theological questions, the order in the church and the lifestyle of members of the congregation. Within a few years different movements developed; these were named after those regions where their adherents originally came from. Like the liberal-moderate "Waterlanders" or the more conservative-restrictive "Flemish" and "Vriesen". These deeply religious Flemish and "Vriesen" strove for a simple life, separated from the outside world, in a closed religious community. Marriage between members of the different groups was forbidden. The "Flemish" and the "Vriesen" disintegrated later into further groups, so that at the end of the 16th century there existed more than half a dozen subdivisions.

THE MENNONITES AND THE LINEN TRADE IN EAST-FRISIA AND LEER

From the 16th century on East-Frisia experienced economic growth. Leer became the centre of the linen industry and trade. In the 16th century, Dutch people, persecuted for their faith, fled in large numbers to East-Frisia, where they had a big share in its prosperity: until then weaving had been a cottage industry. But the Dutch refugees were able to establish a thriving linen industry within a few years. This reached its peak at the beginning of the 17th century. Many of the Dutch were prosperous and successful merchants and artisans from cities of trade such as Antwerp, Amsterdam and Groningen. Among these families were also a large number of Mennonites, who were to control the linen trade in Leer in the centuries to come, such as the families Alring, van Hoorn, Vissering and Zijtsema.

The Mennonites especially showed great skill as artisans and a talent for economics. The linen industry became the main branch of trade in Leer. They did not produce only for the region, they also found further markets at home and abroad. In their capacity of "Leinenrheders", as the linen merchants from Leer were called, they bought yarn and sold it on to the local weavers. Subsequently they bought back the woven cloth and sold it in the big trading cities in the Netherlands, England and Spain. Around 1740 one in five of the approximately 5,000 residents of Leer lived on either the linen trade or of linen manufacture.

In the transition period between 17th and 18th century the linen merchants extended their scope of business. They became ship merchants and traders in other goods. Of the total of 43 merchant houses in Leer at the end of the 18th century 32 were in Mennonite hands.

EASTBOUND MIGRATION - THE HISTORY OF MENNONITES IN POLAND AND RUSSIA

Owing to the ongoing persecution in the Netherlands many Mennonites fled in the 16th century to West-Prussia. In 1569 they established the first Mennonite church at the mouth of the Vistula. This area is very swampy. Dutch farmers, willing to exploit this barren land, were welcome - even if they were Mennonites. Many Dutch merchants and artisans settled in the cities, especially Danzig. By the end of the 16th century about 5,000 Mennonites lived at the mouth of the Vistula – approximately ten percent of the population. In 1780 their number had grown to about 13,000. For roughly 200 years Mennonites lived there and developed a fairly good relationship with the Polish government. After the First Partition of Poland in 1772 West-Prussia became part of the State of Prussia. The modern ideas of Frederick II regarding the functioning of a state led to increased control by the state. This was achieved by new laws and edicts, partly at the expense of the Mennonites. Thus, they were only able to acquire land from other Mennonites. Due to their high birth rate there was not enough land for all of them.

At this time the Russian Czarina Catherine sent messengers to the area of the Vistula to recruit settlers for the south of the Ukraine. Many Mennonites accepted this offer because the promises of freedom and land were tempting. Several thousand migrated east, as far as the Dnjepr and the Black Sea. After initial difficulties they settled successfully and founded four colonies with a total of about 20 villages. In the early 20th century more than 100,000 Mennonites lived in Russia and the Ukraine.

THE "AMISH PEOPLE" IN AMERICA

Among the groups of Anabaptists who still exist today the Amish People are those who are best known to outsiders. Possible reasons are: their obviously different lifestyle compared to the world around them, their strange and old-fashioned clothes and their far-reaching reserve toward technical innovations. Ignorance and prejudice concerning their way of life were widespread.

At the end of the 17th century the "Emmentaler group" around the elder Jakob Ammann, split off from the other Mennonites. Ammann advocated an extremely strict discipline within the congregation. Attempts to mediate between his supporters and more liberal groups failed, and Ammann excluded anyone who did not share his views. In Switzerland and the Alsace "Amish" (named

after their elder Ammann) communities came into being. Due to the ongoing persecution, the "Amish" emigrated to Pennsylvania. The Amish communities which had stayed in Europe gradually fell apart and mostly joined the Mennonite congregations. In the German-speaking territories the last Amish community in Ixheim, (now Rhineland-Palatinate) united with the Mennonites in 1937. The way of life of the Amish People is to this day determined by a separation from the non Amish. This applies both in spatial and social sense. They settle mostly in rural areas. The Bible is for the Amish the principle of their faith and guidance for life. The Bible is taken literally, interpretations are rejected. A special feature is their language, which is even today still spoken by many Amish: the "Pennsylvania Dutch" is based on dialects from the South-West of Germany, like the Palatine.

THE MENNONITES AND MILITARY SERVICE

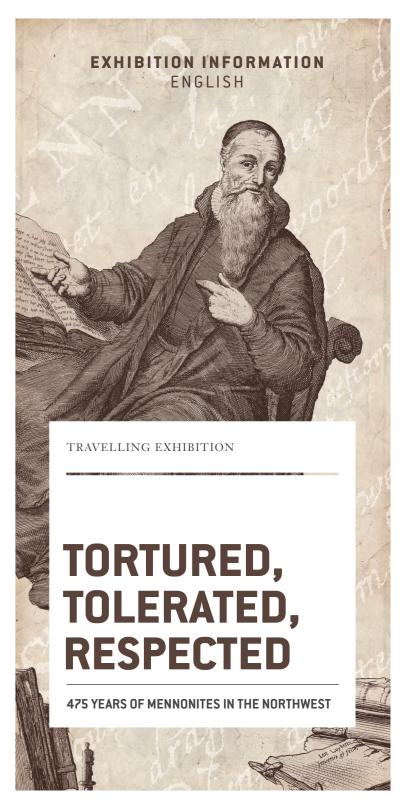
The Mennonites base their absolute rejection of violence on the Sermon on the Mount. In order to be allowed to live according to their belief in nonviolence, the Mennonites had to pay large sums of money for many centuries. Thus everytime the government needed money they were forced to pay again for their exemption from military service. By rejecting military service, they evoked distrust within the community at the beginning of the modern era. He who did not participate in the defense of his community and his city, was branded as a traitor and a rebel.

A turning-point were the wars of liberation against Napoleon. Public pressure, as well as the appeal of the Prussian king to his subjects, caused the Mennonites in Prussia to support the fight against Napoleon with huge amounts of money. Many, mostly young Mennonites even got carried away by the enthusiasm and signed up as volunteers of military service. In East-Frisia the Mennonites had to pay 13,000 Reichstaler for their exemption – although the total number of Mennonites living in the East-Frisian communities was hardly 500.

In 1867 the exemption from military service for the Mennonites was abolished within the North German Confederation. The Mennonites protested. A year later a compromise was reached by mutual concession: Mennonites were exempted from the duty to carry weapons, however, they had to serve in the medical service or in the baggage train, which allowed for provisioning and transport. Some Mennonite congregations decided to emigrate; the majority however, accepted the compromise. Both in the WW I and

WW II this arrangement remained in force. While in the WW I a third of the people concerned still made use of it, in the WW II it no longer played a role.

Text: Matthias Pausch, M.A. Translation: Bodo von Preyss



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THE HISTORY OF LOWER GERMAN ANABAPTISTS

For centuries the church suppressed all attempts of reform and any deviation of the official doctrine. Dissenters were persecuted as heretics, usually in a cruel way. Not until the onset of the reformation did the church permanently lose its monopoly of interpretation. Across Europe, within the shortest time, new trends occurred. Faith was redefined and practiced in a different way; the old, the false was rejected. One of the new denominations was Anabaptism.

In addition to the movement in Switzerland there emerged during the first ten years of the reformation a second centre in the Lower German area. Both movements rejected the baptism of children, which had been common practice since the second century AD. The Anabaptists in Zurich referred to the Holy Bible "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mark 16,16): Only a mature person who confesses his faith and previously also has been taught therein can be baptized. In the Netherlands and East-Frisia, there are also other reasons. Some preachers did not accept baptism as a sacrament and therefore not as a means of grace, others are against baptism before the age of 33 years.

Since 1528 there have been reports of individual (Ana)baptists ("Wederdopern") in East-Frisia. The lay preacher Melchior Hoffmann plays an important role in the Lower German region. In Emden he preaches in the Great Church and baptized appr. 300 adults. Out of this group originated the oldest congregation of Baptists in Northwest Germany. Melchior Hoffmann and his followers, called "Melchiorites", founded further parishes in other cities, especially in the Netherlands.

Melchior Hoffmann and his supporters foresaw large apocalyptic conflicts, which would end with the return of Christ and the founding of the kingdom of peace by Christ. In 1533 Melchior Hoffmann returned to Strasbourg, where he - some years before - had come into contact with the Anabaptist movement and had identified himself with their doctrines. Here he had himself arrested: He wanted to wait for the return of Christ, which had been predicted to him for that year; however this did not happen. He remained in detention until the end of his life 1543/1544.

THE KINGDOM OF ANABAPTISTS IN MUENSTER

In Amsterdam Jan Mathys was the leader of the community of Anabaptists and proclaimed himself as "Enoch", the second witness of the end of the world. Under his leadership the movement radicalized itself more and more. He sent "apostles", to spread the creed. At the beginning of 1534, one of these apostles, Jan van Leiden, was sent to Muenster by Mathys to strengthen the Anabaptists there.

Here the Protestants had achieved successes during the previous years in the struggle for power with their sovereign, the bishop of Muenster and Osnabrueck. The members of the council, as well as all preachers had been evangelical since 1533. However, the principal Protestant preacher of Muenster, Bernd Rothmann, was increasingly attracted by the Anabaptists and was baptized by Jan van Leiden in 1534. At the same time, more and more Lutherans and Baptists from the Netherlands, came into the city. The elections for the council in February 1534 resulted in a victory for the Baptists. Jan Mathys, the self proclaimed prophet, also came into the city. In the ensuing period community of property was introduced, following the example of the early church in Jerusalem. Those citizens and residents, who did not want to be baptized, were expelled from the city. Muenster sent messengers to propagate the "City of God" everywhere. Many Baptists, especially from the Netherlands, tried to go to Muenster.

Mathys announced for Easter 1534 again the return of Christ, which again did not happen. He left the city, which, meanwhile, was besieged by the bishop of Muenster, with a small number of followers and was slain. Under the leadership of Jan van Leiden the Baptists in Muenster were radicalized. Polygamy, the right to marry more than one woman at the same time, was introduced. Jan van Leiden himself married more than a dozen women. Muenster was declared "the heavenly Jerusalem" and Jan van Leiden "the king of the new Temple". In June 1535 the city was conquered after a siege of more than a year. Hundreds of defenders were slain, the remaining Baptists were executed, Jan van Leiden and two of his commanders as late as 1536.

THE SPLIT-UP AMONG THE BAPTISTS: RADICAL ANABAPTISTS AND MENNONITES

After the catastrophe of 1534/35, baptists split up into two completely different directions. One group advocated a non violent faith, the other wanted to continue the legacy of Muenster, partly in an even more radical way. Until around 1580 there existed radical groups of Baptists in the Dutch-Lower German region, (from the province of Holland to Westphalia), who wanted to continue the apocalyptic battle against "the godless" – particularly the catholic clergy – until the return of Christ. One of these groups was named

after their leader, "Batenburgers". Armed with swords they looted and set fire to churches and farmsteads and murdered "the godless". Ian van Batenburg was captured in 1538 and burned at the stake. Among the leaders of the peaceful Anabaptists were two brothers originating from Leeuwarden, Obbe and Dirk Philips. Around 1534 Obbe Philips baptized David Joris, and Menno Simons in 1536/37. After Obbe Philips had turned away from the baptist movement, around 1539/40, Menno Simons became the leader of this group of Anabaptists, who were, at the time called "Obbenites". Under his leadership the peaceful group achieved a clear demarcation from the radical Anabaptists and the legacy of Muenster. In his work written in 1539/40, for short: "The Book of Foundations", Simons described the principles of his faith: Adult Baptism, the Holy Communion as a reminder of what Christ has done for mankind, a peaceful, by God inspired life. Many congregations of Baptists in the Dutch-Lower German area followed him. In the beginning these were called "Mennites", later Mennonites.

THE FLIGHT OF ANABAPTISTS TO EAST-FRISIA

Shortly after the emergence of the Baptist movement the authorities started taking measures against the Anabaptists. The first decree aimed at these "heretics" and "insurgents" was issued in Zurich, where the Reformation of Ulrich Zwingli has prevailed. With the so called "Anabaptists mandate" in 1529 in Spever it was decided to persecute the Baptists throughout the German Empire. Those who did not renounce their "false belief" had to be sentenced to "death by flames, the sword or in a similar way". Even parents, who did not have their children baptized, were to be punished in the same way. The implementation of the Anabaptist mandate was the task of the respective sovereign. Only where Charles V. himself was sovereign, he could execute this mandate. This primarily applied to his possessions in Austria, but also in the Netherlands, which were part of the Habsburg Empire. In both these areas the persecution of the Anabaptists was carried out in a particularly hard and strict way. Many of the Anabaptists, being persecuted in these regions, fled to neighbouring territories. East-Frisia became a refuge, especially for Anabaptists from the Netherlands. Here they did not have to fear for their lives, they remained outsiders of society, though. They were not accepted by the Counts of East-Frisia, but merely tolerated. Soon though the East-Frisian Counts and Princes appreciated how high "the value" of the Mennonites was. Until the first part of the 19th century the Mennonites had to pay large sums of money for their "protection", which meant (limited) freedom to exercise their religion and exemption from military service.

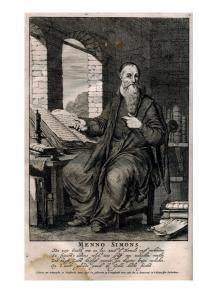
"ANABAPTISTS" - "INSURGENTS" - "HERETICS"?

Especially in the 16th century the Anabaptists were heavily prosecuted by the authorities. It did not matter whether the rulers were Catholic, Lutheran or Reformed. Religious diversity, so it was thought at the time, ought not to be allowed. Diversity caused disagreement; disagreement interfered with peace in the community, the region and the Empire; in the end war and wretchedness would develop within the Empire. This reasoning can also be found in the Anabaptist mandate of 1529, which is meant to prevent this "evil (the Anabaptists) and all that can be caused by them, and thereby preserve peace and unity in the holy Empire". The Anabaptists, due to their "false belief", sowed the seeds of discord, as "insurgents" they disturbed the God-given peace and order - in the eyes of the authorities. They were seen as "heretics", because they practiced "rebaptism"; This was not only forbidden, but also had to be punished by sentence of death. From the point of view of the authorities and a large part of the population the extreme excesses during the kingdom of the Anabaptists in Muenster only confirmed these opinions and accusations: a dangerous inheritance, also for those Mennonites who had agreed to dispense completely with violence.

Their refusal to take the oath also caused the authorities to distrust the Anabaptists: at this beginning of a new period in history the allegiance of subjects to their ruler meant an important proof of loyalty, wherein the God-given order of society was publicly confirmed and testified. The refusal to perform military duties, especially in the towns, caused their fellow citizens to distrust the Mennonites even more. Only by paying huge sums of money for "protection", could the Mennonites achieve toleration. Their legal as well as their social position can be compared to that of the Jews. In some aspects this ended only in the course of the 19th century.

THE SPLIT AMONG THE MENNONITES: WATERLANDERS, FLEMISH, VRIESEN (FRISIANS)

During the 16th century, after the end of the large-scale persecution in the Dutch provinces, the Mennonites settled down in the towns and communities there – and also in East-Frisia. Whilst the external threats were largely banned, differences of opinion arose within the congregations of Mennonites. Points of controversy were



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