25
1:21; 14:23.....	27
6:6; 13:3.....	28
1:1.....	29
2:38; 8:30.....	30
2:38; 2:41; 8:11; 8:36; 8:37; 19:15; 10:48; 10:15; 16:32-34; 18:8; 19:5; 2:38.....	31
2:48; 2:20.....	33
4:19.....	37
1:11; 10:42.....	40
Romans: 1:10; 16:26; 11:33.....	01
(29) 11:36.....	03
5:18; 5:19; 5:18.....	04
5:10.....	07
9:5.....	08
4:25.....	13
8:34.....	17
8:11; 8:14.....	18
6:6; 6:5.....	19
5:1-2; 10:9.....	20
5:1; 4:25.....	21
12:2.....	22
5:5.....	23
12:4.....	26
6:3-4.....	31
8:9.....	32
13:1; 13:3-4; 13:6; 13:7; 13:1-3.....	37

I Cor.:	8:6; 1:22.....	03
(28)	12:28.....	14
	15:4; 15:12-13; 15:21.....	15
	12:13.....	19
	6:11; 6:12.....	21
	3:14.....	23
	3:11.....	24
	6:11.....	32
	11:22; 10:15; 11:28; 11:25; 11:24.....	33
	11:23; 10:16; 10:17.....	34
	5:2; 5:12.....	35
	5:5.....	36
	12:28.....	37
	7:2; 7:36.....	39
	15:42; 15:51-52.....	40
II Cor.:	6:18.....	01
(16)	3:17.....	08
	5:19.....	09
	3:11; 3:14.....	10
	5:19.....	13
	10:4.....	14
	10:4; 2:16; 10:4.....	18
	5:16; 6:16; 5:16-17.....	19
	5:17.....	24
	5:10; 5:10.....	40
Gal.:	4:4.....	08
(9)	6:4.....	09
	6:4.....	11
	4:19.....	19
	5:6; 5:6.....	20
	5:6.....	21
	5:6.....	23
	6:4.....	38
Eph.:	2:1-3.....	06
(27)	5:2; 1:9; 1:4.....	07
	5:2.....	12
	1:13.....	13
	6:13.....	14
	4:8.....	16
	6:17; 6:13.....	18
	3:17; 5:30.....	19
	4:24; 4:23; 4:22-24; 4:17-18.....	22
	2:7.....	23
	5:25; 5:23; 5:23; 5:30.....	24
	5:29.....	30
	5:26; 2:4-5.....	32
	5:29.....	34
	4:11.....	37
	5:31.....	39

Phil.:	2:8.....	12
(10)	2:8.....	13
	3:21; 2:9.....	16
	3:20; 3:9; 3:10; 3:10.....	19
	2:11.....	24
	3:20.....	32
Col.:	1:15; 3:21-26.....	01
(13)	1:15; 2:3.....	03
	1:19.....	07(?)
	2:16-17.....	10
	1:14.....	13
	2:15.....	16
	3:1.....	19
	3:9-10; 3:9-10.....	22
	2:12.....	31
	3:1-2.....	34
I Thes.:	4:17.....	40
(1)		
II Thes:	2:10-11.....	07
(5)	1:7; 1:10; 1:8; 1:9.....	40
I Tim.:	2:4.....	07
(7)	2:5.....	08
	1:15; 2:5.....	09
	2:5.....	17
	4:14.....	28
	2:1-2.....	37
II Tim.:	2:5.....	12
(7)	4:8.....	18
	1:6.....	28
	3:16.....	29
	2:16-18; 3:13.....	36
	4:1.....	40
Titus:	1:17.....	01
(7)	3:5-6.....	21
	3:5.....	30
	3:5; 3:5-7.....	32
	3:10.....	36
	3:1.....	37
Hebrews:	7:3.....	03
(29)	2:9.....	07
	1:10-12.....	08
	3:1.....	09
	8:4-5; 10:1.....	10
	1:2; 1:2; 3:5.....	11

	5:16; 5:20; 10:12.....	12
	9:13-14; 9:28; 10.....	13
	3:1.....	14
	8:1; 2; 7:2-3.....	16
	8:1; 8:2.....	17
	12:23.....	18
	8:1.....	19
	11:1.....	20
	8:10.....	22
	5:7.....	26
	2:3; 12:25.....	29
	12:2-3.....	37
James:	1:17; 1:17.....	01
(6)	1:15.....	07
	1:18.....	19
	1:18.....	22
	5:10.....	38
I Peter:	2:8.....	07
(9)	2:21.....	11
	3:18.....	13
	1:3; 1:23.....	22
	3:21.....	31
	2:13; 2:17; 2:21-23.....	37
II Pet.:	3:9.....	07
(2)	1:4.....	19
I John:	5:7.....	03
(13)	4:8; 2:2; 2:2.....	07
	5:20.....	08
	5:20; 2:2.....	09
	2:6.....	11
	2:2.....	13
	2:2.....	17
	1:7; 3:7.....	21
	1:7.....	32
Rev.:	22:1.....	03
(10)	3:18.....	06
	2:10.....	07
	1:5.....	17
	2:10.....	18
	3:20.....	19
	6:9; 21:2.....	24
	3:23.....	30
	3:20.....	34

Scripture Use: Jan Cents

Book		Article
Genesis: (26)	21:33; 17:1; 1:1.....	01
	1:6; 1:9; 1:13; 1:24; 1:26; 2:7; 1:28; 2:8; 2:9.....	02
	3:1; 3:15; 12; 36; 16; 4; 18; 49.....	03
	17:12.....	06
	2:22.....	10
	18:4.....	13
	2:24; 6:1-2.....	15
	7:11.....	18
Exodus: (7)	34:6-7; 20:11; 3:6; 6:6; 5:1.....	01
	12:3; 25:17.....	03
Lev. (1)	19:12.....	01
Numbers: (3)	1:20.....	01
	24:19; 21:9.....	03
	13:30.....	18
Deut: (10)	6:4.....	01
	30:15.....	04
	7:8.....	05
	18:15.....	06
	21:13.....	07
	24:1.....	15
	6:13; 10:20.....	17
13:5; 7:3.....	18	
Nehemia: (1)	13:25.....	18
Job: (1)	19:26.....	21
Psalms: (12)	90:2; 145:3; 11:7; 103:8; 139.....	01
	49:8.....	03
	2:7.....	05
	110:4; 45:7; 29:25.....	06
	16:11.....	08
	49:15.....	21
Isaiah: (11)	45:5; 45:21; 49:28.....	01
	7:5-9; 5:11; 10:53.....	03
	30:33; 14:11; 66:24; 25:8; 25:8.....	21

Jer.	2:19.....	01
(6)	32;37.....	02
	23:5-6; 33:15.....	03
	33:15.....	06
	29:7.....	16
Ezekial:	34:17.....	21
(1)		
Daniel:	7:13; 9:24.....	03
(5)	7:9; 7:13; 12:2.....	21
Micah:	5:1; 3:1.....	03
(3)	5:1.....	05
Hag:	2:24.....	03
(1)		
Wis. of Solomon:	2:23.....	02
(2)	2:24.....	03
Sirach:	17:5.....	02
(2)	15:14.....	04
Baruch:	3:39.....	04
(2)	3:24.....	21
4 Esdras:	8:21.....	01
(8)	7:48.....	03
	7:14.....	05
	5:27.....	10
	1; 16:10; 2:46; 8:21.....	21
Matthew:	5:48; 19:17; 2:32; 28:19.....	01
(57)	19:17.....	03
	28:18; 16:16; 11:29; 22:9.....	04
	1:21; 2:23; 3:17; 27; 17:5.....	05
	1:21; 18:11; 21:5; 13:35; 18:9.....	06
	4:1; 16:21; 27; 27:56.....	07
	28:2.....	08
	21:3.....	09
	28:20.....	10
	16:15-16; 3; 10:4; 28:19.....	11
	26:25.....	12
	6:1; 25:35.....	14
	19:8.....	15
	22:17; 20:25; 5:44.....	16
	5:37.....	17
	18; 16:19; 18:18; 18:15.....	18

	1:21; 24:30; 25:31; 16:27; 25:31; 24:31; 16:27; 25:32 25:32; 25:33; 25:34; 25:41; 25:6; 8:11; 4:2.....	21
Mark:	16:16.....	10
(4)	14; 22:23.....	12
	9:47.....	21
Luke:	6:36.....	01
(20)	1:31; 2:6; 2:40.....	05
	2:21; 19:18; 10:5.....	06
	4:1; 23.....	07
	24:36; 24:30.....	08
	1:31.....	09
	10:1.....	10
	22:19.....	12
	12:33; 16:9.....	14
	22:25.....	16
	6:36.....	19
	24:46.....	20
	17:24.....	21
John:	5:17; 3:6; 16:28; 14:16.....	01
(36)	3:16; 3:36.....	04
	1:1; 17:5; 8:58; 1:1; 1; 16:28; 1:14; 1; 1:14.....	05
	3:3; 14:12.....	06
	18:36; 19:18; 3:16.....	07
	20:4.....	08
	14:1; 15:25; 16:7; 5:20; 15; 14:26.....	09
	6:51.....	12
	13:5; 22:25.....	13
	3:15.....	15
	8:12; 10:27.....	16
	23:12.....	18
	5:29; 5:29.....	21
Acts:	4:24; 1:8; 22:33.....	01
(34)	17:24.....	02
	17:30; 13:46.....	04
	2:24; 13:34; 24:36; 1:12.....	08
	2:2; 5:3.....	09
	20:28; 6:3; 16:2; 4:32.....	10
	2:38; 8:11; 8:34; 8:37; 8:36; 10:43; 8:36; 10; 2:38.....	11
	2:46; 20:7.....	12
	6:13.....	14
	4:19.....	16
	13:38.....	20
	4:12; 1:11; 1:11; 17:31.....	21
Romans:	10:9; 3:30; 8:3; 5:10.....	01
(22)	5:12; 5:12; 3:24.....	03
	2:5.....	04
	9:5.....	05

21	.....	
10	5:13.....	I Thes:	(3)
	4:16; 4:17.....		
20	1:14.....		
06	3:1.....	COL:	(3)
01	3:24-25.....		
		
21	3:21.....	PHIL:	(2)
13	2:3.....		
		
18	5:5.....		
15	5:23.....		
11	4:5.....		
10	5:26; 4:11; 5:23.....		
06	5:2.....		
05	4:9.....	EPH:	(9)
01	4:6.....		
		
18	5:9; 5:21; 6:11; 6:1.....		
07	3:13.....		
06	3:13; 4:5; 4:4.....	GAL:	(10)
05	4:4; 4:4.....		
		
21	5:10; 5:10; 3:18.....		
19	2:8.....		
06	1:16.....		
03	5:19.....	II COR:	(7)
01	6:18.....		
		
21	15:12; 15:51; 15:28.....		
19	5:5.....		
18	5:6; 5:12; 5:3; 6:9.....		
16	12:28.....		
12	10:16-17; 11:23-24.....		
11	3:5.....		
10	6:20; 12:28.....		
03	15:21.....	I COR:	(17)
01	8:4; 8:27.....		
		
21	2:6.....		
20	8:34.....		
16	13:2-4; 13:7; 12:9.....		
15	12:1.....		
11	6:4.....		
09	9:5.....		
08	6:4; 8:34.....		
07	8:22; 5:10.....		
06	8:3-4.....		

II Thes:	1:8; 4:7.....	04
(9)	3:14.....	18
	3:15; 3:13; 3:15.....	19
	1:7; 1:8; 4:9.....	21
I Tim:	1:12.....	01
(8)	1:15.....	04
	6:13.....	07
	3:10; 5:17-18.....	10
	5:10.....	13
	5:20.....	18
	2:5.....	20
II Tim:	1:10.....	06
(4)	2:5.....	08
	2:16-18.....	19
	4:8.....	21
Titus:	2:11.....	04
(5)	2:2.....	16
	3:10.....	18
	3:10.....	19
	4:15.....	21
Hebrews:	1:3.....	01
(14)	3:11; 10:12; 9:12; 5:2; 5:5; 2:14-15.....	06
	9:12; 12:9.....	08
	13:7; 12:22.....	10
	6:3.....	11
	13:1-3.....	14
	12:2.....	16
James:	4:24; 1:17.....	01
(4)	5:12.....	17
	1:12.....	18
I Peter:	1:23; 1:22.....	15
(4)	2:13; 2:21.....	16
II Peter:	1:6.....	19
(3)	3:10; 3:10.....	21
I John:	5:7.....	01
(4)	5:20.....	05
	2:1.....	08
	2:1.....	20
Jude:	v.14.....	21
(1)		

Rev.	5:3; 5:31.....	03
(17)	1:7; 20:13; 1:7; 20:12; 6:12; 9:2; 14:5; 7:17; 7:9; 19:8	
	7:17; 14:1; 14:4; 14:3; 7:9.....	21

Scripture Use: Dordrecht Confession

Book		Article
Genesis:	17:1; 1; 1:27; 2:7; 5:1; 2:18; 2:17; 2:22.....	01
(21)	3:6; 3:23.....	02
	3:15.....	03
	3:15.....	04
	8:21.....	06
	18:4; 19:2; 8:4; 19:2.....	11
	1:26; 2:22; 24; 28.....	12
Deuteronomy:	6:4.....	01
(1)		
Job:	19:26-27.....	18
(1)		
Psalms:	49:8.....	02
(2)	49:8.....	09
Isaiah:	46:8.....	01
(3)	2:4.....	14
	59:2.....	16
Jeremiah:	31:31.....	05
(1)		
Ezekial:	12:1.....	06
(1)		
Daniel:	12:12.....	18
(1)		
Micah:	5:1.....	04
(2)	4:3.....	14
Zachariah:	9:8-9.....	14
(1)		
4 Esdras:	3:7.....	02
(1)		

Matthew: (26)	1:22; 22:41; 16:16.....	04	
	26:27; 28:19.....	05	
	28:20; 28:20; 3:15.....	07	
	16:18; 28:20; 7:25; 16:18.....	08	
	12:19; 18:11; 28:20.....	09	
	26:25.....	10	
	19:4.....	12	
	22:21; 17:27.....	13	
	5:39; 5:44; 5:39; 7:12.....	14	
	5:34-35.....	15	
	22:30-31; 25:31.....	18	
	Mark: (6)	16:13.....	05
		1:15; 1:15.....	06
16:15.....		07	
14:22.....		10	
9:44.....		18	
Luke: (11)	2:7; 2:21; 1:30-31; 22:53; 23:1; 24:5-6; 24:50.....	04	
	24:45-46.....	05	
	10:1; 6:12-13; 19:13.....	09	
John: (17)	5:7.....	01	
	3:16.....	02	
	1:29.....	03	
	4:25; 16:28; 1:14; 3:16; 1:30; 20:30-31.....	04	
	15:15.....	05	
	7:38.....	06	
	3:29.....	08	
	10:9; 11:15; 2:15.....	09	
	13:4-17.....	11	
5:28.....	18		
Acts: (13)	14:14; 17:26.....	01	
	13:46.....	05	
	2:38; 2:28; 8:11; 9:18; 10:47; 16:33.....	07	
	1:23-24; 6:3-6.....	09	
	2:42; 2:46.....	10	
Romans: (11)	11:36.....	01	
	5:12; 5:18.....	02	
	8:32; 5:18.....	04	
	8:17.....	05	
	6:4.....	07	
	16:1.....	09	
	13:1-7.....	13	
	12:14; 12:20.....	14	
I Corinthians: (13)	12:6.....	01	
	12.....	08	
	10:16; 11:22.....	10	
	7; 9:5; 7:39.....	12	

	5:5; 5:12; 5:6.....	16
	5:9-11.....	17
	15; 2:9.....	18
II Corinthians:	6:16.....	08
(6)	4:2.....	14
	1:17.....	15
	10:8; 13:10.....	16
	5:10.....	18
Galatians:	4:4.....	03
(3)	1:8.....	05
	3:28.....	09
Ephesians:	4:21-22.....	06
(5)	2:19-21.....	08
	4:10-12; 2:13; 4:11.....	09
Colossians:	1:15; 2:14.....	04
(4)	3:9-10.....	06
	2:11-12.....	07
I Thess.:	4:13.....	18
(1)		
II Thess.:	3:14; 3:14.....	17
(2)		
I Timothy:	3:15.....	04
(12)	6:3.....	05
	3:1; 4:16; 3:7; 4:14; 5:2; 5:9.....	09
	5:10.....	11
	2:1-2.....	13
	5:20; 5:20.....	16
II Timothy:	2:2.....	09
(1)		
Titus:	3:6-7.....	08
(6)	1:5; 2:1-2.....	09
	3:1.....	13
	3:10.....	16
	3:10.....	17
I Peter:	1:19.....	03
(6)	2:9; 1:18-19.....	08
	2:29.....	09
	2:17.....	13
	3:9.....	14
I John:	3:8; 2:1.....	03
(3)	3:8.....	04

Hebrews:	11:6.....	01
(8)	11:13; 11:39.....	03
	7:3; 10:5; 1:6.....	04
	9:15-17.....	05
	10:21-22.....	06
James:	1:27.....	09
(3)	5:12.....	10
	5:19.....	16
Revelation:	5.....	02
(6)	1:8; 1:18.....	04
	19:7.....	08
	12:4; 14:11.....	18

Augsburg Confession

Book	Article
Gen.: 1:27.....	23
(2) 2:18.....	27
Exodus: 20:7.....	24
(1)	
Psalms: 19:13.....	11
(4) 19:13; 36:5.....	25
119:50.....	28
Jer.: 17:9.....	25
(1)	
Matt.: 23:2.....	08
(10) 3:8.....	12
26:27.....	22
19:11.....	23
15:9; 15:11.....	26
15:9.....	27
7:15; 15:14; 15:13.....	28
Mark: 9:29.....	26
(2) 16:15.....	28
Luke: 17:10.....	06
(5) 22:19.....	24
21:34.....	26
12:14; 10:36.....	28

John:	8:44.....	19
(7)	14:6; 15:5.....	20
	8:44.....	23
	20:21-23; 18:36; 16:12-13.....	28
Acts:	5:29.....	16
(6)	15:10f.....	26
	15:20; 15:29; 15:10; 5:29.....	28
Rom.:	3:21ff; 4:5.....	04
(6)	5:1.....	20
	8:34.....	21
	14:17.....	26
	1:16.....	28
I Cor.:	2:14.....	18
(12)	11:20ff.....	22
	7:2; 7:9.....	23
	14:9ff; 14:19; 11:27; 11:20ff; 11:33.....	24
	9:27.....	26
	7:2.....	27
	11:5.....	28
IICor.:	10:4; 13:8; 13:10; 10:8.....	28
(4)		
Gal.:	5:4.....	27
(3)	1:8; 5:1.....	28
Eph.:	4:5-6.....	07
(2)	2:8.....	20
Phil.:	3:20.....	28
(1)		
Col.:	2:16.....	26
(3)	2:16; 2:20-23.....	28
ITim.:	2:5.....	21
(6)	3:2; 4:1; 4:3.....	23
	4:1; 4:3.....	26
Titus:	1:14.....	28
(1)		
Heb.:	11:1.....	20
(3)	10:10; 10:14.....	24
I Pet.:	5:2.....	28
(1)		
I John:	2:1.....	21

Scripture Use: The Belgic Confession

Book	Article
Genesis: 5:21.....	09
(19) 1:1.....	11
45:8; 50:20; 1:26.....	13
3:17; 3:19.....	14
6:5.....	15
3:15; 3:22.....	17
26:4.....	18
3:7; 3:7.....	23
4:4.....	24
3:10.....	26
22; 22:18.....	27
9:13; 17:10-11.....	28
Exodus: 17:4; 34:27; 31:18.....	03
(7) 12:6.....	21
20:19.....	26
12.....	33
18:20.....	36
Deut.: 6:4.....	02
(13) 3; 5:22.....	03
12:32; 4:6; 6:9.....	07
32:8.....	16
29:2.....	18
27:26.....	23
4:24.....	26
1:16; 17:16; 16:19.....	36
Judges: 21:25.....	36
(1)	
1 Sam: 2:25.....	13
(2) 12:22.....	16
2 Sam: 16:10.....	13
(2) 7:16.....	27
I Kings: 11:23.....	13
(3) 19:18.....	27
15:12.....	36
IIKings: 23 (IV Roys).....	36
(1)	
Job: 14:4.....	15
(2) 1:1.....	23

Psalms:	19:2.....	02
(43)	102:19.....	03
	12:7; 19:8-9; 19:12.....	07
	2:7; 2:12.....	10
	33:6; 101:3; 104.....	11
	103:21; 34:8.....	12
	115:13; 105:25; 5:5.....	13
	8:5; 49:21; 37:9; 94:11; 28:8.....	14
	51:5.....	15
	65:5.....	16
	132:11; 129:34.....	18
	110:4; 22:1.....	21
	51:8; 32:1; 115:1.....	22
	143:2; 18:28.....	23
	115:1; 34:7; 44:6.....	26
	46:6; 102:14; 89:37; 110:4.....	27
	5:6; 22:23.....	28
	2:3.....	29
	82; 101.....	36
Prov.	30:6.....	07
(6)	8:22.....	08
	4:9; 4:16; 21:1.....	13
	8:15.....	36
Eccl.	12:7; 7:30.....	14
(2)		
Isaiah:	40:44.....	01
(25)	1:12; 8:20.....	07
	7:14.....	10
	40:26.....	12
	45:7; 10:5.....	13
	59:2; 26:12; 45:25.....	14
	7:14.....	17
	53:5.....	21
	26:12; 64:6; 28:26.....	24
	43:22; 55:1-3.....	26
	1:9.....	27
	49:22; 52:11-12.....	28
	61:1.....	31
	29:13.....	32
	49:23.....	36
	25:8; 66:5.....	37
Jer.	32:17.....	11
(13)	33:18.....	18
	23:6; 51:10.....	22
	2:33; 2:5; 17:5; 17:7; 16:20.....	26
	31:35.....	27
	22:3; 21:12; 27:5.....	36

Eze.	14:9.....	13
(2)	36:23.....	23
Daniel:	14:4.....	12
(3)	2:21.....	36
	7.....	37
Hosea:	13:9.....	26
(2)	5:11.....	36
Joel:	2:32.....	27
(1)		
Amos:	4:13.....	11
(2)	3:6.....	13
Micah:	5:2.....	08
(2)	5:2.....	10
Hab:	2:4.....	24
(1)		
Zeph.	3:11.....	23
(1)		
Mal.:	2:10.....	02
(3)	2:10.....	11
	1:2.....	16
Wis. of		
Sol.	5.....	37
Matt.:	15:3.....	07
(51)	28:19; 3:16-17.....	08
	3:16; 28:19.....	09
	3:17; 17:5.....	10
	28:19; 25:41; 4.....	12
	8:31-32.....	13
	15:24; 20:23.....	16
	1:16.....	18
	28:20; 26:11; 27:50.....	19
	1:21.....	21
	1:21.....	22
	7:17.....	24
	28; 11:28.....	26
	28:20; 11:25; 16:18.....	27
	24:28.....	28
	13; 28:20.....	29
	5:14.....	30
	18:26.....	31
	15:9; 18:17.....	32
	28:19; 26:26.....	33

	28:19; 3:11; 19:14.....	34
	26:26; 26:11.....	35
	17:27.....	36
	13:23; 25:13; 24:36; 24:30; 25:31; 11:22; 23:23; 12:36; 25:41; 10:32; 10:32.....	37
Mark:	7:7.....	07
(4)	14:17; 16:14.....	35
	12:18.....	37
Luke:	11:13.....	07
(16)	1:35.....	09
	8:31.....	12
	1:55.....	18
	24:39.....	19
	1:77.....	22
	16:15.....	23
	17:10.....	24
	18:19; 11:2.....	26
	1:32; 17:21.....	27
	10:16.....	30
	22:19.....	35
	22.....	36
	14:14.....	37
John:	4:24.....	01
(70)	3:13; 15:15; 4:25; 5.....	07
	1:14; 1:14.....	08
	1:18; 1:49; 1:24; 1:14; 8:24; 10:30; 9:36; 1:3; 20; 14; 7; 8:58 17:5.....	10
	1:3; 15:26; 14:16; 14:26.....	11
	8:44.....	12
	5:17.....	13
	8:7; 1:5; 3:27; 6:44.....	14
	3:10.....	15
	6:27; 6:44; 17:9; 17:12; 13:9; 15:16; 18:20; 15:19; 10:29.....	16
	7:42; 1:14.....	17
	10:13; 20:25.....	19
	15:13; 3:16; 18:38; 10:9.....	21
	5:26; 8:36; 15.....	24
	15:13; 11:9; 14:6.....	26
	10:4; 10:14; 18:37; 8:47; 17:20; 16:2.....	29
	20:23.....	30
	19:34.....	34
	3:6; 10:10; 5:25; 6:48; 6:51; 6:63; 6:35.....	35
	5:29.....	37
Acts:	26:22; 18:28-29; 4:19; 20:27; 1:21.....	07
(46)	8:34; 20.....	10
	5:3; 23:8.....	12
	2:23.....	13
	14:17; 17:27.....	14

2:47; 13:48.....	16
13:23.....	18
1:11; 3:21; 1:3.....	19
2:24; 4:12.....	21
13:28.....	22
4:12.....	23
14:15; 4:12.....	26
4:32; 2:21.....	27
4:17; 4:19; 17:7; 18:13.....	28
17:11.....	29
26:18.....	30
6:3-4; 1:23; 13:2; 26:18.....	31
22:16; 8:16; 2:38; 2:41.....	34
3:21; 2:42; 20:7.....	35
4:17-19; 5; 2.....	36
1:11.....	37
Romans: 15:4; 3:4.....	07
(70) 9; 4:5; 14.....	10
8:9.....	12
1:28.....	13
5:12; 12:2; 3:10; 8:6; 1:20-21; 8:7.....	14
3:10; 5:14; 7:18-19.....	15
9:16; 3:12; 9:29; 11:5; 9:11; 9:21; 11:34-35.....	16
7:19; 9:5.....	18
8:3; 8:32; 4:25.....	20
5:8-9; 4:25; 8:32; 5:6.....	21
8:1; 3:20; 3:28; 8:29; 8:33; 10:3; 10:5; 10:9; 4:5; 3:24; 3:27;4:2.	22
5:19; 4:6.....	23
10:17; 9:32; 14:23; 2:6; 11:5-7; 10:11.....	24
10:4.....	25
8:26; 5:8; 8:34.....	26
11:1; 9:29.....	27
9:6; 6:2; 7:5.....	29
12:8; 12:7-8.....	31
16:17-18.....	32
4:11; 10:9.....	33
6:3.....	34
8:22.....	35
13:1.....	36
2:5.....	37
I Cor.: 8:4; 8:6; 12:1; 1.....	02
(47) 15:2; 1:13; 2:4; 3:11; 8:6.....	07
1:24.....	08
8:6; 10:9.....	10
3:16; 6:11.....	12
2:14.....	14
12:3.....	13
2:2.....	21
2:12; 1:20; 15:3; 4:7.....	22
4:4.....	23

36	.....	3:17.....	
34	.....	5:26; 4:5.....	
31	.....	1:22.....	
29	.....	2:20; 1.....	
28	.....	4:12.....	
27	.....	4:4.....	
26	.....	3:20; 3:19; 2:18.....	
24	.....	2:4; 2:5.....	
23	.....	2:8.....	
22	.....	1:17-18.....	
19	.....	4:8; 4:12.....	
16	.....	1:4-5; 1:3.....	
15	.....	2:5.....	
14	.....	4:24; 4:18; 5:8.....	
13	.....	1:11.....	
10	.....	3:9.....	
07	.....	4:5.....	(27)
02	.....	4:6.....	eph.:
34	.....	3:27.....	
32	.....	5:1.....	
30	.....	2:8.....	
29	.....	1:8; 5:24; 5:17.....	
25	.....	3; 4.....	
24	.....	5:6; 3:5.....	
12	.....	2:21; 2:16.....	
18	.....	3:16.....	
17	.....	4:4.....	
10	.....	4:4.....	(17)
07	.....	3:15; 1:8; 1:11.....	gal.:
37	.....	5:10.....	
36	.....	10:6.....	
35	.....	6:15.....	
31	.....	5:19.....	
30	.....	5:19.....	
23	.....	5:19.....	
14	.....	3:5.....	
10	.....	5:19.....	
09	.....	13:13.....	(10)
01	.....	3:17.....	II cor.:
37	.....	15:51; 2:9.....	
35	.....	11:24; 10:16; 10:27; 10:3-4; 11:29; 2:14; 11:28.....	
34	.....	6:11; 3:7; 12:13; 7:14.....	
33	.....	5:7; 10:2.....	
32	.....	7:57; 5:5.....	
31	.....	12:28; 3:8.....	
30	.....	4:1-2; 15:10.....	
29	.....	11:20.....	
26	.....	1:30.....	
24	.....	4:7; 3:11.....	

Phil.:	2:11.....	10
(6)	2:13.....	14
	2:7.....	18
	3:8.....	21
	3:9.....	22
	2:7.....	26
Col.:	2:8; 1:16.....	07
(17)	1:15.....	08
	1:15.....	10
	1:16.....	12
	1:15.....	13
	2:14.....	21
	2:13.....	24
	2:17.....	25
	1:23; 1:12; 2:18-19.....	29
	1:28.....	31
	2:6-7.....	32
	2:11; 1:11.....	33
	2:11.....	34
IThes:	3:11.....	10
(5)	1:6.....	22
	5:12-13.....	31
	5:1-2; 4:16.....	37
IIThes:	2:2.....	07
(3)	2:11.....	13
	1:5.....	37
I Tim.:	2:5.....	02
(18)	1:3; 1:13.....	07
	4:3.....	12
	3:16; 2:5.....	18
	1:15.....	21
	2:6.....	23
	1:5.....	24
	2:5; 2:5.....	26
	3.....	30
	4:13; 5:22; 4:14.....	31
	1:20.....	32
	2:2.....	36
	4:1.....	37
II Tim.:	3:17.....	05
(11)	3:17; 3:24; 4:3.....	07
	1:9; 2:20.....	16
	2:8.....	17
	1:9.....	22
	2:19.....	27
	2:18.....	29
	4:1.....	37

Titus:	2.....	10
(10)	3:4-5; 1:1.....	16
	3:5.....	22
	2:12; 3:8; 3:5.....	24
	1:5.....	30
	3:5.....	34
	3.....	36
Heb.:	1:3; 1:1; 3:4; 13:8.....	10
(41)	1:3; 11:3.....	11
	3:4; 1:14.....	12
	1:3.....	13
	7:14.....	17
	7:14; 2:6.....	18
	7:3.....	19
	2:14.....	20
	5:10; 2:17; 2:9; 9:14; 9:12; 9:25-26.....	21
	7:19.....	22
	11:7; 10:20.....	23
	11:6; 11:4.....	24
	1:3; 1:7; 9:24; 4:14-16; 2:17-18; 10:19; 7:25; 13:15.....	26
	2:12; 10:25.....	28
	13:17.....	31
	9:14; 6:1-2.....	34
	6:2; 9:27; 10:27.....	37
James:	4:13; 4:15; 1:13.....	13
(5)	2:10.....	23
	5:17.....	26
I Pet.:	1:11; 5:12.....	07
(14)	2:9.....	14
	1:2.....	16
	2:24; 1:18-19.....	21
	1:4.....	22
	3:20.....	27
	3:20.....	33
	1:2; 2:24; 3:21.....	34
	2:17.....	36
	4:5.....	37
II Pet.:	1:21.....	03
(9)	2:16.....	07
	2:4.....	12
	1:19; 3:2; 3:18.....	25
	2:10.....	36
	3:10; 2:9.....	37
I Joh.:	4:5; 20:19.....	07
(16)	1:1.....	08
	I John.....	09
	5.....	10

5; 15.....	12
2:15; 3:8.....	13
2:1.....	23
2:1; 4:10; 2:1.....	26
1:7; 5:16.....	34
4:17.....	37
IIJoh.: 1.....	07
(2) v.8.....	24
Jude: 1:10.....	36
(2) 1:15.....	37
Rev.: 19:13.....	08
(15) 1-6.....	10
4:11; 11:16.....	12
2:13.....	24
17:2.....	28
2:9; 17:3.....	29
1:5.....	34
6:11; 21:4; 14:7; 21:8; 22:12; 21:4.....	37

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

De Algemeene Belydenissen der Verreenighde Vlaemische, Vriesche, en Hooghduytsche Doopsgesinde Gemeynte Gods Amsterdam: Pieter Arentsz, 1665.

Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche. Tenth Edition. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1986.

Bekentnisse des Gheloofs na Godes Woordt. Hoorn: Zacharias Cornelisz. Boekverkooper, 1617.

van Braght, Thielman J. *Het Bloedig Tooneel, Of Martelaers Spiegel Der Doops-gesinde Of Weereloose Christenen.* Amsterdam: Hieronymus Sweerts, 1685.

van den Brink, J. N. Bakhuizen, ed. *De Nederlandse Belijdenisgeschriften in Authentieke Teksten Met Inleiding en Tekstvergelijkingen.* Second Edition. Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1976.

Bruesewitz, J., and M. A. Krebber, ed. *Confessie van Dordrecht 1632.* Doperse Stemmen 5. Amsterdam: Doopsgezinde Historische Kring, 1982

"Confessie Ende Vredehandelinghe/ Geschied tot Dordrecht/ Anno 1632. den 21en April." Haerlem: Hans Passchiers van Wesbusch, 1633. Facsimilie in Horst, Irvin B., trans. and ed. *Mennonite Confession of Faith.* Mennonite Sources and Documents No. 2 (Lancaster: Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 1988), pp. 41-72.

"Corte Belijdenisse des Geloofs," in *Het boeck der Gesangen.* Hoorn: Jan Jochimsz. Byvanck, 1618.

"Corte Confessie Ofte Belijdenisse des Gheloofs," in *Vrede Handelinghe, Openbaer Gehouden tot Amsterdam den 3. 4. en 5. October 1630.* Amsterdam: Jacob Aertsz. Colom, 1630.

Cramer, S. and F. Pijper, eds. *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica: Geschriften Uit Den Tijd Der Hervorming In De Nederlanden.* 'Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1910.

Handelinghe Der Ver-eenighde Vlaemse, en Duytse Doops-gesinde Gemeynten, Gehouden Tot Haerlem, Anno 1649 in Junio Met De Dry Confessien aldaer geapprobeert of aengenomen. Vlissinghe, Gelyen Jansz., 1666.

Primary Sources in Translation

van Braght, Thieleman J. *The Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians*. Translated by Joseph F. Sohm. Fifth Edition. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1950.

Cochrane, Arthur C., ed. *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966, pp. 185-219.

Dyck, Cornelius J. "A Short Confession of Faith by Hans de Ries." *MQR* 38, no. 1 (January 1964): 5-19.

Dyck, Cornelius J., William E. Keeney, and Alvin Beachy, trans. and ed. *The Writings of Dirk Philips*. Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1992.

Friesen, Frank, trans. and Walter Klaassen ed. "Sixteenth Century Anabaptism: Defenses, Confessions, Refutations." Waterloo: Conrad Grebel College, 1982.

Gross, Leonard and Jan Gleysteen, trans. "The First Mennonite Merger: The Concept of Cologne." In James E. Horsch, ed. *Mennonite Yearbook* (1990-1991): 8-10.

Horst, Irvin B., trans. and ed. *Mennonite Confession of Faith*. Mennonite Sources and Documents No. 2. Lancaster: Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 1988.

Leith, John H., ed. *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*. Third Edition. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982.

Lumpkin, William L., ed. *Baptist Confessions of Faith Revised Edition*. Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1969.

Pipkin, Wayne H. and John H. Yoder, trans. and eds. *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*. Kitchener and Scottdale: Herald Press, 1989.

Verduin, Leonard, trans., and J. C. Wenger, ed. *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*. Scottdale and Kitchener: Herald Press, 1984.

Williams, George H. and Angel M. Mergal, eds. *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*. The Library of Christian Classics: Ichthus Edition. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957.

Secondary Sources

Arens, Edmund. *Bezeugen und Bekennen: Elementare Handlungen des Glaubens*. Duesseldorf: Patmos, 1989.

Augustijn, Cornelis. "Anabaptism in the Netherlands: Another Look." *MQR* 62, no. 3 (July 1988): 197-210.

Bangs, Carl. *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation*. Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1971.

Beachy, Alvin. *The Concept of Grace in the Radical Reformation*. Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1977.

Bender, Harold S. "The Anabaptist Vision." *CH* 13 (March 1944): 3-24; also *MQR* 18, no. 2 (April 1944): 67-88 and Guy F. Herschberger, ed. *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1957): 29-54.

"Bericht vom Dialog VELKD/Mennoniten." In *Texte aus der VELKD* 53. Hannover: Lutherisches Kirchenamt, 1993.

Berkhof, Hendrikus. *Christian Faith: An Introduction*. Trans. by Sierd Woudstra. Revised Edition. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1986.

Bielfeldt, Dennis. "Deification as a Motif in Luther's *Dictata super psalterium*." *SCJ* 28, no. 2 (summer 1997): 401-420.

Bornkamm, Heinrich. *Mystik, Spiritualismus und die Anfaenge des Pietismus in Luthertum*. Giessen: Alfred Toepelmann, 1926.

Brunk, Gerald R., ed. *Menno Simons: A Reappraisal: Essays in honor of Irvin B. Horst on the 450th anniversary of the Fundamentboek*. Harrisonburg: Eastern Mennonite College, 1992.

Campbell, Ted. *Christian Confessions: A Historical Introduction*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

Coggins, James Robert. *John Smyth's Congregation: English Separatism, Mennonite Influence, and the Elect Nation*. Foreword by Irvin B. Horst. *Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History* No. 32. Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1991.

_____. "A Short Confession of Hans de Ries: Union and Separation in Early Seventeenth-Century Holland." *MQR* 60, no. 2 (April 1986): 128-138.

Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective. Scottsdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1995.

Courier 12, no. 4 (Fourth Quarter, 1997): 1-7.

Cullmann, Oscar. *Die Ersten Christlichen Glaubensbekenntnisse*. Theologische Studien, Heft 15, edited by Karl Barth. Zollikon-Zuerich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1949.

Deppermann, Klaus. *Melchior Hoffman: Social Unrest and Apocalyptic Visions in the Age of Reformation*. Trans. by Malcom Wren and ed. by Benjamin Drewery. Edinburg: T. & T Clark, 1987.

Dijkema, F. "Het Ondogmatisch Karakter van onze Broederschap." *DB* (1908): 137-152.

Dintaman, Stephen F. "The Spiritual Poverty of the Anabaptist Vision." *CGR* 10, no. 2 (spring 1992): 205-208.

Directions. 27, no. 1 (spring 1998).

Douwen, W. I. van. "De Afscheiding van de Huiskoopers of Oude Vlamingen (1587) en die van die Janjacobsgezinden (1599)." *DB* (1912): 49-75.

Driver, John. *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church*. Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1986.

Dyck, Cornelius J. ed. *A Legacy of Faith*. Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1962.

_____. *An Introduction to Mennonite History*. Third Edition, Kitchener and Scottdale: Herald Press, 1993.

_____. "The First Waterlandian Confession of Faith." *MQR* 36:1 (January 1962): 5-13.

_____. "Hans de Ries (d. 1638) and Socinianism." In Lech Szczycki, ed. *Socinianism and its Role in the Culture of XVith to XVIIIth Centuries*. Warsaw: Polish Academy of Sciences, 1983), pp. 85-95

_____. "Hans de Ries and the Legacy of Menno." *MQR* 62, no. 3 (July 1988): 401-416.

_____. "Hans de Ries: Theologian and Churchman: A Study in Second Generation Dutch Anabaptism." Ph.D Dissertation, Chicago Divinity School, 1962.

_____. "The Life of the Spirit in Anabaptism." *MQR* 47, no. 4 (October 1973): 309-326.

_____. "The Middleburg Confession of Hans de Ries, 1578." *MQR* 36, no. 2 (April 1962): 147-54, 161.

Finger, Thomas N. *Christian Theology: An Eschatological Approach*. Volume One. Scottdale and Kitchener: Herald Press, 1985.

_____. "Still something essential in the Creeds." In Erland Waltner, ed. *Jesus Christ and the Mission of the Church: Contemporary Anabaptist Perspectives*. (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1990), pp. 106-114.

_____. "The Way to Nicea: Some Reflections from a Mennonite Perspective." *JMS* 24, no. 2 (spring 1987): 212-231.

Fast, Heinhold. "Zur Ueberlieferung des Leser-Amtes bei den oberdeutschen Täufern." *MGB* 54 (1997): 61-68.

Fix, Andrew C. *Prophecy and Reason: The Dutch Collegiants in the Early Enlightenment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

_____. "Mennonites and the Collegiants in Holland 1630-1700." *MQR* 64, no. 2 (April 1990): 160-177.

Friedmann, Robert. "Anabaptist and Pietism." *MQR* 14, no. 3 (July 1940): 149-169.

_____. "Devotional Literature of the Mennonites in Danzig and Prussia to 1800." *MQR* 18, no. 3 (July 1944): 162-173.

_____. *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries: Its Genius and its Literature*. Scottdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1949.

_____. "Spiritual Changes in European Mennonitism 1650-1750." *MQR* 15, no. 1 (January 1941): 33-45.

_____. *The Theology of Anabaptism: An Interpretation*. Kitchener and Scottdale: Herald Press, 1973.

Friesen, Abraham. *Erasmus, the Anabaptists and the Great Commission*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.

_____. "Present at the Inception: Menno Simons and the Beginnings of Dutch Anabaptism." *MQR* 72, no. 3 (July 1998): 351-388.

George, Timothy. *Theology of the Reformers*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992.

Geyl, Pieter. *The Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century. Part One: 1609-1648*. Revised and Enlarged Edition. London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1961.

_____. *The Revolt of the Netherlands, 1555-1609*. Second Edition. London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1958.

Goertz, Hans-Juergen. *The Anabaptists*. Trans. by Trevor Johnson. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

_____. "History and Theology: A Major Problem of Anabaptist Research Today." *MQR* 53, no. 3 (July 1979): 177-189.

_____. "Das Täuferium--Ein Weg in Die Moderne?" In *Zwingli u. Europa Referate u. Protokolle des Internationalen Kongresses als Anlass des feunfhundersten Geburtstages von Huldreich Zwingli 1984*. Zurich, 1985.

_____, ed. *Umstrittenes Täuferium 1525-1575: Neue Forschungen*. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1975.

_____. "Zwischen Zwietracht und Eintracht: Zur Zweideutigkeit Täuferischer und Mennonitischer Bekenntnisse." *MGB* 43/44 (1986-87): 16-48.

Gonzalez, Justo L. *A History of Christian Thought: From the Protestant Reformation to the Twentieth Century*. Volume Three. Revised Edition. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987.

_____. *The Story of Christianity II. The Reformation to the Present Day*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985.

Gregory, Brad. "The Anathema of Compromise: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe." Ph.D Dissertation, Princeton University, 1996.

Grislis, Egil. "The Doctrine of Incarnation According to Menno Simons." *JMS* 8 (1990): 16-33.

Groenveld, S., J. P. Jacobszoon, and S. L. Verheus, ed. *Wederdopers, Menisten, Doopsgezinden in Nederland, 1530-1980*. Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 1980.

Gross, Leonard. "The Swiss Brethren and the Dutch Mennonites: A Particular Study in Contrasts." *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* 53, no. 1 (January 1992): 1-4.

Haendiges, Emil. *Die Lehre der Mennoniten in Geschichte und Gegenwart nach den Quellen dargestellt nebst einem ueberblick ueber die heutige Verbreitung und Organisation der mennonitischen Gemeinschaft*. Ludwigshafen am Rhein: Kommissionsverlag der Konferenz der sueddeutschen Mennoniten e.V., 1921.

Haga, H. "Eenige Bijzonderheden Omtrent de Vroegere Doopsgezinden te Arnhem." *DB* (1863): 43-74.

Haley, K. H. D. *The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1972.

Hall, Douglas John. *Professing the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

_____. *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Hamilton, Alastair, Sjouke Voolstra, and Piet Visser, eds. *From martyr to muppy: A historical introduction to cultural assimilation processes of a religious minority in the Netherlands: the Mennonites*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994.

de HoopScheffer, J. G. "Eene Geschiedenis van de Doopsgezinden, van hunne Geschillen en Hereenigen door een Doopsgezinden in 1647." *DB* (1876): 13-41.

Horsch, John. "Is Dr. Kuehler's Conception of Early Dutch Anabaptism Historically Sound?" *MQR* 7, nos. 1 and 2 (January and April): 48-60, 97-126.

_____. *Mennonites In Europe*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1950.

Horst, Irvin B. "The Dordrecht Confession of Faith: 350 Years." *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* 5, no. 3 (July 1982): 2-8.

_____. *The Dutch Dissenters: A Critical Companion to their History and Ideas*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986.

_____. "Neuer Mensch--Neue Gemeinschaft: Eine Schrift des fruehen Menno Simons." *MGB* 53 (1996): 34-43.

_____. *The Radical Brethren: Anabaptism and the English Reformation to 1558*. Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1972.

Hostetler, Beulah Stauffer. "The Place of Confessions in the Mennonite Church (MC)." *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* 12, no. 2 (April 1989): 2-6.

Hultsch, Eric and Luethi, Kurt. *Bekennendes Bekenntnis: Form und Formulierung christlichen Glaubens*. Guetersloh: Guetersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1982.

Jacobs, Paul. *Theologie Reformierter Bekenntnisschriften in Grundzuegen*. Duisburg-Ruhrort: Neukirchener Verlag, 1959.

Janz, Denis. *Three Reformation Catechisms: Catholic, Anabaptist, Lutheran*. Text and Studies in Religion, Volume Thirteen. New York and Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982.

Janzma, L. G. "Crime in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century: The Batenburg Bands after 1540." *MQR* 62, no. 3 (July 1988): 221-235.

Jecker, Hanspeter. "Das Dordrechter Bekenntnis und die Amische Spaltung." *MGB* 50 (1993): 81-104.

_____. "Glaubensbekenntnis und Katechismus in Rahmen von Geschichte und Theologie der Schweizer Mennoniten, I and II," Unpublished Manuscripts, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, 1987-88.

_____. *Ketzer-Rebellen-Heilige: Das Basler Täuferum von 1580-1700*. Liestal: Verlag des Kantons Basel-Landschaft, 1998.

Kauffman, Richard A. and Gayle Gerber Koontz, eds. *Theology for the Church: Writings by Marlin Miller*. Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1997.

Kaufman, Gordon D. "Mennonite Peace Theology in a Religiously Plural World." *CGR* 14, no. 1 (winter 1996): 33-47.

Keeney, William. E. *The Development of Dutch Anabaptist Thought and Practice From 1539-1564*. Nieuwkoop: B. de Graff, 1968.

Kelly, J. N. D. *Early Christian Creeds*. Third Edition. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1979.

Kirchhoff, Karl-Heinz. *Die Täufer in Meunster 1534/35*. Muenster: Aschendorfsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1973.

_____. "Was There a Peaceful Anabaptist Congregation in Muenster in 1534?" *MQR* 44, no. 4 (October 1970): 357-370.

Klassen, A. J. "Mennonite Brethren Confessions of Faith: Historic Roots and Comparative Analysis." S.T.M. Thesis, Union College, University of British Columbia, 1965.

_____. *Living at the End of the Ages: Apocalyptic Expectation in the Radical Reformation*. Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1992.

Klaassen, Walter, ed. *Anabaptism in Outline*. Kitchener and Scottdale: Herald Press, 1981.

_____. *Anabaptism Revisited: Essays on Anabaptist/Mennonite Studies in Honor of C. J. Dyck*. Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1992.

Klassen, William, and Klaassen, Walter, trans. and ed. *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*. Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1978.

Klassen, William. "Spiritualization in the Reformation." *MQR* 37, no. 2 (April 1963): 67-77.

_____. "Anabaptist Hermeneutics: The Letter and the Spirit." *MQR* 40, no. 2 (April 1966): 83-96.

Koolman, Jacobus ten Doornkaat. *Dirk Philips: Friend and Colleague of Menno Simons, 1504-1568*. Trans. by William E. Keeney and ed. by C. Arnold Snyder. Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1998.

Koop, Karl. "Some Reflections on Mennonites and Postmodern Thought." Response to Carl S. Keener. *CGR* 11, no. 2 (spring 1993): 179-181.

Knipscheer, F. S. "De Nederlandsche Gereformeerde Synoden tegenover de Doopsgezinden." *DB* (1910): 1-40; (1911): 17-49.

Kolakowski, Leszek. "Dutch Seventeenth-Century Anticonfessional Ideas and Rational Religion: The Mennonite, Collegiant and Spinozan Connections." Translated and Edited by James Satterwhite. *MQR* 64, no. 3 and 64, no. 4 (July and October, 1990): 259-297, 385-416.

Krahn, Cornelius. "Anabaptism and the Culture of the Netherlands." In Guy F. Herschberger, ed. *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1957.

_____. *Dutch Anabaptism: Origin, Spread, Life and Thought*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968, and Scottdale: Herald Press, 1981.

Kuehler, Wilhelmus, J. *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Doopsgezinden in de zestiende eeuw*. Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1932.

_____. *Geschiedenis van der Doopsgezinden in Nederland*. Tweede Deel, 1600-1735, Erste Helft. Haarlem: H. D. Tyeenk Willink and Zoon N. V., 1940

_____. *Het Socinianisme in Nederland*. Voorzien van een inleiding van Art De Groot en vermeerderd met een register samengesteld door Dirk Visser. Leiden and Leeuwarden: A. W. Sijthoff and De Tille Bv, 1912 and 1980.

_____. "De Strijd om de Belijdenis in de Vereenigde Vlaamsche, Friesche en Hoogduitsche Gemeente te Utrecht." *DB* (1916): 145-195.

Kurze und einfaeltige Unterweisung aus der Heiligen Schrift. Elbing, 1778.

Leith, John H., ed. *Creeds of the Church: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*. Third Edition. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982.

Lichdi, Dieter Goetz. *Ueber Zuerich und Witmarsum Nach Addis Abeba: Die Mennoniten in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Maxdorf: Agape Verlag, 1983.

_____, ed. *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch 1997*. Lehr: Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Gemeinden in Deutschland, 1996.

_____. *Mennonite World Handbook*. Carol Stream: Mennonite World Conference, 1990.

Lindberg, Carter. "Justice and Injustice in Luther's Judgment of Holiness Movements." In Peter Manns and Harding Meyer, eds. *Luther's Ecumenical Significance: An Interconfessional Consultation*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

Loeschen, John R. *The Divine Community: Trinity, Church, and Ethics in Reformation Theologies*. Kirksville: The Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1981.

Loewen, Howard. "Mennonites--Together at the Centre (A Study of Confessions of Faith)." *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, 13 December 1985, pp. 2-3.

_____. *One Lord, One Church, One Hope And One God: Mennonite Confessions of Faith*. Forward by Cornelius J. Dyck. Text Reader Series No. 2. Elkhart IN.: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1985.

_____. "One Lord, One Church, One Hope, and One God: Mennonite Confessions of Faith in America--An Introduction." *MQR* 57, no. 3 (July, 1983): 265-281.

McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1994.

_____. *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundations of Doctrinal Criticism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

Meihuizen, Hendrick W. "Spiritualistic Tendencies and Movements among the Dutch Mennonites of the Sixteenth and Seventeen Centuries." *MQR* 27, no. 3 (October 1953): 259-304.

Meihuizen, Hendrick W., J. A. Oosterbaan, and H. B. Kossen, eds. *Broederlijke Vereniging. Doperse Stemmen 1*. Amsterdam: Doopsgezinde Historische Kring, 1974.

Meinhold, Peter, ed. *Studien zur Bekenntnisbildung*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980.

Mellink, A. F. "The Beginnings of Dutch Anabaptism in the Light of Recent Research." *MQR* 62, no. 3 (July 1988): 211-220.

Mennonite Encyclopedia Vols. I-IV. Harold S. Bender and C. Henry Smith, eds. Scottdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955-59. Vol. V. Cornelius J. Dyck and Dennis Martin, eds. Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1990.

Mennonitische Lexikon Band I. Christian Hege und Christian Neff, eds. Frankfurt am Main und Weierhof: Im Selbstverlag der Herausgeber, 1913.

Mennonitische Lexikon. Band III. Christian Hege et al, eds. Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider, 1958.

Mennonitische Lexikon. Band IV. Christian Hege et al, eds. Heinrich Schneider, 1967.

Meyer, Harding, ed. *Augsburgische Konfession im Oekumenischen Kontext: Beitrage aus Anglikanischer, Baptistischer, Katholischer, Methodistischer, Orthodoxer und Reformierter Sicht*. LWB-Report, 6/7 Stuttgart: Lutherischen Weltbund, December, 1979.

Meyer, Harding and Heinz Schuette, ed. *Confessio Augustana: Bekenntnis Des Einen Glaubens*. Paderborn and Frankfurt am Main: Bonifacius-Drukerei and Otto Lembeck, 1980.

Migliore, Daniel L. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991.

Miller, Levi. "How the Anabaptist Vision changed the church." *Mennonite Reporter* 24, 30 May, 1994, p. 9.

Miller, Marlin. "Christological Concepts of the Classical Creeds and Mennonite Confessions of Faith." *AMBS Bulletin*, 52, no. 3, May 1989, pp. 7-11.

_____. "Towards an Inter-Mennonite Confession of Faith." *Ecumenical Trends* 17, no. 6 (June 1988): 88-90.

Moltmann, Juergen. *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*. Trans. by R. W. Wilson and John Bowden. London: SCM Press, 1973.

Morphos, Panos Paul. *The Dialogues of Guy de Brues: A Critical Edition with a Study in Renaissance Scepticism and Relativism*. Johns Hopkins Studies in Romance Literatures. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953.

Noll, Mark, ed. *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991.

Oberman, Heiko A. "Die Gelehrten die Verkehrten: Popular Response to Learned Culture in the Renaissance and Reformation." In Steven Ozment, ed. *Religion and Culture in the Renaissance and Reformation*. (Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, 1989), pp. 43-62.

_____. *The Impact of the Reformation*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994.

Ollenburger, Ben C. "Christology and Creeds." *AMBS Bulletin* 52, no. 3, May 1989, pp. 1-3.

_____. "Mennonite Theology: A Conversation Around the Creeds." *MQR* 66, no. 1 (January 1992): 57-89.

Oosterbaan, J. S. "Een Doperse Christologie." *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* (1981): 32-47.

Oyer, John S. "The Strasbourg Conferences of the Anabaptists, 1554-1607." *MQR* 58, no. 3 (July 1984): 218-229.

Packull, Werner O. "A Reinterpretation of Melchior Hoffman's *Exposition Against the Background of Spiritualist Franciscan Eschatology with Special Reference to Peter John Olivi.*" In Irvin B. Horst, ed. *The Dutch Dissenters: A Critical Companion to their History and Ideas* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), pp. 32-65.

_____. "Between Paradigms: Anabaptist Studies at the Crossroads." *CGR* 8, no. 1 (winter 1990): 1-22.

_____. *Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

_____. "In Search of the 'Common Man' in Early German Anabaptist Ideology." *SCJ* 17, no. 1 (spring 1986): 51-67.

_____. "Melchior Hoffman--A Recanted Anabaptist in Schwaebisch Hall?" *MQR* 57, no. 2 (April 1983): 83-111.

_____. "Melchior Hoffman's experience in the Livonian Reformation: The Dynamics of Sect Formation." *MQR* 59, no. 2 (April 1985): 130-146.

_____. "Menno Simons und die Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift." *MGB* 53 (1996): 44-61.

_____. *Mysticism and the Early South German-Austrian Anabaptist Movement, 1525-1532*. Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1977.

_____. "The Origin of Swiss Anabaptism in the Context of the Reformation of the Common Man." *JMS* 3 (1985): 36-59.

_____. "Peter Tasch: From Melchiorite to Bankrupt Wine Merchant." *MQR* 62, no. 3 (July 1988): 276-295.

_____. "Some Reflections on the State of Anabaptist History: The Demise of the Normative Vision." *SR* 8, no. 3 (summer 1979): 313-323.

Packull, Werner, O., and Stayer, James. *The Anabaptists and Thomas Muentzer*. Dubuque, 1980.

Pannenberg, Wolfart. *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I. Trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991.

Parker, Geoffrey. *The Dutch Revolt*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol I. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.

Penner, Archie. "Pieter Jansz. Twisck--Second Generation Anabaptist/Mennonite Churchman, Writer and Polemicist." Ph.D, University of Iowa, 1971.

Pipkin, H. Wayne, ed. *Essays in Anabapist Theology*. Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1994.

Placher, William C. *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983.

Poehlmann, Horst Georg, ed. *Unser Glaube: Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*. Guetersloh: Guetersloher Verlaghaus, Gerd Mohn, 1987.

Redekop, Calvin Wall and Samuel J. Steiner, eds. *Mennonite Identity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1988.

Reimer, A. James. "Biblical and Systematic Theology as Functional Specialties: Their Function and Relation." In Ben C. Ollenburger, ed. *So Wide a Sea: Essays on Biblical and Systematic Theology*. Text-Reader Series No. 4 (Elkhart: Institute of Mennonites Studies, 1991), pp. 37-58.

_____. "Doctrines: What are They, How they Function and Why do We Need Them." *CGR* 11, no. 1 (winter 1993): 21-36.

_____. "Mennonite Systematic Theology and the Problem of Comprehensiveness." In Williard Swartley, ed. *Explorations of Systematic Theology: From Mennonite Perspectives*. Occasional Papers No. 7. Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), pp. 57-82.

_____. "The Nature and Possibility of a Mennonite Theology." *CGR* 1:1 (winter 1983): 33-55.

_____. "Theological Framework for the Authority of the Scriptures." *CGR* 4, no. 2 (spring 1986): 125-140.

_____. "Time, History, and Ethics in Gordon Kaufman." In Alain Epp Weaver, ed. *Mennonite Theology in Face of Modernity: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Kaufman* (Newton: Mennonite Press, 1996), pp. 227-243.

_____. "Toward Christian Theology from a Diversity of Perspectives." *CGR* 6, no. 2 (spring 1988): 147-159.

Reimer, Margaret Loewen. "Dortrecht Confession." *Mennonite Reporter* 12, no. 8, 19 April, 1982, pp. 5-6.

Rempel, John D. *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism*. Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1993.

Riedeman, Peter. *Account of our Religion, Doctrine and Faith*. Refton: Plough Publishing House, 1970.

Rohls, Jan. *Theologie reformierter Bekenntnisschriften: von Zuerich bis Barmen*. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987.

Roth, John. "From Anabaptists to Mennonites: Prolegomena to a History of European Mennonites." A draft presented at the Anabaptist Colloquium at Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, April 16, 1993.

Ruhbach, Gerhard, Henning Schroeer, and Manfred Wichelhaus, eds. *Bekenntnis in Bewegung: Ein Informations und Diskussionsbuch*. Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1969.

Schama, Simon. *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987.

Scheffer, J. G. de Hoop. "Het Verbond de Vier Steden." *DB* (1893): 1-90.

Schlink, Edmund. *Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften*. Muenchen: Albert Lemp, 1940.

Sippell, Theodor. "The Confession of the Swiss Brethren in Hess, 1578." *MQR* 23, no. 1 (January 1949): 22-36.

Slabaugh, Dennis. "Das Apostolikum: Ein frag-wuerdiges Glaubensbekenntnis," *Bruecke*, 9 December, 1994, pp. 186-187.

Snyder-Penner, Russel. "The Ten Commandments, The Lord's Prayer, and The Apostles' Creed as Early Anabaptist Texts." *MQR* 68, no. 3 (July 1994): 318-335.

Snyder, C. Arnold. *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction*. Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1995.

_____. "Beyond Polygenesis: Recovering the Unity and Diversity of Anabaptist Theology." In H. Wayne Pipkin, ed. *Essays in Anabaptist Theology*. Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1994.

_____. "The Influence of the Schleithem Articles on the Anabaptist Movement: An Historical Evaluation." *MQR* 63, no. 4 (October 1989): 323-344.

_____. "Orality, Literacy and the Study of Anabaptism." *MQR* 65, no. 4 (October 1991): 371-392.

_____. "The Schleithem Articles in Light of the Revolution of the Common Man: Continuation or Departure." *SCJ* 16, no. 4 (winter 1985): 419-430.

Spiker, W. van't. "Het gesprek tussen Dopers en Gereformeerden te Emden (1578)." *DB Nieuwe reeks* 7 (1981): 51-65.

Sprunger, Keith L. *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Studies in the History of Christian Thought. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982.

_____. "English Puritans and Anabaptists (?) in Early Seventeenth Century Anabaptism." *MQR* 46, no. 2 (April 1972): 113-128.

Sprunger, Mary S. "The Anabaptist Vision: Reflections from Dutch-Russian Mennonitism." *CGR* 12, no. 3 (fall 1994): 299-307.

_____. "Rich Mennonites, Poor Mennonites: Economics and Theology in the Amsterdam Waterlander Congregation during the Golden Age." Ph.D Dissertation, University of Illinois, 1993.

Stayer, James. *Anabaptists and the Sword*. Second Edition. (Lawrence: Coronado Press, 1976.

_____. "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom and Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend." *MQR* 53, no. 3 (July 1979): 211-218.

_____. "The Radical Reformation." In Brady, Thomas A., Heiko Oberman, and James D. Tracy, eds. *Handbook of European History, 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*. Vol. 2 (Leiden, New York, Koeln: E. J. Brill, 1995), pp. 249-276.

_____. "Was Dr. Kuehler's Conception of Early Dutch Anabaptism Historically Sound?: The Historical Discussion of Anabaptist Muenster 450 Years Later." *MQR* 60, no. 3 (July 1986): 261-288.

Stayer, James, Werner O. Packull, and Klaus Depperman. "From Monogenesis: The Historical Discussion of Anabaptist Origins." *MQR* 43, no. 2 (April 1975): 83-121.

Studer, Gerald C. "The Dordrecht Confession of Faith, 1632-1982." *MQR* 58, no. 4 (October 1984): 503-519.

_____. "What Place Confessions?" *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* 6, no. 2 (April 1983): 2-6.

Swartley, Willard, ed. *Essays on Biblical Interpretation: Anabaptist-Mennonite Perspectives*. Text-Reader Series No. 1. Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984.

Szdzucki, Lech, ed. *Socinianism and its Role in the Culture of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*. Warsaw-Lodz: Polisch Academy of the Sciences, 1983.

Templin, J. Alton. "Adam Pastor: Anti-Trinitarian Anabaptist." *Illiff Review* 24, no. 3 (fall, 1967): 25-31.

Thiessen, John D. "Mennonites are forever splitting, aren't they?" *Gospel Herald* 86, no. 4, 26 January. 1993, pp. 1-3.

Theologische Realenzyklopaedie. Band V. Gerhard Krause and Gerhard Mueller, eds. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1979.

Troelsch, Ernst. *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*. Two Volumes. Translated by Olive Wyon. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981; reprint of the 1931 edition.

Verduin, Leonard. "The Chambers of Rhetoric and Anabaptist Origins in the Lowlands." *MQR* 34 (1960): 192-196.

_____. "Guido de Bres and the Anabaptists." *MQR* 35, no. 4 (October 1961): 251-266.

Vischer, Lukas, ed. *Reformed Witness Today: A Collection of Confessions and Statements of Faith Issued by Reformed Churches*. Bern: Evangelische Arbeitsstelle, 1982.

Visser, Dirk. *A Checklist of Dutch Mennonite Confessions of Faith to 1800*. C.U.D.A.N. (Commissie tot de Uitgave van Documenta Anabaptistica Neerlandica) Bulletin Nos. 6 and 7, 1974-1975.

Visser, Piet. *Broeders in de geest: De doopsgezinde bijdragen van Dierick en Jan Philipsz. Schabaelje tot de Nederlandse stichtelijkde literatuur in de zeventiende eeuw*. Two Volumes. Deventer: Sub Rosa, 1988.

_____. "Doopsgezinde rederijkersactiviteiten in eerste helf van de zeventiende eeuw, voornamelijk in Hoorn, De Rijppen, Rotterdam." *DB Nieuwreeks* 16 (1990): 11-38.

Voolstra, Sjouke. *Het Woord is Vlees Geworden: De melchioritisch-menniste incarnatieleer*. Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1982.

_____. "Mennonite Faith in the Netherlands: A Mirror of Assimilation." *CGR* 9, no. 3 (fall 1991): 277-292.

_____. *Menno Simons: His Image and Message*. Newton: Bethel College, 1997.

_____. "True Penitence: The Core of Menno Simons' Theology." *MQR* 62, no. 3 (July 1988): 387-400.

Vries, Jan de. *The Dutch Rural Economy in the Golden Age 1500-1700*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974.

Waite, Gary. *David Joris and Dutch Anabaptism 1524-1543*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990.

Walker, Willston. *A History of the Christian Church*. Third Edition. Revised by Robert T. Handy. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970.

Wenger, J. C. *Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1947 and 1959.

Wessel, J. H. *De Leerstellige Strijd tuschen Nederlandsche Gereformeerden en Doopsgezinden in de Zestiende Eeuw*. Assen, 1945.

Wilbur, Earl Morse. *A History of Unitarianism: Socinianims and its Antecedents*. Cambridge, 1945.

Williams, George H. *The Radical Reformation*. Third Edition. Kirksville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992.

Wilson, Charles. *The Dutch Republic and the Civilization of the Seventeenth Century*. New York and Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968.

Weaver, Alain Epp Weaver, ed. *Mennonite Theology in Face of Modernity: Essays in Honor of Gordon D. Kaufman*. Newton: Mennonite Press, 1996.

Woelk, Susanne. "Menno Simons in Oldersum und Oldesloe: 'Haeuplingsreformation' und Glaubensfluechtlinge im 16. Jahrhundert." *MGB* 53 (1996): 11-33.

Yoder, John H., trans. and ed. *The Legacy of Michael Sattler*. Scottdale and Waterloo: Herald Press, 1973.

Zijpp, van der N. *De Belijdenisgeschriften der Nederlandse Doopsgezinden*. Haarlem: H. D. Tjeenk Willink and Zoon, 1954; Published in English as "The Confessions of Faith of the Dutch Mennonites." *MQR* 29, no. 3 (July 1955): 171-187.

_____. *Geschiedenis der Doopsgezinden in Nederland*. Arnhem: Van Loghum Slaterus, 1952.

Zumthor, Paul. *Daily Life in Rembrandt's Holland*. Translated by Simon Watson Taylor. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962.