

‘TRUTH IS UNKILLABLE’: NON-RESISTANCE, ‘THE SWORD’ AND MAGISTERIAL  
AUTHORITY IN THE THEOLOGY OF BALTHASAR HUBMAIER 1523-1528

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of MASTER OF  
PHILOSOPHY

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October 2011

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

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## **ABSTRACT**

The German Anabaptist Balthasar Hubmaier (c.1480-1528) has long been neglected by historians due to his premature death and the constrictive pigeon-hole that previous historians have tried and failed to force him into. Unlike any other Anabaptist leader he believed that it was God's will for society to work with and support its government and that the government ideally should be composed of Christians who would protect its citizens from those who would wish to do them harm. Using Hubmaier's own writings, which include *On Heretics and Those Who Burn Them* (1524), *Dialogue with Zwingli's Baptism Book* (1526) and *On The Sword* (1527); this thesis will build upon the work of the historian Kirk MacGregor (2006) and examine Hubmaier's beliefs in the areas that MacGregor did not cover; such as his views on non-resistance, 'the sword' and magisterial authority. The thesis will determine that Hubmaier's beliefs on these issues did indeed make him unique among the Anabaptists; and that historians need to redefine the term 'Anabaptist' so that there is room within the definition for a unique figure such as Hubmaier.

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**TRUTH IS UNKILLABLE: NON-RESISTANCE AND ‘THE SWORD’ IN THE  
THEOLOGY OF BALTHASAR HUBMAIER 1523-1528**

**INTRODUCTION**

Balthasar Hubmaier (1480-1528) is an important figure to study within the radical Reformation because he was the only trained theologian who was labelled as an Anabaptist by his contemporaries such as Zwingli; consequently he was the only figure within Anabaptism who was able to equal other reformers such as Luther or Zwingli in the quantity of treatises they wrote and the theological background that they brought to their writings.<sup>1</sup> This only applies however to those whose level of education is known; Thomas Muntzer for example, may have had a similar education to Hubmaier. Hubmaier was, furthermore, set apart from his contemporaries in various aspects of his theology including his views on non-resistance and magisterial authority. Examining such areas will give a glimpse into an alternate form of Anabaptism that was unique when compared to other Anabaptist groups such as the pacifistic Swiss Brethren.<sup>2</sup> Hubmaier also created and was in charge of the very first Anabaptist cities in Waldshut in 1524 and Nikolsburg in 1526, meaning that he was the first to put his Anabaptist ideas into practice in the community for which he had been priest. This study defines Anabaptism as those who rejected infant baptism and accepted believers baptism as an external witness to a believers confession of faith; believed in the sole authority

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<sup>1</sup> As will be seen in Chapter One of this study Hubmaier received a better than average education. He attended the Cathedral school in Augsburg; then attended the University of Freiburg; and then studied at the University of Ingolstadt where he gained his doctorate in theology. All of this meant that Hubmaier had the theological background that enabled him to explain and defend his theology in a skilful way. In contrast are other Anabaptists such as Hans Hut who was a book peddler and did not have any formal education: Michael Sattler was not university educated. See H. J. Goertz, W. Klaassen, *Profiles of radical reformers: biographical sketches from Thomas Muntzer to Paracelsus* (Kitchener, 1982) for more on the backgrounds of Anabaptists. Dickens supports this when he writes that Hubmaier 'had a far better professional training than the common run of sectarian missionaries.' A. G. Dickens, *Reformation and Society in Sixteenth Century Europe* (London, 1966), p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> The Swiss Brethren were a group of Anabaptists from Zurich that disagreed with Zwingli that the Zurich Council should have the authority over the reform of the city. They became separatists and formed their own church due to the persecution they received from Zwingli and the Council. They were pacifistic and believed in total separation from the government.

of scripture, and were greatly persecuted wherever they went. If this thesis also applied the label of Anabaptism to those who believed in the separation of church and state then Hubmaier could not be considered one of them because he believed that the government and the church could work together for the betterment of all. However even though Hubmaier did not acknowledge the label Anabaptist, due to his belief that the first baptism was not a true baptism, his contemporaries and the wider world treated him as one as have future generations. This thesis will label Hubmaier as an Anabaptist because ultimately he did baptise adults.

Hubmaier's form of Anabaptism was arguably the only Anabaptist theology that had a chance to thrive due to his willingness to work with and support those in authority. This possibility was ended due to his execution by Ferdinand I in Vienna for heresy and sedition. He influenced other religious leaders such as the Hutterite leader Peter Riedmann who incorporated much of Hubmaier's writings into his *Account of Religion* (1565), which is the confession of faith for the Hutterites.<sup>3</sup> He also influenced the North American Baptists who consider Hubmaier to be one of their founders.<sup>4</sup> Hubmaier was an Anabaptist whose reform had the greatest potential for lasting success.

Balthasar Hubmaier however, has not been well treated by historians, either in terms of the acknowledgment of his significance or even in the identification of his true role. In the historiography of the Reformation Hubmaier is never mentioned much, and more often than not his career is given no more than a few lines. The following few historians are good examples of how Hubmaier tends to be treated within general Reformation studies. In Diarmaid MacCulloch's seminal work *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (2004), for example, throughout the entire book Hubmaier is only mentioned four times, and

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3 E. Mabry, *Balthasar Hubmaier's Understanding of Faith* (Lanham, 1998), p. 131.

4 Ibid, p. 150.

two of those are simply mentioning his name in reference to his anti-Semitism.<sup>5</sup> This continues in other major works: in Robert Linder's *The Reformation Era* (2008) Hubmaier's entire life and career is covered in only two pages.<sup>6</sup> Linder sees Hubmaier as an Anabaptist who was a reluctant martyr.<sup>7</sup> In Alister McGrath's survey *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (1999) Hubmaier is only briefly mentioned three times throughout the whole book.<sup>8</sup> Continuing this trend is Carter Lindberg's *Reformation Theologians: An Introduction To Theology In The Early Modern Period*; here, Hubmaier does not even get a section within the chapter 'Radical Theologians' but instead is just referred to a few times elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> All of these examples demonstrate that within the historiography of the Reformation Hubmaier is treated poorly, and is seen as a footnote within history. One of the reasons why he is treated this way is because he was executed only a few years into his career and as a result his form of Anabaptism did not survive. Therefore because in the eyes of some historians he did not have the longevity and influence that other reformers like Luther or Zwingli did, he is not seen as important or so worthy of study. Also history in general tends to be written by those who survive and so because Hubmaier was executed the primary sources that exist about him other than his writings are relatively limited; therefore Reformation historians do not have many sources to work with and as a result have been slow to identify Hubmaier as a significant figure within the Reformation.

Within the historiography of the radical Reformation Hubmaier has in general been treated in a manner more reflective of the significance of his true role. The seminal study on the radical Reformation is George Hunston Williams's *The Radical Reformation*, and within this book Williams examines in varying degrees of depth different aspects of Hubmaier's

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5 D. MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (London, 2004), pp. 19, 160, 166-9, 188.

6 R. D. Linder, *The Reformation Era* (Connecticut, 2008), pp. 90-91.

7 Ibid, p. 90.

8 A. E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 100, 184, 207

9 C. Lindberg, *The Reformation Theologians: An Introduction To Theology In The Early Modern Period* (Oxford, 2002), pp, 105, 113, 162, 332

life.<sup>10</sup> These include his role in the Peasants' War, where Williams notes that Hubmaier's chief interest was the freedom of the gospel, and his support for the peasants was secondary to this.<sup>11</sup> Although this part of the chapter is called 'The Uprising in Stuhlingen and Waldshut: The Role of Balthasar Hubmaier' he doesn't examine what role Hubmaier took within the revolt, but instead concentrates on the activities of the peasants. Hubmaier next appears when Williams looks at his baptism by Wilhelm Reublin, Williams implies that it was Reublin's influence that helped Hubmaier to embrace his new doctrine of believer's baptism.<sup>12</sup> He writes that 'Hubmaier was favourably disposed to move in the same direction [as Zurich and Zollikon]' and that after being baptised by Reublin Hubmaier was now 'confident in his new practice of believers' baptism'.<sup>13</sup> Williams describes at some length the final part of Hubmaier's career, of his time in Nikolsburg, his confrontation with Hans Hut, who was a disciple of Thomas Muntzer and believed that all governments should be slaughtered. Hut believed that those in authority had lost all right to their power, whereas Hubmaier fully supported the magistracy. This confrontation ended with the Lords of Nikolsburg siding with Hubmaier and imprisoning Hut. Williams also describes at length the theology that Hubmaier developed while at Nikolsburg.<sup>14</sup> Finally Williams describes Hubmaier's execution and states that Hubmaier and his wife were seen as martyrs by fellow believers.<sup>15</sup> This was most likely due to Hubmaier's prominent role in Nikolsburg. Williams generally treats Hubmaier very comprehensively by looking at all aspects of his life and career. In an article by the revisionist James Stayer entitled 'The Radical Reformation', Stayer mentions that there were different forms of Anabaptism which is shown by Hubmaier stating that his and Hut's baptism were as

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10 G. H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (London, 1962), pp. 64-67, 134-141, 167-169, 218-232, 408-410, 428-430

11 Ibid, pp. 66, 67.

12 Ibid, p. 136.

13 Ibid, p. 136.

14 Ibid, pp. 218-224.

15 Ibid, p. 229.



far apart as heaven and hell.<sup>16</sup> Stayer was one of the first historians to question the Mennonite historians claims that Anabaptism had a single origin and instead argue that its origin was much more diverse and complex.<sup>17</sup> Hubmaier is reflective of the complex, multiple origins of Anabaptism; he was an Anabaptist in that he believed in and practiced believers' baptism and condemned infant baptism, but he differed from others because he believed in a Christian government that protected its citizens from evildoers. This thesis will re-affirm this polygenesis of Anabaptism and highlight another way in which the whole movement could have gone had Hubmaier and his views survived.

Tellingly, though, Balthasar Hubmaier's treatment within some of the historiography specifically of Anabaptism has been the most negative of all. He has been misused by confessional historians to further their own, twentieth century picture of what Anabaptism was. This is most clearly demonstrated in the work of the Mennonite Horsch and his son in law Harold Bender. In the writings of Horsch, in the early twentieth century, he wrote a highly positive piece about the Anabaptists, where he called them the 'true Protestants of the Reformation.'<sup>18</sup> This affirmation regarding the Anabaptists did not apply to Hubmaier however, because he did not fit into the pigeon hole that Horsch had created for them. This treatment of Hubmaier is seen most clearly in the work of Horsch's son in law Harold Bender. In 1944 Bender wrote a highly influential and positive article about the Anabaptists called 'The Anabaptist Vision'; in this piece Bender continued and expanded upon the work of Horsch when he wrote that the only true Anabaptists were the ones who practiced non-

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16 J. Stayer, 'The Radical Reformation' in T. A. Brady jr., H. A. Oberman, J. D. Tracy (eds.), *Handbook of European History 1400-1600: Late Medieval Ages, Renaissance and Reformation* (Leiden, 1995), pp. 249-285, p. 261.

17 The monogenetic origin of Anabaptism was put forward by North American Mennonite scholars who believed that 'real' Anabaptism began in Zurich alone and that any Anabaptist who did not fit into their mould of being pacifistic and believing in the separation of Church and state was not a true Anabaptist. The revisionists however took issue with this interpretation of Anabaptism and instead argued that the origins of Anabaptism were much more diverse and complex and that the definition of what an Anabaptist was needed to be more broad.

18 J. M. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword* (Lawrence, 1972), p. 9.

resistance and believed in the separation of church and state.<sup>19</sup> They also believed in the freedom of conscience and voluntarism in religion.<sup>20</sup> Bender defined this 'real' Anabaptism by making a clear distinction between the

original evangelical and constructive Anabaptism on the one hand, which was born...in Zurich...and the various mystical, spiritualistic, revolutionary, or even antinomian related and unrelated groups...which came and went like the flowers of the field<sup>21</sup>

This evangelical Anabaptism which began in Zurich alone was in Bender's eyes the Swiss Brethren; they were the true Anabaptists and anyone who deviated from their beliefs was not part of the group.<sup>22</sup> Hubmaier was not included within this group of true Anabaptists because he did not preach non-resistance and so in Bender's eyes could not be considered a part of the Anabaptists. In a later article Bender calls Hubmaier a 'minor exception' in the Anabaptist movement.<sup>23</sup> Bender's ultimate purpose was to show a distinct line of inheritance from the original Anabaptists to the current Mennonites, this would help to create a single identifiable origin point for them that had 'a clear middle and a hesitant ending that came into their present which brought promise of a new beginning.'<sup>24</sup> This need that the Mennonites had to claim the Anabaptists for their own clearly influenced and skewed how they interpreted the sources that they read and their need to claim them was evidently for a purpose within their present day church. Roth backs this up and states that 'Bender's efforts to restore the study of Anabaptism and with it the position of the Anabaptists within history is inseparable from his need to use their history to create a spiritual renewal within the Mennonite church.'<sup>25</sup> He also

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19 H. S. Bender, 'The Anabaptist Vision', *American Society of Church History*, 13 (1944), pp. 3-24.

20 Ibid, p. 4.

21 Ibid, p. 8.

22 The Mennonite historians were not the only ones who believed that Anabaptism began in Zurich alone, Geoffrey Elton writes that 'the Anabaptist movement proper started in Zurich.' G. R. Elton, *Reformation Europe 1517-1559* (Glasgow, 1963), p. 94.

23 H. S. Bender, 'The Pacifism of the Sixteenth Century Anabaptists', *American Society of Church History*, 24 (1955), pp. 119-131, p. 124.

24 T. Heilke, 'Theological and Secular Meta-Narratives of Politics: Anabaptist Origins Revisited (Again)', *Modern Theology*, 13 (1997), pp. 227-252, p. 229.

25 J. Roth, 'Recent Currents in the Historiography of the Radical Reformation', *American Society of Church History*, 71 (2002), pp. 523-535, p. 523.

remarks that Bender's article 'The Anabaptist Vision' had 'a significance that went far beyond the academic findings that it presented to the world.'<sup>26</sup> The scholar Heilke argues whether the Mennonite's monogenetic view of Anabaptism is not simply a 'historical self-authentication, a self serving attempt at locating an historical legitimacy [for themselves]'.<sup>27</sup> Hubmaier's exclusion by the Mennonites meant that he was also excluded from any of their research and historical study. By contrast, another historian who examines Hubmaier through a confessional viewpoint to a rather different outcome is Christof Windhorst. Within Goertz and Klaassen's *Profiles of Radical Reformers* Hubmaier is given his own glowing chapter which is full of praise. Windhorst writes that Hubmaier had special talent and abilities, that the growing Anabaptist movement was indebted to him and that it was influenced by him and bore his stamp.<sup>28</sup> Evidently this is a more positive view of Hubmaier but Windhorst seems to be blind to any of Hubmaier's faults. Windhorst sums up this chapter on Hubmaier by calling Hubmaier the 'fighter for immortal truth' and that he was 'the best witness for the earnestness and strength of his theology and faith through his martyrdom.'<sup>29</sup> There does seem to be a contradiction here because Windhorst's article appears within an overwhelmingly revisionist volume; there is the possibility however that it was included to provide some contrast. The Baptist Vedder even compared Hubmaier to John the Baptist by writing that '...at a time when intolerance and persecution were universal, his was the voice of one crying in the wilderness for the restoration of... [the] right of man to study the scriptures for himself, and to whithersoever they might lead.'<sup>30</sup>

These excessively positive or excessively negative treatments of Hubmaier finally

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26 Ibid, p. 523.

27 Heilke, 'Theological and Secular Meta-Narratives of Politics: Anabaptist Origins Revisited (Again)', *Modern Theology*, p. 229.

28 C. Windhorst, 'Balthasar Hubmaier: Professor, Preacher, Politician' in H. J. Goertz, W. Klaassen (eds.), *Profiles of radical reformers: biographical sketches from Thomas Muntzer to Paracelsus* (Kitchener, 1982), pp. 144-158, p. 144.

29 Ibid, p. 155.

30 H. C. Vedder, *Balthasar Hubmaier: The Leader of the Anabaptists* (New York, 1905), p. 271.

came to an end in the work of the revisionist historians such as James Stayer and Hans-Jurgen Goertz.<sup>31</sup> They rejected the Mennonites' view of a monogenetic origin of Anabaptism and instead argued that their origin was multiple and complex and that they all had diverse views, such as the Swiss Brethren who originally were willing to consider alternatives to pacifism but ended up pacifistic due to persecution.<sup>32</sup> The seminal revisionist work was by J. Stayer called *Anabaptists And The Sword*.<sup>33</sup> Within this book Stayer did not ignore Hubmaier although he isn't studied in much depth; he calls him unusual and says that his career at Waldshut was a 'living testimony' to his real political views.<sup>34</sup> Stayer writes that 'Hubmaier's attempt to legitimise Anabaptism through cooperation with the authorities was discredited by failure, a failure which was highlighted through his own execution.'<sup>35</sup> The inclusion of Hubmaier within the Anabaptists is continued in 1996 by H. Goertz in his book *The Anabaptists*; Goertz notes that Hubmaier's 'scheme represented the first considered theological alternative to Zwingli's doctrines, but that he did not really add anything new to Anabaptist ideas.'<sup>36</sup> All of this demonstrates that Hubmaier's treatment within the historiography of Anabaptism is varied in the extreme, with historians either rejecting or accepting him depending on their definition of Anabaptism. Mennonites don't include him because he does not fit comfortably in the pigeon-hole of 'pacifistic Anabaptist', but the revisionists do because they see Anabaptism as diverse and complex and so there is room

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31 The revisionist historians' key works include J. M., Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword* (Kansas, 1972), Goertz, H. J., 'Radical Religiosity in the German Reformation' in R. P. Hsia (ed.), *A Companion To The Reformation World* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 70-86 and H. J., Goertz, W., Klaassen, *Profiles of radical reformers: biographical sketches from Thomas Muntzer to Paracelsus* (Kitchener, 1982). Even after the revisionists discounted the Mennonite historians' view of Anabaptism there is still the occasional historian who echoes the Mennonites' views. Juhnke reviewing J. D., Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist: The Origin and Significance of Sixteenth Century Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, 1987) writes that 'at the end, Weaver's definition of the Anabaptist norm comes down to a three-fold statement very reminiscent of Bender's 1943 essay...Anabaptist regulative principles include discipleship, the believing community, and the rejection of violence.' J. C. Juhnke, 'Review: [untitled]', *Church History*, 58 (1989), pp. 386-387, p. 387.

32 According to T. George the revisionists challenged 'what might be called a false intimacy with the historical past.' T. George, 'The Spirituality of the Radical Reformation' in J. Raitt (ed.) *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation* (London, 1987), pp. 334-376, p. 335.

33 Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword*.

34 Ibid, pp. 106-107.

35 Ibid, p. 167.

36 H. J. Goertz, *The Anabaptists* (London, 1996), p. 74.

within it for a figure such as Hubmaier.<sup>37</sup>

In recent years however there has been a growing interest in the study of Hubmaier, which has been reflected in the growing number of books and journal articles that have been published solely about him. One of the potential reasons for this is that the revisionist historians in the early 1970's threw open the study of different figures and groups that the confessional historians had previously ignored as irrelevant. The study of Hubmaier's writings was greatly assisted in 1989 by the publication of a new translation of his complete Anabaptist works by Pipkin and Yoder.<sup>38</sup> This book also included a brief overview of Hubmaier's life and informative footnotes explaining some of Hubmaier's references. Another historian who treats Hubmaier comprehensively is Estep in his *Renaissance and Reformation*. Within the chapter 'Anabaptist Theologians' the study of Hubmaier is given nine pages, and he is mentioned in a few places throughout the book in reference to other events.<sup>39</sup> Hubmaier's portrayal is as a theologian who had an influence over sixteenth century Anabaptism.<sup>40</sup> In 1991 J. McClendon Jr. published an important journal article called 'Balthasar Hubmaier, Catholic Anabaptist'. In this article McClendon argues that Hubmaier's theology was so greatly influenced by his Catholic upbringing that he should be called a Catholic Anabaptist and that 'his typical deeds and central thoughts remain dark to us unless we take account of the near foreground of his life as Catholic intellectual and Catholic pastor.'<sup>41</sup>

Other recent studies solely about Hubmaier include Klager's *Balthasar Hubmaier's Use of the Church Fathers: Availability, Access and Interaction* (2010); here, Klager notes

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37 Stayer writes that the confessional view that the North American Mennonites held at the publication of *Anabaptists and the Sword* is no longer the case, and that Mennonite scholars such as H. Goertz were creating groundbreaking studies. J. Stayer, 'Reflections And Retractions On Anabaptists And The Sword', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 51 (1977), pp. 196-212, p. 197.

38 H. W. Pipkin, J. H. Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, 1989).

39 W. R. Estep, *Renaissance and Reformation* (Michigan, 1986).

40 Ibid, p. 216.

41 J. W. McClendon, Jr, 'Balthasar Hubmaier, Catholic Anabaptist', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 65 (1991), p. 21.

that Hubmaier used the beliefs of the fathers to back up his own arguments in areas such as baptism and free will.<sup>42</sup> The significance of this is that Hubmaier was willing to look outside of scripture to back up his argument. However he picked and chose the certain church fathers that agreed with him on areas. This shows that even though Hubmaier claimed that he saw only scripture as the basis of his theology, he was willing to use other sources if they agreed with him. It also points to his high level of education. Another recent study is Wiens's *Balthasar Hubmaier's Sword: A Circumstantial Development* (2010). In this study Wiens claims that Hubmaier's theology on the sword up until his major work on the subject, 'On The Sword' (1527), was 'markedly different, and that up until 1525 he should not be separated from the Swiss Brethren in his attitude to the sword of government.'<sup>43</sup> The recent work of E. Mabry has also been important in the historiography of Hubmaier. In his book *Balthasar Hubmaier's Doctrine of the Church* (1994) he writes that his aim is to make 'a further contribution to the on-going movement of church historians to re-discover the genius of Anabaptism, and particularly that of its leading theologian, Dr. Balthasar Hubmaier.'<sup>44</sup> He also states that this book is a breakthrough in Hubmaier studies because it is the only book that looks into Hubmaier's doctrine of the church.<sup>45</sup> Mabry's central point is important; he writes even though due to 'his teachings against infant baptism Hubmaier was called an Anabaptist, and even their leader, Hubmaier was in fact so different from all of the Anabaptists that he could scarcely be called one of them.'<sup>46</sup> He does not easily fit into any of the categories that historians impose on him and Mabry sums this up by stating that from his theological foundation Hubmaier can

'interact with the various views, agree and disagree with them, without really becoming a

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42 A. P. Klager, 'Balthasar Hubmaier's Use of the Church Fathers: Availability, Access and Interaction', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 84 (2010), pp. 1-103, p. 65.

43 R. H. Wiens, *Balthasar Hubmaier's Sword: A Circumstantial Development*, Waterloo (2010), p. 100.

44 E. Mabry, *Balthasar Hubmaier's Doctrine of the Church* (Lanham, 1994), p. xvi.

45 Ibid, p. xvi.

46 Ibid, p. 201.

member of any particular camp. He remains consistently somewhere in between them all.<sup>47</sup> Within this study Mabry examines in depth various different areas of Hubmaier's doctrine of the church such as, his beliefs on the church, salvation and regeneration, baptism, the Lord's supper and the role of the church in the world.<sup>48</sup> He concludes that Hubmaier's reform ideas and doctrine of the church specifically had an enormous impact on Anabaptism and upon the Protestant Reformation in general, and that this impact 'was more due to him being an independent theologian interacting with them, rather than him being a disciple of any particular group.'<sup>49</sup>

In Mabry's most recent work *Balthasar Hubmaier's Understanding of Faith* he writes that he 'wants there to be a clear understanding of how Hubmaier's understanding of faith is a central idea in his theology and how he influenced the ongoing debate.'<sup>50</sup> Mabry states that Hubmaier understands faith to presuppose human free will, as one must be able to hear the Word of God and respond to it.<sup>51</sup> He also writes that Hubmaier developed a 'trichotomous anthropology, in which the three distinct parts of human nature, spirit, soul and body, each have their own will.'<sup>52</sup> Mabry's overall view and treatment of Hubmaier is very comprehensive. The latest book solely about Hubmaier is K. MacGregor's *A Central European Synthesis Of Radical And Magisterial Reform: The Sacramental Theology of Balthasar Hubmaier* (2006). Within this very important study MacGregor makes some important points. For example, he argues that Hubmaier differs from other Anabaptists so

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47 Ibid, p. 201.

48 Hubmaier believed that there can be no salvation outside of the church because of 'the church's instructional and shepherding role, which Christ has given only to the church with the investiture of the keys' and that for Hubmaier 'salvation is a process of the actual transformation of fallen humanity so that it becomes, in fact, acceptable before God.' Ibid, pp. 101-102 Hubmaier's doctrine of regeneration is linked to his beliefs in salvation. He believes that the salvation of an individual begins with an 'inner regeneration experience' which is 'wrought by God in the inner being of the person who responds to God's word; and it continues under the shepherding of the church until the sinner is transformed into a totally righteous person, and can, thus, stand justified before God.' Ibid, p. 102.

49 Ibid, p. 201.

50 Mabry, *Balthasar Hubmaier's Understanding of Faith*, p. xii.

51 Ibid, p. 152.

52 Ibid, p. 152.

greatly in his theology that he shouldn't be called an Anabaptist at all but 'must be reclassified as both a Magisterial and Radical Reformer, a strange hybrid that does not seem to be reflected by any figure or group in the Anabaptist movement.'<sup>53</sup> MacGregor is the first historian within the historiography of Hubmaier to make this point; although Mabry does go as far as writing that Hubmaier can barely be called an Anabaptist, he never goes as far as to say what then Hubmaier should be called. MacGregor also states for the first time that it was in fact Hubmaier and not the Swiss Brethren who was the first to institute believer's baptism.<sup>54</sup> He writes that it was established by Hubmaier in partial form in Regensburg in 1522 and in complete form in Waldshut by 1523.<sup>55</sup> MacGregor believes that the Zurich council saw infant baptism as indispensable because Zwingli did, similarly in Waldshut the authorities also followed their reformer but in the opposite direction, and so there was no issue in the removal of infant baptism, due to Hubmaier believing that it wasn't a problem.<sup>56</sup> Waldshut simply saw the institution of believer's baptism as another reform of a long line initiated by Hubmaier whereas Zurich, MacGregor argues, would not have linked infant baptism with treason if Zwingli had not already done so.<sup>57</sup> This is significant because it demonstrates that Hubmaier was willing to put his beliefs into practice before anyone else, and shows just how strongly he believed that he knew the truth.

This study will examine whether MacGregor's view of Hubmaier as a hybrid magisterial and radical reformer also applies to areas of his theology that MacGregor's study did not cover, namely his views on non-resistance, magisterial authority and the sword. To clarify, non-resistance is when a person refuses to resist any enemy even when under attack,

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>54</sup> K. R. MacGregor, *A Central European Synthesis of Radical and Magisterial Reform: The Sacramental Theology of Balthasar Hubmaier* (Lanham, 2006), p. 126 Grieser reviewing Estep's *The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to Sixteenth Century Anabaptism* writes that Estep sees the institution of adult baptism by the Swiss Brethren as 'the most revolutionary act of the Reformation.'. D. J. Grieser, 'Review: [untitled]', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 28 (1997), pp. 244-245, p. 244. This accolade however should instead be given to Hubmaier as he was the first to institute it.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 126.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 126.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 127.



magisterial authority is a term that refers to the ruling elite of the time, namely monarchs, governments and councils, and finally the concept of ‘the sword’ refers to the authority of governments to attack its enemies and defend its citizens.<sup>58</sup> The study will ultimately conclude that Hubmaier did indeed go his own way in his theology on non-resistance issues and therefore supports MacGregor's claims that Hubmaier was a unique figure in his period. It will however disagree with MacGregor's argument that Hubmaier should be called a hybrid and instead suggest that Hubmaier was a true Anabaptist. However, as with the other areas of his theology it was unplanned and not a political decision. Hubmaier wrote many times that his theology was based on a simple and thorough reading of scriptures; although as will be shown Hubmaier was greatly influenced by his education and these influences came into play in how he actually interpreted scripture. This study will also conclude that within Hubmaier's Anabaptism there had been a great possibility for Anabaptism to have gone in a different direction if he had survived.

The primary sources that will be used within this thesis will be ones that are either written or translated into the English, although this is a limitation this thesis still has access to all of Hubmaier's writings. To examine Hubmaier's beliefs on non-resistance this study will look at his own writings. This will involve studying in depth the recent edited collection of Hubmaier's Anabaptist writings.<sup>59</sup> This collection will be invaluable to this study, and will be the main source for examining Hubmaier's theology. The writings that Pipkin and Yoder chose for this collection constitute all of Hubmaier's Anabaptist writings. Within this there are numerous writings of Hubmaier's that either deal with directly or mention his views on non-

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58 These three topics are all interconnected and were of great importance during the 1520's. One reason for this is because with the rise of the Reformation and Luther's 'sola scriptura' there had been a rise in the study of scripture, and through this people had come away from the Bible with their own interpretations. This included views on whether a person could defend themselves, whether those in authority were seen as unchristian or a guardian of the people, and whether war could ever be justified. An example of the importance of these topics in this period is demonstrated by the treatment of Hans Hut by Hubmaier and Lord Liechtenstein who imprisoned him and ejected his followers from the city because Hut believed that all those in authority should be slain.  
59 H. W. Pipkin, J. H. Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, 1989).

resistance and the sword, these include *A Brief Apologia* (1526) and *Apologia* (1527) as well as his main work on the subject which is his treatise on *The Sword* (1527), dealing directly with how the authority of government should be viewed and treated. It also addresses the issue of whether the ordinary person can go to war or not. This range of primary sources will be invaluable to examine what Hubmaier's views were on these issues. Examining Hubmaier's writings will help to show whether Hubmaier saw himself as an Anabaptist. Other sources that will be useful include *The Schleithem Confession* (1527).<sup>60</sup> This primary source will be invaluable in chapter three of this study when examining Hubmaier's theology on non-resistance, the sword and magisterial authority. It will be possible to see how much Hubmaier differed in his theology on this topic when compared to the Swiss Brethren. These sources will be very useful in the study because it will be possible using them to compare and contrast Hubmaier's view with those of other leaders and religious groups of the time, such as Zwingli and the Swiss Brethren. This will enable Hubmaier to be given a specific place within the radical Reformation and will show where Hubmaier differed in his theology from other Anabaptists. There are also printed primary sources relating to important figures that had contact with Hubmaier but deviated from him on his beliefs on non-resistance. These include some of Zwingli's writings, including his *Short Christian Instruction* (1523) and *On Baptism* (1525) where Zwingli stated his views on various aspects of his theology.<sup>61</sup> This source will be useful because it will help to demonstrate what Zwingli believed on some of the topics that were being debated fiercely at the time. It will also enable the comparison of Zwingli's beliefs against Hubmaier's. The Hutterite leader Peter Riedemann's *Account Of Our Religion* (1565) will also be examined to see if there is any overlap between

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60 'The Schleithem Confession of Faith', in Estep, W., *Anabaptist Beginnings (1523-1533)* (Nieuwkoop, 1976), p. 99

61 Zwingli, 'Short Christian Instruction', 'On Baptism' in C. Lindberg (ed.), *The European Reformations Sourcebook* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 109-110, 131.

Riedemann's and Hubmaier's theology.<sup>62</sup>

Chapter One of this study will examine Hubmaier's career as a whole, thus enabling the reader to get an understanding of the major events of Hubmaier's career and how they affected him. Chapter Two will examine Hubmaier's theology in general, excluding his beliefs on non-resistance; this will show whether he was unique in areas of his theology other than those that will be discussed in Chapter Three. Chapter Three will examine in great detail Hubmaier's beliefs on the issue of toleration, non-resistance, the sword and magisterial authority and Chapter Four will examine Balthasar Hubmaier's impact and legacy. The conclusion will sum up Hubmaier's beliefs on non-resistance, magisterial authority and the sword. The conclusion will also ask the question about whether Hubmaier's form of Anabaptism could have survived and have become the acceptable face of Anabaptism if not for his martyrdom. The conclusion will demonstrate that the definition of what an Anabaptist is needs to be broadened because Hubmaier was ultimately an Anabaptist, he differed from the main body of Anabaptists in his beliefs on non-resistance, magisterial authority and 'the sword'. As a result, it seems that some historians of the Reformation, and certainly the Radical Reformation, need to look again at how they categorise the figures and groups that they study.

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62 P. Rideman, *Confession Of Faith* (Bungay, 1950).

## CHAPTER ONE: THE CAREER OF BALTHASAR HUBMAIER

Examining Hubmaier's upbringing and career is quite a difficult thing to do because few primary sources about Hubmaier exist. Also to make it even more difficult Hubmaier did not write about himself much within his writings. One reason for this is that he saw the truth that he was trying to proclaim more important than himself and so gave his theology centre stage. Due to this varying attention is given to different aspects of his life. For example Hubmaier did not mention his eventual conversion from being a Catholic to a Lutheran, Zwinglian and finally an Anabaptist and so it is impossible to analyse his writings in any depth on this topic. There are however various parts of his career that are possible to analyse, these include his education and its influence on him, his role within the anti-Jewish riots in Regensburg in 1516 and his role within the Peasants' War in 1524. These will be examined here in order to see how these events shaped and affected Hubmaier's later theology.

Balthasar Hubmaier was born in the town of Friedburg in Bavaria sometime between 1480 and 1485. Not a great deal is known about the beginning of his life other than his family most likely were of the peasant class but were somehow able to give Hubmaier more than the standard education.<sup>1</sup> Vedder conjectures that his family may have risen to the artisan or small merchant class but that they were evidently of limited local stature due to the fact that no records about them have survived.<sup>2</sup> However there is simply not enough evidence to determine whether this is true or not; ultimately not much is known about Hubmaier's background. What is known, however, is that Hubmaier started his education in Augsburg at the Cathedral school and then he took minor holy orders and went to the University of Freiburg in the Breisgau.<sup>3</sup> It was during this period at this university that he met the man who

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<sup>1</sup> H. C. Vedder, *Balthasar Hubmaier: The Leader of the Anabaptists* (New York, 1905), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> H. J. Goertz, W. Klaassen, *Profiles of radical reformers: biographical sketches from Thomas Muntzer to Paracelsus* (Kitchener, 1982), p. 145

would become his mentor, Johann Eck, who would later achieve fame as the man who disputed against Luther at the Leipzig disputation in 1519. Hubmaier was soon ordained as a priest and in 1512 when Eck was called to the University of Ingolstadt Hubmaier soon followed and was awarded his doctorate in theology in September 1512.<sup>4</sup> Hubmaier's education would have been a traditional one and it can be assumed that he would have been subjected to the same teachings and influences that other German students would have been exposed to, such as nominalism. James McClendon Jr. suggests that

‘Hubmaier could not have had radical reform as the father of his life in Christ if the Catholic church had not been his spiritual mother...and that he was influenced so much by his Catholic upbringing that he should be in fact called a Catholic baptist’.<sup>5</sup>

This points to the idea that Hubmaier was greatly influenced as a man and in his theology by his education and upbringing.<sup>6</sup>

Steinmetz writes that ‘Hubmaier like Luther received a thorough education in late medieval scholastic thought.’<sup>7</sup> Mabry agrees noting that he was well schooled in scholastic philosophy and that he was exposed to late medieval Augustinianism of the Franciscan school, which was the ‘theology of St. Augustine via the syncretism of Thomas Aquinas and Aristotelianism and influenced somewhat by the *via moderna* and *via antiqua*’.<sup>8</sup>

Once Hubmaier had started at the university, and through the strong influence of his mentor Eck Hubmaier was pulled into the camp of the nominalists.<sup>9</sup> The significance of this is that it shows quite clearly how much influence Eck had over Hubmaier because he was able to bring Hubmaier over to join his group; and also it shows that Hubmaier greatly

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4 H. W. Pipkin, J. H. Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, 1992), p. 16.

5 J. W. McClendon, Jr, ‘Balthasar Hubmaier, Catholic Anabaptist’, *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 65 (1991), pp. 20-33, p. 22, 32.

6 Mabry agrees with this when he states that ‘Hubmaier's theology at times seems to reflect the theology of the medieval church rather than of the Protestant reformers.’ E. Mabry, *Balthasar Hubmaier's Understanding of Faith* (Lanham, 1998), p. 111.

7 D. C. Steinmetz, ‘Scholasticism and Radical Reform: Nominalist Motifs in the Theology of Balthasar Hubmaier’, *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 45 (1971), pp. 123-144, p. 125.

8 Mabry, *Balthasar Hubmaier's Understanding of Faith*, p. 111.

9 Ibid, p. 119.

respected and looked up to Eck, because he was willing to side with him. Although it is entirely possible that it was Hubmaier's considered opinion that Eck was right in this matter. It would have been interesting to see how Hubmaier's theology would have altered if he had not followed Eck into the same group and gone a different way. There were four different nominalist groups at Freiburg and Hubmaier joined the fourth one, this group was a moderate branch of nominalism and was led by the teachings of John Gerson and Gabriel Biel.<sup>10</sup> When Eck left Freiburg Hubmaier ended up becoming the leader of this group.<sup>11</sup> The contrast between Hubmaier at this point in his life and later after his conversion is interesting because Hubmaier while at Freiburg championed a form of nominalism and yet after his conversion to Protestant Evangelicalism he apparently rejected much of the theology of the medieval church, including medieval nominalism.<sup>12</sup> His rejection of it however was not entirely complete because he was so influenced by it in his education, it would have been impossible for Hubmaier to have been able to remove its effects.<sup>13</sup> Therefore they need to live as good a life as possible in order to be receptive to God's call. Hubmaier ended up accepting some nominalistic ideas but rejecting others. For example Steinmetz writes that Hubmaier agreed with the nominalists and distinguished between the absolute and ordained power of God, although he rejected the Augustinian understanding of predestination; Hubmaier ultimately 'revived the nominalistic solutions and embraced them as his own'.<sup>14</sup> Hubmaier also defended the freedom of the human will against Luther and in doing so returned to some of the medieval views that he had been brought up on. Although Hubmaier was influenced by

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10 Ibid, p. 119.

11 Ibid, p. 121.

12 Ibid, p. 121.

13 Mabry agrees with this when he states that in 'his understanding of faith Hubmaier returns to some of his prior nominalist beliefs.' For example 'Hubmaier believed like Biel in the free will of humans and that God must give humanity the ability to hear his word and respond to it, but to do this they need a degree of free will.' Ibid, pp. 122, 124.

14 Steinmetz, 'Scholasticism and Radical Reform: Nominalist Motifs in the Theology of Balthasar Hubmaier', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, pp. 123-144, p. 131.

nominalism, it would be incorrect to claim that it was the only influence on his thought.<sup>15</sup> All of this demonstrates that Hubmaier rethought his education to confirm the continuity of his previous ideas. Hubmaier did not simply read the bible and then base his theology on that and as Janz says

'one of the breakthroughs in Reformation studies is the discovery that the Reformation had a background. The ideas of the Reformers did not emerge full blown from an objective study of the bible alone but emerged from a theology landscape that they either rejected, appropriated or sublated by taking something old and making it into something new.'<sup>16</sup>

This applies as much to Hubmaier as to any of the mainstream reformers and highlights that he was deeply influenced by 'via moderna'; although after his conversion from the Catholic faith he tried to reject all of his education, it was ultimately impossible and this shone through in his later writings where he appropriated nominalistic terms and theology for his own. As well as Hubmaier's attempted rejection of his past he also came to reject and attack priests in general, calling the priests 'ass strokers, whores, adulterers, pimps, gamblers, drunkards and buffoons whom we certainly would not have trusted to take care of sows and nanny goats!'<sup>17</sup> Hubmaier was not alone in his anticlericalist views; the Swiss Brethren also attacked the clergy and wanted instead 'to liquidate the long-established clerical system of tithes and benefices, and to turn the preacher into a servant of local congregations instead of being an agent of a church or state hierarchy whose authority pressed down upon the common laity.'<sup>18</sup>

The significance of this is that it demonstrates that anticlericalism was a theme that ran through different forms of Anabaptism whether pacifistic or not.

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15 Steinmetz agrees and writes that although 'Hubmaier was not influenced solely by nominalism it yet played an important part in the formation of his views.' He also notes that 'Hubmaier retains nominalist insights precisely at those points where they have been overcome by the radically Augustinian theology of Martin Luther.' *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 137

16 D. R. Janz, 'Late Medieval Theology' in D. Bagchi, D. C. Steinmetz, (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion To Reformation Theology* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 5-15, p. 5.

17 T. George, 'The Spirituality of the Radical Reformation' in J. Raitt (ed.) *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation* (London, 1987), pp. 334-376, p. 337.

18 J. Stayer, 'Reformation, Peasants, Anabaptists: Northeastern Swiss Anticlericalism' in P. A. Dykema, H. A. Oberman (eds.), *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 1993), pp. 559-566, p. 566.

After receiving his doctorate Hubmaier was employed as a theology professor, and he also became the priest in the largest church in the city of Ingolstadt, but by 1516 he was called to become the cathedral preacher in Regensburg.<sup>19</sup> It was during this five year period in Regensburg that Hubmaier became involved in the anti-Semitic riots that ended with the expulsion of the entire Jewish population from the city. At this point in his life Hubmaier was still a devout Catholic and saw the Jews' practices as intolerable, (though a Protestant would have felt the same). He spoke out against the 'money lending practices, arguing that the toleration of the sin of usury in the community represented a great danger to the souls of the city's Christians'.<sup>20</sup>

With the support of the clergy and Hubmaier the council was able to get a papal bull condemning usury and the participation of Christians in it; this led to a boycott of Jewish merchants and some Christian merchants even refused to sell to Jewish customers.<sup>21</sup> There is no mention however of whether Christian customers were ever treated in the same way. This Jewish situation was talked about at a secret meeting of the Reichstag in Augsburg to which Hubmaier was sent to defend the clergy; Vedder writes that 'the presence of this hated preacher against their race roused the Jews to special efforts, and they did everything in their power to secure his expulsion'.<sup>22</sup> Through the use of influence and money they managed to achieve this and an Imperial messenger was sent to Regensburg, where he demanded Hubmaier's recall and amongst other things that the priest should stop his preaching against the Jews and that the papal bull be treated as null and void.<sup>23</sup> It can be assumed that the city did as required and for a time Hubmaier was still in Augsburg. Not long after however Hubmaier wanted to return to Regensburg. However he had to call in favours and promise

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19 Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 16.

20 A. F. Creasman, 'The Virgin Mary Against the Jews: Anti-Jewish Polemic in the Pilgrimage to the Schöne Maria of Regensburg, 1519-25', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 33 (2002), pp. 963-980, p. 966.

21 Creasman, 'The Virgin Mary Against the Jews: Anti-Jewish Polemic in the Pilgrimage to the Schöne Maria of Regensburg, 1519-25', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, pp. 963-980, p. 966.

22 Vedder, *Balthasar Hubmaier: The Leader of the Anabaptists*, p. 41.

23 Ibid, p. 42.



that he would be more moderate towards the Jews in future if he was going to be allowed to return.<sup>24</sup> As soon as he had arrived back in the city however Hubmaier told the city council that he would not moderate or slacken his efforts against the Jews and that the Church would defend him against his breaking of his pledge of peace to the Emperor.<sup>25</sup>

Vedder sums up by saying that ‘while it is difficult to infer Hubmaier's motives in taking such an ignoble role in this action against the Jewish population, it is quite likely that he simply shared the prejudices of the time against the Jews and thought that the persecution of them was a sign of a good Christian.’<sup>26</sup> It is highly likely that Hubmaier did indeed simply think that he was being a good Catholic and that by attacking the Jews he was defending both the city and all of Christendom from their practices. Eventually Emperor Maximilian I had to intervene in 1518 to order that the council expel Hubmaier from the city and reinstate the Jews' privileges.<sup>27</sup> This shows quite clearly that the Emperor considered Hubmaier to be one of the main voices if not the leader of the actions against the Jews and that he thought that by expelling him from the city the main threat to the Jews would be removed. This demand was either ignored or was invalidated when the Emperor died, which allowed Hubmaier and his followers to focus all of their efforts and attention on ridding the city of the Jews. All of this culminated in the expulsion of the entire Jewish community from the city, and in the place of its synagogue which was destroyed by the mob, a shrine was erected by Hubmaier that was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. This shrine, was called the 'Schöne Maria' and not long after its construction miracles apparently started to take place there, this culminated in the shrine becoming incredibly popular with pilgrims and multitudes of them started to flock there.<sup>28</sup>

Blickle says that ‘Hubmaier encouraged tens of thousands of pilgrims to flock to the shrine of

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24 Ibid, pp. 42-43.

25 Ibid, p. 43.

26 Ibid, p. 43.

27 Creasman, ‘The Virgin Mary Against the Jews: Anti-Jewish Polemic in the Pilgrimage to the Schöne Maria of Regensburg, 1519-25’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, pp. 963-980, p. 966.

28 Ibid, pp. 963-4.

the Blessed Virgin.<sup>29</sup> This enthusiasm caused critics of pilgrimages to argue that this new shrine and its pilgrims were socially destabilising and at worst demoniacally inspired.<sup>30</sup>

Evidently at some point something that Hubmaier did not agree with must have occurred at the shrine because Hubmaier unexpectedly left the city. One possible reason was the behaviour of the pilgrims at the shrine.<sup>31</sup> Williams writes 'there were abuses so coarse connected to the pilgrimages at the new shrine that Hubmaier willingly accepted the call to become the priest at Waldshut.'<sup>32</sup>

Whatever the reason, Hubmaier eventually decided to leave Regensburg and accept the call to become the priest at Waldshut. There are conflicting reports by historians about what Hubmaier thought about this period of his life once he had become an Anabaptist, even though while in prison in Zurich Hubmaier himself wrote that

when I was a preacher in Regensburg, I saw the great oppression that the population suffered from the Jews; I saw that ecclesiastical and secular statutes gave law and sentence to this. Then I said to the people from the pulpit, that they ought not to suffer in this wise for the future. But nobody repented and all remained as before.<sup>33</sup>

This demonstrates quite clearly that Hubmaier even as an Anabaptist did not believe that what he had done in Regensburg had been wrong.<sup>34</sup> Even though Hubmaier shows no regret when he briefly mentioned this period of his life, historians have still debated this issue.<sup>35</sup>

MacCulloch suggests that once Hubmaier was an Anabaptist that he repented of his actions

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29 P. Blickle, *From the Communal Reformation to the Revolution of the Common Man* (Leiden, 1998), p. 95.

30 Ibid, p. 964.

31 Creasman writes that 'some threw themselves on the ground before it; others sang and danced around it. Many pilgrims wept...a mood of apocalyptic expectation sometimes prevailed.' Creasman, 'The Virgin Mary Against the Jews: Anti-Jewish Polemic in the Pilgrimage to the Schöne Maria of Regensburg, 1519-25', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, pp. 963-980, p. 974.

32 G. H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (London, 1962), p. 65 Vedder suggests that Hubmaier's departure from Regensburg may have been due to the conflict that was occurring between the shrine and the order of the Dominicans, who were jealous that the shrine was receiving lots of gifts from the pilgrims. Vedder, *Balthasar Hubmaier: The Leader of the Anabaptists*, pp. 47-48.

33 Ibid, pp. 43-44.

34 Mabry agrees with this idea when he notes that in his actions against the Jews Hubmaier claimed that he was simply following the teachings of Eck, and that he was being a good Catholic. E. Mabry, *Balthasar Hubmaier's Doctrine of the Church* (Lanham, 1994), p. 2.

35 Mabry states that it was 'Hubmaier's disappointment with the result of the pilgrimage trade and Regensburg's worldly, economic and commercial atmosphere that led Hubmaier to eventually regret his participation in the affair.' Ibid, p. 23.

but doesn't mention why he thinks this.<sup>36</sup> Vedder contrasts this view and says that 'even after he had become more enlightened as to the true spirit of the gospel, he expressed no regret for his course, but rather gives it tacit approval.'<sup>37</sup> This shows that both Mabry and MacCulloch feel the need to show that Hubmaier regretted his actions even though he never said that he did himself. Their need to do this may be due to the rightfully hated view of anti-Semitism and its association with Nazism in today's world, both Mabry and MacCulloch are attempting to moderate Hubmaier's views more than he did himself so that he is portrayed as a more sympathetic figure for today's readers. This does not mean however that Mabry or MacCulloch should not be taken as reliable commentators on Hubmaier at all, their need to exonerate him due to his writings against the Jews is regrettable but it does not negate the quality of their research in other areas. The main evidence that historians use to claim that Hubmaier regretted this period of his life is that he developed a theology on tolerance once he had become an Anabaptist. This is demonstrated by MacGregor who says that 'once Hubmaier had acquired his theology on tolerance his attitude towards Jews had a tremendous conversion; he reversed his opinion of them and championed a Christian adoption of a philo-Semitic stance.'<sup>38</sup> Hubmaier did indeed change his view on the Jews but this does not necessarily mean that he had come to regret his actions against them in the past. Hubmaier shows his change in attitude to those of all different faiths when he writes that 'a Turk or a heretic cannot be overcome by our doing, neither by sword nor by fire, but alone with patience and supplication, whereby we patiently await divine judgement.'<sup>39</sup> While his less aggressive view meant that he thought that secular authority did not have the right to execute groups such as the Jews or Turks due to their religious beliefs but that patience and kindness

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36 D. MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (London, 2004), p. 166.

37 Vedder, *Balthasar Hubmaier: The Leader of the Anabaptists*, p.43.

38 K. R. MacGregor, *A Central European Synthesis Of Radical And Magisterial Reform: The Sacramental Theology Of Balthasar Hubmaier* (Lanham, 2006), p. 149.

39 Hubmaier, 'On Heretics and Those Who Burn Them', in H. W. Pipkin, J. H. Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, 1992), p. 62.

would eventually win them over, this does not mean that he would ignore a practice such as usury if he came across it again, although this would apply to Christians practicing usury as much as Jews. The significance of this is that it shows that Hubmaier was very much a man of his time and it grounds him in the sixteenth century. Hubmaier (as with most people of his century) had no problem with being anti-Semitic but once he had developed a more moderate view he realized that being aggressive towards them would achieve nothing, because he believed that Christianity was not a religion of force but of patience.<sup>40</sup> The significance of Hubmaier's new attitude towards the Jews for this study is that it ties into his writings on toleration because he comes to believe that those of other religions such as Turks and Jews should be treated patiently and with kindness, not aggression and force. It also shows that his shifting interpretation of scripture greatly affected his shifting view on the world.

At the end of 1520 Hubmaier left Regensburg for Waldshut to accept the invitation to become the priest there. It was during this period at Waldshut that Hubmaier started to read the bible deeply for the first time and he also read the writings of Luther and Erasmus.<sup>41</sup> All of this led to him beginning to question his Catholic teachings. In 1523 Hubmaier visited Zurich and talked with Zwingli about theology, with special focus on infant baptism which they both rejected at the time, due to there being no scriptural authority for it. Hubmaier also attended the October disputation in Zurich, at this disputation Hubmaier sided with Zwingli on the issue of the mass. From this point Hubmaier until April 1525 saw himself as a follower of Zwingli. Unfortunately the primary sources do not tell us anything more about this period of Hubmaier's life and Hubmaier himself did not write anything about it. We simply do not know how Hubmaier saw himself when he was a follower of Zwingli.

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40 T. George backs this up when he argues that 'rulers and magistrates do not have it within their power to compel the heart. By compulsion they can only produce hypocrites, not true Christians.' George, 'The Spirituality of the Radical Reformation' in Raitt (ed.) *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, pp. 334-376, p. 362.

41 Mullett writes that 'radical Christians who move away from totally fidelity to scripture share with the major churches the view of scripture as a tool'. M. Mullett, *Radical Religious Movements in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1980), p. xi.

At the end of 1524 Hubmaier became involved in the dispute known as the Peasants' War. This is an interesting event within Hubmaier's career to examine because at this point in his life Hubmaier no longer considered himself to be a Catholic, he was not yet considered an Anabaptist but thought himself as a follower of Zwingli. Therefore his role within the rebellion would be a helpful indicator to show whether he supported the peasants, whether he can be seen as one of the leaders or not and whether he wrote any of their demands for them. As a follower of Zwingli it is interesting to note that Zwingli's own views on the Peasants' War were complex because he had agreed that 'there was no scriptural justification for turning a payment which had originally been a voluntary one into an exaction enforced by customary and canon law.'<sup>42</sup> Even so he felt that he had to 'uphold the established political and social order, which suited him very well... with the legal requirement that tithe should be paid, he was satisfied; it was sufficient that the government ordered and enforced it upon its subjects whose duty it was to obey and pay.'<sup>43</sup> Any potential role that Hubmaier had in this conflict would have angered Zwingli because he believed in supporting those in authority, and by associating himself in any way with the peasants Hubmaier would be seen to be contradicting this view.

Ultimately determining Hubmaier's role within the rebellion is a very difficult thing to achieve because Hubmaier never mentions the rebellion or his role within it in his writings and so all there is to examine is how other people at the time saw him. All that can really be determined is that it seems most likely that Hubmaier did lend the peasants moral support, and that he did support some of their demands, as evidenced by his preaching of a sermon to them, this sermon is not available to examine as it has not been translated into English. The majority of historians also seem to be in agreement that Hubmaier did not write or amend the peasants demands for them but at the most simply approved them. Scott agrees with this idea

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42 G. R. Potter, *Zwingli* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 198-199.

43 Ibid, pp. 198-199.

when he states that,

Fabri suggested that upon the arrival of the Klettgauers in Waldshut Hubmaier delivered a sermon to them saying that game, fish, fowl, wine, pasture and wood were all common property. This is possible but does not paint Hubmaier as a great leader of rebellion as this was the common stock of the peasant's demands. There is no reason to doubt that he lent them moral support but there is almost no trace of his doctrines in their articles of grievances.<sup>44</sup>

Another view from the Mennonite historian Foley is that Hubmaier encouraged cooperation between the armed peasants and Waldshut, and that he himself carried weapons.<sup>45</sup> This contrasts with MacGregor who states that Hubmaier opposed the Peasants' War and that the revolt was catastrophic for many of his parishioners who were killed by the peasants.<sup>46</sup> These contrasting views shows that Hubmaier's role within the rebellion is still cause for some uncertainty; this is most likely because Hubmaier does not mention the revolt at all in any of his writings from the period and so the only sources that historians are left with are those of Hubmaier's enemies.<sup>47</sup> For example the Austrian government regarded Hubmaier as one of the rebellion's leaders but Steinmetz argues that Hubmaier was less concerned with the feudal rights of the peasants and more with the freedom of Waldshut to remain Protestant.<sup>48</sup> Ultimately Hubmaier's definite role within the rebellion is uncertain, and most probably will remain this way unless new sources are discovered.

While the rebellion was happening the Swiss Brethren leader Wilhelm Reublin visited

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44 T. Scott, *Town, Country, and Regions in Reformation Germany* (Leiden, 2005), p. 39. This contrasts to Meinbold who argues that due to his relationship with Thomas Muntzer 'Hubmaier had a decisive influence on the development of the Peasants' War and that his Anabaptist and spiritualistic ideas supported the economic and social demands of the peasants, and contributed to their spread.' P. Meinbold, 'Society in Transition in the Age of the Reformation', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 3 (1972), pp. 25-36, p. 29.

45T. Foley, 'The Anabaptism of Balthasar Hubmaier', <http://www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/155>, accessed 17/06/2011.

46 MacGregor, *A Central European Synthesis Of Radical And Magisterial Reform: The Sacramental Theology Of Balthasar Hubmaier*, p.232.

47 One example of this is the catholic theologian Faber who writes that Hubmaier 'takes second place only to Luther in being responsible for the sad slaughter of a hundred thousand peasants and the making of a many hundred widows and orphans.'Faber taken from Johann Loserth, *Doctor Balthasar Hubmaier und die Anfänge der Wiedertaufe in Mähren* (Brunn, 1893), 210-216 in J. Stayer, 'Anabaptists And Future Anabaptists In The Peasants' War', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 62 (1988), pp. 99-139, p. 105.

48 D. C. Steinmetz, *Reformers in the Wings: From Geiler von Kaysersberg to Theodore Beza* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 40-41.

Waldshut in 1525 and proceeded to baptise Hubmaier and around three hundred citizens.<sup>49</sup> Hubmaier was now an Anabaptist. One reason why Hubmaier chose to break away from Zwingli during this period and accept baptism by Reublin is because he believed that infant baptism was unscriptural and evidently Zwingli would not be moved on the matter. The final result of the rebellion was defeat for the peasants and Hubmaier who did not wish to see Waldshut occupied by Austrian troops and converted back to Catholicism fled to Zurich. His reception at Zurich however was less than kind; Hubmaier was arrested and imprisoned by Zwingli and the Zurich council and forced to recant his views. Once this was done, after he first refused and then was forced after torture to do it again he fled the city in April 1526 and eventually ended up in Nikolsburg, which is in Bohemia. He was invited here by Lord Liechtenstein who was a very tolerant ruler and who Hubmaier had soon converted to Anabaptism with the majority of his family. It was during this final period of Hubmaier's life that he had the most success in his reforms, with the establishment of Nikolsburg as an Anabaptist city and the publication of a steady stream of writings. The significance of the freedom that Hubmaier experienced while in Moravia is important. Without the tolerance of Lord Liechtenstein Hubmaier would not have been able to develop or put his reforms into practice. Hubmaier does not make any mention of this freedom within his own writings so we cannot know for sure his own thoughts on the beneficial situation he found himself in but it is possible that without it the success of his reforms would have been greatly reduced. This did not last however and once Ferdinand I had become ruler of Moravia he ordered the rulers of Nikolsburg to hand Hubmaier over. Hubmaier was then imprisoned in Vienna, tortured and finally burnt at the stake in 1528 as a heretic.

Hubmaier's very conventional education and his very conventional career as a priest in Regensburg show how much influence they had in his development later in life. The

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49 M. I. Bochenski, *Balthasar Hubmaier: A Brief Biography*, (Warsaw, 2009), p. 2.

significance of Hubmaier's education for this study is that it demonstrates that a traditional education did not stop or hinder him in any way from becoming a prominent figure within Anabaptism, but in fact helped him because it gave him the knowledge and skills that he would need to formulate his own theology. This also applies to other major figures such as Luther. It seems that for these figures the benefit of being theologically trained is that it gave them the tools that they needed to interpret scripture and then formulate an individual and complex theology around their interpretation.

The significance of Hubmaier's conventional career in Regensburg for this study is that it shows the contrast between the Catholic and the Anabaptist Hubmaier and highlights how much his conversion did change him. It also shows that Hubmaier was willing to work with the government in order to achieve his goals and this experience more than likely made him realise in the future that the support of the authorities would be needed if his reform was to succeed.



## CHAPTER TWO: BALTHASAR HUBMAIER'S THEOLOGY

As soon as Hubmaier had converted from Catholicism and especially after he had become an Anabaptist, Hubmaier published an extensive amount of writings on topics such as infant baptism and the Lord's supper. These dealt with every aspect of his developing theology and created a clear picture of how a magisterial Anabaptist church would have looked under the direction of Hubmaier. Unfortunately due to his martyrdom Hubmaier's reforms did not last in Nikolsburg for long and so the image of his church is only preserved within his writings. This chapter will examine Hubmaier's theology in various areas such as the mass, his position on images, and infant baptism. Examining these areas of his theology will help to recreate firstly what Hubmaier thought about these various issues, and secondly establish whether his position on these issues differed in any way from groups such as the Swiss Brethren and mainstream reformers such as Luther and Zwingli. This chapter will show that in some areas of his theology such as images he went his own way when compared to Zwingli because he believed that the congregation and not the government should decide whether images were forbidden or not; in other areas such as infant baptism, however, he was very much in agreement with the Swiss Brethren. This demonstrates that Hubmaier was an independent thinker because he did not align himself with one certain group on all topics. This demonstrates the complexity of early Anabaptism, as well as the diversity of early Reformation theology and Hubmaier represents one such complex figure who chose his own path.

Hubmaier's theology on the mass is examined in several of his writings.<sup>1</sup> In *Statements at the Second Zurich Disputation* Hubmaier argues that the mass should be read in

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<sup>1</sup> These include *Statements at the Second Zurich Disputation* (1523), *Eighteen Theses Concerning the Christian Life* (1524), *A Simple Instruction* (1526) and his main work on the subject *A Form for Christ's Supper* (1527).

the vernacular language of the people, so that they can understand everything.<sup>2</sup> This is a point that he raised again and again within his writings and was evidently an issue about which he felt strongly. He wanted everyone to be able to understand clearly what was happening within the service for 'Christ did not speak Calcuttish with his disciples at the Last Supper but rather aloud and understandably' and that

'...to celebrate the mass quietly and not proclaim is to silence the Lord. Paul wants us to speak understandably in the church.'<sup>3</sup>

This statement shows that Hubmaier was already using his knowledge of the Pauline epistles to back up his arguments. Hubmaier also stated that he believed that the mass should be a testament of Christ or a memorial of his bitter death and that the mass is not a sacrifice but a 'proclamation of the covenant of Christ'.<sup>4</sup> Here Hubmaier is clearly rejecting the Catholic tradition of seeing the mass as a sacrifice of Christ. Hubmaier is not alone in this view on the mass. Ulrich Zwingli in his *Short Christian Instruction* (1523) writes that 'the mass has a different purpose from that of eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ and that the claim of the priests to sacrifice Christ for other people has been invented in themselves without foundation in the word of God.'<sup>5</sup> This is similar to the views of the Swiss Brethren who in *The Schleitheim Confession of Faith* (1527) say that 'all those who wish to break one bread in remembrance of the broken body of Christ, and all who wish to drink of one drink as a remembrance of the shed blood of Christ, shall be united beforehand by baptism in one body of Christ which is the Church of God and whose head is Christ.'<sup>6</sup> The views of Zwingli and the Swiss Brethren are very similar to Hubmaier on his views on the mass; they all believe strongly that the mass should not be seen as another sacrifice of Christ but simply as a

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2 Hubmaier, 'Statements at the Second Zurich Disputation', in H. W. Pipkin, J. H. Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, 1992), p. 28.

3 Ibid, p. 28.

4 Ibid, pp. 27. 28.

5 Zwingli, 'Short Christian Instruction', in C. Lindberg (ed.), *The European Reformations Sourcebook* (Oxford, 2000), p. 110.

6 'The Schleitheim Confession of Faith', in Lindberg (ed.), *The European Reformations Sourcebook*, p. 133.

remembrance of his death that he did once for all.<sup>7</sup> Hubmaier expands upon his theology on the mass in his *Eighteen Theses Concerning the Christian Life* (1524) which was written in preparation for a disputation in Waldshut with the clergy that Hubmaier wanted to hold but never actually took place. Hubmaier states that

'the mass is a memorial of the death of Christ, it cannot be offered for the living or dead. Hereby requiem masses and memorial masses collapse.'<sup>8</sup>

This demonstrates more of Hubmaier's rejection of Catholic tradition, disagreeing with Luther and agreeing with groups such as the Swiss Brethren and Zwingli in this area of his theology. In *A Simple Instruction* Hubmaier argued that the bread and wine in the mass cannot be the body and blood of Christ because 'Christ is sitting at the right hand of the father.'<sup>9</sup> This is a very logical answer to the question of whether Christ is physically there in the bread and wine or not and shows that for Hubmaier sometimes the simplest approach to an answer was the correct one.<sup>10</sup> This is paralleled in how he approached scripture, he stated that whenever he encounters a passage which he doesn't understand he looks at other scriptures that are clearer, and uses that clearer scripture to help interpret the more ambiguous scripture.<sup>11</sup> This shows that Hubmaier's approach to scripture was very methodical and that he believed that even if he found a particular passage difficult to understand that he would eventually find the answer. This approach to scripture however was in no way unique to Hubmaier but was a typical mark of reformation hermeneutics. In Hubmaier's *A Form for*

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7 Alternatives to the stark statements of the Schleitheim Confession were being considered by the Swiss Brethren by the end of the sixteenth century. See C. A. Snyders, 'The Perfection of Christ' reconsidered: the later Swiss Brethren and the Sword', in W. O. Packull, G. L. Dipple (eds.), *Radical Reformation Studies* (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 53-69 for more on this.

8 Hubmaier, 'Eighteen Theses Concerning the Christian Life', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 33.

9 Hubmaier, 'A Simple Instruction', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 324.

10 This is most likely drawn from Zwingli who believed that 'in the New Testament the body of Christ is used in three senses: for the natural body with which Christ lived and died, for his risen body, and for his mystical body the church. The bread cannot be any of these...the natural body could be eaten only in a bodily way, but Christ has ruled that out saying that the flesh is of no avail. It cannot be the risen body, for that is at God's right hand...[and] it cannot be the mystical body, as it is Christ, not the church, who was given for us. W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 233-234

11 Ibid, p. 322.

*Christ's Supper* which he wrote in 1527 while in relative peace in Nikolsburg, he created a highly detailed and structured service for the mass. Within this piece Hubmaier wrote that evangelical teaching is important, and that 'it is important that all arrive for Christ's supper at the same time so that teaching is not neglected.'<sup>12</sup> This clarifies how important Hubmaier thought that being able to understand what was going on within the service was for him. This emphasis on teaching and being able to understand the teaching is likely emphasised for Hubmaier because as the mass is no longer a sacrifice nor supernatural in nature, then as a remembrance of Christ's death it becomes extremely important to be able to understand why Christ died. In his theology on the mass Hubmaier seems to be very much in agreement with other radical groups such as the Swiss Brethren and figures like Zwingli. MacGregor argues however that Hubmaier in fact differed from all others in his theology on the mass because he believed that 'when believers partake of the Supper, they ontologically share in the human nature or essence of Christ without sacrificing their own human natures... [and] Hubmaier asserted that the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist constitutes a special sacramental mode of the ubiquitous repletive bodily presence of Christ in which believers physically participate.'<sup>13</sup> However nowhere within Hubmaier's writings upon the Lord's Supper does MacGregor's argument for the real presence of Christ and a sharing of Christ's essence between participants stand up. Again and again Hubmaier wrote that the Lord's Supper is simply a memorial or testament to Christ's bitter death and that the bread and wine does not change its substance at all. For example in *Statements at the Second Zurich Disputation* (1523) he stated that 'the mass is not a sacrifice but a proclamation of the covenant of Christ, in which there is a remembrance of his bitter suffering and his self-sacrifice, who offered

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12 Hubmaier, 'A Form for Christ's Supper', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 394.

13 K. R. MacGregor, *A Central European Synthesis Of Radical And Magisterial Reform: The Sacramental Theology Of Balthasar Hubmaier* (Lanham, 2006), p. 223. MacGregor states this because he believes that Hubmaier's view was that 'a sacrament was an analogue of the incarnation' but again nowhere within his available writings does Hubmaier suggest this. *Ibid*, p. 189

himself once for all on the cross, and never more will again be offered'.<sup>14</sup> Also in *Eighteen Theses* (1524) he wrote 'the mass is not a sacrifice, but a memorial of the death of Christ, for which reason it cannot be offered either for the dead or for the living.'<sup>15</sup> It is clear that Hubmaier believed that the consumption of the bread and wine is simply a remembrance and nothing more.<sup>16</sup> In his theology on the Lord's supper Hubmaier did not go his separate way because he was very much in agreement with other Anabaptists such as the Swiss Brethren who believed that 'all those who wish to break one bread in remembrance of the broken body of Christ, and who wish to drink of one drink as remembrance of the shed blood of Christ shall be united beforehand by baptism...'<sup>17</sup>.

Hubmaier's agreement with other Anabaptists continued in his beliefs on images. The main source where Hubmaier goes into the most detail upon his stance on this topic is in the *Statements at the Second Zurich Disputation*. This disputation was organised in 1523 by the Zurich city council and was an opportunity for different factions to voice their opinions, these included figures who would become leaders of the Swiss Brethren such as Conrad Grebel. At the end of the first day at the disputation Hubmaier stood up and gave his views on the issue of images, saying, firstly that the creation and worship of images was an 'atrociousness against God.'<sup>18</sup> This demonstrates immediately that Hubmaier was against the use of images. He then went on to argue that everything that God had not allowed was in vain and that the abuse of

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14 Hubmaier, 'Statements at the Second Zurich Disputation', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 27.

15 Hubmaier, 'Eighteen Theses Concerning the Christian Life', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, pp. 32-33.

16 Pipkin and Yoder back this up when they note that in Hubmaier's *Several Theses Concerning the Mass* (1525), Hubmaier put emphasis on the Lord's supper as a memorial and proclamation of the death of Christ, and that no attention at all was given to the presence of Christ in the supper. Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 74.

17 'The Schleithem Confession of Faith', in W. Estep, *Anabaptist Beginnings (1523-1533)* (Nieuwkoop, 1976), p. 101.

18 Ibid, p. 24.

images can only be corrected by examining the scriptures.<sup>19</sup> Hubmaier's biblical focus in everything he does comes into the foreground here; he fervently believed that if people read the bible then they can see for themselves that images are forbidden and against God, and then will realise that they should be removed. He then stated that 'it is a blasphemy to tell the people that images call us, move us, invite us or draw us to contemplation.'<sup>20</sup> For Hubmaier an image is simply that, an image, and therefore any notion that it has the ability to affect a person spiritually is blasphemy, as that only God can do. This is similar to Zwingli's position on images; in a letter to Martin Bucer in 1524 he writes that his case against images was not simply that they are not commanded by God in scripture,

'but that we cannot learn Christ from them, for they affect only the senses. We need to be taught by the word.'<sup>21</sup>

In later works such as his *Short Christian Introduction* (1523) Zwingli writes that

'it is reasonable to teach that images are forbidden by God...the unlearned and weak ones may soon accept what should be done with the images' [and] 'the images and paintings which we have in our churches...have created the danger of idolatry. Therefore one should not leave them there any longer.'<sup>22</sup>

Evidently both Hubmaier and Zwingli are in agreement that in teaching anything or affecting a person spiritually, images are useless, which is a problem because people were going to these images and expecting through them to have a spiritual experience. Hubmaier then continued his tirade against images by stating that he believed the entire congregations should gather and decide for themselves about the issue of images, and that 'every godly congregation would decide that images were sinful and against God.'<sup>23</sup> This is a very interesting suggestion that Hubmaier makes because by stating that it should be up to the congregations of churches to decide whether to ban images or not, it suggests that he thinks

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19 Ibid, p. 24.

20 Ibid, p. 26.

21 W. P. Stephens, *The Theology Of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford, 1986), p. 174.

22 Zwingli, 'Short Christian Instruction', in Lindberg (ed.), *The European Reformations Sourcebook*, p. 110.

23 Hubmaier, 'Statements at the Second Zurich Disputation', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 26.

the power should be in the hands of the people and not the ruling councils on this issue.

Although there is the possibility that this could be rhetoric and when it came down to it if Hubmaier's Lord wanted to make the decision it seems unlikely that Hubmaier would have opposed him. An issue does arise however in Hubmaier's willingness to let the congregations decide on the issue of images because there arises the possibility of some congregations ruling in favour of keeping the images. Would he allow some of them to keep their images as surely that is their choice to make? Hubmaier does go some way to tackle this at the Second Zurich Disputation. He stated that

the clear holy Word of God against images and idols in Old and New Testament must be shown to the people earnestly and often with care and diligence. This will exercise its authority and power and with time will drive all images out, for it is impossible that the Word of God should be preached and not bring works and fruits in that whereto it was sent from God.<sup>24</sup>

It seems that Hubmaier would not allow images to stay indefinitely in congregations that wanted them but would preach to them from the Word of God until they had decided that images were indeed useless.

This separates him from Zwingli because Zwingli would end up giving the authority to decide issues of reform to the Zurich council, which would dismay figures like Conrad Grebel and lead to them separating from Zwingli and the creation of the Swiss Brethren.

Hubmaier says at this disputation that he gets his position on this issue from scripture 'it became thoroughly clear from Scripture that there should be no images.'<sup>25</sup> A year later in his

*Eighteen Theses Concerning the Christian Life* Hubmaier wrote that

'images are good for nothing. Henceforth such expenditures shall be devoted not to wood and stone but to the living needy images of God.'<sup>26</sup>

and then in 1526 in his *A Christian Catechism*, which was one of Hubmaier's first published

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24 Ibid, p. 26.

25 Ibid, p. 25.

26 Hubmaier, 'Eighteen Theses Concerning the Christian Life', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 33.

writings in Nikolsburg and was written as a discussion between the Liechtenstein Lords, he wrote that 'images have been seriously forbidden by God and are of no benefit...one should above all uproot such idols and images out of human hearts with the Word of God, or the outward destruction of idols is futile.'<sup>27</sup> Hubmaier believed that simply removing and destroying the images was not enough, but that in the place of the images for everyone should be the reading of the Word of God. In his beliefs about images Hubmaier did not go his own way but was very much in agreement with Zwingli and although they differed in who ended up deciding whether images would be removed from churches or not, they agreed in all other areas on this issue. Hubmaier's position on this topic did not change once he had broken away from Zwingli and so this shows that he was consistent in his position on images, and evidently truly believed what he said.

Hubmaier's theology on infant baptism was the topic on which he wrote most extensively, publishing a total of seven treatises on this issue.<sup>28</sup> The most likely reason for this is because it was simply such a controversial issue during this period, with authorities such as the Zurich council setting up the First Zurich Disputation in 1523 to debate the issue and the separation of communities and creation of radical groups such as the Swiss Brethren to try and put into practice what they saw as the correct way to baptise. The works will now be examined to see what new points Hubmaier raised in each one; what Hubmaier actually believed about infant baptism; and how this compared to his contemporaries such as Zwingli and the Swiss Brethren. Hubmaier's first work that is solely about infant baptism is his *Letter to Oecolampad* (1525), here he stated very clearly that 'the very young should by no means

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27 Hubmaier, 'Eighteen Theses Concerning the Christian Life', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 33, Hubmaier, 'A Christian Catechism', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 358.

28 These include 'Letter to Oecolampad' (1525), 'A Public Challenge to All Believers' (1525), 'On the Christian Baptism of Believers' (1525), 'Dialogue with Zwingli's Baptism Book' (1526), 'Old and New Teachers on Believers Baptism' (1526), 'Dialogue with Oecolampad on Infant Baptism' (1527), and 'A Form for Water Baptism' (1527).



receive baptism.<sup>29</sup> In this work however Hubmaier did not go into detail about why he believed this. This is rectified in his *A Public Challenge to All Believers* (1525); Hubmaier now wrote that 'the baptism of infants is a work without any basis in the divine Word.'<sup>30</sup> These two statements of Hubmaier's clearly demonstrate his basic beliefs on infant baptism, namely that he didn't think that children should be baptised because there is no command for it within scripture. Hubmaier's next work *On the Christian Baptism Of Believers* (1525) was written in response to Zwingli and was dedicated to all believers, it was one of Hubmaier's main works on the subject. He wrote that 'word or teaching should always precede outward baptism, along with the determination to change one's life by the help of God.'<sup>31</sup> Therefore due to this belief it is logical for Hubmaier to think that children should be excluded from baptism because a newborn baby cannot be taught about God or the bible.<sup>32</sup> Hubmaier continued his denunciation of infant baptism by writing that infant baptism is forbidden by God because baptising believers is commanded; he firmly believed that if God had not specifically commanded an issue then it was automatically forbidden.<sup>33</sup> Hubmaier then chose to raise an interesting question that no doubt would be on the minds of his opponents: what happens to an infant if it dies before it is old enough to be baptised? He firstly stated that 'in Adam we die, and by our nature we are children of wrath.' However God can choose to save infants by his grace if he wants to.<sup>34</sup> Hubmaier then humbled himself and wrote that ultimately he simply does not know the answer to that question 'I am not ashamed not to

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29 Hubmaier, 'Letter to Oecolampad', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 70.

30 Hubmaier, 'A Public Challenge to All Believers', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 80.

31 Hubmaier, 'On the Christian Baptism of Believers', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 101.

32 Kamen suggests that it is a good thing for a child not be to baptised without any say in the matter because 'only in Anabaptism was a child free of any obligation to accept religious dogma until his voluntary faith had made him assent to baptism at an adult age.' H. Kamen., *The Rise of Toleration* (London, 1972), p. 62.

33 Hubmaier, 'On the Christian Baptism of Believers', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 136.

34 Ibid, pp. 139-140.

know what God did not want to reveal to us with a clear and plain word.<sup>35</sup> Hubmaier was clearly not concerned with being seen as not knowing the answer to a question, as this demonstrates. Or it simply could have been a clever argument to hide the fact that it was a difficult question which he didn't want to answer. In Hubmaier's next work on baptism, his *Dialogue with Zwingli's Baptism Book* (1526), which was written days before the fall of Waldshut in the Peasants' War, he countered Zwingli's charge that he practises re-baptism by stating that believers' baptism is not a re-baptism because infant baptism is not a true baptism in any way.<sup>36</sup> He also argued that 'baptism cannot wash away sin, as it is still of God it must be a public testimony of internal faith, and an outward sign of commitment to a new life.'<sup>37</sup> Zwingli at the very least agreed with one aspect of this; when he wrote that 'the pouring of water does not wash away sin.'<sup>38</sup> Hubmaier's *Old and New Teachers on Believers Baptism* (1526) was dedicated to Martin Goschl who was the leading evangelical pastor in Nikolsburg. In this writing Hubmaier demonstrates the correct order that someone should receive baptism 'one should first preach; second, believe; third, be baptised; fourth follows salvation.'<sup>39</sup> This theology that Hubmaier had developed about believers' baptism was not simply theoretical; he had instituted it at Nikolsburg and in his *A Form for Water Baptism* (1527) went onto describe the ceremony itself. He wrote that whoever desires water baptism must present himself to the bishop so that he can be questioned. If he shows enough knowledge then he is presented to the church; they all fall to their knees. Then the baptismal pledge is said; the bishops then lay hands on the baptised person and admits them to the church.<sup>40</sup> This shows that Hubmaier was willing to back up his theology by putting it into action. In his theology on

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35 Ibid, p. 139.

36 Hubmaier, 'Dialogue with Zwingli's Baptism Book', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 180.

37 Ibid, p. 228.

38 Zwingli, 'Of Baptism', in Lindberg (ed.), *The European Reformations Sourcebook*, p. 131.

39 Hubmaier, 'Old and New Teachers on Believers Baptism', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 261.

40 Hubmaier, 'A Form for Water Baptism', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, pp. 389-391.

infant baptism Hubmaier was initially in agreement with Zwingli, before Zwingli changed his mind and fervently backed the baptising of infants. Zwingli did this because he felt that he needed to meet the challenge that the Anabaptists brought and evidently did not want to be counted among their number as it would destroy his work in Zurich.<sup>41</sup> Hubmaier however stuck to his convictions and so did not follow Zwingli on this issue. The Swiss Brethren were in agreement with Hubmaier in this issue, writing that,

Baptism shall be given to all those who have learned repentance and amendment of life, and who believe truly that their sins are taken away by Christ. This excludes all infant baptism, the highest and chief abomination of the pope. In this you have the foundation and testimony of the apostles themselves...<sup>42</sup>

Hubmaier did not go his own way on this issue of infant baptism, although he did split with Zwingli due to it, and was more in agreement with the radicals than Zwingli.

Balthasar Hubmaier's theology in areas such as the Lord's Supper, images and infant baptism show that he did not go his own way in comparison to other Anabaptists in every area of his theology. He was however willing to break from his education and through his reading of scripture formulate a position on some of the hotly debated issues of the period that was in line with other Anabaptists like the Swiss Brethren. This similarity with the Swiss Brethren on topics such as the Lord's supper and infant baptism, and his similarity with Zwingli in areas like images does not mean that Hubmaier was creating and adjusting his theology to fit with different people and groups. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter Hubmaier was an independent thinker who was willing to go a separate way in areas that he believed he was correct in. The next chapter will examine areas of Hubmaier's theology that MacGregor did not cover, these include toleration, non-resistance, 'the sword' and magisterial authority.

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41 Stephens, *The Theology Of Huldrych Zwingli*, p. 194.

42 'The Schleithem Confession of Faith', in Estep, *Anabaptist Beginnings (1523-1533)*, p. 101.

**CHAPTER THREE: HUBMAIER'S BELIEFS ON MAGISTERIAL AUTHORITY,  
NON-RESISTANCE AND 'THE SWORD'**

This chapter will examine in detail Hubmaier's attitude towards toleration, magisterial authority or the government; the use of the sword by the government and its people (which is the government's ability to attack its enemies and defend its people), and finally non-resistance. Studying these areas will help to show whether Hubmaier's theology fell more in line in these areas with the Anabaptists or if he sided more with the radicals or magisterial reformers. It will ultimately show that Hubmaier was unique in these areas in comparison to other Anabaptists such as the Swiss Brethren and leading figures such as Zwingli. Hubmaier wrote an extensive amount about these topics, making references to them in several of his treatises such as in *On Heretics and Those Who Burn Them* (1524), *On the Christian Baptism Of Believers* (1525) and towards the end of his career published *On the Sword* in 1527, which is his main work on these issues.

In 1524 Hubmaier wrote a treatise called *On Heretics and Those Who Burn Them*. This piece of writing was produced while he was taking refuge in Schaffhausen from the Austrian authorities and so his ostensibly moderate position could partly be due to the threat that he felt himself from the authorities. Hubmaier writes that people who are heretics should be overcome with holy instruction gently, and that if they don't yield to words of authority 'then avoid them and let them go on to rant and rage...so that those who are filthy may yet become more filthy.'<sup>1</sup> Even at this early point in his conversion Hubmaier was evidently so confident in his understanding of scripture that he was willing to go against the Catholic Church's stance on heretics and instead provide his own solution. He then goes even further when he wrote that Inquisitors are the greatest heretics of all, because contrary to Christ's

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<sup>1</sup> Hubmaier, 'On Heretics and Those Who Burn Them', in H. W. Pipkin, J. H. Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, 1992), p. 60.

instructions they condemn heretics to the fire.<sup>2</sup> He believed this because Christ states 'let both grow up together until the harvest, lest in gathering the tares you tear up the wheat together with it.'<sup>3</sup> Therefore as the Inquisitors martyr the heretics they could be also killing God fearing Christians who have done nothing wrong and so disobeying Christ's command. Hubmaier then argues that a Turk or heretic cannot be overcome by sword or fire but by patience and supplication and that to kill heretics appears to be confessing Christ but is in fact denying him.<sup>4</sup> This shows how opposed to the killing of heretics Hubmaier was; he suggested that only by being patient with the person and demonstrating Christ's love for them has the chance of converting them to Christianity, but by killing them the heretic is merely vindicated in their own beliefs. He thinks this because he believes that Christianity is a religion of persuasion and patience, and that no-one can truly be converted by the threat of their own death. Hubmaier clearly believed that killing someone due to their religious beliefs achieves nothing positive; this is a very moderate view on toleration for Hubmaier to have during this period. In this view on toleration Hubmaier is clearly standing, if not alone, then in a very small group. From a first glance it seems that Hubmaier is simply concerned with protecting the church from the state. However McClendon writes that in Hubmaier's *On Heretics And Those Who Burn Them* that Hubmaier was not only 'shielding the church from state interference but was protecting the state from church interference when it carried out its legitimate role as keeper of the peace by shielding both the church and state Hubmaier certainly foreshadowed modernity.'<sup>5</sup> Hubmaier was ahead of his time in his theology on toleration and he was the first early Anabaptist to publish these sorts of ideas. He was the first

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2 Ibid, p. 62.

3 Ibid, p. 61.

4 Ibid, pp. 60, 64.

5 J. W. McClendon, 'Balthasar Hubmaier, Catholic Anabaptist', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 65 (1991), pp. 20-33, pp. 29-30. Estep writes that Hubmaier argues that faith or the lack of it is not within the jurisdiction of secular government and that it was 'Hubmaier's conviction that both church and state suffer when people are tried and condemned for religious reasons.' W. R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism* (Michigan, 1996), pp. 261, 263.

Anabaptist to proclaim these radical and defiant ideas; this shows that he had broken away from his past. Other Anabaptists such as the Swiss Brethren didn't believe that execution should be used at all because they saw it as outside the perfection of Christ, which means that Christ had not instituted the practice, and therefore they only warranted the use of the ban within their separatist communities.<sup>6</sup> Hubmaier however saw a difference between the godless who should never be executed and violent evildoers for whom punishment is appropriate.<sup>7</sup> He writes that 'it is fitting that secular authority puts to death the wicked...who cause bodily harm to the defenceless'.<sup>8</sup> Hubmaier's theology was individual in this area because he believed that execution could be used on those who threaten the stability of society, such as criminals who use violence against others but heretics do not threaten society because they simply wish to believe different things.

During his few years in Nikolsburg Hubmaier had the support of Lord Lichenstein, and his time there was not without confrontation. This was due to the arrival of the fiery Anabaptist preacher Hans Hut. The confrontation that occurred between the two preachers is important to examine because the main issue between the two was their differing opinions on magisterial authority, the sword, and baptism and so by examining this it becomes possible to see where the issues were on this topic between two opposing views. Hut differed greatly from Hubmaier on these issues. On magisterial authority Hut believed that 'all rulers had forfeited their right to wield the sword because they had opposed the Word of God and placed obstacles in the path of the elect.'<sup>9</sup> This is in stark contrast to Hubmaier who believed that the government's right to wield the sword was God-given. Hut's thoughts on this matter did not end there however; he also believed that 'their rule, which was nothing less than rebellion and

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6 H. J., Goertz, *The Anabaptists* (London, 1996), p. 98.

7 Hubmaier, 'On Heretics and Those Who Burn Them', in H. W. Pipkin, J. H. Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, 1992), p. 60.

8 Ibid, p. 63.

9 Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, p. 103.

revolt against God, had to be destroyed.<sup>10</sup> Hut's highly revolutionary and violent beliefs contrast greatly with both Hubmaier and the Swiss Brethren. The Swiss Brethren were closer to Hut in their negative view of magisterial authority but they never wrote that all governments had to be destroyed; and Hubmaier wanted to work and support governments, not destroy them. Hut continued in this revolutionary tone and identified that the destroyers of government would be 'the Elect [who] were being called upon to take up the sword and root out the godless.'<sup>11</sup> The elect for Hut was himself and those who followed him. However after the defeat of the peasants in the Peasants' War he realised that any immediate confrontation would be impossible and so modified his beliefs; he now preached that until the Last Judgement the sword should stay in its sheath.<sup>12</sup> This however did not mean that there was no longer any conflict between the two because Hut believed that Hubmaier's form of adult baptism was too inclusive and that his congregation was undisciplined.<sup>13</sup> Hut believed that believer's baptism was preparation for the end of the age where his followers would rise up and destroy those in authority, this was too much for Hubmaier and Lord Liechtenstein who saw Hut as a 'revolutionary threat'.<sup>14</sup> Hubmaier affirms this when he writes that 'therefore the baptism that I have taught and the baptism that Hut promoted are as far apart as heaven and hell, east and west, Christ and Belial.'<sup>15</sup> It is clear just how opposed Hubmaier and Hut were in their beliefs on magisterial authority, the sword and baptism, and so when Hut arrived in Nikolsburg in 1527 a clash between them was very likely. It was not only Hut that opposed Hubmaier but also his group of followers, and Hut's ideology of holy violence had carried away a fair number of people to his side, so much so that a schism had developed

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10 Ibid, p. 103.

11 Ibid, p. 103.

12 Ibid, p. 103. Goertz states that by doing this 'Hut could put the defeat behind him while still remaining true to the revolutionary goals of the Peasants' War.' Ibid, p. 103.

13 H. W. Pipkin, J. H. Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, 1992), p. 18

14 Ibid, p. 18

15 Ibid, p. 557

between the parishioners of Nikolsburg.<sup>16</sup> Some of these people who were swayed to Hut's side included a few of Hubmaier's most prominent disciples, including Oswald Glaidt.<sup>17</sup> Consequently Lord Liechtenstein and Hubmaier organised a debate between the two parties, which was called the Nikolsburg Disputation.<sup>18</sup> During the disputation, which took place in the church and in the castle at Nikolsburg, Hubmaier had a debate with Hut over a series of theses that Hubmaier had compiled on Hut's teachings.<sup>19</sup> Lord Liechtenstein, quite unsurprisingly, ended up siding with Hubmaier but he wanted the two preachers to be able to come to some sort of agreement; when it was realised that this was not possible, with Hubmaier's approval he imprisoned Hut in the castle.<sup>20</sup> MacGregor writes that once Hut was imprisoned there were 'bitter outcries from fellow anti-establishment Anabaptists throughout Moravia.'<sup>21</sup> One of the reasons why Hut was imprisoned was because Lord Liechtenstein feared that Hut posed a serious threat to public order, and felt threatened by him because Hut was advocating the destruction of the very institution that he represented.<sup>22</sup> Due to the outcry against Hut's imprisonment Hubmaier published *The Nikolsburg Articles* in November 1527 in the hope that it would sustain peace among his congregation; he wrote that Hut's imprisonment was due to his attempt to subvert the commonweal and not due to his theology.<sup>23</sup> Vedder agrees with the Lord's and Hubmaier's actions when he writes that 'no principle of religious liberty requires that a government shall leave such a firebrand to go about in the community.'<sup>24</sup> However it is most likely that Vedder is in reality expressing his

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16 K. R. MacGregor, *A Central European Synthesis Of Radical And Magisterial Reform: The Sacramental Theology Of Balthasar Hubmaier* (Lanham, 2006), p. 249.

17 Ibid, p. 249.

18 H. J. Goertz, W. Klaassen, *Profiles of radical reformers: biographical sketches from Thomas Muntzer to Paracelsus* (Kitchener, 1982), p. 154.

19 Ibid, pp. 154-155.

20 Ibid, p. 155.

21 MacGregor, *A Central European Synthesis Of Radical And Magisterial Reform: The Sacramental Theology Of Balthasar Hubmaier*, p. 12f. MacGregor also states that this was the sole example of religious persecution in Hubmaier's congregations once he had become an Anabaptist. Ibid, p. 12.

22 Ibid, p. 249.

23 Ibid, p. 250.

24 H. C. Vedder, *Balthasar Hubmaier: The Leader of the Anabaptists* (New York, 1905), p. 168.



own prejudices rather than arguing a case.

Hubmaier's *Nikolsburg Articles* helped him to clarify a point in his thinking that 'the only time that governmental authority may be exerted against a heretic is if that heretic also undermines the public order.'<sup>25</sup> Hut however didn't stay imprisoned for long as he was able to escape with the help of a few sympathetic followers by climbing down the walls on a rope and escaping to Augsburg.<sup>26</sup> This conflict between Hubmaier and Hut shows just how strongly the authorities were willing to support and defend Hubmaier in his beliefs and reforms in Nikolsburg; and it shows just how successful his theology had been on the Liechtenstein Lords. They were willing to defend and support Hubmaier against a foe that refused to back down. Evidently Hubmaier's willingness to work with the authorities was in his favour; his beliefs on this topic will now be examined.

Within his *Recantation at Zurich* in 1526 Hubmaier said boldly that

'I am aware that I have been accused of rejecting government, and that I say a Christian cannot sit in a government. This report does me violence and injustice. Ever and always I have said that a Christian can be in government, and that the more Christian he is, the more honourably he would rule.'<sup>27</sup>

It is interesting that Hubmaier was ever accused of rejecting governments and their authority because he only ever wrote positively about them. The above portion of his forced recantation clearly demonstrates that he was in fact in favour of governmental authority and that a Christian can and should take a position within it to help change society for the better. If he was not in favour of governments then like the Swiss Brethren he would not believe that a Christian could work in one, as that would defile the Christian.<sup>28</sup> Even though this is a forced recantation that Hubmaier has to do, he doesn't seem to be changing his views to save his

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25 MacGregor, *A Central European Synthesis Of Radical And Magisterial Reform: The Sacramental Theology Of Balthasar Hubmaier*, p. 250.

26 Ibid, p. 251.

27 Hubmaier, 'Recantation at Zurich', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 152.

28 The Swiss Brethren were not the first group to reject executions or the government 'both Lollards and Waldenses at various times objected to killing people in judicial execution or otherwise, and objection which (if taken consistently) would have precluded wielding the office of magistrate.' E. Cameron, 'Dissent and Heresy' in R. P. Hsia, *A Companion to the Reformation World* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 3-21, p. 12.

skin at all; his views here are very much in line with all of his earlier writings on the subject such as his *On the Christian Baptism of Believers* (1525). For example Hubmaier writes that ‘...there should be a government which carries the sword, that we want and should be obedient to the same in all things that are not contrary to God...’<sup>29</sup> MacGregor writes that ‘Hubmaier thinks that a Christian may in good conscience sit in court and council and service as judges in temporal matters’. Hubmaier backs this up by saying that godly judges ruled over Israel in the Old Testament and Paul commands Christians to settle legal disputes before believing judges rather than unbelieving ones.<sup>30</sup> Even though both Hubmaier and the Swiss Brethren are categorized as Anabaptists by both their contemporaries and later historians, it is interesting to note how divergent their views were on the issue of government and whether a Christian can become a magistrate or not. In *The Schleitheim Confession* (1527), the Swiss Brethren state that:

‘It will be observed that it is not appropriate for a Christian to serve as a magistrate because of these points: The government's magistracy is according to the flesh, but the Christians' is according to the Spirit...the weapons of their conflict and war are carnal and against the flesh only, but the Christians' weapons are spiritual, against the fornication of the devil...For every kingdom divided against itself will be destroyed.’<sup>31</sup>

It is clear that Hubmaier's and the Swiss Brethren's views were on this issue in complete opposition to each other. This is shown by a conflict that arose between them. Goertz states that ‘the Swiss Brethren began to criticize openly Hubmaier’s positive attitude towards the secular authorities, they disputed the Christian character of the government and tried to prove from scripture that a Christian should not be a judge, carry a sword or occupy any governmental post.’<sup>32</sup> Hubmaier responded with the text *On The Sword* published in June 1527. He argued that it was wrong to read a dualism between the congregation and the world

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29 Hubmaier, ‘On the Christian Baptism of Believers’, in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 98.

30 MacGregor, *A Central European Synthesis Of Radical And Magisterial Reform: The Sacramental Theology Of Balthasar Hubmaier*, p. 233.

31 'The Schleitheim Confession of Faith', in W. Estep, *Anabaptist Beginnings (1523-1533)* (Nieuwkoop, 1976), pp. 103-104.

32 Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, p. 101.

into every passage which mentioned governments or described the attitude of Jesus towards public office and the sword, and said that 'You have slipped up badly and done great damage against God and against brotherly love under the appearance of spirituality and a cloak of humility.'<sup>33</sup> One reason why the Swiss Brethren criticised Hubmaier so openly on this issue is given by Goertz:

'the Swiss brethren refused to be confronted with their own past, in the shape of Hubmaier, a past from which they had distanced themselves through suffering and with the aid of scripture. For them any abandonment of their new views would be a betrayal of the Word of God.'<sup>34</sup>

It is an interesting point to consider that when the Swiss Brethren looked upon Hubmaier they only saw their own past, which was filled with pain and suffering. Hubmaier had managed to succeed where they had failed; in bringing about an Anabaptist reform that had the support of the government. The Swiss Brethren had failed in this because of the persecution that they had received at the hands of the Zurich council. This persecution meant that they decided to separate themselves from mainstream society and form their own church; this naturally meant that any chance of reforming Zurich with the support of the authorities was all but gone.<sup>35</sup>

Hubmaier did not have this problem in Nikolsburg because unlike the Swiss Brethren he did not have an opposing figure like Zwingli who held sway over the authorities and who could persecute the Swiss Brethren due to their beliefs. Also Hubmaier was in a better position than the Swiss Brethren because he was a 'Zwingli' type figure within his community who had influence with the authorities. As an Anabaptist Hubmaier was unique in his view of the government and the Christians role within it. However if compared to the views of figures such as Zwingli, Hubmaier's beliefs on this one part of the topic are very similar. Stephens'

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33 Ibid, p. 101.

34 Ibid, p. 102.

35 'The Swiss Anabaptists saw things differently [from Hubmaier] after 1527. They had separated themselves from the militant revolutionaries during the Peasants War, and had distanced themselves slightly also from their own roots in the peasant uprising, and had begun to see in secular authority 'an order outside of the completeness of God.'...Thus the attitude of Anabaptists to secular authorities varied very widely.' H. J. Goertz, 'Radical Religiosity in the German Reformation' in R. P. Hsia (ed.), *A Companion To The Reformation World* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 70-86, p. 81.

interpretation of Zwingli's *A Commentary* states that Zwingli believed that 'a person can only be a true ruler if he is a Christian; without the fear of God he will become a tyrant; he will then seek his own good and not the good of his people.'<sup>36</sup> This demonstrates that in their view of a Christian holding an office in government, both Hubmaier and Zwingli have almost identical beliefs. It is curious that Hubmaier points to the Old Testament to back up his views because in the majority of his writings he is very focussed on the New Testament and at times dismisses citations from the Old Testament altogether, such as in his *Dialogue with Oecolampad on Infant Baptism* (1527) where he says '...I demand from you a clear word out of the New Testament with which you bring to us this infant baptism...'<sup>37</sup> He dismisses Oecolampad's attempts to cite from the Old Testament altogether. This charge against Hubmaier that he rejects magisterial authority is mentioned again within his *A Brief Apologia* (1526); he writes that 'since I am everywhere decried and denounced as a proclaimer of new teachings...[that] I preach that one should not obey the government, nor pay interest or tithes...nevertheless, this I affirm with God and with several thousand people that no preacher in the areas where I have been has gone to more trouble and labour in writing and preaching than I in order that people should be obedient to the government.'<sup>38</sup> Evidently Hubmaier felt that enough people were accusing him of being against the government that he felt the need to proclaim his innocence and show what he actually believed and preached. The most probable reason why people were accusing him of this is because they saw him as an Anabaptist; and as an Anabaptist they thought that he believed that governments were outside the perfection of Christ, just like the Swiss Brethren did.<sup>39</sup> This shows that in his attitude towards magisterial authority Hubmaier was closer to that of the magisterial reformers than

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36 W. P. Stephens, *The Theology Of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford, 1986), p. 300.

37 Hubmaier, 'Dialogue with Oecolampad on Infant Baptism', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 288.

38 Hubmaier, 'A Brief Apologia', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, pp. 298, 303-304.

39 Goertz states that in his view on the government Hubmaier is echoing 'an essentially Protestant view, even if his arguments were less complex than either Luther's or Zwingli's.' Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, p. 101.

other groups within Anabaptism. Hubmaier's attitude towards governments does raise the question, what for Hubmaier constitutes a Christian government? He goes some way to answer this within his writings. In *A Brief Apologia* (1526) he writes that 'On the other hand I have also told the government to wield the sword according to the order of God for the protection of the righteous and punishment of the evil, or God will take away its mandate and mete out to it with the same measure.'<sup>40</sup> Later in the same writing he states that 'God will not graciously accept anything from an unjust government.'<sup>41</sup> This suggests that Hubmaier believed that God would punish an unchristian government and so it can be concluded that for Hubmaier a Christian government is one that follows Hubmaier's interpretation of God's rule.

In his *Apologia* (1528) Hubmaier demonstrated just how obedient to authority he was willing to be and at the same time shows the theology that he developed while in the Liechtenstein territories; he writes 'to them we owe obedience at the cost of honour, property, body and life, unto death, for body and the goods belong to the emperor, that is, the government, but the soul belongs to God.'<sup>42</sup> This *Apologia* of Hubmaier's was written during his imprisonment by Ferdinand I and so its aim was to make his views as acceptable as possible to Ferdinand, in the hope that he would be released; it demonstrates just how much obedience he was willing to show the authorities, which is to give them everything but his soul; although it is possible that at the time he was simply saying anything pleasing to Ferdinand in order to save his life. So whether he really meant what he was writing or not will never truly be known. It is quite poignant that he reveals that he is willing to die by the government's hands to show his obedience, because in the end that is what happens; he is martyred in Vienna by the government.

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40 Hubmaier, 'A Brief Apologia', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 304.

41 Ibid, p. 310

42 Hubmaier, 'Apologia', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 559.

Clasen makes an interesting point when he writes that if the Anabaptists had adopted Hubmaier's position their movement may not have incurred such violent oppression from the government, it even may have survived.<sup>43</sup> Even though Hubmaier's obedience to the government did not save his life, it is interesting to think that if groups like the Swiss Brethren had been less separatist and more willing to show the government the respect and duty that it demanded, that they may not have been persecuted so heavily.

Hubmaier's beliefs on 'The Sword' are a very interesting area to study because as Bochenski writes this was 'one of the key debates of sixteenth century Europe in the 1520's, the issue of the appropriate use of force to defend the true gospel from Catholic or Protestant aggression and from further Muslim incursions.'<sup>44</sup> Hubmaier wrote extensively on this subject; just some of his writings where he talks about this subject include his *On Heretics and Those Who Burn Them* (1524), *On the Christian Baptism Of Believers* (1525) and *A Brief Apologia* (1526). In his *On Heretics and Those Who Burn Them* (1524), where he first mentions the subject, he wrote that 'every Christian has a sword to use against the godless, namely the sword of the Word of God, but not a sword against the evildoers.'<sup>45</sup> This shows straight away that Hubmaier believed that a Christian is allowed to use scripture to try and convert a non-Christian but that they are not allowed to either try and convert an evildoer or harm them in any way. He then continued and stated 'it is fitting that secular authority puts to death the wicked who cause bodily harm to the defenceless. But the enemy of God can harm no one, unless that person would not have it otherwise and would forsake the gospel.'<sup>46</sup>

Hubmaier is arguing here that a godless person should not be killed because they simply wish to believe something other than Christianity but that when that person starts being violent

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43 C. P. Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History 1525-1618* (London, 1972), p. 178.

44 M. I. Bochenski, *Balthasar Hubmaier: A Brief Biography* (Warsaw, 2009), p. 7.

45 Hubmaier, 'On Heretics and Those Who Burn Them', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 63.

46 Ibid, p. 63.

themselves then they become a criminal and so should be punished. This treatise which is Hubmaier's great call for moderation, demonstrates his revolutionary idea that although the government has the authority to execute criminals, it has no authority whatsoever to kill those who have different religious views. MacGregor states that Hubmaier believes this because killing those of different faiths violates God's purpose for the sword.<sup>47</sup> This purpose is to protect the defenceless from those who would want to do them harm, and as Hubmaier wrote 'the enemy of God can harm no one.'<sup>48</sup>

The next treatise where Hubmaier wrote about this issue is his *On the Christian Baptism of Believers* (1525); within this he stated that 'there should be a government which carries the sword, that we want and should be obedient to the same in all things that are not contrary to God, and the more the same is Christian the more it desires from God to rule with the wisdom of Solomon...therefore we should also seriously and with great diligence pray to God for it...'<sup>49</sup> Evidently Hubmaier deviated greatly in his beliefs here from other Anabaptists such as the Swiss Brethren, who think that 'the sword is ordained of God outside the perfection of Christ' and therefore wanted nothing to do with it.<sup>50</sup> Unlike the Swiss Brethren Hubmaier's view of government is not so black and white; he saw magisterial authority as the guardian which is situated between the Church and the world and protects the Church.<sup>51</sup> This highly positive view of the government, so different from any other person or group labelled as an Anabaptist shows how unique Hubmaier was in his beliefs in this area. Unlike

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47 MacGregor, *A Central European Synthesis Of Radical And Magisterial Reform: The Sacramental Theology Of Balthasar Hubmaier*, p. 237.

48 Hubmaier, 'On Heretics and Those Who Burn Them', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 63.

49 Hubmaier, 'On the Christian Baptism of Believers', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 98.

50 'The Schleithem Confession of Faith', in Estep, *Anabaptist Beginnings (1523-1533)*, pp 103-104.

51 MacGregor eloquently explains this when he writes that: 'the duty of the government is to free and protect all innocent and peaceful people...it has the task of protecting the church from the evils of the world in order for the church to bring its divinely assigned task to completion. In his theology the government is a friend and guardian of the church, In return the church is obliged to pray for the government and to support and assist it in its duties.' MacGregor, *A Central European Synthesis Of Radical And Magisterial Reform: The Sacramental Theology Of Balthasar Hubmaier*, pp. 229-231.

the Swiss Brethren he did not believe that the only way to live in this world as a Christian is to totally separate himself off from any potential unchristian influence. Instead he taught that society should assist the government in any way they can so that it can fulfil its divinely appointed role as the Church's protector. Ultimately for separatist and pacifist Anabaptists they believe they are obeying God by removing themselves from mainstream society, because they see it as the devil's domain and therefore corrupted. Hubmaier however believed that he was obeying God by being active within mainstream society and that although the world is fallen and sinful, a Christian government can protect them from it.

One reason why there is such a contrast in beliefs in this area between Hubmaier and other Anabaptists like the Swiss Brethren is due to the persecution and suffering that the Swiss Brethren were subjected to at the hands of the Zurich Council. For them the picture of what the true church was, was transformed from a 'radical reform of the political and ecclesiastical life of their community' to a church that was 'a distinct alternative to the existing form of Christianity', namely one that was separatist, pacifist and for the minority. Also their treatment at the hands of the government led to 'an existential detachment from the government and eventually to a fundamental reappraisal of governmental office itself'<sup>52</sup> McClendon shows how far away Hubmaier's beliefs were from the Swiss Brethren when he writes that 'Hubmaier's intention was to carry the entire community with him in defiance of any schism or separatism.'<sup>53</sup> In his *A Brief Apologia* (1526) Hubmaier continued writing about this issue; he stated firstly that he has 'also told the government to wield the sword according to the order of God for the protection of the righteous and punishment of evil, or God will take away its mandate and mete out to it with the same measure.'<sup>54</sup> It is unclear exactly who would judge whether the order of God was being carried out, most likely

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52 Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, pp. 85, 98.

53 McClendon, Jr, 'Balthasar Hubmaier, Catholic Anabaptist', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, pp. 20-33, p. 21.

54 Hubmaier, 'A Brief Apologia', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 304.



Hubmaier would have wanted that role himself because it would be his interpretation of God's rule by which the governments would be judged. It is unclear when Hubmaier wrote that he told the government to wield the sword correctly, whether he actually spoke to his government directly or whether he simply meant that he wrote about and preached it. It is clear that it is important to Hubmaier that the government realises that its god-given authority to govern, and the respect and obedience that it is owed is balanced against its duty to behave in a Christian manner and fulfil its role by protecting its citizens. For Hubmaier the government is only truly fulfilling its divine role when it is defending the people from evildoers and performing its actions in a moral and Christian way. Hubmaier then switched his focus to the citizens and wrote

‘when even heavier burdens are imposed upon them that are not contrary to God...they are to take them up willingly and carry them with patience as their cross. On the other hand I have also never taught that it is proper for the government...to overload their poor people, more than is godly and just, with unprecedented unchristian impositions.’<sup>55</sup>

This demonstrates that Hubmaier believed that it is not right for the citizens to riot or rebel against their government if they think that they are being oppressed because Christ taught that every Christian would have a cross to bear, and therefore any burdens that are not against God are simply this teaching being put into action. It is very interesting that Hubmaier even lent his moral support to the peasants during the Peasants' War, because surely they were rebelling against their rulers and in doing so rejecting the cross that Christ told them to bear. It is of course possible that in 1524 Hubmaier had simply not considered this in great detail and had not developed his beliefs on this issue. If Hubmaier is given the label Anabaptist then in his beliefs on the sword he is totally unique; although the Swiss Brethren accepted that the government did have a temporal sword to wield, they believed that it was outside the perfection of Christ. Hubmaier instead had a much more positive view and saw the government's role as a God ordained protector.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 304.

Hubmaier's thoughts on non-resistance, or more specifically whether a person who is being attacked is allowed to defend themselves or their property or not, is a lot more difficult to pin down. None of the treatises that he wrote were specifically about the issue and when he did write about other similar topics such as magisterial authority and the sword, no mention of non-resistance is to be found. His position on this topic however can be ascertained by examining what he wrote about the authority of the government. This is because he generally made it very clear that only those with God given authority to wield the sword are allowed to use it. In Hubmaier's *On The Sword* (1527) he wrote that 'where one hits you on the right cheek, then do not accuse him, do not run to the judge, do not demand vengeance...but offer the other cheek also.'<sup>56</sup> At first glance it looks like Hubmaier was very much in line with pacifistic Anabaptists because he is stating that if someone strikes a person then that person should not hit them back. However where Hubmaier differed in this area is that although an individual may not be allowed to defend himself, the government has the authority to defend him on his behalf. He confirmed this when he wrote that 'the government's sword is not yet unbuckled, Yes, it is much more commanded to protect the righteous and to punish the evil with the sword, where it notices such wantonness or sacrilege by itself or it is pointed out by others.'<sup>57</sup> This is where Hubmaier differed from other Anabaptists in this area. The Swiss Brethren for comparison believed that 'in the perfection of Christ however, only the ban is used for a warning and for the excommunication of the one who has sinned without putting the flesh to death, simply the warning and the command to sin no more.'<sup>58</sup> Evidently for them their only form of punishment in their separation from the world is a Christian one, whereas Hubmaier who remains active within mainstream society is willing to let the government be his protector from those who would wish to do him any sort of harm. The difference for Hubmaier between an individual killing an evildoer and the government doing so, is that the

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56 Hubmaier, 'On The Sword', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 507.

57 Ibid, p. 507.

58 'The Schleithem Confession of Faith', in Estep, *Anabaptist Beginnings (1523-1533)*, p. 103.

individual kills out of anger or jealousy and so commits an evil act themselves, whereas the government when it executes a person is simply fulfilling its divine role as the guardian in society. Hubmaier affirms this when he wrote that ‘the government – I speak of a just government – does not kill out of anger or move out of mockery and despising words, but by the order of God, which commands it earnestly to do away with the evil ones and to hold the righteous in peace.’<sup>59</sup> Foley backs this up when he writes that ‘Christ did forbid killing out of mockery and anger but this did not apply to the government who kills out of obedience to God and keeping the peace.’<sup>60</sup> Hubmaier’s just government would most likely be those governments who followed his beliefs to the letter.

Hubmaier's beliefs on magisterial authority, the sword and non-resistance make him unique among the Anabaptists. He was the only one who was in a position to implement his views with the help of the government at Nikolsburg and was the only one who saw the authority of government as God-given. If however the label of Anabaptist is taken from him and he is seen apart from them, then his beliefs in this area no longer are unique. Instead his position on these issues become very similar to Zwingli's in Zurich. Due to the fact that Hubmaier has been seen as an Anabaptist both by his contemporaries and by nearly all historians to the present day, his views on these issues have separated him from all others around him. He simply does not fit into any of the categories that historians have constructed for this period and so they have been unsure about what exactly to do with him. This is because even though he has been seen as an Anabaptist, he has been seen as the odd one out who refuses to conform to their ideas about what an Anabaptist is and should be. A possible solution to this is for historians to re-examine how they define what an Anabaptist is, so that there is room within their categories for a unique figure such as Hubmaier. Historians need to broaden their definition of an Anabaptist so that a non-pacifistic re-baptiser such as Hubmaier

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<sup>59</sup> Hubmaier, 'On The Sword', in Pipkin, Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, p. 515.  
<sup>60</sup> T. Foley, 'The Anabaptism of Balthasar Hubmaier', <http://www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/155>, accessed 17/06/2011.

is not seen as the one that refuses to conform but as simply a different expression within the complex radical reform that is Anabaptism.

#### **CHAPTER FOUR: HUBMAIER'S IMPACT AND LEGACY**

On March 10 1528, Balthasar Hubmaier was burnt at the stake in Vienna under the charges of being a rebel and a heretic. He was charged with being a rebel because of his supposed involvement with the Peasants' War and he was charged with being a heretic due to his Anabaptist views on issues such as infant baptism. He had spent the previous eight months in prison and had been subjected to torture. While imprisoned he had the hope that he might be released with the help of his *Apologia* (1528); however this attempt to make his theology and beliefs as acceptable as possible for Ferdinand I was unsuccessful. No potential reconciliation with the Catholic Church would have saved his life because he would still have been charged with treason, and as Vedder writes with the charge of treason 'his head must answer.'<sup>1</sup> Due to his martyrdom it is impossible to say whether Hubmaier's form of Anabaptism would have survived under the protection of Lord Liechtenstein or a similar authority. However due to Hubmaier's positive view of the government, his willingness to support it, and his preaching that everyone should obey their government, it is most likely that out of any of the strains of Anabaptism that existed at the time Hubmaier's had the most potential for success. This is because other Anabaptist groups like the Swiss Brethren saw all the governments and forms of authority as worldly and outside the perfection of Christ; therefore in the need to keep themselves holy they advocated a separation from society and any form of government. This meant that any possibility that there was for their beliefs to be accepted by the magistracy was practically non-existent. There was every chance that if not for his execution Hubmaier's form of Anabaptism would have had continued support from Lord Liechtenstein and an increase of followers to his congregations. In reality however after his execution Hubmaier's followers gradually dispersed and merged in different radical groups. This is backed up by

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<sup>1</sup> H. C. Vedder, *Balthasar Hubmaier: The Leader of the Anabaptists* (New York, 1905), p. 236.

Williams who states that ‘remnants of the Nicolsburgers were absorbed by the later Sabbatarians.’<sup>2</sup> They did not disperse immediately however; during his imprisonment Hubmaier's reform was taken over by a figure called Hans Spittelmaier, who defended Hubmaier's beliefs against a pacifistic Anabaptist faction.<sup>3</sup> This faction ended up being forced to leave Nikolsburg by Lord Liechtenstein because they refused to adopt Hubmaier's beliefs.<sup>4</sup> This shows firstly that Lord Liechtenstein was not willing to have anyone in his domains that threatened his power and position but also just how important Hubmaier's theology and beliefs had become to Lord Liechtenstein because he was willing to evict anyone from his domains who opposed Hubmaier's views. This is one clue about Hubmaier's potential future if not for his martyrdom; his theology had become so accepted by the authorities within Nikolsburg that they were willing to defend it against any opposition, which is a positive indication that Hubmaier's theology could easily have survived and even thrived within the city, if not for his execution in Vienna.

Examining what influence or impact that Hubmaier had on society around him and other religious groups is at first glance quite a difficult task because he was martyred only a few short years into his career. Mabry writes that the

'dominance of Hubmaier's views in Nikolsburg was not long lived, however, because the reform there gradually came under the influence of the Hutterites.'<sup>5</sup>

Therefore the logical conclusion would be that Hubmaier had no lasting influence and that he was simply a short lived anomaly. If however groups such as the Hutterites are examined then it becomes possible to see that Hubmaier influenced them in various different ways. After his martyrdom the Hutterites began to see Hubmaier as one of the most important Anabaptist leaders, they thought that he was correct in his beliefs on believer's baptism and that those

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2 G. H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (London, 1962), p. 229.

3 E. Mabry, *Balthasar Hubmaier's Understanding of Faith* (Lanham, 1998), p. 130.

4 Ibid, p. 130.

5 Ibid, p. 131.

who proclaimed infant baptism had no scriptural grounds for their beliefs at all.<sup>6</sup> They also thought that Hubmaier's theology on the Lord's Supper was correct; that it was a memorial of Christ's suffering.<sup>7</sup> Most interestingly of all though is how the Hutterites approached Hubmaier's contrasting views on non-resistance and the sword. Mabry writes that

‘in an attempt to make it appear that they were not really out of harmony with Hubmaier's views the Hutterites said that while Hubmaier was in prison he had confessed that he was wrong about the Christian use of the sword, and that Hans Hut and the Hutterites were correct. This, however, was not true, as Hubmaier had staunchly maintained his opposition to Hut on this matter while Hubmaier was in prison.’<sup>8</sup>

It is very interesting that the Hutterites tried to claim that Hubmaier had changed his views on the main area that he conflicted with them because it shows that it was obviously very important to them for Hubmaier to appear in harmony with their theology so that they could represent themselves as his heirs. It also shows that by claiming Hubmaier they give their own beliefs a greater cachet of respectability and intellectual validity. Vedder's statement of Hubmaier's influence and legacy is interesting to examine because it shows just how positive Vedder's opinion of Hubmaier was, which is evidently heavily influenced by Vedder being a Baptist himself and seeing Hubmaier as one of his founders. Vedder asks whether due to almost everything that Hubmaier and his colleagues worked for not surviving, had they worked and given their lives for nothing? He answers this by writing that

‘Hubmaier's contribution to the gradual progress of the truth, to the slow emancipation of man, to the final triumph of religious and civil liberty, was not only considerable but lasting. His name, his example and his teachings were long cherished by the brotherhood; and when his name and example had faded from recollection, his teachings lived on. In an age of credulity and superstition he stood for the gospel proclaimed by the Apostles...at a time when intolerance and persecution were universal, his was the voice of one crying in the wilderness for the restoration of the God-given right of every man to study the scriptures for himself, and to follow whithersoever they might lead.’<sup>9</sup>

This incredibly praising view of Hubmaier highlights the preoccupations that Vedder had in his portrayal of Hubmaier. A clear example of this is shown in the title of the series that the

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6 Ibid, p. 131.

7 Ibid, p. 131.

8 Ibid, p. 131.

9 Vedder, *Balthasar Hubmaier: The Leader of the Anabaptists*, p. 271.

book is in which is 'Heroes Of The Reformation', evidently to fit into the theme of the series Vedder is going to portray Hubmaier as one of these heroes, and by his glowing view of Hubmaier's influence he evidently does. Vedder goes as far as comparing Hubmaier to John the Baptist when he writes that Hubmaier was 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness', which implies that Vedder sees Hubmaier almost as a prophet proclaiming the truth for the first time since the Apostles.<sup>10</sup> For Vedder Hubmaier is a hero because he is willing to suffer and by the end die for what he believes in. Vedder's treatment of Hubmaier when writing about his influence is incredibly biased, and his glowing praise for him is almost saint-like.

Hubmaier's influence over the Hutterites did not simply end at their claiming him as one of their leaders. He also appears to have had some influence over the Hutterite leader Peter Rideman, whose theology of baptism seems remarkably similar to Hubmaier's own.

Rideman in his *Account of Religion* (1565) writes that

'whoever now is to be born in Christian wise, must first like Mary hear the word and believe the same, that when his faith is sealed by the Holy Spirit he may be truly accepted into the Church of Christ...we find in no place that the apostles baptized children...we hold the baptism of children to be useless and wrong.'<sup>11</sup>

Rideman like Hubmaier believes that the baptism of believers should proceed in a certain way; first they should hear the truth, then believe it, and only then be baptised. Hubmaier wrote a great deal about the correct process for baptism; for example in his *Old and New Teachers on Believers Baptism* (1526) he states that

'you see here even more clearly how one should first preach; second, believe; third, be baptised; fourth follows salvation.'<sup>12</sup>

Rideman's doctrine of baptism is practically identical to Hubmaier's, this shows that there is the potential of influence of Hubmaier on Rideman. Rideman's theology on the Lord's Supper is also very similar; Rideman writes that the Lord's Supper 'was given us to comfort and

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 271.

<sup>11</sup> P. Rideman, *Confession Of Faith* (Bungay, 1950), p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> Hubmaier, 'Old and New Teachers on Believers Baptism', in H. W. Pipkin, J. H. Yoder (eds.), *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, 1992), p. 261.



remind us of God's grace' and that

'the meal, or the partaking of bread and wine of the Lord, is a sign of the community of his body, in that each and every member thereby declareth himself to be of the one mind, heart and spirit of Christ.'<sup>13</sup>

Hubmaier in a similar vein as shown previously also believes that the Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ's death and that it is not a sacrifice. This thesis cannot prove for definite with the sources available to it whether Hubmaier influenced Rideman's theology or not.

However other historians believe that it is likely that he did. For example Mabry writes that

'Hubmaier's influence upon these Moravan Anabaptist[s] after his death is also indicated by statements made by Peter Riedemann, an outstanding leader of the movement. In his writings Riedemann seems to be closely in harmony with Hubmaier's views on baptism, the Lord's Supper, discipline, and the nature of the church...some of Riedemann's ideas on baptism, however, do reflect some of those previously stated by Hubmaier, especially when Riedemann insists upon believer's baptism and the use of the ban.'<sup>14</sup>

Hubmaier influenced an Anabaptist leader called Bishop Peter Walpot who used Hubmaier's writings in his own *A Dialogue* and he even makes frequent references to Hubmaier's writings in the margins of his manuscripts.<sup>15</sup> Walpot was Rideman's successor and became the intellectual leader of the brotherhood.<sup>16</sup> Mabry writes that it is clear that

'Hubmaier's writings were read and highly respected long after he was killed...and in their own confession of faith many of these Anabaptist writers of the first half of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movements simply adopted Hubmaier's views, or tried to modify them somewhat to make them more acceptable to their own theology.'<sup>17</sup>

Hubmaier's influence however did not only extend to the Hutterites, for a time the German Anabaptists also upheld some of his teachings.<sup>18</sup> In the *Sektenverzeichnis* which was published in 1556, different Anabaptist groups are listed and one of these is the *Schwertler*: this is the name that Hubmaier and his followers were branded with in Nikolsburg and its existence in 1556 suggests that there were still some Anabaptists who held to the same views

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13 Rideman, *Confession Of Faith*, p. 87.

14 Mabry, *Balthasar Hubmaier's Understanding of Faith*, pp. 131-132.

15 Ibid, p. 132.

16 Ibid, p. 132.

17 Ibid, p. 132.

18 Ibid, p. 133.

on church and state that Hubmaier did.<sup>19</sup> Hubmaier's theology was also known about in Switzerland as late as the end of the sixteenth century, when in 1598 Kasper Waser, who was a deacon of the Grossmunster in Zurich, wrote a treatise in defence of infant baptism and attacked the Anabaptists.<sup>20</sup> He makes reference to the charge that infant baptism came from Pope Nicholas and comments in the margin that this idea was advocated by Hubmaier, who Waser calls the devil himself.<sup>21</sup> This shows that Hubmaier's ideas were so prevalent and strong that Catholic writers felt the need to write treatises against him and to align Hubmaier with the devil. Mabry sums this up by stating that 'contrary to those scholars who believe that Hubmaier's influence waned and died shortly after his martyrdom...Hubmaier and his beliefs were held in high esteem, particularly by Anabaptist groups, for more than a hundred years thereafter.'<sup>22</sup>

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19 Ibid, p. 133.

20 Ibid, p. 133.

21 Ibid, p. 133.

22 Ibid, p. 134.

## CONCLUSION

The new debate that MacGregor raises over whether Hubmaier was an Anabaptist or not only works if historians keep the current definition of what an Anabaptist is. In Hubmaier's case he was definitely an Anabaptist because no matter what Hubmaier himself would call it, he did re-baptise people and believed in believers' baptism. Therefore historians need to look again at how they define these widely diverse and complex people so that an interesting figure such as Hubmaier can be given a fitting and deserving place within the historiography of the Reformation.

Balthasar Hubmaier's theology on non-resistance, the sword and magisterial authority was completely unique as an Anabaptist. He was the only one who has left writings that indicate that he believed and preached that the government was not outside the perfection of Christ and therefore unchristian but that it was the Church's divinely appointed guardian and protector. He believed that all types of magisterial authority, such as nobles and monarchs had been given the authority from God to protect all of their people from evildoers. This authority to protect however only applied to those who would wish to do its citizens harm; it did not apply in Hubmaier's mind, to those who simply had different religious beliefs, because they can do no harm. This is because for Hubmaier Christianity is a religion of voluntary believers and patience; and therefore no-one can be forced or coerced into becoming a Christian. Hubmaier believed that those who did execute people due to their religious beliefs were not defending the faith, like they claimed, but were in fact denying Christ; because Christ taught that by killing people over religion increases the chance of killing someone who had in fact done nothing wrong. This cry for toleration by Hubmaier was one of the earliest of its kind. Hubmaier believed that the Church needed the government as its protector because it was not allowed to defend itself, the only sword that the Church had at its disposal was the Word of

God. Instead the Church's role was to assist the government in any way it could, such as praying for it and giving it anything that was owed to it, such as taxes. Ultimately the government and the Church were to work together to further God's purpose of converting as many people as possible to Christianity. In his beliefs on magisterial authority Hubmaier believed that being a Christian and working for the government were not opposing roles, as other Anabaptists such as the Swiss Brethren believed. Instead he taught that a Christian government is more beneficial to society than a non-Christian one; this is because a Christian government would strive to help fulfil God's purpose in the world. Hubmaier's beliefs on non-resistance were very much interconnected with his beliefs on the sword. He taught that only those who had been given authority by God could wield the sword, and therefore defend themselves. This God-given authority would apply only to those in authority themselves, such as the government, and so the only time an ordinary citizen would be allowed to take up the sword would be if they had been chosen by those in authority to join or lead their army. Hubmaier however believed that none of this applied to him because he thought that all priests should be pacifists.

It was due to his beliefs in these areas that Hubmaier has been treated the way he has by his contemporaries and up until recently by historians. For other Anabaptists he was too much like a magisterial reformer, and for mainstream reformers like Zwingli, he was too much like an Anabaptist. This has meant that historians up until recently have been unsure of what to make of him and where to place him in the Reformation. MacGregor has been the only historian to argue that Hubmaier should have the label of Anabaptist removed from him altogether and instead be called a magisterial and radical reformer, the only one of his kind. This study has built upon MacGregor's work and has shown that in areas of his theology such as infant baptism and the Lord's Supper Hubmaier however did not go his own separate way but was in fact much more in agreement with the Swiss Brethren. However he did formulate

his own theology in his beliefs on non-resistance, magisterial authority and the sword. At no point in any of his writings however does Hubmaier ever state that he wished to be unique or that he is purposely creating a theology that is different. Therefore it can be deduced that at no point in his life was Hubmaier ever intentionally trying to be unique in his theology, but it was simply the result of his reading and interpretation of scripture.

Ultimately it was only with Hubmaier's form of Anabaptism where there was the greatest possibility for survival and success due to his willingness to work with governments. If Hubmaier had survived would his form of Anabaptism had survived and spread? This unfortunately will always be an unanswerable question because his life was cut short so early in his career. However due to his influence Hubmaier knew that even though he would die, truth as he defined it would remain unkillable.

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