

CLASSICS
OF THE
RADICAL
REFORMATION

Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith



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Classics of the Radical Reformation is an English-language series of Anabaptist and Free Church documents translated and annotated under the direction of the Institute of Mennonite Studies, which is the research agency of the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, and published by Plough Publishing House.

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Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith

Translation of the 1565 German Edition of
Confession of Our Religion, Teaching, and Faith
By the Brothers Who Are Known as the Hutterites

Translated and edited by
John J. Friesen



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This volume is a translation of the second edition, dated 1565, of *Rechenschaft unserer Religion / Leer und Glaubens / Von den Brüdern so man die Hutterischen Nen't ausgangen /* Durch Peter Riedemann

This translation is based on the copy in the British Museum and the English translation by Kathleen E. Hasenberg, *Peter Rideman, Account of our Religion, Doctrine and Faith: Given by Peter Rideman of the Brothers Whom Men Call Hutterian* (London: Hodder and Stoughton in conjunction with Plough Publishing House, 1950).

Scripture quotations are translated directly from Riedemann's text and thus do not follow any one English version.

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*To the Hutterian Brethren Church,
which for five centuries has kept
the vision of communal living alive*

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By the Brothers Who Are Known as the Hutterites
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Abbreviations

In the notes, names of biblical books are abbreviated to first letters.
Here are abbreviations for Apocryphal or Deuterocanonical books:

Bar.	Baruch	Rest of Esther	Additions to Esther
Bel.	Bel and the Dragon	Sir.	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
1-2 Esd.	1-2 Esdras	Song of Thr.	Prayer of Azariah and
Jth.	Judith		Song of the Three Jews
Let. Jer.	Letter of Jeremiah	Sus.	Susanna
1-4 Macc.	1-4 Maccabees	Tob.	Tobit
Pr. Man.	Prayer of Manasseh	Wisd. of Sol.	Wisdom of Solomon

Other sources:

Herald Press	Scottsdale, Pa., and Waterloo, Ont.: Herald Press
ME	<i>The Mennonite Encyclopedia</i> . 5 vols. Herald Press, 1955-59, 1990.
ML	<i>Mennonitisches Lexikon</i> . Vols. 1-3: Frankfurt a. M. and Weierhof, 1913-42, 1958. Vol. 4: Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider, 1967.
MQR	<i>Mennonite Quarterly Review</i> . Goshen, Ind.

Preface to the New Edition

Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith is one of the most important documents of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement. Written during Riedemann's two-year imprisonment in Wolkersdorf in Hesse, Germany, from 1540 to 1542, it not only was a personal confession but also expressed the faith of the Hutterite communal group in Moravia. This community was the only Anabaptist communal group to survive the bitter persecutions in 1535. By the early 1540s, Hutterites were able to re-establish communities under the protection of sympathetic nobles.

When Riedemann left his place of imprisonment in Wolkersdorf and took up his mantle as spiritual leader of the Hutterites, the *Confession* quickly gained importance within the community. It was based on biblical principles, gave theological expression to the community's faith, followed the outline of the Apostles' Creed, and provided practical guidance for how to live in community. An indication of its importance is that it was the only document published by Hutterites in the sixteenth century.

The *Confession* survived the fierce persecutions in the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), when all Hutterite communities in Moravia (Czechia today) were destroyed, and again when the communities that survived in Hungary (Slovakia today) were also destroyed a few decades later. Wagonloads of Hutterite writings were confiscated by the Jesuits and government authorities, but the surviving remnant of Hutterites always managed to retain copies of the *Confession*. Following the migrations and calamities, the *Confession* was eventually taken to North America and remains a prized document in Hutterite communities.

The publication of Riedemann's *Confession* in English in 1950¹ made this important work more accessible to Hutterites, many of whom are now more conversant in English than in German. It also made this document available to English-reading students and scholars, thus broadening the use and influence of this work within academic circles.

Following its republication in 1999 as part of the Classics of the Radical Reformation series,² *Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith* was positively reviewed in several scholarly publications. It has also been cited more than three dozen times in academic journals. One of the most significant discussions of Riedemann's theology is in David Griffin's *The Word Became Flesh*.³ In this "rapprochement" Griffin leans heavily on Riedemann's *Confession* as an expression of Anabaptist thinking.

Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith has also received a positive reception by contemporary Hutterites. In 1997, two years before its publication, Arnold Hofer asked to see the translation. (At that time Hofer was a German teacher at Riverbend Community, Manitoba, and president of the Hutterian Education Committee; in 2017 he became elder of the Schmiedeleut Group I conference.) He indicated that Hutterites had been discussing the possibility of translating Riedemann's *Confession* into modern English and they were wondering if the translation that I had completed, and Herald Press was about to publish, could serve their communities' purposes. Hutterite leaders in various groups reviewed the translation and, after extensive discussions, decided to adopt it for their use.

When the *Confession* was printed in 1999, the Hutterites ordered more than 5,000 copies for distribution within their communities. They also produced expanded editions in hardcover and softcover that included a brief historical survey of Hutterite history written by Dora Maendel, Fairholme Community, Manitoba, a five-page historical timeline, and a translation of an epistle written by Peter Riedemann in 1540 while imprisoned in Wolkersdorf.

The English translation continues to play a formative role in Hutterite communities. Some communities provide a copy to young people for instruction prior to baptism. Others give a copy to newly married couples or to ministers at their election or ordination.

Arnold Hofer says he believes it is having a significant influence. He adds that the Bible index in the English translation helps ministers cross-reference the many places where the Hutterite *Lehren* and *Vorreden* (traditional sermons) refer to particular sections of Riedemann's *Confession*. Edward Kleinsasser, a minister in Crystal Spring Community, Manitoba, also says the English translation has played a role in a spiritual awakening among Hutterites. He, too, uses quotations from Riedemann's *Confession* to augment the *Lehren* and *Vorreden* when he preaches. Patrick Murphy, James Valley Community, Manitoba, says the *Confession* provides Hutterites with a communal understanding of the Christian faith, providing a strong alternative to the more individualistic mainline and evangelical religious vocabulary. All the Hutterite leaders with whom I spoke agree that the *Confession* remains essential for shaping their future.

Young-Pyo Jun, a Korean Anabaptist who studied at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (now Canadian Mennonite University) in the 1990s, has translated Riedemann's *Confession* into Korean; his translation was published in 2018.⁴

Supplementing this English translation, a number of books have been published about Riedemann's *Confession* and the sixteenth-century Hutterite communities in Moravia. In 1995, Werner Packull turned his attention to Hutterite studies and published *Hutterite Beginnings*.⁵ Packull divides his study into two parts. In part 1, he discusses early Anabaptist communitarian experiments, and in part 2, he discusses the emergence of the Hutterites. In this study, Packull provides a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Anabaptist communitarian efforts.

In 2002, Martin Rothkegel published an essay in which he examines a manuscript found in the University Library of Breslau/Wrocław (Poland), written by Riedemann around 1549, which consists of his paraphrases of the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and Matthew.⁶ Rothkegel discovered that Riedemann's paraphrases are similar to other paraphrases during his time and depend heavily on those of Erasmus. The aim of Riedemann's paraphrases, Rothkegel concludes, was to get at the spiritual meaning of the literal text. To accomplish this, Riedemann especially used etymology and allegory.

In 2003, Andrea Chudaska published her doctoral dissertation, which she wrote for Gottfried Seebass, professor at the University of Heidelberg and one of the foremost Anabaptist scholars in Europe. Chudaska's study, *Peter Riedemann*, provides an insightful discussion of Riedemann's life and thought and places his *Confession* into its social, political, and cultural context, including the regions of Silesia, central Germany, and Moravia.⁷ Her book provides an excellent review of the primary and secondary literature related to Riedemann, includes a detailed outline of Riedemann's life based on a comprehensive use of sources, and helpfully discusses Riedemann's theology.

In 2006, Astrid von Schlachta published a survey of Hutterite history from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, explaining in the preface that her aim is "to purge the Hutterite story of myths and clichés that reflect only the euphoria and growth, and include the shadows of divisions and repeated conflicts."⁸ She provides helpful context for the early Hutterite story but pays little specific attention to Riedemann and his writings.

In 2007, Werner O. Packull, building on his study in *Hutterite Beginnings*, published *Peter Riedemann*, a major study of the life and writings of Riedemann. In this work Packull provides a detailed account of Riedemann's life, including an analysis of the influences on his thought. He concludes with two chapters in which he discusses the *Confession*. In one chapter he deals with the theological section of the *Confession*, and in the other he treats the section that addresses practical living. In the latter chapter, Packull writes that "by giving particular community practices a confessional and biblical base, Riedemann's *Confession* gave a particular shape and definition to the subsequent Hutterite tradition," and this powerful influence was possible because the *Confession* "achieved a normative status in subsequent generations."⁹

An English translation of an earlier confession written by Riedemann when he was imprisoned in Gmunden from 1529 to 1532 was published by Plough in 1993 and again in 2016.¹⁰ In 2010 the Hutterian Brethren Book Centre published this book in German.¹¹ This early work includes some of the themes that Riedemann later incorporated into the *Confession* of 1542. Central to this work is his weaving together of faith and love as key foci in the divine-human

drama. This emphasis on faith and love seems to be written as a critique of Luther's emphasis on *sola fide* (by faith alone). For Riedemann, in order for faith to be genuine, it must be expressed in concrete actions of love toward neighbor.

Another recently published book that sheds light on Riedemann's era is Hauprecht Zapff's *Johannes Der Evangelist über alle Kapitel erklärt*.¹² Although this book doesn't mention Riedemann, it brings to light writings by Hutterites that hitherto have been largely unknown. This book is one example of the rich material Rothkegel has discovered in European archives near former Hutterite communities. These materials need to be researched more fully for content, methodology, and style. The result may be a fuller understanding of Riedemann, whose influence is still powerful centuries later.

In the meantime, it is gratifying that Plough is republishing *Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith* and thus helping to keep its message alive for future generations of readers, including students, scholars, and Hutterites.

John J. Friesen

Notes

1. Peter Rideman, *Account of our Religion, Doctrine and Faith: Given by Peter Rideman of the Brothers Whom Men Call Hutterian*, translated by Kathleen E. Hasenberg (London: Hodder and Stoughton in conjunction with Plough Publishing House, 1950).
2. Peter Riedemann, *Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith*, translated and edited by John J. Friesen (Waterloo, ON; Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999).
3. David Griffin, *The Word Became Flesh: A Rapprochement of Christian Natural Law and Radical Christological Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016).
4. 후터라이터 신앙고백서 (Daejeon, South Korea: Daejangan, 2018).
5. Werner O. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1995). In 2000 his book was translated into German by Astrid von Schlachta and published as *Die Anfänge der Hutterer: Experiment in der Gueteregemeinschaft während der Reformationszeit* (Innsbruck, Austria: Wagner Verlag, 2000).
6. Martin Rothkegel, "Learned in the School of David: Peter Riedemann's Paraphrases of the Gospels," *Commoners and Community, Essays in Honour of Werner O. Packull*, edited by C. Arnold Snyder (Kitchener, ON: Pandora, 2002).
7. Andrea Chudaska, *Peter Riedemann: konfessionsbildendes Täuferum im 16. Jahrhundert*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte 76 (Heidelberg: Verein Fuer Reformationsgeschichte, Guetersloher Verlagshaus, 2003).

8. Astrid von Schlachta, *Die Hutterer zwischen Tyrol und Amerika: Eine Reise durch die Jahrhunderte* (Innsbruck, Austria: Universitaetsverlag Wagner, 2006); published in English translation as *From the Tyrol to North America: The Hutterite Story through the Centuries*, translated by Werner Packull and Karin Packull (Kitchener, ON: Pandora, 2008); quote from 13.

9. Werner O. Packull, *Peter Riedemann: Shaper of the Hutterite Tradition* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora, 2007); quotes from 161.

10. Peter Riedemann, *Love Is Like Fire: The Confession of an Anabaptist Prisoner; Written at Gmunden, Upper Austria between 1529 and 1532*, translated by Kathleen Hasenberg and edited by Emmy Barth Maendel (Walden, NY: Plough, 1993).

11. Peter Riedemann, *Liebe brennt wie Feuer: die Rechenschaft und Glaubensbekenntnis eines Täufers: geschrieben ins Gefängnis zu Gmunden, Oberösterreich im Jahre 1530* (MacGregor, MB: Hutterian Brethren Book Centre, 2010).

12. Hauptrecht Zapff, *Johannes Der Evangelist über alle Kapitel erklärt: Ein täuferischer Bibelkommentar von 1597*, edited by Martin Rothkegel (MacGregor, MB: Hutterian Brethren Book Centre, 2017).

General Editor's Preface

In the last three decades there has been a change in understanding the origins, nature, and development of the Radical Reformation in general and of the Anabaptists in particular. Scholars have become aware of the diversity and variety of the Radical Reformers.

When primary source materials from the Radical Reformers are available and studied, one can grasp how early Anabaptists agreed or disagreed, came together or diverged. The Institute of Mennonite Studies has a vision to make such sources available in English in this series, *Classics of the Radical Reformation (CRR)*.

Though scholarly, CRR editions are meant also for the wider audience of those interested in the Anabaptist and free church writers of the sixteenth century. The translations are intended to be true and polished, yet not excessively literal or wooden.

With this ninth volume in the series, we encounter a Radical Reformer whose work endures and continues to exercise substantial influence among present-day descendants of a radical and communal vision of discipleship. Peter Riedemann wrote this *Confession of Faith* and many letters and hymns. The *Confession* has served as the basic text for Hutterites from the sixteenth century up to the present day.

We are grateful to Professor John J. Friesen of Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, for making a new and readable translation of this pivotal document. Radical Reformation Christians from many denominations and manifestations of the body of Christ are grateful to have in hand this modern and readable translation. The introduction by the editor, a respected and capable historian, sets this book within the context of radical movements at the time of its origin.

—H. Wayne Pipkin, *General Editor, CRR*
Archbold, Ohio

Translator-Editor's Preface

Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith provides the theological grounding for the Hutterite understanding of economic communalism, and gives numerous practical examples of it. This *Confession* has guided the Hutterian communities from the sixteenth century to the present. While in prison in the early 1540s, Riedemann wrote this book for the Lutheran ruler, Philip of Hesse, to interpret the vision of a renewed community pursued by the Hutterites. He tried to overcome popular misconceptions about Anabaptists by presenting the Hutterite-Anabaptist beliefs and way of life. A copy of the *Confession* was taken to Moravia, and the Hutterites quickly accepted it as the definitive statement of their faith.

The *Confession* consists of two major parts. Early in the first part, Riedemann expounds the Hutterite view of various theological issues, using short, pithy sections of half a page to a couple of pages in length. This discussion is structured around the Apostles' Creed. He argues that the understanding of the faith and the church which he presents is the intended meaning of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds. Later in the first part, Riedemann explores implications of this faith for the life of the community. In the second part of the *Confession*, he deals with six issues more extensively.

The *Confession* is liberally supported by biblical quotations and allusions. The 1565 edition cites these Scriptures by book and chapter, in the page margins. Verse citations were added later. In this translation, amended references are in footnotes. Riedemann creatively weaves together a renewed reading of the Bible with the best in the tradition of the classical Christian creeds. Thereby he produces a powerful synthesis of Scripture and tradition. He builds a dynamic view of Christian community based on both tradition and the Bible.

In the *Confession*, Riedemann shows that his view of a faithful Christian community is not marginal or sectarian. He presents the Hutterite community as expressing the heart of the Scriptures and the best in the creedal tradition of the early church. The Introduction in this volume provides a new and comprehensive history of Peter Riedemann. It shows the range of influences that shaped his theology and were thus involved in the formation of the Hutterite community.

This volume is a fresh translation in modern English from the German edition of 1565. The Introduction includes a textual history of

the book. The 1950 English translation prepared in England by Kathleen E. Hasenberg and the Society of Brothers was in an old English style and needed updating. When H. Wayne Pipkin, then associate director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies, asked me to undertake this project, I eagerly accepted because of my long-standing interest in Peter Riedemann and the Hutterites.

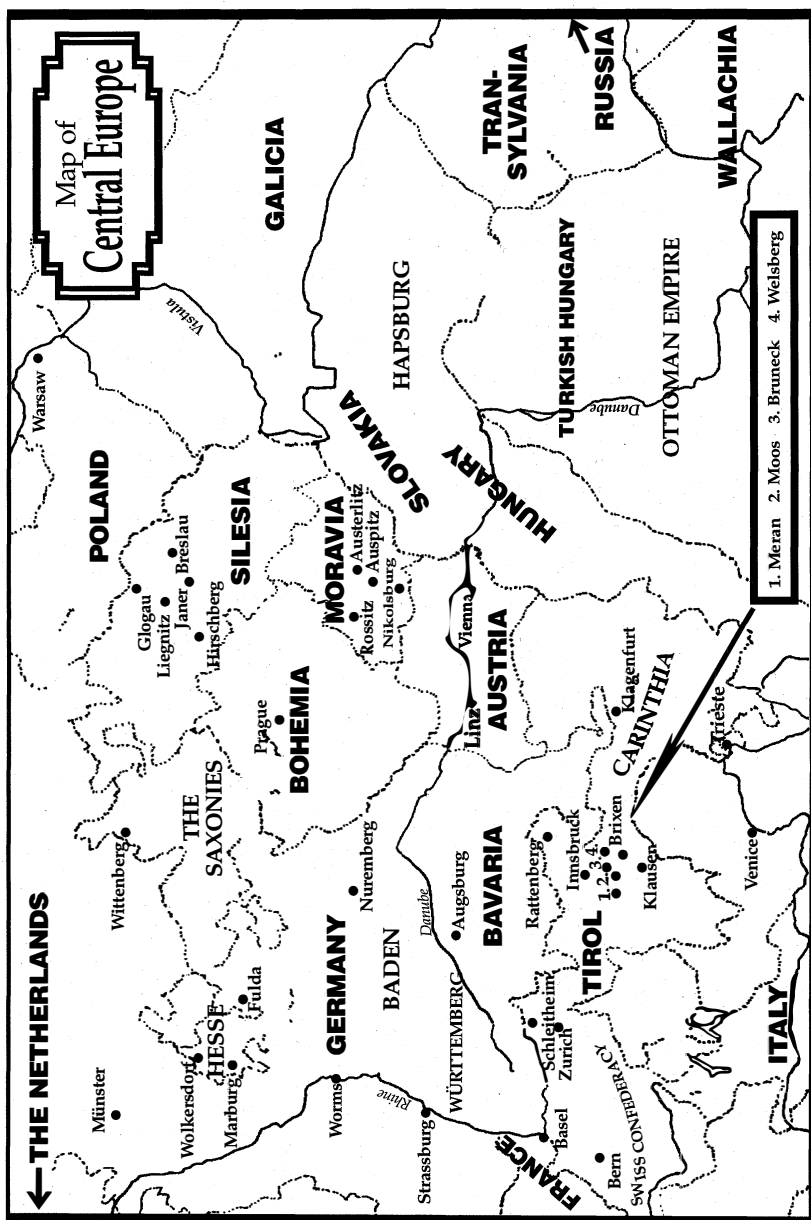
Many other attempts at expressing the Christian faith in communal living have failed, but the Hutterite communal experience has stood for centuries, despite periods of incredible persecution. The Anabaptist theology that inspired this long history of faithful discipleship deserves to be available to modern English readers. In addition, it is gratifying to see how Bruderhofers and Hutterites themselves want to use this English translation for instruction in their own communities. I believe that Riedemann's dynamic vision challenges all believers toward greater faithfulness to the Lord and to each other.

Numerous people need to be thanked. In this translation, Plough Publishing House of Farmington, Pennsylvania, generously made available to me the preliminary work they had done up to 1990 on a new translation. I benefited from their work even while studiously and conscientiously checking everything and retranslating from German. Winifred M. Hildel of the Plough Publishing House read the translation carefully and made numerous helpful suggestions.

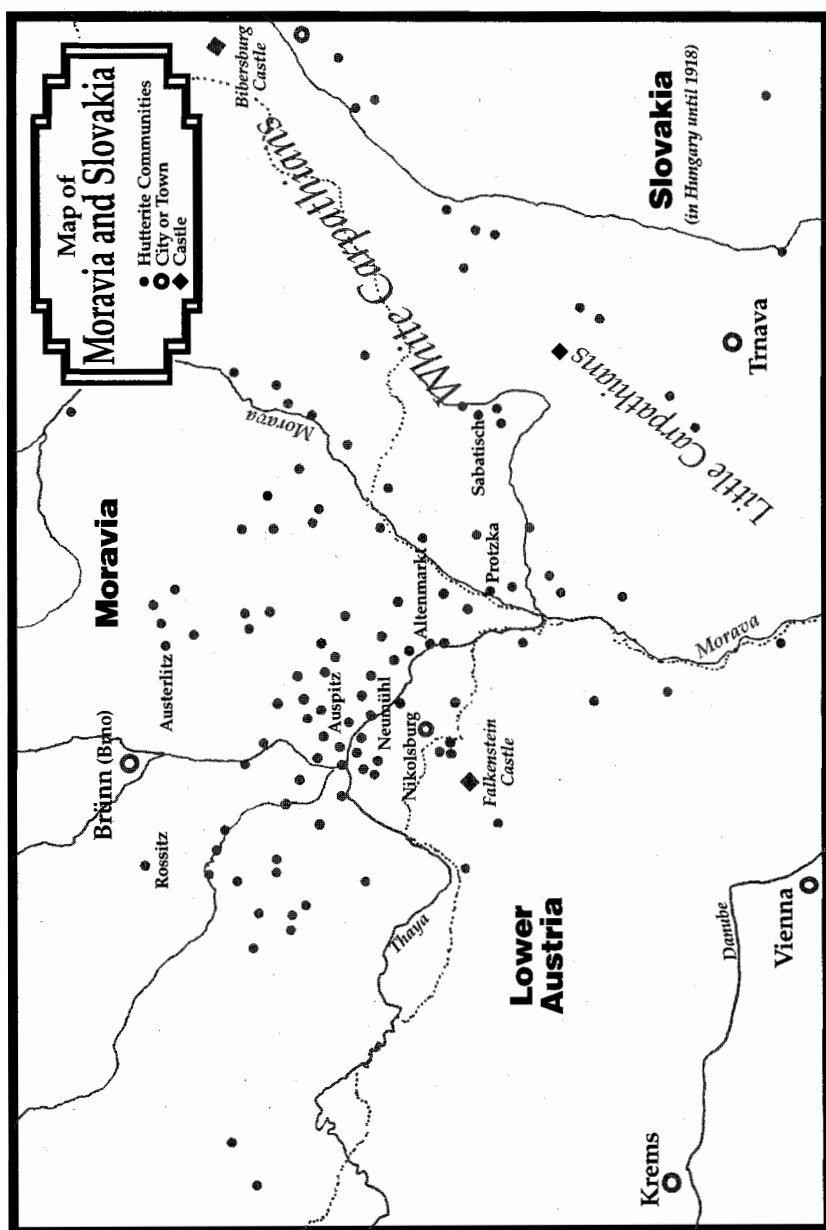
Gratitude is also due my research assistant, Laura Braun, who laboriously checked biblical references for accuracy and put them in the manuscript. This assistance was made possible through a summer research grant provided by the Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg. Dorothy, my wife, assisted with some translation nuances and offered support and encouragement during the whole process.

To H. Wayne Pipkin, General Editor of the CRR series, I owe special gratitude for extending to me the invitation to do this project, and for providing strong guidance, patience, and encouragement.

—*John J. Friesen*
Winnipeg, Manitoba



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Peter Riedemann, writing the *Confession of Faith* while imprisoned at the Wolkersdorf Castle near Marburg in 1540-42. Painting by Ivan Moon, 1975.

Introduction

Labeled a heretic before his twenty-third birthday, young Peter Riedemann (1506-1556) had a burning desire for reform. He wandered far from his native home and was constantly in danger of being captured and executed by officials suspicious and fearful of Anabaptists. During his twenties and thirties, he was imprisoned for nearly nine years.

Riedemann developed a vision that went beyond the religious reform he wanted for the church. He also yearned to see economic, social, and political reform. His view of needed change was comprehensive, transforming all aspects of people's lives.

This leader did not see himself as a heretic, holding beliefs rejected by others; or a sectarian, starting a group as an alternative to the state church. He believed that his vision for reform expressed the heart of Christian tradition. Riedemann was trying to recapture the essence of historical Christianity as expressed in Scripture and in the great creeds of the church. He saw himself standing in a long line of true Christian teachers, leaders calling the church back to its historical basics. He was reforming the center, not the edges.

Riedemann was born in 1506 in Hirschberg (now Jelenia Góra, in southwest Poland), Silesia, about fifty kilometers southwest of Liegnitz (Legnica). He was a cobbler by trade. Little is known about his life before about age twenty-three. Practically all the available information is a brief note in the *Hutterite Chronicle*: in 1532 Riedemann was released from prison in Gmunden, Upper Austria.¹ Then he made his way to Anabaptist groups in Moravia, joining his vision for reform to their experience of communalism.

During his first brief stay in Moravia, he married. However, he spent little time at home in the next decade. From 1532 to 1542, Riedemann was mostly traveling as a missionary for the Hutterites. He

tirelessly moved through Austrian and German states, promoting his vision for reform.² He spent almost six of those ten years in prison.

Three times Riedemann was imprisoned. He appeared on the historical scene in 1532, after a three-year prison term in Gmunden. Later, while on a missionary journey for the Hutterites, he spent more than four years in the Nuremberg prison. His last imprisonment (about two years) was in Hesse, at Marburg and then at Wolkersdorf, again while on a missionary journey. In prison, he wrote the *Confession of Faith*, in which he expressed his and the Hutterite community's powerful vision.³ There he also received the call to take up leadership in the Hutterite communities in Moravia.

During his Gmunden imprisonment (1529-32), Riedemann composed a meditation, his *First Confession*, available in English as *Love Is Like Fire*.⁴ In many respects it was a forerunner of his *Confession of Faith*, the subject of this volume. He wrote this later *Confession* during his imprisonment in Hesse (1540-42),⁵ before he accepted the invitation from the Hutterite communities in Moravia to serve as their leader.⁶ For fourteen years he served as a spiritual leader to the Hutterites, guiding their communities through a period of intense persecution. He lived to see the beginning of the era when Hutterites were relatively tolerated.⁷ He died in 1556 in a Hutterite community at Protzka (Broczko, now Brodsko), Slovakia, then part of Hungary.⁸

Riedemann's inspiring letters, forty-six hymns, and the *Confession of Faith* helped set the direction for Hutterite communities through the centuries.⁹ The German edition of Riedemann's *Confession* is still used by Hutterites in western Canada and United States as their theological guide. The Bruderhofs in eastern United States and England also use the *Confession*.

Fascinating questions arise about the setting of Riedemann's early life. From what background did he come? Where and when did he become Anabaptist? Who influenced his formative years? What helped to shape his *Confession of Faith*?¹⁰

During recent decades, studies have established that Anabaptism was not solidly uniform. In the sixteenth century, numerous Anabaptist movements were appearing at about the same time in various parts of Europe, largely within what was once the Holy Roman Empire.¹¹ Anabaptist groups overlapped, made contact with each other, shared ideas, and disagreed with each other. There were considerable similarities. Yet the various groups had different basic char-

acteristics, starting points, and theological emphases.

Research has identified at least five major circles of Anabaptism: Swiss-South German, Central German, Tirolean-Moravian, Dutch, and the Marpeck circle.¹² Each grouping has its own traits. Some of these groups can be further subdivided.

Which circle most influenced the theology in Riedemann's *Confession of Faith*? Was his teaching shaped by the humanist biblicism of the Swiss-South German Anabaptism of Grebel, Manz, and Sattler? By the mysticism¹³ and chiliasm¹⁴ of the Central German Anabaptism of Hut and Denck, developed in the locale of the Peasants' Revolt? By Marpeck or Hubmaier, who were less separatist than most Anabaptists and willing to see Christians as rulers or civil officers? What role did Tirolean-Moravian Anabaptism play in his theology? How did the spiritualism of Melchior Hoffmann and the Münsterite experiment of Dutch Anabaptism influence his thinking?

Silesia: Riedemann's Early Life and Influences

The Hutterites' own extensive history book, *Die älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder* (The oldest chronicle of the Hutterite brothers: *Chronicle*), begins the story of Riedemann with his imprisonment in Gmunden, at age twenty-three. Then it traces his travels and ideas as they developed from that point.¹⁵ Since Riedemann was born in Hirschberg, it is fitting to begin with Silesia in reviewing his life and thought. Likely his earliest views of Christian reform were given shape in Silesia.¹⁶

The majority of the people in lower Silesia, where Hirschberg was located, were Germans whose ancestors had settled in the area in the thirteenth century. Most of the upper classes were German. The principal city was Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland). Liegnitz was one of the more important cities in the northern part of Silesia. Hirschberg was within the political jurisdiction of Liegnitz. Local rulers in Silesia had considerable autonomy and were frequently at war with each other. In 1527, Ferdinand I, Hapsburg ruler in Vienna, gained political control of Silesia and imposed a measure of peace on the region.¹⁷ He was staunchly Catholic, and his firm grip on the region made religious reform difficult.

The reform in Silesia was led by Caspar Schwenckfeld (b. 1489). He was of noble birth and educated in various universities of Europe.

He had traveled, as usual for a nobleman's son, and was a man of grace, manners, culture, and self-confidence. Though aware of humanism, he was not a humanist. He had no specific training in law, theology, or any other discipline.¹⁸ A courtier among the local nobles, he came to the court of Duke Frederick II of Liegnitz by 1521.¹⁹

Schwenckfeld had converted to religious reform in 1519. Though he admired Luther at this early stage, his reform was not specifically Lutheran.²⁰ Various reform impulses appeared among lay people in Silesia, including anti-clericalism (criticism of clergy, church leaders) and a desire to raise the moral level of the church. After Schwenckfeld was appointed to the court at Liegnitz, he served as midwife to the duke's conversion to reform²¹ and promoted religious reform in the regions in and around Liegnitz.²²

At first Schwenckfeld believed that his reform ideas were in agreement with Luther's. However, by 1524 he began to notice differences. To try to resolve them, he made three trips to Wittenberg in the mid-1520s to confer with Luther. To his surprise, Luther rebuffed him. Schwenckfeld then began to chart a separate path. He felt his reform was a middle way between Luther and the Catholics.²³

The two main issues which separated Luther and Schwenckfeld were the interpretation of the eucharist²⁴ (the Lord's Supper) and the lack of moral improvement in regions of Lutheran reform. During the middle and latter 1520s, Luther was placing increasing emphasis on the "real presence" of Christ's body in the eucharist (Matt. 26:26). This led to Luther's abortive discussions with Zwingli at Marburg in 1529. On moral reform, Luther's main concern was to overcome a theology of works-righteousness and develop a theology of grace. He saw salvation as a gift of God, not earned by humans. This theology became known as *sola fideism* (salvation by faith alone), but it was not producing the moral results which Schwenckfeld believed ought to accompany religious reform.

In contrast to Luther, Schwenckfeld emphasized that "it is Christ himself by his inner Word who directs the faithful to the Middle Way."²⁵ Schwenckfeld developed a spiritual theology. He preached that the transforming power of the inner word was more important than external forms. For Schwenckfeld, sanctification was an increasingly central concern. On the other hand, Luther in 1525 was engaged in a sharp debate over free will with Erasmus, then at Basel. He saw all issues from the perspective of protecting salvation as a gift of God

and a work by God.²⁶ Fallen humans are thus powerless to do anything good in the sight of God and must wait for God to bestow salvation on them. Luther thought Schwenckfeld's view of sanctification strayed dangerously close to human works-righteousness.

From 1524 to 1526, Schwenckfeld was engaged in two difficult struggles. There was increasing tension between himself and the Lutheran reformers in Silesia.²⁷ The center of the Lutheran reform was Breslau, and Liegnitz was the center of the reform led by Schwenckfeld. Schwenckfeld's other struggle was with Roman Catholicism, which was vigorously resisting church reform in Silesia.

Meanwhile, the German Peasants' Revolt of 1524 to 1525 developed. These uprisings largely bypassed Silesia, convulsing the lands to the east and west. However, the effects were keenly felt in Silesia. The Catholic Church charged that Schwenckfeld's reforms "provided occasion and encouragement to insurrection and social upheaval."²⁸

Schwenckfeld became engaged in increasingly difficult religious conflicts. In a 1526 circular letter, he recommended that the Lord's Supper be suspended until conflict between Catholics and Lutherans halted. That move further isolated him from the Lutheran camp.²⁹

In this setting, the Silesian Anabaptist movement developed. It is largely shrouded in obscurity because it had no defining event, nor did it produce a continuing community in Silesia. In addition, the initial years of reform in Silesia produced no sharp lines separating Lutheran, Schwenckfeldian, and Anabaptist groups.

Sometime after 1525, distinctions began to develop between the various reform groups. In the emerging Anabaptist movement in Silesia, the leaders who made their mark were mostly from other countries. A number of native Silesians who became active in the Anabaptist movement are best known for later activities in the Hutterite and Gabrielite communities in Moravia and Slovakia. Two local Anabaptists, in addition to Peter Riedemann, were Bärthl Riedmair³⁰ and Caspar Braitmichel.³¹ Riedmair and Braitmichel eventually made their way to Moravia, likely as part of the Gabriel Ascherham group, and both eventually joined the Hutterites. Probably late in life, Braitmichel began the great Hutterite Chronicle and carried it to 1542. He ceased because of failing eyesight and died in 1573.³²

Balthasar Hubmaier, from near Augsburg, had contact with the Anabaptist movement in Silesia. While in Nikolsburg, Moravia, he dedicated his second book on *Freedom of the Will* to Frederick II, duke

of Liegnitz.³³ However, there is no evidence that Hubmaier's writing on free will had a major influence on Anabaptism in Silesia.

Hans Hut was also connected with Anabaptism in Silesia. It is not clear whether Hans Hut ever came to Silesia.³⁴ His chiliasm and interim peace ethic (until Christ returns) do not seem to have figured prominently in the theology of the Silesian Anabaptist movement.

In late 1527 and early 1528, a number of Anabaptists arrived in Liegnitz, largely because of its reputation for tolerance. One was the Swiss Anabaptist printer Froschauer. He was fleeing from Emperor Ferdinand I and was attracted to the University of Liegnitz, established in 1525.³⁵ Shortly after he arrived, Froschauer gave up his Anabaptist beliefs and joined the Schwenkfelder movement. This conversion shows the ease with which people moved from one group to the other in the Silesian reform movements of that time.

In 1528 two other Anabaptists arrived in Silesia: Oswald Glaidt and Andreas Fischer. Fischer's exact birth date and place of origin are not known, though recent research suggests that he may have originated in Austria or in a southern German state.³⁶ He perhaps became Anabaptist in an area influenced by Hans Hut's theology.

When Glaidt and Fischer arrived in Silesia, they preached in the countryside and won many people to Anabaptism. They may have linked with local Anabaptist groups. Glaidt and Fischer emphasized adult baptism, likely in the tradition of Hans Hut: baptism only after teaching and belief, and not before age thirty.³⁷

Glaidt appears to have been pacifist. It is not clear that Fischer was pacifist; a few years later in Moravia, he sided with the *Schwertler* (sword-bearers) and was willing to be protected by the nobility.³⁸ Both Glaidt and Fischer seem to have taught communalism and sharing of goods, though not in the strict form later practiced by Hutterites in Moravia.³⁹ The evidence suggests that Glaidt was more eschatological⁴⁰ in his theology than Fischer. Yet neither made chiliasm a key issue in their teaching while in Silesia.⁴¹

Glaidt and Fischer's disagreement with Schwenckfeld did not focus on these issues, however, but on whether the Sabbath ought to be observed by Christians.⁴² In late 1528 and early 1529, Glaidt and Fischer wrote articles promoting the view that "one has a duty to celebrate the Sabbath, Saturday, because it is the word, will, and commandment of God (Exod. 20)."⁴³ Their documents have been lost, but Schwenckfeld's reply is extant. Since Schwenckfeld quoted them

extensively, it is possible to reconstruct their Sabbatarian arguments.⁴⁴

Glaiddt and Fischer asserted that observing Sunday as the day of rest was a pattern initiated by the popes. They saw Sunday observance as a human invention, to be discarded as the church was being reformed. Christ had superseded the priestly or ritual law, but the moral law still applied to Christians. The Ten Commandments were the center of the moral law and should be totally kept. Therefore, the Sabbath and not Sunday ought to be the day of rest.⁴⁵ Their Sabbatarianism may have been influenced by Hans Hut, who in his eschatological thinking favored the number seven. On the other hand, it may also have been based on a biblical restitutionism and developed by people within the Anabaptist movement in Silesia.⁴⁶

About the same time, another Anabaptist arrived in Silesia. Gabriel Ascherham, a furrier from Bavaria, was a spiritualist in the tradition of Hans Denck. He placed more emphasis on the inner Spirit of God than on the written Word, and stressed the spiritual meaning of ceremonies more than their particular outer form. He wrote a book entitled *Unterschied göttlicher und menschlicher Weisheit* (Distinction between divine and human wisdom), which emphasizes "baptism of the Holy Spirit to such a degree that the external observance of water baptism becomes almost superfluous, and the disputes about infant and believers baptism irrelevant."⁴⁷ He had also gone on missionary journeys with Hans Hut. Ascherham was active in the Breslau, Glogau, and Glatz areas of Silesia, finding many Anabaptists there.⁴⁸

Another Anabaptist leader in Silesia was Clemens Adler. Some think Adler was a Swiss Anabaptist; others believe he came from the Anabaptist communities in Moravia. He may even have been native to Silesia.⁴⁹ It is not clear when he appeared as an Anabaptist in Silesia. He seems to have been active in areas to the south of Liegnitz, around Schweidnitz, Glatz, and Jauer.⁵⁰ Adler was an advocate of moral reform and of changes in the practice of the eucharist.⁵¹ He was willing to take dramatic action to bring about change. On one occasion he came into the church in Glatz and ordered the priest to be silent so he could speak. Adler was forced out of the church. Undaunted, he held a service outdoors. Adler was captured, imprisoned, released, and continued preaching on a nearby estate. The issue he addressed at this time was the proper form and interpretation of the eucharist.⁵²

His writings show his concern that the gospel message be appropriated inwardly and not merely outwardly, with just a show of obe-

dience to the written Word.⁵³ Adler was a strong proponent of peace, forgiveness, and not retaliating against evil. He believed evil had to be met with suffering.⁵⁴ He made a strong case for community of goods.⁵⁵ He also advocated not swearing the oath, which he discussed in the context of making a commitment to God.⁵⁶ Commitments to God were required, and oaths forbidden.

Adler argued that the Sabbath was given in the old covenant as an external sign of what God requires of his believers: "They should leave their evil works, and with their thoughts, words and deeds not do anything which is against God."⁵⁷ He said it was not important to keep the actual Sabbath (on Saturday) according to the Mosaic Law.

He also addressed the significance of the Law. Although salvation can only be attained through Christ and not through the Law, the Law shows humans what they ought to do and not do. So the Law becomes a witness to eternal life.⁵⁸ Adler did not include a lengthy section on adult baptism but did make references to it and assumed it as part of the Christian life.⁵⁹

Adler left for Moravia and may have been gone for some time. In 1533 he was again active in the Glogau region of Silesia. He was arrested and executed, possibly in 1533. The history and travels of Adler and Riedemann show that they might have met in Silesia or Moravia. Adler might have been in Silesia as early as 1525, introducing Anabaptism to the Schweidnitz area.⁶⁰ There is a remarkable overlap of ideas in the writings of Adler and Riedemann.

By 1528 numerous Anabaptists were in various regions of Silesia. They gave attention to issues of baptism, peace, communalism, and the end-time. Yet the Sabbath and the eucharist were debated most vigorously and publicly. Earlier historians saw Sabbatarianism as evidence of Judaizing. Later interpreters have taken Sabbatarianism as evidence of spiritualism, especially a spiritualism that resulted when Hut's predictions about the end-time failed to materialize.⁶¹

On August 1, 1528, Emperor Ferdinand I issued a decree that "the religion in the region (Silesia) be returned to its pristine state."⁶² The death penalty was prescribed for anyone questioning the "real presence," and for anyone "who rejected child baptism and engaged in rebaptism."⁶³ This decree resulted in the emigration of a large number of Anabaptists from Silesia.⁶⁴ Gabriel Ascherham led a group to Moravia, perhaps as many as two thousand believers.

In the face of this threat from the emperor, Duke Frederick II of

Liegnitz decided to abandon Schwenckfeld and to ally his region with Luther's reform. The Reichstag in 1526 had allowed nobles to decide whether their people would be Roman Catholic or Lutheran. In 1529, Schwenckfeld left for Strassburg (French: Strasbourg). A year and a half later, on March 15, 1530, the emperor ordered Duke Frederick II to expel Anabaptists, and more of them fled then.⁶⁵ During that expulsion, Andreas Fischer left for Nikolsburg in Moravia.⁶⁶

Since Peter Riedemann was imprisoned in Gmunden in 1529, he might have fled Silesia after the emperor's decree of August 1528. Perhaps he traveled with some of the groups who left for Moravia. No concrete evidence has appeared to date his departure from Silesia, or to identify the route he took from Silesia to Gmunden.

Gmunden: First Imprisonment

Riedemann was imprisoned in Gmunden from 1529 to 1532. Apparently he arrived in the Linz area of Upper Austria in 1529, was drawn into the local Anabaptist group under the leadership of Wolfgang Brandhuber, and was ordained Servant of the Word.⁶⁷ He was captured and imprisoned, not in Linz, the capital city of Upper Austria, but in Gmunden, on the banks of the Traunsee. In prison, he was "subjected to great pain, hunger, and mistreatment."⁶⁸ After Riedemann was released from prison in 1532, he briefly visited the Anabaptist group in Linz, then traveled to Moravia.

The Anabaptism that Riedemann met in Linz and Gmunden of Austria was partly shaped by the legacy of Hans Hut.⁶⁹ Hut had been active in Upper Austria. His ideas were evident locally,⁷⁰ such as an emphasis on the nearness of Christ's second coming and a belief in suffering as a confirmation of faithfulness.⁷¹

However, Wolfgang Brandhuber was likely the major influence on Riedemann in the Linz-Gmunden area. Brandhuber was the leader of the Linz congregation when Riedemann arrived in 1529. Brandhuber's influence extended all over Upper Austria, where he founded congregations. His reputation extended even into the Tirol (Tyrol).⁷² Daniel Liechty claims that "Wolfgang Brandhuber led the Linz congregation in a characteristically Hutian manner."⁷³

In his letters, however, Brandhuber shows little evidence of influence from Hut. Chiliasm did not much interest him. He emphasized a faith based upon Scripture and a spiritual life of patient suffering

and mutual sharing, rejecting worldly grandeur. His views on sharing material possessions, though not expressing the full extent of communalism which the Hutterites later adopted in Moravia, did emphasize that "all things that serve to honor God should be held in common."⁷⁴ Brandhuber also argued that war and vengeance do not fit a true Christian faith.⁷⁵ These ideas have little in common with Hut's main theological emphases. They are, however, similar to the ideas which become prominent in Riedemann's *Confession of Faith*.

During Riedemann's imprisonment in Gmunden, he wrote a treatise known as his *First Confession*.⁷⁶ It is much shorter than his later *Confession of Faith*, and the organization is different, but the methodology and approach to issues is similar. His discussion in the *First Confession* consists largely of weaving together quotations and allusions from Scripture. The treatise consists of three sections.

In the first section, he begins with a long discussion of God's love for humans. He argues that God calls people to love God and each other. He rejects war and violence. He discusses faith in terms of God's call and human response, carefully avoiding any reference to Luther's theology of faith as initiated solely by God without human participation. He makes the case for missions and adult baptism.

In the second section, he follows the principal affirmations of the Apostles' Creed, thus prefiguring the structure of the *Confession of Faith*. The discussion falls into three parts: affirmations of faith in God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. On God, Riedemann emphasizes that people are created good. He appears to be rejecting Luther's emphasis on the total depravity of humanity. On Christ, he includes lengthy comment on the Lord's Supper or the mass, and he rejects both Catholic and Lutheran views. He submits "that as Christ in the breaking of the bread had given his body to be broken for our salvation, so those who break the bread in the Lord's Supper commit themselves to give their bodies in love for God's sake, and to serve each other, even unto death in persecution."⁷⁷ Then he describes the Holy Spirit as comforter, enabler, and protector of the poor.⁷⁸

The third and shortest section of the *First Confession* outlines seven pillars on which the house of God is built: fear of God, God's wisdom, God's knowledge, God's counsel, God's power, God's surpassing wisdom, and God as friend.

In Riedemann's *First Confession*, there is no hint of the chiliasm of Hut, nor of a spiritualism which places the inspiration of the Spirit

over the witness of the written word of Scripture. He wrote while under the influence of Brandhuber, and his ideas seem consistent with Brandhuber's. The main issues Riedemann presents in the treatise are similar to his thought in the later *Confession of Faith*. Brandhuber may be the source of some of the ideas, since he also emphasized love, missions, adult baptism, peace, and sharing of material goods.⁷⁹ Yet many teachings in the *First Confession* were also current in Anabaptist groups in Silesia before 1529. Thus Riedemann could have developed some of them in his native region. Dependence on Hans Hut's ideas seems slight, except for the emphasis on missions, which was pervasive among Anabaptists anyhow.

Toward the end of 1532, Riedemann was released from prison and went to Austerlitz, Moravia.⁸⁰ There he joined communalist Anabaptists led by Jakob Wiedemann and Philip Jäger. They had been part of the Nikolsburg Anabaptists but had separated from them in 1528.⁸¹ The Hutterite *Chronicle* states that the communalists left because the Nikolsburg group was not pacifist and was willing to use the sword, having the spirit of Münster, and was called Sabbatarian.⁸² The nonresistant communalists were called *Stäbler* (staff-bearers).

In its terse style, the *Chronicle* describes the 1528 departure of the communalists from Nikolsburg (now Mikulov). "These men then spread out a cloak in front of the people, and each laid his possessions on it with a willing heart—without being forced—so that the needy might be supported in accordance with the teaching of the prophets and apostles. Isa. 23:18; Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35; 5:1-11."⁸³

The communalist group of about two hundred adults led by Wiedemann and Jäger went to Austerlitz. There the lords Kaunitz gave them lodging. When they negotiated with the lords, they stated that, because of their faith in God, they would not pay war taxes.⁸⁴

In 1529, the Austerlitz group seems to have adopted a church order as its own constitution. The order may have originated with Schiemer or Schlaffer in the Linz-Gmunden area, to which Riedemann came in 1529, or with the Anabaptists who emigrated from the Tirol in 1529.⁸⁵

Also in 1529, Jakob Hutter first came on the scene in Moravia. He had become Anabaptist in the Tirol, possibly at Klagenfurt.⁸⁶ Because of severe persecution in the Tirol, the local Anabaptists sent Hutter and Simon Schützinger to see if Moravia would provide a haven for Tirolean Anabaptists. According to the Hutterite writings, Hutter and

Schützinger, in the name of the Anabaptists in the Tirol, "united in peace with the church at Austerlitz."⁸⁷ They thus recognized that this group was a place of refuge for their persecuted fellow believers in the Tirol; they also seem to have either acknowledged or created unity in the group. Perhaps there had been internal tensions.

At this time other Anabaptist groups were also in Moravia. In 1528, Gabriel Ascherham and a group of Anabaptists from Silesia settled in Rossitz (now Rosice), near Austerlitz. Some members of Ascherham's group may have settled in Rossitz in 1527.⁸⁸ This group from Silesia was also communalist; some of them had settled in Rossitz before the communalists left Nikolsburg to settle in Austerlitz. In 1529 more Anabaptists fled from Silesia and joined Ascherham's group, which might have had up to two thousand Silesian refugees.

In 1528, Anabaptists from Hesse and the Palatinate arrived in Moravia under the leadership of Philipp Plener, a Swabian.⁸⁹ They initially settled with the Gabriel Ascherham group. However, tensions soon arose between the two leaders, Gabriel Ascherham and Philipp Plener. In 1529, the Philippites moved to Auspitz, between the Austerlitz and Nikolsburg communities.⁹⁰ The Philippites were also communalists, and their community continued to be augmented by new arrivals from south and central German regions.⁹¹ Thus by 1529, there were three major communalist groups in Moravia: one led by Ascherham at Rossitz, another by Wiedemann and Jäger at Austerlitz, and the third by Philipp Plener at Auspitz.

An event which had major implications for Anabaptism in Moravia was the division in Austerlitz on January 8, 1531.⁹² The unity within the Austerlitz group, acknowledged by Hutter in 1529, did not last. Factions developed. A number of people, among them Wilhelm Reublin and George Zauring, opposed the leadership of Jakob Wiedemann; they accused him of mismanagement and acting like an absolute ruler.⁹³ Hence, in the dead of winter, part of the Austerlitz group decided to leave for Auspitz, perhaps 350 persons out of about 600. They were led by Reublin and Zauring.⁹⁴ Most of the people who left had apparently come from the Tirol. They did not unite with the Philippite group already at Auspitz.

Since Jakob Hutter and Simon Schützinger were respected, they were invited by both groups to come to Moravia and mediate between them.⁹⁵ In 1531, Hutter and Schützinger came from the Tirol, investigated the situation, and decided Wiedemann was at fault.

Wiedemann refused to accept the decision, and the division could not be repaired. Hutter and Schützinger also found Reublin unacceptable for leadership in the Auspitz group because “he was not wholeheartedly practicing apostolic communalism.”⁹⁶ Before Hutter and Schützinger left, they appointed Zaunring as leader of the Tirolean group in Auspitz.⁹⁷ Remarkably, the group at Auspitz gave Hutter and Schützinger authority to make these leadership changes.

The new group at Auspitz, desperately poor financially and with many ill people, had to endure further internal conflict. Within the year, Zaunring was found to have administered discipline more leniently to his wife than to other members of the group. The resulting conflict led to Zaunring’s dismissal from leadership. Again Hutter and Schützinger came from the Tirol to settle matters in Auspitz.⁹⁸

It was decided that Schützinger would remain with the Auspitz group as its leader. Hutter and Schützinger also made another major organizational change. The *Chronicle* does not supply reasons but simply states that Hutter and Schützinger formed a loose federation of the Gabrielites at Rossitz, the Philippites at Auspitz, and the Tiroleans at Auspitz.⁹⁹ Gabriel Ascherham, the Silesian, was apparently appointed senior bishop (*Vorsteher*) of the three affiliated groups.¹⁰⁰

Arrival in Moravia

Riedemann arrived in Moravia in late 1532, shortly after the Auspitz Tirolean community members had been robbed, beaten, and raped by a group of marauding soldiers.¹⁰¹ Riedemann chose to come to the Auspitz Tirolean group of communalists, though nearby was also a group of communalists from Silesia. While there, he married an Anabaptist sister, Katharine, called Treindl, and he was appointed Servant of the Word (*Diener des Wortes*).¹⁰² He was with the Auspitz Tiroleans for less than a year and then was sent to Franconia.

Tirolean Anabaptism: Formation and Background

Before following Riedemann to Franconia, we recognize forces that shaped the Tirolean Anabaptist movement, with which Riedemann identified in Moravia. Anabaptism in the Tirol was inspired and influenced by a remarkable number of people. As in other Anabaptist areas, Anabaptism in the Tirol was interwoven with

social and economic upheavals. One of the earliest reform leaders there was Michael Gaismair.¹⁰³ He was not an Anabaptist but came to prominence during the Peasants' Revolt in the Tirolean Brixen area in 1525. The uprising in which he became a leader expressed a mixture of religious, social, and political concerns, as did such revolts in many other areas in the Holy Roman Empire during the same years.

Gaismair was secretary to the vice-regent of the Tirol and secretary to the bishop of Brixen. In May of 1525, he was likely involved in drawing up the sixty-two Meran Articles, addressing areas of political, religious, and social abuse.¹⁰⁴ Miners and peasants of the area presented the articles to the diets of Meran and Innsbruck.¹⁰⁵ Among other things, they called for reform on the basis of "the equality of man."¹⁰⁶ The officials rejected this attempt at reform.

In late 1525 and early 1526, Gaismair became more radical. He visited Zwingli and drew up plans for military action. To free the Tirol from tyrannical rule, he hoped he would receive military assistance from various Swiss cantons, as well as from France and Venice.¹⁰⁷ He wrote a new constitution (*Landesordnung*) for the Tirol. It called for abolishing the power of the nobility and radically equalizing all people, including burgers and peasants, even to the point of destroying walled cities.¹⁰⁸

In the summer of 1526, Gaismair assembled an army to free the Tirolean land. Faced with overwhelming odds, he and his peasant army retreated to the region of Venice. They asked for protection and offered their military services to Venice.¹⁰⁹ Gaismair's hoped-for assistance from Venice, the king of France, and the Swiss cantons came to nothing. Gaismair lived in Venetian territory until 1532, when an acquaintance assassinated him in hope of collecting a reward which the Council of Innsbruck had offered for Gaismair's death.¹¹⁰

No clear connection has been established between this armed attempt to create an independent mountain territory modeled after the Swiss cantons, and the Anabaptist movement which arose shortly afterward.¹¹¹ Gaismair's planned reforms for the peasants and miners in the Tirol provides the context, however, for later Anabaptist reforms.¹¹² Many needs for reform expressed in the Gaismair events continued in the Tirol for years. Some concerns were given new shape in the Anabaptist reforms, especially among the communalists.

The first official record of Anabaptism in the Tirol is in early 1527. On January 2, 1527, Ferdinand I of Austria, brother of the emperor

Charles V, issued a warning against unauthorized preachers (*Winkelprediger*) in the Puster Valley of the Tirol.¹¹³ In April of the same year, Ferdinand I sent another edict to the authorities throughout the Tirol, noting that Anabaptists had appeared in many regions. The officials were to be diligent in suppressing them.¹¹⁴ He called them rebels and charged them with provoking disturbances and spilling blood.¹¹⁵ In the summer of 1527, Ferdinand I issued more mandates against Anabaptists in the Tirol, noting that they were also questioning Christ's presence in the elements of the mass.¹¹⁶

The founder of the Anabaptist movement in the Tirol cannot be determined with certainty. It does not appear that the movement began with just one person or in one locale. It is possible, however, to identify Anabaptists present in the Tirol after the movement had begun. Two Anabaptist missionaries active in the Tirol in the fall of 1527 were Leonhard Schiemer and Hans Schlaffer.

Schiemer, a former Franciscan friar, made his way to Nikolsburg in Moravia in early 1527 and debated with Hubmaier over the use of the sword (allowed by Hubmaier).¹¹⁷ Leaving Nikolsburg, he went to Vienna, where he had conversations with Hut about his beliefs.¹¹⁸ Finding Hut's ideas biblical, he requested rebaptism by Oswald Glaidt in the spring of 1527.¹¹⁹ Schiemer was active in the Inn Valley of the Tirol for only about six months. He was arrested in Rattenberg on November 25, 1527, and beheaded there on January 14, 1528.¹²⁰

Schlaffer, a former priest, had met Hans Hut in Nikolsburg.¹²¹ He also met and was influenced by a number of other Anabaptists, including Denck, Ludwig Hätzer, Jakob Wiedemann, Glaidt, and Brandhuber.¹²² From September to December 1527, Schlaffer was active in the Inn Valley, meeting Anabaptist cells already in existence and preaching to people not yet converted to the Anabaptist movement. He was captured December 5, 1527, and beheaded on February 4, 1528, at Schwaz, a town about ten miles from Rattenberg.¹²³

In his correspondence, Schiemer's ideas show some influence from Denck and Hut.¹²⁴ In a manner similar to Denck's, he acknowledged his deep sinfulness and dependence upon God's grace for salvation. He taught that God had left a threefold witness of himself on earth in the spirit, water, and blood; this is similar to Hut's threefold view of baptism. There is, however, little evidence of Hut's eschatological views, and Schiemer does not refer to communalism.

Hans Schlaffer's theology shows less influence from either Hut or Denck. He strongly defends adult baptism but does not discuss the threefold view of baptism that Hut emphasized: water, spirit, and martyrdom (blood).¹²⁵ Schlaffer distances himself from Hut's preoccupation with the nearing end-time and coming judgment.¹²⁶ He emphasizes a life of discipleship and faithfulness to God.¹²⁷ His concept of discipleship is expressed in his views that Christ is the "exemplar" for the Christian, and that justification brings a transformation of one's mode of living.¹²⁸ He warns against undue concern and speculation about "secret things"—likely meaning end-time speculation. He says God will reveal such events in his own time.¹²⁹ Schlaffer also strongly rejects accusations that adult baptism is a cover for revolution; he says he knows of no plans for revolution among people in his circles.¹³⁰ His writings show little evidence of communalism.

Georg Cajacob (Blaurock), a priest and a native of Chur, arrived in the Tirol after being expelled from a number of Swiss regions, including Zurich and Bern. In a recent study, Packull suggests that Blaurock likely visited the South Tirol twice, once between May and September of 1527, and again during the spring of 1529.¹³¹ When he entered the South Tirol the second time, a number of new Anabaptist leaders had emerged, including Jakob Hutter. In July 1529, Blaurock was captured. He was tortured, and on September 6, 1529, he was burned at the stake in Klausen.¹³²

Blaurock participated in founding the Zurich Anabaptist movement. He was the first to receive rebaptism by the hands of Conrad Grebel, in the home of Felix Manz's mother on January 21, 1525. An impulsive missionary for Anabaptism, he would even interrupt a church service and take the pulpit himself. He believed in the importance of Scripture, adult baptism, improvement of life, and the church as a body of believers united by faith in Christ. There is no evidence that he advocated community of goods.¹³³ Though Blaurock seems to have been an important Anabaptist figure in the Tirol, his influence was brief. He seems not to have contributed anything specific to the communalism of the Tirolean Anabaptists who left for Moravia.

Another Anabaptist native to the Tirol was Pilgram Marpeck. He was a member of the Upper Council as well as a mining magistrate in the city of Rattenberg, on the Inn River.¹³⁴ On January 28, 1528, Marpeck abruptly resigned his position as mining magistrate two weeks after Schiemer was executed at Rattenberg, and one week

before Schlaffer was beheaded in Schwaz.¹³⁵ Marpeck seems to have left Rattenberg shortly thereafter, appearing in Strassburg in September of the same year, where he purchased citizenship.¹³⁶

Marpeck was a moderate Anabaptist. He opposed the spiritualism of Schwenckfeld¹³⁷ but was equally opposed to the biblical literalism he saw in the Swiss Anabaptists. He thought such mechanical adherence to the written Word misinterpreted signs and figures in Scripture and caused unnecessary divisions in the church.¹³⁸ Marpeck rejected violence, yet he did not reject government office; he held such offices in Rattenberg and later in Strassburg and Augsburg. He believed in sharing with the needy but did not advocate community of goods. He was a strong advocate of adult baptism and believed the state had no right to determine matters of faith.¹³⁸ One finds little of the chiliasm of Hut in his writings.

None of the Anabaptist leaders in the Tirol noted thus far placed emphasis on communalism. They did not show the kind of theological sophistication and dependence upon the church's creedal tradition evident in the theological sections of Riedemann's two *Confessions*.

Jakob Hutter was the Anabaptist leader in the Tirol most influential in shaping the group in Moravia which Riedemann joined. Hutter (hatmaker), born in the Puster Valley of the Tirol, in the hamlet of Moos (now in Italy), received some education in nearby Bruneck (Brunico) and studied hatmaking in nearby Prags, in the Tirol. He likely came in contact with Anabaptism at Klagenfurt. In the first clear reference to Hutter as an Anabaptist, he barely eluded capture when a group of believers was surprised in Welsberg.¹⁴⁰ How long he had been an Anabaptist is not known, but some scholars have concluded that he was one as early as 1526.¹⁴¹ He became a leader in the Anabaptist community of Spittall in Carinthia.¹⁴² He also led a congregation in Welsberg in the Puster Valley.

Specific influences on Hutter are difficult to identify. His communalism and views on church reform speak to some of the issues of economic injustice and inequality raised by the revolt of Gaismair. Even though there is no direct historical connection between Gaismair's revolt and Hutter's reform, Hutter perhaps was a partisan of Gaismair.¹⁴³ Before Hutter was converted to pacifism, he might have been associated with the military revolts in the Tirol.

Persecution of Anabaptists in the Tirol was intense, so Hutter and

Simon Schützinger traveled to Moravia in 1529 to see whether it would be a safe refuge for persecuted Anabaptists from the Tirol.¹⁴⁴ From 1529 to 1535, Hutter was promoting the Anabaptist movement in the Tirol or was in Moravia settling disputes and organizing the Tirolean Anabaptist communalists.

The few extant letters by Hutter provide some insight into his thinking.¹⁴⁵ He expressed a strong sense of being led by God. He believed his view of communalism was God's vision for all of humanity. Hutter held that salvation is made available through faith in Christ.¹⁴⁶ He wrote his letters of comfort and encouragement with a strong sense of living in an evil world in which the faithful are persecuted.¹⁴⁷ Repeatedly, he called on believers to live in such a way "that their walk and life may be faultless, and that their life and walk not be a hindrance to Christ."¹⁴⁸

Hutter's communalism became the vision of the Tirolean group in Moravia. Riedemann identified with this communalism during his brief stay in Moravia. The Tirolean Anabaptists in Moravia became Riedemann's home community for the rest of his life.

Missioner to Franconia

In 1533 Riedemann and Six Braitfus were sent as missionaries (*Sendboten*) to Franconia to replace Zaunring. Zaunring, after he had repented from his lapses in leadership, had been sent as a missionary to Franconia; in 1533 he was executed in Bamberg, Upper Franconia.¹⁴⁹ Shortly after Riedemann arrived in Franconia with Six Braitfus, the two were captured. Braitfus was whipped and expelled, but Riedemann was imprisoned for more than four years in the city tower of Nuremberg.¹⁵⁰

How did those four years influence Riedemann? His imprisonment was not particularly severe. He was allowed to write letters, so it can be assumed that he had some contact with local Anabaptists, both personally and by letter. His correspondence also shows that he maintained contact with the Hutterite communities in Moravia.

The city council of the free city of Nuremberg had a relatively lenient policy regarding Anabaptists, compared with other governments in the region in the mid-1530s.¹⁵¹ During the early 1520s, the city council had decided to side with the Lutheran reform, though there were also Catholics and Zwinglians in the city.¹⁵² The council

vigorously combated Anabaptism, yet only one Anabaptist was executed: Wolfgang Vogel, a former Catholic priest, on March 26, 1527.¹⁵³

A year later the Nuremberg city council protested the emperor's order to execute without trial all persons suspected of being Anabaptists. In July 1528, the city council decided to expel Anabaptists who would not recant.¹⁵⁴ Later the council demanded that those who were being exiled must promise never to return to Nuremberg. Braitfus was immediately expelled, and Riedemann was sent away after four years and ten weeks in prison.

At Nuremberg in Franconia, Riedemann had entered a region in which most of the local Anabaptists were common people. In the country, the majority were peasants. In the towns, Anabaptists were artisans and members of guilds; they included weavers, painters, smiths, printers, and a few former priests.¹⁵⁵ The Tirolean communalists at Auspitz in Moravia had contact with this area and had been sending missionaries there, as shown by the activity of Zaurning.

The local Anabaptist movement in Franconia had been shaped under the influence of the Peasants' Revolt.¹⁵⁶ Thomas Müntzer, one of the principal leaders of the peasants, spent time in Nuremberg in late 1524.¹⁵⁷ In 1525 the Peasants' Revolt broke out in Franconia, in the area near Nuremberg. Even though the peasants had the support of some local nobles and priests, they were brutally crushed.¹⁵⁸

After the collapse of that revolt, Anabaptism in Franconia developed in two directions. One form was led by Hans Hut, the other by Hans Denck. Hans Hut became Anabaptist some time after the failed Peasants' Revolt. He developed an Anabaptism influenced by Müntzer's mysticism and apocalypticism,¹⁵⁹ but without his agenda for social and economic reform through violent revolution. Instead of violence, Hut advocated an interim peace ethic, pacifism until the end of the age, which he believed was near and would bring sudden and violent war between believers and unbelievers. In that war, believers would unsheathe their swords and fight on the side of God's forces to defeat and destroy the evil ones.

Though Hans Denck was also a mystic, his theology was quite different from Hut's.¹⁶⁰ He was not involved in the Peasants' Revolt, nor was he interested in speculations about the end-times.¹⁶¹ He is probably best known for one statement: "No one may truly know Christ except one who follows him in life."¹⁶² That view of discipleship was part of his overarching theme about the love of God. As God

loves humans, so humans are to love each other. In his theology, salvation and discipleship are woven into one theological fabric. His mysticism caused him to de-emphasize outer forms in favor of the Spirit within. Instead of the outer form of baptism, he stressed inner baptism. Instead of the literal (mechanically interpreted) word of Scripture, he emphasized the spirit of the written Word.

The spirit of Hut's and Denck's Anabaptism lived on in Franconia until 1533, when Peter Riedemann arrived in Nuremberg. Yet the legacy of Hans Hut was more prominent. Hut's chiliasm had been transformed into a new Anabaptism much more peaceful and not involved in end-time speculations. Despite persistent persecution, the Hutian Anabaptist movement had survived. The Nuremberg group had repeatedly reconstituted itself, frequently with refugees from other areas.¹⁶³

Riedemann remained in prison in Nuremberg for four years. Little is known about his stay, except that he was imprisoned in the city tower. In July 1537, upon his promise that he would not preach in Nuremberg, he was released from prison. On the way back to Moravia, he visited some Philippite members in Upper Austria.¹⁶⁴

The Philippites complained to Riedemann about the treatment they had received at the hands of the Hutterites in Auspitz, which had influenced them to leave the Hutterites. Riedemann did not immediately side with one or the other group. He indicated that he was willing to listen to the Philippites, but he wanted to speak to the Hutterites before taking any action.¹⁶⁵

In Moravia

In September 1537, Riedemann and two Philippite members arrived at the Tirolean Hutterian communities in Moravia. Although Hans Amon was the *Vorsteher* (chief leader) at this time, Riedemann met with Leonhard Lanzenstiel and heard his account of the reasons for the conflict between the Hutterians on one side and the Gabrielites and the Philippites on the other. Subsequently, he also met with the followers of Philipp Plener and Gabriel Ascherham to hear their views of reasons for the conflict and division.¹⁶⁶

During Riedemann's discussions with Lanzenstiel, Peter Hüter, Gabriel Ascherham's assistant, arrived and confessed that he had been wrong in the conflict. Apparently that confession convinced

Riedemann that the Hutterites had been right, and the Gabrielites and Philippites wrong. In following years, Riedemann used personal intercession and letter in trying to convince the Gabrielites and Philippites to rejoin the Hutterites. Initially he had limited success, but eventually he convinced many to rejoin the Hutterites.¹⁶⁷

Riedemann had discovered that the Anabaptist situation in Moravia in 1537 was quite different from what it had been in 1533. Because of severe persecution of Anabaptists in the Tirol, Jakob Hutter and others had moved to Moravia in August 1533, and his arrival had far-reaching consequences. It led to what the Hutterites called "the great split (*die grosse Zerspaltung*)."¹⁶⁸ Hutter soon met with leaders of the three federated communalist groups: Gabriel Ascherham of the Silesian group at Rossitz, Philipp Plener of the South German group at Auspitz, and Simon Schützing of the Tirolean group, also at Auspitz. The three men seem to have had about equal authority in a federated relationship, with Ascherham exercising some overall leadership.¹⁶⁸ Hutter's arrival this time, in contrast to the other three times, was not in response to an invitation or a leadership crisis.

In a major speech, Hutter made a case for his becoming an equal leader with the others, claiming he had been appointed by God.¹⁶⁹ The three leaders resisted Hutter. Schützing was the boldest in trying to silence Hutter in the Tirolean group. In the leadership struggle between Hutter and Schützing, Hutter proved that Schützing had been secretly hoarding money and thus had compromised his commitment to communalism. The Tirolean group deposed Schützing and selected Hutter as leader.¹⁷⁰ Plener and Ascherham supported Schützing and resisted Hutter's attempt to take over leadership of their groups.

In harsh discussions, Hutter and the Tiroleans condemned both Plener and Ascherham. At first Plener and Ascherham apparently retained most of their followers.¹⁷¹ This division was a blow to the communalist movement in Moravia and yet also seemed to consolidate it. Hutter's stricter interpretation of communalism required full and unconditional financial participation. That became the pattern for the Hutterite faction of the communalists.

Hutter felt the need to justify his actions, so he sent a long letter to the Anabaptists in the Tirol, explaining why the split occurred.¹⁷² He saw the conflict largely in terms of a larger battle between the

forces of good and evil. The other three leaders had allied themselves with evil, which was why they had been deposed by the congregations.¹⁷³ In this conflict, the final arbiters were the congregations. Leaders were leaders only if they could persuade the members of their point of view.

The second major development in Moravia during Riedemann's imprisonment in Nuremberg was the persecution in 1535. In 1534 and 1535, the princes in Europe were horrified at the Anabaptist uprising in Münster in Westphalia. At the Moravian diet in the spring of 1535, Ferdinand I, eastern emperor in Vienna, ordered the nobles in Moravia to expel all Anabaptists from their lands. He believed, as did most of the nobility of Europe, that all Anabaptists were as threatening as those at Münster. The local nobles who had given refuge to the communalists at Rossitz and Auspitz were forced to expel them.¹⁷⁴

The persecution was severe. Men, women, and children were scattered in the forests. A price was placed upon Jakob Hutter's head. The suffering became so intense that in 1535 the Tirolean communalists in Moravia finally asked Hutter to leave, since the authorities seemed primarily intent on capturing him.¹⁷⁵ All three communal groups suffered in the persecution. Most of the Hutterites scattered in the countryside in Moravia for the duration of the crisis. When persecution subsided in 1536, they regrouped in Auspitz.¹⁷⁶

In the worst of the suffering, Philipp Plener left his group to look for refuge. Then he sent his people a message to scatter and find refuge wherever they could.¹⁷⁷ Most of the Philippites settled in Upper Austria and in various South German states.¹⁷⁹ Some Philippites, however, joined the Hutterites after the persecution subsided, and later Riedemann persuaded others to join the Hutterites.¹⁷⁹

During the crisis, the major portion of the Gabrielite group from Rossitz left for Silesia under the leadership of Gabriel Ascherham. Their communal structure disintegrated, however, likely due to Ascherham's problematic leadership.¹⁸⁰ Some Gabrielites returned to Moravia and joined the Hutterites after the persecution had abated. Others joined under the encouragement of Riedemann after 1545, following the death of Ascherham.

Thus when Riedemann returned to the Hutterite community in Moravia in 1537, the Hutterite community was the major communal Anabaptist group in Moravia. It was led by Hans Amon, who had been selected as *Vorsteher* when Hutter left for the Tirol in 1535.¹⁸¹

During the two years that Riedemann was in Moravia, from 1537 to 1539, he related to scattered groups of Philippites. In 1537 he sent a lengthy letter to the groups in Upper Austria.¹⁸² Members of those groups seem to have left Moravia before the great division in 1533, and he reminded them of the faith that they had shared. At the heart of true faith, he reminded them, is living in community and giving up private property.¹⁸³

Early in 1538, Riedemann visited the scattered Philippite groups. He encouraged and organized them, establishing leaders in the various locations.¹⁸⁴ Later in 1538, he sent them and other Philippite groups a letter. Again he defended Jakob Hutter's case in the great division in 1533 and showed why the leadership of the Philippite and Gabrielite groups had been wrong. He repeatedly argued that Gabriel Ascherham and Philipp Plener had not been consistent enough in communal sharing.

Missioner to Hesse

In 1539 the Hutterite communities in Moravia received a request from Anabaptists in Hesse for help; they decided to send Peter Riedemann.¹⁸⁵ On the way to Hesse, Riedemann detoured through Upper Austria, again visiting scattered Anabaptist groups. He made a special effort to relate to the Philippites.

Riedemann also stopped to visit a group of Anabaptists in Lauingen, Swabia, who had come from Moravia.¹⁸⁶ A person who claimed to be inspired by the Spirit of God had deposed the leaders of the congregation, which was waiting for new leadership. In a letter to Hans Amon, leader of the Hutterites in Moravia, Riedemann expressed his concern about the group and noted that he had left them before they had resolved their problem.¹⁸⁷ He also met with a former Philippite group which by then had ceased communal living.

In Hesse, Riedemann became involved in settling problems within the local Anabaptist group. He wrote a long letter to Hans Amon, describing the tangled situation with which he had to work.¹⁸⁸ Riedemann reported that there was dissension in the group, and the group did not have confidence in its leader, Matthias. He noted that many Anabaptists were returning to the state church.

Riedemann initiated discussions which resulted in a split in the group. According to Riedemann, only about forty people joined him,

including the troublesome leader Matthias.¹⁸⁹ Riedemann described Matthias as "self-willed and obstinate."¹⁹⁰ Riedemann asked Matthias to go to Moravia to learn about communal living and proper leadership, but he refused. In a letter to Amon, Riedemann asked Amon to make a decision about the leadership situation in Hesse.

As Riedemann discovered, Anabaptism in Hesse was in a critical state. What had once been a large, flourishing movement had become a small group, struggling and demoralized, racked by inner dissension. What had happened in Hesse to create this situation?

The first Anabaptist group in Hesse was formed as the result of the preaching of Hans Hut. Hut had started Anabaptist cells consisting primarily of former members of the Peasants' Revolt.¹⁹¹ A leader of this Hut-type Anabaptism was Melchior Rinck. In 1533 a group of Hutian Anabaptists in Sorga, Hesse, was captured and brought to trial. They were found guilty of being Anabaptist. Philip, ruler of Hesse, had a lenient policy toward Anabaptists and expelled them instead of executing them as demanded by imperial law. Zaunring, a Hutterite missionary, invited the Sorga group to join the Hutterites in Moravia. They accepted this invitation. Riedemann may have met the group of refugees from Hesse, since he spent time in Moravia in 1533.

Another and perhaps a more important group of Anabaptists arose in Hesse under influence of Melchior Hoffmann. Hoffmann, who began his career as a Lutheran preacher, was the founder of Anabaptism in the Netherlands. In the early 1530s, on one of his trips from the Netherlands to Strassburg, he stopped in Hesse and started an Anabaptist group. The local leaders who continued Melchiorite Anabaptism in Hesse were Peter Tasch and Georg Schnabel.¹⁹²

The Melchiorite Anabaptists in Hesse carried the burden of the Münsterite episode of 1534-35. Some of them were arrested in 1536. After being in prison for about two years, they presented a confession to Prince Philip. They attempted to distance themselves from the Münsterite movement by pledging obedience to the government and even promising to obey a call to arms. They disavowed polygamy¹⁹³ and rejected community of goods. Their main concern, though, was that the church be truly reformed. They believed that members of the church should live holy lives, and that ethical standards should be enforced through church discipline.¹⁹⁴

In late 1538, Prince Philip arranged a discussion with this group of Melchiorite Anabaptists. Philip promised to reform the Hesse

church more fully by improving the education of church members and by introducing church discipline. So Peter Tasch and many of the Melchiorite Anabaptists drew up a confession, presented it to Philip in December of 1538, and returned to the state church.¹⁹⁵

When some Anabaptists in Hesse invited Riedemann to visit them, it was probably because so many others had left the Anabaptists. Those who remained Anabaptist in Hesse were few. They felt demoralized, and they lacked a sense of vision and direction. In Riedemann's first visit, he gathered Anabaptists interested in communalism, and in that group he primarily addressed issues of leadership.

Brief Return to Moravia

Riedemann remained in Hesse less than a year. In autumn 1539, Riedemann returned to Steinebrunn in Austria. He arrived "the week after St. Nicholas Day" (Dec. 6), just after the authorities had captured the Hutterite men in the community.¹⁹⁶ About 150 Hutterite men had been taken to the Falkenstein Castle.¹⁹⁷ Riedemann found only the grieving women and children. He apparently remained with the community for a while during this difficult time.

Missioner to Hesse Again

In early 1540, Riedemann was again sent to Hesse by the Hutterite community.¹⁹⁸ On the way he visited various groups in Upper and Lower Austria, the Tirol, Swabia, and Württemberg.¹⁹⁹ Riedemann took along a letter from Hans Amon to the Anabaptists in Hesse.²⁰⁰ In the letter Amon chided the Anabaptists in Hesse for turning against the communities in Moravia. He acknowledged that there were different groups of Anabaptists in Hesse and admitted that they were involved in a struggle concerning their direction. Amon likely received his information about Hesse from Riedemann.

Shortly after arriving in Hesse, Riedemann was captured.²⁰¹ He was first kept in chains in a dungeon in Marburg.²⁰² Later he was transferred to the nearby castle at Wolkersdorf, where his imprisonment was less harsh and restrictive. Philip, the ruler of Hesse and one of the major Lutheran princes, did not execute Anabaptists. Instead, he tried to win them back by argument and discussion. Riedemann

benefited from this leniency. During the imprisonment, Riedemann wrote a number of letters to the communities in Moravia.²⁰³

Riedemann's most important accomplishment during his imprisonment in Hesse was composing his *Confession of Faith*.²⁰⁴ He wrote the *Confession* primarily to inform Prince Philip about the beliefs of Riedemann and the communalist Anabaptists whom he represented in Hesse.²⁰⁵ A copy of the *Confession* was taken to the Hutterite communities in Moravia and was "quickly accepted by the Hutterites as the definitive statement of their faith."²⁰⁶

In 1540, possibly during the time when Riedemann was in prison in Hesse, Matthias recanted and joined the state church.²⁰⁷ Perhaps he later joined the Anabaptists again.

Leader of Hutterites in Moravia

Hans Amon, leader of the Hutterites in Moravia, died in 1542. Leonhard Lanzenstiel was chosen to replace him, but he felt inadequate to take on the leadership by himself and invited Riedemann to join him as leader of the Hutterites.²⁰⁸ After about two years of rather lenient imprisonment, Riedemann escaped and returned to Moravia to take up leadership with Lanzenstiel. Lanzenstiel led in the practical and administrative areas of the community, and Riedemann gave pastoral guidance. Riedemann continued as a leader until December 1556, when he died in the community of Protzka.²⁰⁹

Riedemann's career as leader of the Hutterite communities in Moravia falls into three distinct periods: 1542-47, with relative toleration even though Anabaptists were still outlawed; 1547-53, with severe persecution; and 1553-56, with a return to toleration and the beginning of the "golden age" of Hutterite development.²¹⁰

From 1542 until 1547, the Hutterites experienced relative prosperity.²¹¹ Hutterites, especially those sent out on missionary assignments, were being captured, tortured, and executed, but the communities in Moravia were mostly allowed to exist in peace.²¹² During those years Riedemann, in addition to general duties as leader, worked to bring about reconciliation with the Gabrielites who had moved to Silesia. After Gabriel Ascherham's death in 1545, Riedemann persuaded many Gabrielites in Silesia to move to Moravia and join the Hutterites.²¹³

Already in 1545 the Moravian princes were trying to restrict the

economic communalism of the Hutterites, likely hoping to limit their growth.²¹⁴ By 1547 the Protestant John Frederick of Saxony had been defeated, and Philip of Hesse had surrendered to the Catholic rulers. Leading the Holy Roman Empire were Emperor Charles V and his brother Ferdinand I, who ruled in Vienna. They were staunchly Catholic and attempted to eradicate religious reform in their domains.²¹⁵ For a few years, they had hope of destroying the Lutheran and all other reforms. This brought a new and severe period of persecution upon the Hutterites in Moravia. The *Chronicle* vividly describes the 1548 capture and torture of Hans Greckenhofer and Hans Mändel.²¹⁶ They escaped.

The arrests were a sign of things to come. Hutterites were threatened with hanging if they did not comply with orders to recant their faith and join the Catholic Church.²¹⁷ They were expelled from Moravia, so they settled among Hutterites already in Slovakia, then part of Hungary. Next, Hutterites were ordered to leave that country as well.²¹⁸ Women and children were chased out of homes with hardly a moment's notice, sometimes with food still on the table.²¹⁹ Some had to spend nights in the snow and under hedges. Others dug holes and tunnels in the ground and hid in underground mazes for several years.²²⁰ Hutterites lost most of their property. Many left possessions with neighbors while they were on the run, but even those "friends" helped themselves to whatever they wanted.²²¹ Left without protection, the Hutterites were beaten, robbed, and violated.²²²

Some Hutterites could not stand the pressure and left communal living to return to the state church. The *Chronicle* is harsh in its judgment of them, claiming that they were lax, superficial, chaff, impure, unable and unwilling to suffer for God's sake.²²³ Those who returned to the state church were accused of preferring the pleasures of sin and the world, and of letting the favor of the devil win them over, instead of bearing the shame of Christ.²²⁴ No allowance was made for the harsh persecution they suffered. The Hutterite writers of the *Chronicle* simply expected everyone to stand firm.

Finally in the early 1550s, the severest persecution ended. In 1553 the Moravian nobles reasserted their independence from the emperor. Hutterites were again allowed to establish communities in Moravia and Hungary.²²⁵ They continued to send missionaries to various regions of Europe. That resulted in the capture and execution of many missionary Hutterites, as recorded in the *Chronicle*.²²⁶

The *Chronicle* does not give details of Riedemann's activities during the years of persecution, nor in the few years of relative toleration until his death in 1556. Hutterite historians, however, treated him with great respect. In their view, his contribution was important for the eventual survival of the Hutterites.

The *Chronicle* records that he composed one last hymn on his deathbed, which begins, "From death's bonds Christ redeemed us, from the devil's might he freed us."²²⁷ After years of personal suffering and imprisonment; of comforting many who were suffering, imprisoned, or mourning; and of leading Hutterites for fourteen difficult years—Riedemann died in 1556 in the relative peace and quiet of the community in Protzka.²²⁸

We return to the question with which this study began. What were the formative influences on Riedemann? The historical survey shows that Riedemann had close contact with most of the major streams of sixteenth-century Anabaptism. He likely began his life as an Anabaptist within the spiritualist, Sabbatarian reform movement in Silesia. He came into contact with another form of spiritualist Anabaptism in Gmunden, a style likely influenced by Hut and Denck, yet with its own characteristics. He joined the communalists in Moravia who were being shaped by concerns in the Tirol. With its social, economic, and religious reforms, the Tirol created a stream of Anabaptism which differed from other major branches of Anabaptism on economic issues.

For much of his early life as an Anabaptist, Riedemann moved in areas influenced by the chiliasm and apocalypticism of Hans Hut. Some interpreters see Riedemann as transposing Hut's end-time speculations into peaceful communalist forms. However, his ideas are so different from Hut's at so many points that Riedemann may also be seen as offering a major alternative to Hut's theology. Riedemann had contact with Dutch Melchiorite Anabaptists in Hesse. But for Riedemann, the Melchiorites in Hesse were compromisers, since many of them had returned to the state church.

Despite Riedemann's wide range of contacts with various Anabaptist groups, this historical survey has shown that his thinking drew most heavily upon Anabaptism from the Tirol. In the *Confession of Faith*, he encourages communalism, pacifism, and separation from the larger society, the world. These are themes characteristic of Jakob Hutter and other Tirolean Anabaptists who migrated to Moravia.

In Riedemann's theology, as expressed in the *Confession of Faith*, the central motif is communalism, the concept and practice of community of goods. In developing communalism, Riedemann drew together the spiritualism of Schwenckfeld and Denck, the biblicism held by most Anabaptists whom he met, and Michael Gaismair's vision for economic and social reform, but adapted to peaceful ways.

Textual History of Riedemann's *Confession of Faith*

The first edition of the *Confession of Faith* was likely printed between 1543 and 1545 in connection with a presentation to the princes of Moravia, to explain and defend the Hutterites' beliefs.²²⁹ Its original title was *Rechenschaft unserer Religion / Leer und Glaubens*. (An account of our religion, teaching, and faith.)²³⁰ Under the title appeared the initials for Peter Riedemann: "P. R." The following was added in handwriting in the Zurich copy: "Von uns Brüd'n So man dj Hutterischen nen't Ausgange" (By us brothers who are known as the Hutterites). The use of initials instead of name lets the writer fade into the background, reinforcing his claim to be spelling out the beliefs of the community. Perhaps he also had future safety in mind.

In addition, the title page includes most of 1 Peter 3:15: "Seit alle zeit vrbüetig yederman zur verantwortung / dem der Grund fordert der hoffnu'g die inn euch ist. 1 Pet. 3." (Always be ready to make a defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you.)²³¹ This verse justifies the book: Riedemann gives an account or confession of the Hutterites' faith and hope.

Two or three copies of the first edition (ca. 1545) are extant, one in the Zentralbibliothek in Zurich,²³² one in the City Library of Wroclaw (formerly Breslau, Poland),²³³ and one in the Vienna Nationalbibliothek.²³⁴ The extant copies of this edition list no date and no publisher. Perhaps it was prepared by a traveling printer. It consists of a pocket-size version of 288 leaves.²³⁵

The *Confession of Faith* was printed in a second edition in 1565, by Philips Vollanndt, with the same title: *Rechenschaft unserer Religion / Leer und Glaubens*. On the title page, now as a subtitle, its origin is again attributed to the Hutterite community: *Von den Brüdern so man die Hutterischen Nen't ausgangen*. Here it says "by the brothers" rather than "by us brothers." Since this 1565 edition was printed after

Riedemann's death in 1556, the writer is named on the title page: "Durch Peter Ryedeman" (through Peter Riedemann). The use of "through" is a reminder that he wrote for the community, which has approved the *Confession*. The title page also quotes 1 Peter 3:15. Several copies of this second edition are extant: in the Austrian Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, in the British Museum, in the Library of the University of Chicago, and at a Bruderhof in Montana.²³⁶

Four modern editions of Riedemann's *Confession of Faith* have been published.²³⁷ In 1902 the Hutterites in North America published an edition in Berne, Indiana, using the University of Chicago copy of the second edition. This edition was corrected and reprinted in 1962. In 1938 the Society of Brothers (Bruderhof communities) produced a new edition of the *Confession of Faith*, using the copy in the British Museum. In 1950 the Society of Brothers published the first English translation, by Kathleen E. Hasenberg, entitled *Confession of Faith: Account of Our Religion, Doctrine and Faith*. In addition to these four, there is a rare 1870 reprint of the *Confession of Faith* in the *Mitteilungen aus dem Antiquariat von S. Calvary*.²³⁸

Riedemann did not generally supply Scripture references in the first edition. Marginal references were added in the 1565 edition, citing the Bible by book and chapter, without giving verse divisions (which Robert Estienne [Stephanus] had introduced in the New Testament in 1551). The 1565 edition identified location in the chapter with letters: *a*, *b*, *c*, or *d*. The 1902 edition included biblical references in the text, without specifying verse numbers. The first to offer marginal verse references was the 1938 edition, published by the Cotswold Bruderhof in England, through the "Publishing House of the Hutterian Brethren in the U.S.A., Canada, and England." The 1950 translation (reprinted in 1970) put Bible references in endnotes.

This fresh English translation is based on the copy of the 1565 (second) edition in the British Museum. Amended biblical references are provided here in footnotes and in a Scripture index.

Overview of the *Confession of Faith*

Peter Riedemann, a simple cobbler, wrote the *Confession of Faith*. The book expresses Riedemann's personal views; more significantly, it also sums up the beliefs of the Hutterite communalists centered in

Moravia. This *Confession* was quickly approved by the Hutterite community, to be their official statement.

The *Confession of Faith* consists of two parts. The first has ninety short sections about theology and ethics, beginning with God and ending with “the life, conduct, and adornment of Christians.” The second part provides six longer discussions on how the people of God should be separated from the world. He deals with the church, grace, the Supper of Christ, swearing, and governmental authority. In each section Riedemann argues a particular theological view or ethical admonition.

The *Confession of Faith* is thoroughly based on Scripture. Each section refers to the Bible, alludes to it, or quotes directly from various parts of Scripture and the Apocrypha.²³⁹ In the sequence of editions, references were clarified, and citation methods were developed. Biblical imagery is prominent throughout the *Confession*. Riedemann skillfully weaves his material into one harmonious whole.

The first part of the *Confession* has at least 1,432 biblical references, plus allusions. There are at least 320 references to the Old Testament, 55 to the Apocrypha, primarily to Wisdom and Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), and 1,057 to the New Testament. Among references to the New Testament, 390 cite the Gospels, and 667 call on other books in the New Testament, chiefly Paul’s epistles.

Like Hans Denck and Pilgram Marpeck, Riedemann stresses that the literal word of Scripture must be interpreted through the Holy Spirit, not in a rigid or mechanical fashion (1 Cor. 2:10-16, cited in “Concerning Oaths”). The written Word is truly understood only through the living Word, the word of the gospel.

A second characteristic of the *Confession* is that a large portion of the first part (29 of 90 sections) is organized around the Apostles’ Creed. Thus Riedemann bases his *Confession* not only on the Bible but also on tradition. Following exposition of the Apostles’ Creed, 32 sections deal with related classical theological themes, such as faith, original sin, law, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. The last third (29 sections) of the first part deals with practical concerns of community living, such as warfare, taxation, making swords, and trade.

By using the Apostles’ Creed as an outline, Riedemann was able briefly to address classical theological themes. His *Confession* is theologically more comprehensive than, for example, the articles of *Brotherly Union*, called the *Schleitheim Confession*, drawn up by Swiss

and South German Anabaptists in 1527 at Schleithem, Switzerland. Riedemann's *Confession* is an example of an Anabaptist community in dialogue with the wider Christian theological tradition.

In the first sections of the *Confession*, Riedemann affirms the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Riedemann thus separates himself from the anti-trinitarian movements of the sixteenth century and demonstrates his orthodox view of the Trinity. In describing the relationships of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to each other, Riedemann emphasizes that they are equal, not subordinate to one another, yet also one. Thus he avoids the charge of being Arian (subordinating the Son).²⁴⁰ He affirms that though there are three names, there is "yet one substance, one nature, one essence" ("We Confess the Holy Spirit"). In speaking of God's oneness, he does not shy away from using the key theological term in the Nicene Creed: "of one substance" (*homoousios*). He also uses metaphors of fire, heat, and light to describe the threeness as well as the essential oneness of God.

In his discussion of God, Riedemann uses a mixture of biblical references and traditional creedal terms. He says that the Son proceeds from the Father, the Son was with the Father in the beginning, the Son is in the Father as the Father is in the Son, the Son and the Father are one nature and one strength, and the Son is the only begotten one of the Father. On the Holy Spirit, he uses the term included in the Western version of the Nicene Creed, that the Holy Spirit "proceeds" from both Father and Son ("We Confess the Holy Spirit").

The Christology section is brief. Yet the emphasis is so consistent with the Christology of the Creed of Chalcedon that it appears he was consciously affirming an orthodox Christology. He declares that Christ became incarnate, fully human and in the flesh, and yet also remained fully divine. Since Christ was fully divine, he was able to provide salvation and overcome death; because he was fully human, through him we can become "God's anointed."

In these early sections, Riedemann shows that the Hutterites' belief is based on the Bible, and that it is consistent with the traditional terminology and concepts of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds. Throughout the discussion, he uses both biblical and traditional creedal terminology.

He provides a unique and creative application of the Trinity by rooting communalism in the Trinity:

Community means that those who have this fellowship hold all things in common, no one having anything for oneself, but each sharing all things with the others. Just so, the Father has nothing for himself, but everything he has, he has with the Son. Likewise, the Son has nothing for himself, but all he has, he has with the Father and with all who have fellowship with him. ("Community of Saints")

Riedemann correctly notes that in the traditional view of the Trinity, the three persons share all characteristics and are seen as equal in all respects. He argues that if the church is really a holy community, it should exhibit the same characteristics: all members should share all things with each other and each be equal with the others. Riedemann lays a theological and trinitarian foundation for communal sharing.

He closes his comments on the Apostles' Creed with a lengthy discussion of the church. He describes it as "an assembly of the children of God," "the foundation and ground of truth," "a community gathered by God through his Spirit," and "a community of saints because they have fellowship in holy things." His emphasis is on the church as gathered, created by God, holy, and in character consistent with the character of God. The church is not basically defined by separation from the world but by relationship to Christ and God.

In the 32 sections following the Apostles' Creed, Riedemann deals with other theological affirmations. The key is his section on faith. Faith, he says, is not merely empty words from people who profess Christ and then live to suit themselves. Faith is a real divine power which renews people and makes them like God in character. This lays the foundation for the sections on faithful living. He ties faith and discipleship together and reaffirms this connection in the section on "Doctrine." He insists that teaching exists to produce fruit.

Riedemann also addresses the issues of original sin and free will, issues over which Luther and Erasmus had a major controversy.²⁴¹ He agrees with the view traditional since Augustine, that all people inherit sin from Adam, and that this inherited, original sin is the cause of both physical and eternal death. Riedemann differs from Luther's view of grace by arguing that Christ's death and resurrection have freed people from eternal death if they respond to God in faith. Like Erasmus, he holds that Christ has given people who believe in him the ability to respond to God and thus lead changed lives.

Response to God in faith, he is quick to point out, is not a good deed for which we humans deserve merit, but a gift from God, given

through Christ. Yet in Christ, people *can* turn to God in faith and be changed. After Christ's death and resurrection, eternal death is the result of unbelief and not of inherited punishment. Thus children need not be baptized, since until they reach the age of accountability, they will not be punished. This discussion of faith lays the foundation for the possibility and necessity of Christians being faithful to God in their daily life in the community. Sanctification, the theological theme which Schwenckfeld tried unsuccessfully to incorporate into the reform in Silesia, is prominent in Riedemann's theology.

In the last 29 sections of the first part, Riedemann expounds various aspects of community living. Few of these issues are simply individual ethics. For Riedemann, ethics or discipleship is *community* ethics. Being Christian is developing an ethic by which the whole community will live. Thus the character of the community is shaped by the character of God, and the character of the individual is shaped by the character of the community to which people commit themselves. Issues of warfare, adultery, innkeeping, making swords, and taxation—these are not matters for the individual to decide separately; they are issues the community decides.

The last half of the *Confession* consists of six sections which elaborate issues already introduced in the first half of the book. Here Riedemann treats the church as the people of God separated from the world, the community and how it should be built up, the covenant of grace, the Supper of Christ, swearing, and governmental authority.

In these sections there is greater emphasis on themes of separation than in the first half of the *Confession*. In the first half, Riedemann was apparently more concerned to identify the areas of agreement between Hutterite beliefs and orthodox Christian beliefs. The first half consists of bridge-building. In the second half of the *Confession*, sharper distinctions are drawn, especially distinctions between the true church and the false church, or the world.

Riedemann concludes the *Confession* with a reminder that he is writing in the German state of Hesse and that his aim is to reveal the truth so that "all the children of God may walk in the truth."

Dates for Riedemann and Hutterite Origins

- 1506 Peter Riedemann born at Hirschberg, Silesia; then learns trade of cobbler.
- 1517 Luther nails his 95 theses to castle church door in Wittenberg (Oct. 31).
- 1519-20 Zwingli begins church reform in Zurich.
- 1524-25 Peasants' Revolt, with social concerns, led in the Tirol by Michael Gaismair.
- 1524-29 Caspar Schwenckfeld leads church reform in Silesia, Riedemann's area.
- 1525 Grebel, Manz, and Blaurock rebaptized in Zurich (Jan. 21). Bolt Eberli, first Anabaptist martyr (May 29, 1525); Felix Manz, second (Jan. 5, 1527).
- 1526 Anabaptists increase and are penalized. Conrad Grebel dies of the plague.
- 1526-28 Balthasar Hubmaier attracts many Anabaptists to Nikolsburg; is executed.
- 1527 Anabaptists adopt *Schleitheim Confession* (Feb. 24), by Michael Sattler.
- 1527-28 Many Anabaptists arriving in Silesia, fleeing persecution.
- 1528 Anabaptists outlawed in Silesia; many leave for Nikolsburg area of Moravia. Hubmaier's "sword-bearer" Anabaptists stay at Nikolsburg but soon disband. "Staff-bearer" communalists go to Austerlitz, led by Wiedemann and Jäger. Gabriel Ascherham communalists from Silesia to Rossitz, near Austerlitz. Philipp Plener communal Anabaptists from Hesse and Palatinate to Moravia.
- 1529 Blaurock, Hutter's predecessor, burned at the stake in the Tirol (Sept. 6). Philippites move to Auspitz, between Austerlitz and Nikolsburg. Jakob Hutter (hatmaker), Anabaptist from the Tirol, visits Moravia.
- 1529-32 Riedemann, 23, in prison at Gmunden, the Tirol; writes *First Confession*.
- 1530 More Anabaptists expelled from Silesia, including Andreas Fischer.
- 1531 Division in Austerlitz community; some leave for Auspitz. Federation of two communities at Auspitz and one at Rossitz, with Ascherham as *Vorsteher*.
- 1532 Riedemann joins communalist Anabaptists at Austerlitz; marries Katherine.
- 1532-35 Münsterite Anabaptists practice community of goods but become fanatic.
- 1533-37 Riedemann as missionary to Franconia; imprisoned four years at Nuremberg.
- 1533 Hutter and more Tirolean Anabaptists move to Moravia, fleeing persecution. Hutter calls for stricter communalism, exposes inconsistencies of leaders, becomes *Vorsteher* of federated colonies. In this "great split," some leave.
- 1535 Severe persecution of communal Anabaptists in Moravia; Hutter leaves.
- 1535-42 Hans Amon follows Hutter as *Vorsteher* (chief leader) of the Hutterites.
- 1536 Hutter as missionary, burned at the stake at Innsbruck, Austria (Feb. 25).
- 1537-39 Riedemann discovers conflict in Moravia; works with Hutterites for unity.
- 1539 Riedemann as missionary to Hesse; visits grieving Hutterites in Austria.
- 1540-42 Riedemann, again missionary to Hesse, writes *Confession of Faith* in prison.
- 1542-65 Leonhard Lanzensiel as *Vorsteher* of Hutterites, assisted by Riedemann.
- 1542-47 Hutterites in Moravia enjoy relative toleration.
- 1543-45 *Confession of Faith*, first ed., presented to princes of Moravia; 2d ed., 1565.
- 1547-53 Riedemann guides the Hutterites through severe persecution.
- 1553-56 Riedemann helps lead Hutterites into a "golden age," under toleration.
- 1556 Riedemann dies peacefully at Protzka, Hungary (now Brodsko, Slovakia).
- 1560s Caspar Braitmichel carries the Hutterite *Chronicle* to 1542.
- 1561 Hutterites make only known reply to 1557 Lutheran attack on Anabaptists.
- 1565-78 Peter Walpot as *Vorsteher* of about 30,000 Hutterites during their "golden age," with about 100 *Haushaben* (*Bruderhöfe*, farm colonies) in Moravia and Slovakia. Schools and crafts well developed. Books and letters written.
- 1592 Golden period yielding to Counter-Reformation persecution and decline of Hutterites. Those not converting to Catholicism ordered to leave Moravia.
- 1601 Claus Braidl in long letter defends community of goods on biblical grounds.
- 1618-48 Thirty Years' War drives Hutterites from Moravia, to refuge in Slovakia.
- 1639-62 Andreas Ehrenpreis at Sabatisch, Slovakia, restoring communal discipline.

Shucks.

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