

“Hear my son the instructions of your mother”: Children and Anabaptism

Marion Kobelt-Groch, *University of Hamburg*

Men and women in Mennonite history occupy the center of interest in this symposium. In my lecture, too, gender relationships will play an important role, even if these are presented only indirectly and in a less systematic way. The subject of my lecture is children in the Anabaptist movements of the sixteenth century. Children not only resulted from gender relationships, but their lives were determined by their close relationship to both their fathers and their mothers over many years. This fact makes them legitimate objects of investigation within the limits of this conference.

In the introduction to his book *Schule der Diktatur* [School of Dictatorship], Kurt-Ingo Flessau cites a maxim of National Socialist education: “Whoever possesses the young possesses the future”¹—a slogan which conceals more than just a superficial appropriation of the adolescent generation. At stake here is survival, the preservation of existing societal structures and the ideology underlying them. This seamless transition to a possibly calculable future succeeds only if young people in particular, but also children, are sworn to the existing values and norms and, thus, become circumspect heirs of generally accepted values.

Although the Hutterites in Moravia would not have formulated their educational intentions with reference to the maxim, “whoever possesses the young possesses the future,” in principle they did orient themselves on it.² Their

educational task existed in pledging the children and youth to community-oriented life and thought in godly obedience and collective responsibility. Therefore, the comprehensive supervision of the children and the young people was taken away from the family and laid in the hands of the community, at first for economic reasons, but later for religious and pedagogical reasons.³ The oldest substantiated witness to this manner of community education is found in the *Hutterian Chronicle*. The Hutterian Brethren who were driven out of Auspitz and who settled in Kostel and Roherbach in 1536 declared the education of their children to be a collective task: "They have also, at the places of their assembly, brought their children together/ And entrusted them to Godfearing sisters/ to show them the Lord in Christian discipline and admonition/ and to educate them with all diligence."⁴ These general terms are spelled out in more detail later in the Hutterite *Schulordnungen*.⁵ In these ordinances organizational and pedagogical questions are discussed as are questions of health care and discipline.

While the Hutterite educational system has met with considerable interest in research, the children of the other, less strictly-organized Anabaptist movements of the sixteenth century have remained largely unnoticed.⁶ This has to do with several facts: theoretical concepts of education are lacking in these movements; an organized education of children did not take place; and the conscious Anabaptist life of the individual person began only with the explicit renunciation of the world, a step which was sealed with adult believer's baptism. If, in this sense, Anabaptists are mentioned, it is men and women. Children remain in the background because they are not confessing members of the community. Yet, as uncertain as the status of children may be, the Anabaptist movements would be unthinkable without them. They belonged to those men and women who, as confessing Anabaptists, were not only marriage partners, but also mothers and fathers. To disregard this situation would mean ignoring the available source material and reducing the Anabaptist movements themselves to the sum of their confessing adherents. The parent-child relationship determined not only the thought and conduct of individual Anabaptists, but also influenced the actions and decisions undertaken by the governmental authorities in their dealings with Anabaptists.

Of Children and Anabaptist Children

Even a cursory look into the sources shows that the idea of the child is complex. Here Else Kern, during her interrogation claims to have behaved like an "unreasonable" and "a foolish child."⁷ In another place, a woman asked another for forgiveness for a letter which had become too detailed: Helen Streicher is asked to have patience with Sibylle von Speckersecks for "childishly long writing."⁸ Along with these sporadic comparisons which placed children and everything childlike in a poor light, there exist other more positive references. Strictly speaking, all Anabaptists felt themselves to be "God's

children” who wanted to have nothing in common with the “world’s children.”⁹ A popular commonplace was that “to be childlike meant to be Christian.”¹⁰ On the other hand, the situation becomes problematic when the question of demarcation is addressed concretely: who is meant when children are mentioned, babies, small children or adolescents? Even young adults, married sons and daughters of Anabaptist parents, were always viewed as children within the kinship unit. Further difficulties emerge from the attempt to determine more exactly the age of the boys and girls concerned. The transitions from childhood to adolescence to adulthood often took shape without clear divisions, the more so since ages are not given in most cases. Added to this are designations such as “little daughter” (*Töchterlein*), “maiden” (*Meidlin*), or “little lady” (*kleins fräulein*), which are often difficult to decipher and which give only a vague idea of the age of a child or an adolescent without expressly confirming it. Many farmhands and maids, listed in government records as suspected Anabaptists, were children or young people.¹¹

Even children in their prenatal condition are mentioned.¹² Among imprisoned Anabaptist women there were always some who were pregnant, a condition that, for at least a short time, protected them from rigorous punishment. Pregnant women, especially those shortly before delivery, could count on leniency, not least of all because it was deemed important to protect the unborn, “innocent” child. Thus, expectant women were released from prison¹³ and not interrogated further,¹⁴ or they were accommodated in more comfortable quarters than their likewise imprisoned husbands.¹⁵ In 1530, the Innsbruck government gave permission to the *Hauptmann* of Kufstein, Christoff Fuchs, to build a heated apartment which was supposed to protect imprisoned, pregnant women from the winter cold.¹⁶ After the birth of the child, such leniency was ended; in the worst cases, execution followed. Such a fate threatened Anna Gasteigerin who was told that she would be examined to determine whether she really was pregnant; she was further told that in the event that her claim was true, care would be taken to ensure that the child was brought “into the world in an orderly manner and afterwards to a Christian baptism.” A wetnurse would then assume the care of the child, while the mother would be executed.¹⁷

With birth began a new, important phase of the child’s existence. It was in the interest of the governmental authority to protect the newborn children of Anabaptist mothers or parents from pernicious influences, and to integrate them into the prevailing religious-social order from the moment of birth. The Anabaptist “poison” was not to be allowed to be planted in the souls of the children. It was potentially easier to preserve them from “heretical” indoctrination if the mother was executed, or if she could be made to leave her child and run for her life. This was the story of the wife of the former Anabaptist Wolfgang Schneider. Three days after her confinement, she made off. The child born on July 29, remained behind; the judge, not the father, took it into his care. Schneider supposedly had let his child be baptized “*without compulsion by the wetnurse*,” whereupon he was arrested. To the question why no proper baptism

had taken place, Schneider answered that "it doesn't need it, it was baptized by God, that is what it believes."¹⁸ With his criticism of infant baptism, Wolfgang clearly imagined God on his side. The remark that the child did not need baptism, but had already been baptized by God, leads directly into the center of Anabaptist understanding. In this instance ideas developed in the context of Radical Reformation were carried even further. Thomas Müntzer was among the first who sharply criticized the conventional practice and doctrine of baptism; he desired to see infant baptism replaced with a baptismal act at a later point in time.¹⁹ The Anabaptists paid the greatest attention to the baptismal question and, through their practice of believers' baptism, separated themselves in a provocative manner from the church and society of their times. The leading, theological figures of the time did not grow weary in rejecting believers' baptism with biblical arguments in favour of infant baptism. Also the uneducated Anabaptist men and women defended Anabaptist principles in their own ways. By rejecting infant baptism, the Anabaptists not only raised believers' baptism to the status of the only binding and valid baptismal act, they also made the children the future bearers of the Anabaptist world of faith and life. This idea, to be sure, was not articulated explicitly, yet it lies within the consequences of Anabaptist thought and action. It also is not new. After all, connected with infant baptism was the expectation on the part of the church authorities that the children would grow into the faith. The rejection of baptism while infants thus raised Anabaptist children to a condition of pre-Anabaptist existence, which ended with believers' baptism, the baptism which let them to become full-fledged brothers and sisters. Of course, the Anabaptist maturation process ought not to be thought of as clear-cut and strictly goal-oriented. There were marriages in which only one parent was Anabaptist and, thus, the education of the children was marked by different influences and faith understandings. Many women and men recanted or consciously attempted to keep their convictions secret, perhaps also from their children. In addition, executions and persecutions prevented many children from being reared as Anabaptists. Perhaps this situation of permanent threat determined the maturation and learning process as much as did an anticlerical attitude and fundamental biblical knowledge.

Whether it was the father or the mother who chose a later Anabaptist life for a child by rejecting infant baptism, differs from case to case. Often, the fathers appeared to have been the driving forces, but the mothers also took a decided position, although they tended to remain in the background. The governmental authority held the men in their function as housefathers as responsible for the orthodoxy of their families. Thus, it was the Anabaptist Adam Ergkel from Kirtorf who alone was cited and asked why he had not had his child, given to him by God, baptized.²⁰ There were no questions asked of the mother; the opinion of the wife and mother was considered unimportant. Yet, other sources, indicate that women also spoke out vehemently against infant baptism, and sought to prevent it.

Everyday Life Among Anabaptist Children

In many respects everyday life for Anabaptist children differed little from that of children of other faiths. Not infrequently, misery and want determined the life of Anabaptists and their families who lived on the land or pursued a handicraft, especially in times of failed crops and inflation. Scarcity and want drove many families to Moravia. They hoped to find better religious and social conditions there, but scarcity and want also determined everyday conduct. Anna, Balthus Alinger's widow, claimed to have avoided worship services for several years because she was required to work home to feed her small children.²¹ Perhaps she was merely being evasive. In Urach, in 1599, the pastor complained that adults and children often preferred to go to the woods, looking for cherries, strawberries and raspberries rather than attend preaching services; the result of this practice was that children were learning that there were more important things than attending church.²²

The government, however, had the opposite concern; there were justified suspicions that children were being taught Anabaptist principles and manners of conduct. Officials remarked that "blasphemy" was not only the order of the day among the young people and the older folks, but also among children of the Anabaptists. There are indications among Anabaptists of a collective educational system, resembling the Hutterite approach to education. In 1528, during the interrogation of Anabaptist Jorg Dorsch, the governmental authority mentioned that Dorsch's fellows believed "that all goods, wives and children also, should be held in common."²³ A similar idea was stated by Michael Maier in 1531. He had in mind not only the restoration of the community of goods practiced by the Early Church,²⁴ but also the practice of a kind of common education of the children, even if on a modest scale. It was reported that up to this time he had not been married, but now, on the advice of the Holy Spirit, had taken the wife of Schmid, from Uttenreut, and was taking care of the children already present, "which Schmid had before with said woman; they maintain the same now in common with each other, just as they otherwise have all other goods in common, too."²⁵

The *Martyrs' Mirror* contains striking examples of motherly and fatherly care in the form of testaments and letters which indicate the course of the life of an Anabaptist child. "Hear, my son, the instruction of your mother..."²⁶ With these words, just before her death by drowning on January 23, 1539, the 28 or 29 year old Anneken Jans implored her son Esaja to accept the instruction of the Lord, search the Scriptures, and avoid the path of the multitudes. The will of the mother was that in his life he should contend for justice until death and arm himself with the armour of God. Anneken Jans' testament contains not only a wealth of suggested admonitions, but also concrete references to biblical passages which are intended to facilitate the orientation of her son. Jans also advises her son to separate himself from the world as he seeks to serve God. And this means keeping himself apart, even in his childhood years, from boys and girls of different faiths. This was something that Menno Simons also demanded

in his "Kinderzucht" (ca. 1557). Parents should allow their offspring "no association with the evil, useless children from whom they learn nothing but lying, cursing, swearing, begging, smoking and knaveries...."²⁷

Sources provide only sporadic information about the practice amongst early Anabaptists of separating their children, of providing goal-oriented instruction, or letting them take part in meetings. The emotional relationships between children and parents also remains obscure. How did mothers and fathers deal with their children? In keeping with the custom of the time, Menno Simons recommended disciplining children in a rather harsh manner.²⁸ That children were consciously trained is especially obvious when there were dissensions within the family with regard to religious questions. Simon Kraußhaar, for example, tried to forbid his wife and children from attending church and meeting people. His wife, however, was to prevail as she not only attended preaching services regularly and went to receive the Holy Supper, but she also had the children baptized, against the wishes of her husband.²⁹ It is likewise known that Greta, Wolf Clasen's wife, convinced her 15-year-old daughter not to go to church any longer.³⁰ While there may also be examples of fathers prevailing in religious questions, it appears that the mothers had their way remarkably often. Of course, still other possibilities for inspiration presented themselves. Here it was a son of a schoolmaster who stands under suspicion of influencing the children,³¹ there it was an employer.³²

Older children, having heard and become curious about the Anabaptists sometimes set out on their own search for them. According to one source, two "young boys about 16 or 17 years old" had attended an Anabaptist meeting supposedly out of "impertinence."³³ Children's presence at secret meetings cannot be confirmed in general, but also it can not be ruled out. Although the reports usually mention only men and women, it may be that the governmental side did not consider it worth mentioning the presence of small children. It was an entirely different matter where older children, who appeared as potential candidates for baptism, were concerned. Sources reveal that sometimes children between 11 to 14 years old were interrogated and punished. One source makes note of a 14 year-old boy who could not be moved by any means to renounce his faith; after a lengthy stay in prison, he was finally executed.³⁴ Another source mentions a girl who was arrested and interrogated in 1531; in this instance interest was directed to the person from whom she had learned prayers and hymns. Perhaps in order that she would betray no one, she had been urged to "say that the heavenly Father had taught her this..."³⁵ In isolated instances, there are references to children taking part in Anabaptist meetings. This appears to have been the case in 1606 in the forest at Bretten: here the governmental side declared with a sense of leniency that "*those who by chance or from impertinence went there, among these underage children, shall receive a reprimand.*"³⁶ Of another meeting in 1531 it was noted that "the (wife of) Lennzt Urstetter together with two children" was present.³⁷ For children, meetings in homes were certainly more easily accessible than secret meetings in the middle of the night

in out-of-the-way places. An incident in 1527 in Hans Nodler's house is illustrative. The participants had just sat down to dinner when Meier's wife, with a book in hand and a little boy in tow, appeared. The source indicates that "the boy began to read from it, and when he had read an article, they told him to be quiet; then Meyer and Nodler put their heads together and disputed upon it...."³⁸ Clearly, this was considered a positive development, but other references criticize the practice of children attending services. Children could present a danger as they could disturb or even betray meetings. Thus, they were sometimes not permitted to be present during the baptism of an adult; in one instance it was noted that the father was compelled "to chase his child out of the house" during a service.³⁹

Those who took their families and joined the Hutterites laid firmer foundations for an Anabaptist future for their children than did others. The most important precondition for this was, naturally, that children were taken along and not left behind. There were plenty of abandoned children. In one case, an older girl, who did not want to accept this fate, simply ran after her mother.⁴⁰ The idea of leaving everything behind in order to be faithful to Christ alone, or the inner compulsion to do so, stood in opposition to all the pretensions of bringing up children in the Anabaptist sense. Once the children fell into the hands of the governmental authority, they were, as potential new members of the community, as good as lost. Still, one *Vorsteher* addressing an evening meeting quoted from Matthew 19:29, urging "whoever desires to be a real Christian [to] leave his wife and child."⁴¹ To renounce all earthly obligations on the authority of the divine will appears to have been easier for the men than for the women. They were gladly able to apply the cited biblical passage to themselves, especially when they reinterpreted it in a manner appropriate to their sex. But, certainly not all women were able or willing to do likewise. To leave everything behind was harder for them not least of all because, in contrast to many men, they had a closer relationship to their children. Women strongly influenced their children not only in religious questions, but also oriented their own lives around their children, a situation which consciously was exploited by governmental authority in the struggle against the Anabaptists.

Children—Bone of Contention between "Light" and "Darkness"

The slogan, "whoever possesses the young possesses the future," also applies in instances where, figuratively speaking, Anabaptist children became a "bone of contention" between two worlds or, in Anabaptist jargon, between "light" and "darkness." What did the measures undertaken by governmental authority look like?

1. Forced baptisms: Governmental authority reacted to the Anabaptist concern to leave new borns unbaptized with the effort to erase this sin of omission as quickly as possible. The Anabaptist sources contain several exam-

ples of children who were integrated into the prevailing religious and social order against the will of their parents or at least against the will of one parent. This step can be understood as a preventive measure for the purpose of saving the child's soul and placing it from the very beginning on the correct path of faith and life. This fate overtook Peter Schneider's children. It was decided that they be "made to share in such a baptism" and to baptize them "officially."⁴² The father was to be dealt with in an amicable manner; obviously there was no desire for a confrontation. But, such cases did not always end without harm. As two children were baptized on order of the *Vogt*, the Anabaptist father of one of the children commented upon the procedure with the words: "he washed the filth from the child again."⁴³ Forced baptisms were applied not only to new borns, but also occasionally to all the children of an Anabaptist couple after years of preventing such baptism. It would be too one-sided to claim that these forced baptisms took place in a completely arbitrary manner and without reflection. There certainly were doubts on the government side about the legitimacy of such a step.

2. Controls. All those who drifted away from the church, that is, those who did not attend preaching services or avoided the Eucharist, fell under suspicion of being Anabaptists. The real state of relationships to the church could be seen in the conduct of the congregational members. Attention was directed primarily to the adults. It was expected not only that they live up to the prevailing norms of belief and conduct, but they act as accomplices of governmental interests in thus bring up their children in conformity with the system. A petition submitted by the preachers to the Straßburg city council in February 1531 is illustrative. They faulted people who rarely heard sermons for being bad examples to young people. The preachers demanded that no one be permitted to prevent their children or their servants from attending preaching services. In addition, all the youth should be brought to catechism and visitations should be ordered for all the schools.⁴⁴ Obviously it was in the interests of the governmental authority to supervise children and young people and to bring them under its control.

3. Foster Parents: Removing children from Anabaptist influence in a lasting way succeeded above all when the father and mother were fugitives without their children, when the parents died, or when they sought a better life in Moravia. Children who were left behind were, first of all, a financial problem, especially when they lacked assets or had no goods which could be sold. In such cases of absolute destitution, Anabaptist children were often ordered into institutional care or supported by the publicly-funded poor chest. Apart from these material considerations, it was important to entrust the children to qualified persons. That these persons sometimes discharged their duties unsatisfactorily is another story. In one instance, an Anabaptist couple who stayed just outside the village where their children were kept, succeeded in luring them away and persuaded them to bring their household effects with them.⁴⁵ The guardians who had been ordered to care for them were now charged by the government with failing in their duty.

Often Anabaptists attempted to keep their children from falling into “worldly” hands. One imprisoned Anabaptist who was supposedly moved to recant by his concern for his wife and child, implied that his brothers would take the children into their care.⁴⁶ There are also references to marriage partners who, finding their lives threatened, enjoined each other to see to the education of the children. It was important to protect them from the influences of the unbelieving “world” and to instruct them in a godly manner.

4. Family Constraints: The goal of the governmental authorities was not only to integrate Anabaptist children into the prevailing social order. Children, serving as bait and as decoys, could become instruments of the disciplinary policy of governmental authority. With the help of children, apostates could be brought to reason and destroyed family structures were to be restored. Faced with a despairing wife and mother of several children, many Anabaptists left prison earlier than expected. The so-called “common Anabaptists,” those who proved themselves to be more simple-minded than obstinate, were often permitted to remain with their wives and children.⁴⁷ It would be wrong, however, to see only a gesture of generosity behind these concessions. Other considerations played a role. An intact family provided for and represented by the father was easier to control and less expensive. Such a family corresponded to the model of patriarchal social structure ordained by government. In addition, mothers whose husbands had left or were in prison for religious reasons, often found themselves on the edge of ruin, requiring financial support. If the woman was no longer in the household, things were not much better. Binding her to the household, if necessary, therefore appeared to be more economical than to place her in prison. This clever move of governmental policy, emphasizing family ties and letting these triumph over Anabaptist faith, was, however, only successful if men and women in fact were willing to give up their different religious convictions in favour of “worldly” ties. Seen in this light, children contributed in individual cases toward destroying the Anabaptist solidarity of their parents, or even preventing such a solidarity from arising in the first place. A question to be considered further is whether mothers, above all, were prevented from joining the Anabaptists out of concern for their children.

Summary

This decidedly destructive aspect of the presence of children in the Anabaptist movements stands in opposition to observations previously made. Children, to be sure, could have an undermining effect and were often enough a burden; above all, though, they contributed to the maintenance of the community. Children were the Anabaptists of tomorrow without, however, really being educated in this sense. In contrast to the Hutterites in Moravia, the less strictly-organized Anabaptist movements brought forth no systematic conceptions of education. Children were offered the chance to grow into the Anabaptist world of their parents and gradually to make the religious and life principles of their

parents their own. The decisive point of departure for the Anabaptist development of a child was the unconsummated infant baptism, which required the later believers' baptism. In between lay years in which the children could adopt the anticlerical attitude of their parents, meaning that they would stay away from church or even from school instruction and that they might participate in Anabaptist meetings or in smaller gatherings of Anabaptists. If children moved with their parents to Moravia, the likelihood of leading an Anabaptist life in the future was especially great.

The reactions on the part of governmental authority show that Anabaptist children represented, to be sure, not an acute danger, but definitely a serious one. By means of forced baptisms, pressure to attend preaching service, and instruction, the lost souls of the children were to be led back into the bosom of the supposedly orthodox "world." If the parents were fugitives or deceased, then the possibility of a positive influence through foster parents along the lines of the prevailing order offered itself. The supreme goal was to strengthen the children through every means available and to free them from the stain of Anabaptism. This was reached not only through punishment and persecution, but also through attempts to tie apostate or inconstant individuals to the family and, with the help of the children, to domesticate them.

Notes

1. Kurt-Ingo Flessau, *Schule der Diktatur. Lehrpläne und Schulbücher des Nationalsozialismus*. (Frankfurt/Main: 1979), 12.

2. See: Bodo Hildebrand, *Erziehung zur Gemeinschaft. Geschichte und Gegenwart des Erziehungswesens der Hutterer* (Pfaffenweiler: 1993).

3. Hildebrand, *Erziehung*, 37.

4. Quoted in: Martin Rothkegel, "Die älteste hutterische Schulordnung: Ein Ordnungszettel von 1558," *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* (MGBI) 55 (1998): 86.

5. See Gary J. Waltner, "The Educational System of the Hutterian Anabaptists and Their Schulordnungen of the 16th and 17th Centuries," (M.A. Thesis, University of South Dakota, 1975); Hildebrand, *Erziehung*; Rothkegel, "Die älteste hutterische Schulordnung" with its supplement: "Schulordnung von 1558," 101–105. This school regulation (*Schulordnung*) does not contain rules for instruction, but deals rather with questions regarding discipline and education.

6. In the relevant descriptions of the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, children are mentioned only sporadically. See Claus-Peter Clasen, *Anabaptism. A Social History, 1525–1618. Switzerland, Austria, Moravia, South and Central Germany* (Ithaca and London: 1972) and Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, trans. Trevor Johnson (London and New York: 1996). More extensive is the study by Marlies Mattern, *Leben im Abseits: Frauen und Männer im Täuferium (1525–1550): Eine Studie zur Alltagsgeschichte* (Frankfurt/Main: 1998), especially Ch. 3, "Familie und Kindererziehung" (The Family and Childrearing), 123–135.

7. *Quellen zur Geschichte der Wiedertäufer*, Bd. II: *Markgraftum Brandenburg (Bayern I. Abteilung)*, ed. Karl Schornbaum (Leipzig: 1934), hereafter cited as TQ Brandenburg, 301.

8. *Quellen zur Geschichte der Wiedertäufer*, Bd. I: *Herzogtum Württemberg*, ed. Gustav Bossert (Leipzig: 1930), hereafter cited as TQ Württemberg, 97.

9. TQ Brandenburg, 71.

10. M. J. Tucker, "Das Kind als Anfang und Ende: Kindheit in England im fünfzehnten und sechzehnten Jahrhundert" in: *Hört ihr die Kinder weinen. Eine psychogenetische Geschichte der Kindheit*, ed. Lloyd deMause (Frankfurt/ Main: 1980), 329.

11. Veit Reitze und Lienhart Hornung were ordered to remove their children from the "Anabaptist Vogelhof" and to put them to service somewhere else. Veit Reitze's son was 11 and the oldest of Lienhart Hornung's three children was 14 years old (TQ Württemberg, 630 and 635). On the integration of children from the age of seven in the workaday world, see Klaus Arnold, *Kind und Gesellschaft in Mittelalter und Renaissance. Beiträge und Texte zur Geschichte der Kindheit* (Paderborn: 1980), 20f. and Shulamith Shahar, *Kindheit im Mittelalter* (Munich and Zurich: 1991), 280f.

12. On the subject of pregnancy, birth, and midwifery among the Anabaptists, see Mattern, *Leben im Abseits*, Ch. 3: "Geburt und Tod" (Birth and Death), 135–150. On the subject in general, see Eva Labouvie, *Andere Umstände. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Geburt* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna: 1998); Sybilla Flügge, *Hebammen und heilkundige Frauen. Recht und Rechtswirklichkeit im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/ Main and Basel: 1998).

13. *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, Bd. XVI: *Elsaß, IV. Teil. Stadt Straßburg 1543–1552 samt Nachträgen und Verbesserungen zu Teil I, II und III*, ed. Marc Lienhard, Stephen F. Nelson and Hans Georg Rott (Gütersloh: 1998), hereafter cited as TQ Elsaß IV, 19.

14. TQ Württemberg, 564.

15. *Ibid.*, 46.

16. *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, Bd. XIII: *Österreich, II*, ed. Grete Mecenseffy (Gütersloh: 1972), hereafter cited as TQ Österreich II, 397f.

17. *Ibid.*, 265.

18. *Ibid.*, 266.

19. Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Innere und äußere Ordnung in der Theologie Thomas Müntzers* (Leiden: 1967), 110, and Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, 68.

20. *Urkundliche Quellen zur hessischen Reformationsgeschichte*, Vierter Bd.: *Wiedertäuferakten 1527–1626*, ed. Günther Franz (Marburg: 1951), hereafter cited as TQ Hessen, 147f. See also *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, Bd. VIII: *Elsaß, II. Teil. Stadt Straßburg 1533–1535*, ed. Manfred Krebs and Hans Georg Rott (Gütersloh: 1960), 440f.: "1535 März 17. und 18. - Verzeichnis derjenigen Personen in Straßburg, die ihre Kinder nicht taufen lassen wollen..." With the exception of two widows, all the persons who are brought to account here for this omission are exclusively men.

21. TQ Württemberg, 723.

22. *Ibid.*, 748.

23. TQ Brandenburg, 124.

24. *Ibid.*, 285.

25. *Ibid.*, 287.

26. *Der blutige Schauplatz oder Märtyrer-Spiegel der Taufgesinnten oder Wehrlosen Christen...*, ed. Thielem J. van Braght (Aylmer, ON and Lagrange, IN: 1973), Zweiter Teil, 36. On Anneken Jansz, see Werner O. Packull, "Anna Jansz of Rotterdam, a Historical Investigation of an Early Anabaptist Heroine," in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 78. Jg. (1987): 147–173, and Packull, "Anna Jansz of Rotterdam," in *Profiles of Anabaptist Women. Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers*, ed. C. Arnold Snyder and Linda A. Huebert Hecht (Waterloo, ON: 1996), 336–351.

27. *Die vollständigen Werke Menno Simon's, übersetzt aus der Originalsprache, dem Holländischen* (Aylmer, ON and Lagrange, IN), Erster Teil, 382.

28. Exemplary behavior on the part of the parents and strict discipline were intended to guide the children onto the proper path of faith and life. Menno Simons urgently admonishes the parents against "...dealing with mistakes and godlessness on the part of the children with indulgence out of blind, fleshly love..." (*Ibid.*) On the idea of perfect obedience as the goal of Anabaptist childrearing, see Hillel Schwartz, "Early Anabaptist Ideas about the Nature of Children," in: *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 42 (1973): 102–114.

29. TQ Württemberg, 181.

30. *Ibid.*, 436.

31. *Ibid.*, 561.

32. *Ibid.*, 404f.

33. TQ Elsaß IV, 143f.

34. *Der blutige Schauplatz*, 18.

35. TQ Hessen, 32.

36. TQ Württemberg, 794.

37. TQ Österreich II, 455.

38. TQ Brandenburg, 17. Children helped when the adults were not able to read and, thus, came into contact with radical or Anabaptist ideas (see TQ Württemberg, 560).

39. TQ Brandenburg, 81.

40. TQ Württemberg, 483.

41. TQ Österreich II, 454. The sources contain stirring scenes. Hans Nodler left his family with the following words: "... woman, I intend to leave and want to follow the Word of God and also to learn the will of God; may the children be commended to you." (TQ Brandenburg, 14). A leader like Conrad Grebel also chose his own way of faith and developed problems with his wife. See: Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Konrad Grebel. Kritiker des frommen Scheins, 1498–1526* (Bolanden and Hamburg, 1998), 118. About women who left their husbands and families, see: Marion Kobelt Groch, "Why Did Petronella leave her Husband? Reflections on Marital Avoidance Among the Halbstadt Anabaptists," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 62 (1988): 26–41.

42. TQ Hessen, 278.

43. *Ibid.*, 291, note 2.

44. *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, Bd. VII: *Elsaß, 1. Stadt Straßburg 1522–1532*, ed. Manfred Krebs and Hans Georg Rott (Gütersloh: 1959), 328f.

45. TQ Württemberg, 845.

46. *Ibid.*, 659.

47. *Ibid.*, 575.

48. In order to tie the woman to the house, but not to disturb the domestic order, Anabaptist women in Württemberg, in isolated cases, were even chained in the house. See on this point Marion Kobelt-Groch, "Frauen in Ketten. 'Von widertaufferischen weibern, wie gegen selbigen zu handeln'," *MGBI*, 47./48 (1990/91): 49–70.

Translation by Dennis L. Slabaugh.

The author wishes to express her grateful thanks for the work of the translator.