

**A COMPARISON OF GENEVA'S THEOCRACY  
WITH MÜNSTER'S NEW JERUSALEM**


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**DEMAS BRUBACHER**

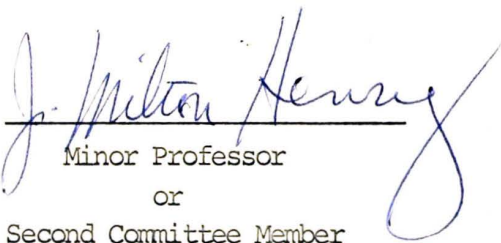



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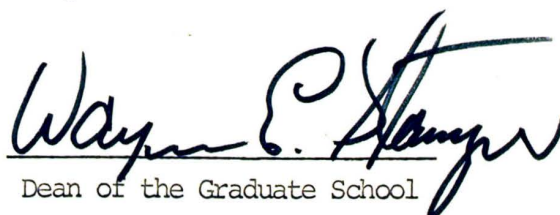
  
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A COMPARISON OF GENEVA'S THEOCRACY WITH  
MÜNSTER'S NEW JERUSALEM

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An Abstract  
Presented to  
the Graduate Council of  
Austin Peay State University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Demas Brubacher

May 1970

## ABSTRACT

It is the purpose of this thesis to compare the theocratic government instituted by John Calvin in Geneva between 1537 and 1564 with the operation of the millennium kingdom set up by the Anabaptists in Münster in 1534-1535. In order that each government might be seen clearly, the subjects will be examined individually.

The thesis will seek to show the reasoning behind both John Calvin and the leaders at Münster for their respective governments. In order to do this it will be necessary to review any theological, historical, social, political, or personal influences that might have determined the course of events. The focal point of the paper will be the determining factors and the resulting courses of action taken by these governments.

The conclusion will estimate their similarities and differences. Perhaps by this observation it can be learned what certain types of men will do in the light of Biblical influence if given the proper time and place.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Times of the Reformation

The Reformation resulted in the splitting-up of Christendom into a number of rival, conflicting churches. It destroyed the concept that all Europe formed a single community with the Pope as the supreme arbitrator of Christendom. The original purpose of reforming the established church to strengthen it resulted in weakening it by setting up a number of permanently warring factions. The medieval church could no longer speak for all men as Christians.<sup>1</sup>

It would be impossible to pursue this study without an understanding of the times in which John Calvin and the chiliasts at Münster lived. The Reformation marks the transition from medieval to modern Europe. It was not a sudden change. The Holy Roman Empire was decaying, Christendom was disintegrating, the papacy was degraded, and the ideal unity of the faith was slowly disappearing. On the rise were national states, dynastic kingships, a prominent middle class, and the emergence of the individual.<sup>2</sup> The introduction of firearms, the discovery of the universe, the discovery of the New World, and the new interest in the humanities effected a great

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<sup>1</sup>William Montgomery McGovern, From Luther To Hitler (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1941), p. 27; Frederick Watkins, The Political Tradition of the West (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 62-67.

<sup>2</sup>F. J. C. Hearnshaw, The Social and Political Ideas of Some Great Thinkers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1949), p. 10.

transformation. Man began to turn his attention to social and political problems. The academic discovery of primitive Christianity as found in the Greek New Testament and the writings of the early Fathers prompted discussions on religious toleration. The idea of freedom of the conscience in law and religion with respect to those things which are not in themselves essential was propagated by many.<sup>3</sup> The relations between church and state were changing. As the states reached maturity they were disregarding the exalted claims of the Papacy.<sup>4</sup> The Papacy had disgraced itself in the eyes of many people. Profligate, worldly-minded, and pagan-minded popes shook the confidence of the laity. The "Babylonian Captivity of the Church" had caused much ridicule. Expensive wars and architecture had drained the church treasuries. When Martin Luther revealed the exploitation of the church through indulgences, people were ready for something new.<sup>5</sup>

International relations gave a broad scope to the Reformation. The Portuguese found a short route to India by water, Columbus discovered a whole new world, the Turkish invasion from the East was bringing new ideas and knowledge. It was only natural that the economy should expand.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>A. Mervyn Davies, Foundations of American Freedom (Nashville: The Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 29; Hearnshaw, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>Norman Sykes, The Crisis of the Reformation (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1938), p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>Albert Henry Newman, A Manual of Church History (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1902), Vol. 2, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup>Elmore Harris Harbison, The Age of Reformation (New York: Cornell University Press, 1955), p. 11.

Ships, mule trains, and caravans carried the products of Europe to the far reaches of the world.

Many things which we consider commonplace were new at this time. The magnetic compass allowed access to the high seas. The discovery of gunpowder lifted the peasant to the level of the knight in warfare. The printing industry was greatly aided by the discovery of moveable type. Now the desire for knowledge, started by the Renaissance, could be satisfied. Perhaps no one invention aided the Reformation like the printing press. With it new ideas could be reproduced and carried throughout all lands for all to see and read.<sup>7</sup>

The economic and social frustrations of industrial development were also part of the picture at this time. Poverty, poor wages, poor housing, and long hours existed. The mines were being developed in Saxony during the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Mining in such areas as Freiberg, Schneeberg, Schreckenstein, Annaberg, and Joachimsthal took laborers from the agricultural population. In a vicious cycle the cities demanded more food from the under populated agrarian areas, causing further exploitation of the laborers. The demand for imported and manufactured goods increased. Forests were stripped for lumber and fuel. The latter resulted in stricter penalties on game and fish preserves which were vanishing. In all abuses it seemed the church was accused. In all new societies and guilds, ecclesiastical authority was opposed. People were beginning to realize that the wealth of the church had caused some of

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<sup>7</sup>George Park Fisher, The Reformation (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), pp. 10-11.



their poverty. The inhumanity of the feudal system was also coming under the scrutiny of evangelical teaching. The few free cities with imperial charters became the centers from which the doctrines of reform spread. With their wealth, industry, intelligence, strong fortification, and spirit of religious toleration these cities were able to protect the new evangelicism during times of exterminating persecution. The sixty cities of the Hanseatic League also became a defence of liberty as well as a protection of commerce. They were able to do much to maintain law and order and advance civilization.<sup>8</sup>

No one was safe. With the ideas of equality, everyone was looking for the causes of his affliction. Perpetual disorder resulted from the breakdown of the relations between lord, king, and pope. Assassination and massacre became the accepted weapons of controversy. People often felt the king might be less onerous and, therefore, united with him against the local nobility.<sup>9</sup>

Certain factors helped the course of the Reformation. The practical ease of printing communications, the anti-ecclesiastical sentiment throughout Europe, the vocal criticism of the humanists of conditions, the public sympathy for such men as Luther and his political support in Germany, and the desire for a restoration of true Biblical religion all helped the Protestant cause.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Newman, op. cit., pp. 7-12.

<sup>9</sup>Watkins, op. cit., pp. 72-73; McGovern, op. cit., pp. 28-30.

<sup>10</sup>H. J. Hillerbrand, "The Spread of the Protestant Reformation of the Sixteenth Century," South Atlantic Quarterly Vol. 67 (Spring, 1968), p. 283.

Into this time came John Calvin, the lawgiver of the Reformation. His theological power, moral earnestness, and political insight were peculiarly adapted to bring order out of the chaotic social conditions that prevailed. He quickly won recognition with his theocratic principles.<sup>11</sup>

Beneath the surface, hidden by the actions of the nobility and the great reformers, was a truly popular and widespread movement. To the established church this heresy was known as Anabaptism. It was found in many places and in many guises. As a unit it involved a motley collection of beliefs and behaviors ranging from mad millennialism to pietism. It ranged from reckless force to pacifism, from personal egotism to humble piety. Spreading among the lower orders, its social protests were regarded as revolutionary dangers. The movement gives us a glimpse beneath the usual surface of recorded history and shows the enormous hatreds and dissatisfactions of the time.<sup>12</sup>

### The Theocratic Ideal

Webster defines a theocracy as, "rule of a state by God or government by clergy claiming to rule with divine authority."<sup>13</sup> The joining of the Greek words God (theos) and rule (kratos) gives us the first insight into the workings of theocratic ideology.

John Calvin's theocracy was based upon the sovereignty of the

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<sup>11</sup>William Archibald Dunning, A History of Political Theories (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938), p. 31.

<sup>12</sup>G. R. Elton, (ed.), The New Cambridge Modern History (Cambridge: University Press, 1958), Vol. 2, pp. 5-6.

<sup>13</sup>Noah Webster, Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1964), p. 1892.

Christian people and the general priesthood of believers while the papal theocracy was an exclusive rule by the priesthood. He had a much higher view of the state than the popes. "He considered it equally divine in origin and authority as the Church and fully independent in all temporal matters."<sup>14</sup> From Augustine's City Of God Calvin developed a two-fold idea. First he drew a distinction between the secular and the religious. Secondly he placed the secular authority under the sanction of a higher authority.<sup>15</sup> Calvin placed the powers of Church and State in the whole body of the community, giving the people both spiritual and temporal sovereignty.<sup>16</sup> God reigned over the Church and State alike. The magistrates and the clergy were his ministers. In Geneva every office was sacred and existed for the glory of the God who was its creator.<sup>17</sup> All magistrates were to be obeyed. "They have a commission from God, that they are invested with divine authority, and in fact, represent the person of God, as whose substitutes they in a manner act."<sup>18</sup> The subject's respect for the ruler is not to be through fear but rather because "the obedience which they yield is rendered to God himself, insomuch as their power is from God."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1958), Vol. 8, p. 473.

<sup>15</sup>Michael B. Foster, Masters of Political Thought (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1941), p. 224.

<sup>16</sup>Otto Gierke, Natural Law and the Theory of Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 89.

<sup>17</sup>A. F. Pollard, The Cambridge Modern History (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1907), Vol. 2, p. 372.

<sup>18</sup>John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1559 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1966), IV, xx, 4.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., IV, xx, 22.



If the magistrate was evil, cowardly, or cruel, he was still to be obeyed because "the station itself is deserving of honor and reverence, and those who rule should, in respect of their office, be held in esteem."<sup>20</sup>

Calvin inherited from the Roman Catholic Church "the principle of appeal to the secular arm for the temporal, and if necessary, capital punishment of spiritual offenses, as being offenses against the order and peace of society."<sup>21</sup> The Biblical basis for the whole theocratic system rested on his conviction of the perpetual validity of the Mosaic civil code.

Calvin sought to control the liberated impulses of the Reformation by placing an emphasis on structure and organization. In the theocratic community the members were neither purely religious nor purely secular. The common bond of the doctrine of Christ penetrated all areas of human conduct. All legislation was limited by the common tie of the Word of God. The difference between spiritual and secular power lay only in its jurisdiction. The church had power over doctrine, was able to make laws, and had considerable jurisdiction. The civil authority was equally important as its God-given function was to see that the church could operate unmolested in a world of evil.<sup>22</sup>

The theocratic ideal was not simply a method of making the church an institution for the worship of God. Calvin sought to make the church an agency for making men fit to worship God. The whole city of Geneva

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1877), p. 463.

<sup>22</sup>Sheldon S. Wolin, "Calvin and the Reformation: The Political Education of Protestantism," American Political Science Review, Vol. 51, pp. 428-434.

was construed as a church ruled by God. A confession of faith was to be sworn to by all the citizens. Regulated worship, psalm singing, catechism classes, and personal study of the Word of God was enforced. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper was only served to those who were morally fit or worthy. Through the Ecclesiastical Ordinances Calvin applied his theocracy. The Church and State constituted one society. If they merged, the church would cease to be a Divine institution. If the church were subordinate to the state it would be falsely subject to man. If the church and state were separated, the church would be cut off from the field that needed its presence and action.<sup>23</sup>

In comparison, the New Jerusalem at Münster did not entertain any of the logical system of Calvin's theocracy. It was an irrational attempt to realize the millennial reign of Christ.<sup>24</sup> Its only ideal was to prepare a heaven on earth. Since it did not follow a specific plan, it will be easier to follow its vicissitudes as events progress.

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<sup>23</sup>Pollard, Cambridge, op. cit., pp. 367-370.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 222.

## CHAPTER II

### INROADS OF PROTESTANTISM

#### Geneva as Calvin Found it

"William Farel gave the Reformation to Geneva and gave John Calvin to Geneva."<sup>25</sup> Years before John Calvin entered Geneva the reformation had entered the area. "There are already in our times," said Franeh, writing in 1530, "three distinct faiths which have a large following: the Lutheran, the Zwinglian, and the Anabaptist."<sup>26</sup> The Zwinglian influence had been permeating Geneva for the past twenty years. Calvin, however, did not follow Zwingli. They disagreed on Augustine, election, original sin, baptismal regeneration, salvation of the pious heathen, and Zwingli's view that the church should be submissive to civil authority in all things.<sup>27</sup>

Ethnographically, Geneva was made up of both Teutonic and Latin races. The city spoke the French language but held its religious interests with Italy. Politically connected with Switzerland, Geneva's commercial and industrial connections were with Germany. No city could have been better geographically situated for security while at the same time affording easy access to all Europe. As one of Europe's crossroads, all the world knew what happened in Geneva.<sup>28</sup> The Dukes of Savoy dominated Geneva during

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<sup>25</sup>Schaff, History, op. cit., p. 348.

<sup>26</sup>Elton, New Cambridge, op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>27</sup>Newman, op. cit., pp. 201-202.

<sup>28</sup>Pollard, Cambridge, op. cit., p. 358.



the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There was constant intrigue between the Bishop, the Vicedom, and the people of Geneva. The Bishop was the elected sovereign of the city. The election was jointly between the clergy and the laity. All the citizens endorsed the election and "accompanied the Bishop in solemn procession to the Cathedral, where before the altar ...clergy...and people...he swore to preserve their law, liberties, and privileges."<sup>29</sup> He issued coinage, imposed customs, was general of the forces, supreme judge in both civil and ecclesiastical causes, and had the prerogative of mercy. The Cathedral Chapter formed his council. The Vicedom, not a citizen, was the theoretical vassal of the Bishop. He repressed violence and defended the city from attack. The office was hereditary in the House of Savoy. Since the Duke could not live in Geneva he had two lieutenants who exercised his functions in the city. Controlling the military might, the Vicedom in actuality dominated the actions of the Bishop.<sup>30</sup>

The General Council was composed of all the heads of families and met semi-annually at the summons of the great bell. They transacted community business, elected the four Syndics and the Treasurer, concluded alliances, proclaimed laws, and fixed the prices of wine and grain. The four Syndics represented the municipality against the Bishop and the powerful Vicedom. Controlling the criminal jurisdiction, they were responsible for good order from sunset to sunrise. A Small Council of twenty qualified citizens assisted the Syndics. The Council of Sixty, consisting of the representatives of the several districts and the most experienced and respectable citizens, assisted the Small Council in matters too large

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

for them to handle. This Council of Sixty was later increased to the Council of Two Hundred.<sup>31</sup>

It was not surprising that Calvin had difficulty with the moral conduct of Geneva. "The rule of dissolute bishops, and the example of a turbulent and immoral clergy had poisoned the morals of the city. Even the nuns of Geneva were notorious for their conduct."<sup>32</sup> The priests dressed and armed like the people as they played and fought with them. The bishop had become a humiliation to the Church and a degradation to the clergy. An old priest, when ordered to put away his mistress replied that he was quite ready to obey, provided all his brethren were treated with the same severity. The extent to which a man could sin and yet remain a citizen was a matter of statutory regulation. No citizen was allowed to keep more than one mistress, and every convicted adulterer was banished. The prostitutes had a quarter where they lived, special clothing which they wore, and a queen who was responsible for the good order of her community. The clergy acted as moral police and as their morals declined, so did the city. As long as the Bishop and the people agreed all was well. A Chronicler says that,

Duke and Bishop, like Herod and Pilate, stood united against the city. The Bishop, the Bastard of Savoy, appointed in 1513, was a man of notorious immoral conduct. He lived ignobly, but served the House of Savoy well. In a moment of remorse, on his death-bed in 1522, he admonished his successor, Pierre de la Baume: "Do not when thou art Bishop of Geneva walk in my footsteps, but defend the privileges of the church and the freedom of the city."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Thomas M. Lindsay, A History of the Reformation (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), Vol. 2, p. 90.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 360-361.

An attempt was made by the people to gain their liberty from Savoy. In 1519 Philibert Berthelier, Bezanson Hugues, and Francois de Bonivard formed a party known as the Eyguenots or confederates. They opposed the Mamelukes, so named because these Genevans were like the Mamelukes who denied Christ and followed Mohammed. Making an alliance with Freiburg, the confederates were able to join the Swiss Confederation. However, Duke Charles III forced them to break the alliance and restore the deposed Bishop. Berthelier was executed, Bonivard imprisoned, and Hugues was driven into exile in 1525.<sup>34</sup> In 1526 Hugues renewed the alliance with Freiburg. Protestant Berne feared that with the Duke of Savoy defeated, the way would be open for the Roman Bishop of Geneva to stop all Genevan liberties. When Bishop Pierre de la Baume, on August 20, 1530, declared war on the Genevan rebels and called on the House of Savoy to help, Berne and Freiburg moved in and emancipated Geneva, forcing the Bishop to recognize the independency of Geneva.<sup>35</sup>

The political struggle was followed by a religious one. William Farel, an evangelical protestant preacher, entered Geneva on October 2, 1532. He preached and advocated protestant doctrine from the Bible. A great commotion was aroused. He was treated with insolence and would have been drowned in the Rhone River if one of the Syndics had not changed his sentence to banishment within three hours. He was pursued by the priests who sought to beat him with clubs as he escaped.<sup>36</sup> Entering again under

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<sup>34</sup>James Mackinnon, Calvin and the Reformation (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1936), pp. 52-53.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Schaff, History, op. cit., pp. 243-244.



the protection of powerful Berne, on January 29, 1534, Farel, Viret, and Froment were able to preach reformation in Geneva. On August 27, 1535, the Council of Two Hundred issued an edict of the Reformation which was followed by another on May 21, 1536. Idols were smashed, the Mass was abolished, reformed doctrine was established, a compulsory school was set up with Saunier as rector, and the priests, monks, and nuns were banished.<sup>37</sup> By the summer of 1536, the city Council had taken over the duties of the Bishop, placed placards forbidding many of the same things that Calvin later prohibited, become the supreme church authority, and even inscribed "Post Tenebras Lux" on the city arms.<sup>38</sup>

How far had Geneva come in reform when Calvin entered? The Genevan Protestant State demanded obedience to an independent civil government, rejection of Papal abuses, the Word of God be preached as the standard of life, compulsory education, that the Church is an organism with constitutional rights, a catechism for the supervision of morals, the enforcement of the Bible in daily life, and a conscientious fiber of austerity in Christianity. Geneva still required democracy, freedom of conscience, personal liberty, a formal creed as an organized church, and the rights of property.<sup>39</sup> As Calvin put it, "They had preached, they had burned images, but there was no real reformation. It was all in the melting pot."<sup>40</sup>

Calvin arrived in Geneva in July, 1536. He intended to spend only a night as he had to detour through Geneva on his way from Paris to Basel.

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<sup>37</sup>Mackinnon, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.; Foster, op. cit., pp. 229-230.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 235-238. <sup>40</sup>Elton, New Cambridge, op. cit., p. 113.

The armies of Francis I and Charles V were on the roads that would have given him the shortest route. Farel was informed by Du Tillet that Calvin was in town and immediately went to see him. He forced Calvin to stay in Geneva by calling down divine wrath upon him if he refused.

And I declare it to you in the name of Almighty God. You adduce your studies as a pretext. If you refuse to devote yourself along with us to the work of the Lord, God will punish you, for you seek your own interest rather than that of Christ.<sup>41</sup>

Calvin stayed!

### Münster as the Chiliasts Found it

North-Western Germany abounded in ecclesiastical principalities such as Cologne, Münster, Paderborn, Osnabrück, and Minden. Of these the Archbishopric of Cologne and Bishopric of Münster were by far the most important. The reigning prince of each city held both the power of the church and the state under the watchful scrutiny of the Emperor and the Pope. Since 1392 the election of the Bishop of Münster had been a monopolized privilege of the nobility of the Chapter of the area. The nobility and high church dignitaries remained on the side of the wealth of the Vatican.<sup>42</sup>

Münster was a large, rich city, well fortified, and was the chief town of the bishopric and of the whole of Westphalia. A sense of democracy existed. As in every medieval town, the Council had been exclusively in the hands of the wealthy, until the guilds gained power and asserted a

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<sup>41</sup>Mackinnon, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

<sup>42</sup>Karl Kautsky, Communism in Central Europe in the Time of the Reformation (New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1966), p. 218.

right to be on the Council. This change came when trades and handicrafts began to flourish. In Münster the Council was now selected annually by ten electors who were nominated by the assembled citizens. Of the twenty-four members, one-half were chosen from among the educated and wealthy and the remainder from those wealthy people who were closely associated with the former group.<sup>43</sup>

There were seventeen guilds in Münster. Each had its own by-laws. In Lent, shortly after the election of the Council, twenty-four guildmasters would meet and elect two aldermen.

These were the heads and representatives of the whole community of burgesses, and their authority was so great that they, together with the guildmasters, could reverse the decisions of the Council if they wished.<sup>44</sup>

The Peasant's War of 1525 caused the common man to arise in Lower Germany against the nobility. In Münster there was much agitation against the clergy. Seeing the nobility would not aid them, the clergy took the side of the people against the rich, privileged tax-imposers. The famine of 1529-1531 and the plague that accompanied it greatly increased the foment. The Turkish Tax unfairly imposed on the poor people caused further resentment, especially on the part of those who lived far from the Turkish advance.<sup>45</sup>

Bishop Frederick was ease-loving and desired a trouble-free office. When the Pope and Emperor urged him to defend the church against the preaching of reform by Bernhard Rottmann, he decided to sell his office. Bishop

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 220-222.



Eric of Paderborn and Osnabrück was looking for a third commission and agreed to the fantastic price of forty thousand gulden. The Chapter was tricked by fraud into believing the price. It was really sold for only one-half that amount. Eric took possession in March, 1532. He saw himself as a ruler rather than a bishop. He sympathized with a follower of Luther, Philip of Hesse, did not mind Lutheran teaching, and even acted as a witness to the marriage of Graf von Tecklenburg to a nun who had quitted her cloister.<sup>46</sup> Bishop Eric's moderate policy of reform was rejected by the people and when he wished to remove Rottmann on April 28, 1532, the people said they would keep him at all costs. Unfortunately, too much merry-making in his castle of Furstenau in the Diocese of Osnabrück caused his sudden death on May 14, after having emptied a large beaker of wine. Immediately the people of all three dioceses revolted and substituted protestant pastors for the Catholic clergy. The Bishop's forces soon restored things back to normal.<sup>47</sup>

In Münster things were different. Bishop Franz von Waldeck was elected to succeed Eric. His letter, demanding the surrender of the city on June 28, 1532, was rejected. The guilds usurped the Council's power and appointed a thirty-six man body. The church was re-organized on evangelical principles and an alliance was formed with Philip of Hesse. While Bishop Franz was organizing an army, the Council in Münster enrolled three hundred soldiers to repair the town's fortifications. The Bishop lacked funds, could not get aid from the financially embarrassed Emperor who was fighting the Turks, feared a defeat on foreign soil, and could not negotiate peace with Münster. "Not a step backwards! Rather let us kill

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

and eat our children," cried Knipperdolling as peaceful negotiations were advocated.<sup>48</sup>

On December 26, 1532, the forces of the excommunicated city of Münster surprised Bishop Franz and his forces at Telgt just outside the city. The Bishop would have been captured himself had he not unexpectedly left the day before. On February 14, 1533, a treaty was concluded by the interposition of Philip of Hesse. The Bishop, Council, and Knights were to retain all their advantages gained during the insurrection. Münster now became a free evangelical town.<sup>49</sup>

Bernhard Rottmann was appointed by the Council as the evangelical preacher. Bernhard Knipperdolling was a wealthy cloth merchant in Münster who had met Rottmann earlier in Sweden. They became closely associated. Knipperdolling had come under the influence of Melchior Hoffmann in 1524 and had heard some of his Anabaptist millennialism. In 1529 he helped Rottmann in the church of St. Mauritz, outside of Münster.<sup>50</sup> In May, 1533, Heinrich Roll convinced Rottmann to reject infant baptism. Rottmann adopted adult baptism and was condemned by the University of Marburg and the Council of Münster. Anabaptists from Holland were introduced during the latter half of 1533.<sup>51</sup>

In January, 1534, Jan Matthys and Jan Bockelsohn, who is better known as John of Leyden, arrived. The millennium was on its way.

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>49</sup>Pollard, Cambridge, op. cit., pp. 224-225.

<sup>50</sup>Encyclopaedia Britannica, (11th ed.) XV. p. 869.

<sup>51</sup>Pollard, Cambridge, op. cit., p. 225.

## CHAPTER III

### THE GENEVAN THEOCRACY

#### Biblical Influence

It is impossible to discuss the Genevan theocracy without an understanding of the role that the Bible played in the whole system. The change in Calvin from law to theology took place in 1532. His writings also show this. In Psychopannychia Calvin refutes the sleep of the soul after death before the resurrection of the body. All his proofs are from scripture, showing a change from his usual philosophical argumentation.<sup>52</sup> Calvin was humanistic to the extent of fully appreciating the importance of classical and philological learning, but humanistic indifference and liberalism found no place in him. He was intensely Biblical. The Augustinian system of doctrine as elaborated by himself was something he lived and would have died for.<sup>53</sup>

Calvin believed that spiritual independence came from the belief that the Bible was the sole rule of truth and that everyone had direct access to it. It relieved one of the burden of ignorance, superstition, and false doctrine. Calvin's examples came from the Old Testament kings who, he noted, were praised for suppressing idolatry and punished for careless conduct.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Schaff, History, op. cit., Vol. 8. p. 325.

<sup>53</sup>Newman, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>54</sup>Davies, op. cit., p. 67; Newman, op. cit., p. 217.



The doctrine of equality as taught in the scriptures had a direct bearing on the people of Geneva. Since all were equal by birth in that they are sinners, therefore all were equal in status. Inequality came only in the fact that some were saved sinners and some were lost sinners. Thus all men were shown to be men of freedom. The assurance of heaven, guaranteed by the doctrine of God's election of a certain people for himself, caused a desire for self-discipline, high moral standards, and self-improvement. The greater one was subject to God the greater freedom he had. Calvinists worked hard because they felt that God was going to accomplish his work on earth through the historical process which included men. The task was tremendous and demanded heroes. Such liberty could not exist without responsibility and subjection to a higher power and without concern for the common good.<sup>55</sup>

Persecution was the theological outcome of Calvin's convictions. If he preached error he felt he should also deserve punishment. In moulding the community life in subjection to the divine law of the Old and New Testaments, a rigid system of discipline backed by the state was established. It amounted to a kingdom or rule of God on earth. It must be remembered that at this time the demoralization of the Church and State was nauseating. Calvin's narrow formalism, his placement of artificial values on religious things, his cramped individual liberty, and breeding of hypocrisy, makes him appear as a monk in the guise of an evangelical reformer.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Davies, op. cit., pp. 67-83.

<sup>56</sup>Mackinnon, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

The distinction between crime and sin vanished. All crime was primarily sin, all sin an offence against the true sovereign God. Man was by nature a corrupt and evil rebel against God. The government had the job of maintaining the honor of the sovereign Deity and enforcing his will on recalcitrant man. The honor of God required that man should be forced to fear if he could not love. Calvin's Institutes demonstrated the true Word of God and anyone who disagreed was in error or ignorance.<sup>57</sup>

The right of the clergy to instruct in faith and morals laid the basis for a rigid regulation of private conduct, dress, arrangement of the hair, wearing of jewelry, sports, and diversions. According to the twenty-second chapter of Deuteronomy, adultery merited the death penalty.<sup>58</sup> "Adultery was often visited with death and prostitutes who ventured back to Geneva were mercilessly thrown into the Rhone. Rope dancers and conjurers were forbidden to exhibit. Usury was restricted to a maximum of six percent."<sup>59</sup> Attendance at the frequent preachings was compulsory. On Sunday at daybreak a sermon was preached at St. Peter and St. Gervais. Another sermon was proclaimed at the usual hour in these churches. At midday a children's catechism was held in the three churches of St. Peter, St. Gervais, and St. Magdalene. St. Peter and St. Gervais also conducted a three o'clock sermon. During the week sermons were preached at St. Peter's on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday. Boundaries were drawn to determine which

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<sup>57</sup>J. W. Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1957), pp. 67-71.

<sup>58</sup>Henry S. Lucas, The Renaissance and the Reformation (New York: Harper and Row Pub., 1960), p. 605.

<sup>59</sup>Robert H. Murray, The Political Consequences of the Reformation (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), p. 91.

church one should attend.<sup>60</sup>

Swearing was considered to be blasphemy. "A man who swore by the 'body and blood of Christ' was condemned to sit in the public pillory and be fined." "Another, hearing an ass bray, and saying jestingly, 'Il chante un beau psaume', was sentenced to temporary banishment from the city." "A young girl in church, singing the words of a song to the tune of the psalm, was ordered to be whipped by her parents."<sup>61</sup> A girl of thirteen was condemned to be publicly beaten with rods for saying that she wanted to be a Catholic.<sup>62</sup>

Calvin's aim in Geneva was neither to become a dictator nor to make it an ecclesiastical absolutism of church and state. Rather, he wanted a city in which the Word of God should be the ultimate authority in matters of morals and belief. This required rigid discipline and an important role for both church and state. The church had the guardianship of the Word of God and the state had the political power given to it by God to enforce moral living and sound doctrine. By 1555, the church was actually dominating the state as well.<sup>63</sup> To prepare the student for easy reading and understanding of the Bible, Calvin wrote his Institutes. These were also to serve as a vindication for the teaching of the reformers.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Lewis W. Spitz, The Protestant Reformation (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1966), pp. 125-126.

<sup>61</sup>Murray, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>62</sup>Preserved Smith, The Age of the Reformation (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1920), p. 175.

<sup>63</sup>Georgia Harkness, John Calvin (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1931), pp. 21-22.

<sup>64</sup>Thomas Cecil Harris, John Calvin's Contribution to the Principle Of Religious Liberty (Vanderbilt University Thesis, 1929), p. 43.



In order for Calvin to accomplish his goal he needed good leaders. This work was carried on mainly by the pastors. Calvin believed that the ministry was a separate ordinance of God. "There is nothing in the Church more noble and glorious than the ministry of the Gospel, seeing it is the administration of the Spirit of righteousness and eternal life."<sup>65</sup> The minister should be held in high estimation because God, in them,

uses the ministry of men, making them, as it were, his substitutes not by transferring his right and honor to them, but only doing his own work by their lips, just as an artificer uses a tool for any purpose.<sup>66</sup>

Only ministers called of God and ordained may alone preach and administer the sacraments.

It is expressly provided that no one should assume a public office in the Church without a call (Heb. v. 4; Jer. xvii. 16). Therefore, if any one would be deemed a true minister of the Church, he must first be duly called; and secondly, he must answer to his calling; that is, undertake and execute the office assigned to him.<sup>67</sup>

A legitimate ministry is one appointed with the consent and approbation of the people under the presidency of other pastors by whom the final act of ordination should be performed.

We see, then, that ministers are legitimately called according to the Word of God, when those who may have seemed fit are elected on the consent and approbation of the people. Other pastors, however, ought to preside over the election, lest any error should be committed by the general body either through levity, or bad passion, or tumult.<sup>68</sup>

To aid the ministers in admonishing and exercising discipline,

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<sup>65</sup>Institutes, op. cit., IV. 3, 3.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., IV. 3, 1.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., IV. 3, 10.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., IV. 3, 15.

governors or persons of advanced years were selected from the people.

By these governors I understand seniors selected from the people to unite with the bishops in pronouncing censures and exercising discipline. For this is the only meaning which can be given to the passage, "He that ruleth with diligence." (Rom. xii. 8) From the beginning, therefore, each church had its senate, (Latin: senatum, French: conseil ou consistoire - council or consistory) composed of pious, grave, and venerable men, in whom was lodged the power of correcting faults. Moreover, experience shows that this arrangement was not confined to one age, and therefore we are to regard the office of government as necessary for all ages.<sup>69</sup>

The entire system of discipline rested on Biblical influence. The pastors, doctors, elders, and deacons that made up the Ordonnances Ecclésiastique along with the Consistory were purely for instruction in righteousness and correction in the right way of Christian discipleship.

### Political Influence

"We cannot understand the political element in Calvin's teaching without being aware that it hangs upon his scriptural conception of the relation of God to man and of the consequent obligation of man to man."<sup>70</sup> As a statesman, he was willing to accept concessions and limitations but his contention was still discipline and the right of excommunication. Not until 1555 did Calvin have his way over the authority of the magistrates.<sup>71</sup>

On April 22, 1538, John Calvin and William Farel were banished from Geneva. They had lost the first conflict over whether the Genevan

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., IV. 3, 8.

<sup>70</sup>John Calvin, On God and Political Duty (ed. by John T. McNeill, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1950), p. vii.

<sup>71</sup>Elton, New Cambridge, op. cit., p. 116.

Church should rule itself or be ruled by the state. Calvin and Farel's efforts to ban evil ones from the Lord's Table had also failed. They had started the struggle which would go on for almost the next twenty years. As they left Calvin said, "Well indeed! If we had served men, we should have been ill-rewarded, but we serve a Great Master who will recompense us!"<sup>72</sup>

Geneva had only revolted politically from the Roman Catholic Church to rid itself of the Duke of Savoy. It was still in "the filth of the Papacy."<sup>73</sup> Religious intolerance was not necessarily of Calvin's creating. During Calvin's exile Antoine Marcourt from Neuchâtel and Jean Morant from Cully took the place of Calvin and Farel. They sought to stamp out Catholicism. Everyone was forced to attend the sermons. Jean Balard, a former member of the Little Council, was forced to say, "The Mass is bad." He knew that but he doubted if the reform was any better!<sup>74</sup>

There were three factions in Geneva during Calvin's exile. The first faction was the Guillelmins, who supported the reformers. The second was the Artichauds, who wanted the leadership of protestant Berne. They even signed a treaty to that effect. However, Calvin's proposal of peace to the Artichauds caused them to favor the "Frenchman." The third party, the Catholics, was the largest. They were encouraged by Bishop Jacopo Sadoletto of Carpentras to come back to the Roman Catholic fold. These Catholics, desiring spiritual unity with Rome only, refused to yield to

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<sup>72</sup>Harkness, op. cit., pp. 12-14.

<sup>73</sup>Encyclopaedia Britannica (11th ed.) p. 73.

<sup>74</sup>Harkness, op. cit., p. 18.



the yoke of Rome. They enlisted Calvin, who lived in Strassburg, to answer Cardinal Sadoletto. His answer increased his popularity in Geneva and in September, 1541, Calvin reluctantly returned to Geneva.<sup>75</sup> "I would submit to death a thousand times rather than to that cross on which I had daily to suffer a thousand deaths."<sup>76</sup>

Calvin returned because of political necessity. The town was a prey to anarchy. One party was threatening to return to Rome while another group wanted to join Berne and relinquish Genevan independence. Calvin, however, returned on his own terms. The Council was to recognize the church's spiritual independence. Geneva was to be divided into a number of parishes. A Consistory or council of twelve elders was to be appointed by the municipal authorities in each parish for the exercise of discipline. These terms were embodied in the famous Ordonnances écclesiastique de l'église de Genève (1541).<sup>77</sup>

The conditions of Calvin's recall gave him peculiar authority to carry out his will in arranging his theocracy as he had theoretically fashioned it during his exile in Strassburg. Geneva was a city set on a hill and it soon shone out over the rest of the world.<sup>78</sup> Beginning with man's alienation in depravity, Calvin placed the cure in obedience to a new religious discipline. Secular repression was the means used to assure

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<sup>75</sup>Lucas, op. cit., pp. 607-608.

<sup>76</sup>Elton, New Cambridge, op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>77</sup>Encyclopaedia Britannica, XXII, 287.

<sup>78</sup>Sykes, op. cit., p. 68.

this discipline. For all men, and not only for the elect, God had established social and political order. If these did not provide deliverance they would at any rate bring tranquillity and safety. The Christian must submit obediently to the ruler because God had allowed him to rule even though he might be a tyrant. Men were subject to God's authoritative governments because humans also were the creatures of his formation. Calvin accepted politics in any form they took as long as they fulfilled the general purpose and established an order of repression. He was concerned with obedience rather than reconciliation. The covenant that the people entered into was accepted willingly. It represented a social commitment to obey God's law based upon an assumed internal consent. In this way all became subjects of the church which was in effect the whole city.<sup>79</sup>

Spiritualizing the state, Calvin put the power and responsibility of church affairs into the hands of the people. Clerical domination was ended. Ministers became servants of the people. They were pastors and not priests. The term theocracy was not really in Calvin's thinking. It became theocratic because of the large influence wielded by the clergy. Calvin's ideal called for the secular government to be filled by laymen who carried the idea of a christian calling into government and public affairs. He felt it was the mutual responsibility of clergy and magistrates alike to obey God. It was also the God-given prerogative of the people to rebel against an outrageous unchristian tyrant.<sup>80</sup> This last

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<sup>79</sup>Michael Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 26-57.

<sup>80</sup>Davies, op. cit., pp. 54-59.

idea seems to contradict the belief expressed earlier that the magistrate is to be obeyed because he is appointed by God. Later Calvin had difficulty explaining this inconsistency when faced with the propriety of the uprisings of the Huguenots in France.

A city which chose to live according to the Gospel must accept the precepts of the church for the rule of its citizen's lives.<sup>81</sup> Even Calvin was simply a member of the community although it must be admitted that he was quite influential.<sup>82</sup> It was the opinion of Calvin that not only flagitious and profligate members were to be cut off from the sacred society and excluded from the communion of the church, but also that men of dissolute and licentious lives were to be punished by the laws of the state.<sup>83</sup> The Council handled the more serious cases. The pastors, doctors, elders, and deacons were the four offices that pertained chiefly to the life of the church. The pastors preached, administered the sacraments, and helped in discipline. The doctors were to teach and guard the purity of all doctrine. The elders supervised the people's daily life, warned the disorderly, and gave notice to those requiring discipline. The deacon's work centered around the temporal needs of the poor and the administration of the hospitals.<sup>84</sup>

It was in the Consistory that the idea of the Genevan Church-State

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<sup>81</sup>Sykes, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>82</sup>Mackinnon, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>83</sup>John Lawrence Mosheim, An Ecclesiastical History (Philadelphia: Stephen C. Ustick, 1798), Vol. 4, p. 407.

<sup>84</sup>Encyclopaedia Britannica, (11th ed.) XXII, 287.



was represented. Through this body the life of man and the state was moralized. It consisted of six ministers and twelve, annually-elected elders. They had to be good, honorable in conduct, blameless and free from suspicion, animated by the fear of God, and endowed with spiritual wisdom. Two of the twelve were elected from the Small Council, four from the Council of Sixty, and six from the Council of Two Hundred. They were elected at the same time as the magistrates and had to take an oath of allegiance to the state and fidelity to the Church. It was their duty to have their eyes on every man, family, district, to have their ears open to every complaint, punish every offense according to a carefully-graduated scale, and to enforce purity everywhere. Jurisdiction was not civil but spiritual. The sword was Christ's yet the Consistory had the right of entry and investigation that made it a civil function.<sup>85</sup>

Offenders refusing to appear were brought in by a civil officer and thus every offense to the church became an act of civil disobedience. The ministers, the servants of the people, were not exempt from the following list of intolerable crimes:

Heresy, schism, rebellion against ecclesiastical order, blasphemy open and meriting civil punishment, simony and all corruption in presentations, intrigue to occupy another's place, leaving one's church without lawful leave or just calling, duplicity, perjury, lewdness, larceny, drunkenness, assault meriting punishment by law, usury, games forbidden by the law and scandalous, dances and similar dissoluteness, crimes carrying with them loss of civil rights, crime giving rise to another separation from the Church.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Pollard, Cambridge, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 374.

<sup>86</sup>Spitz, op. cit., p. 124.

Political leaders who disagreed with the theocratic system soon experienced the correction rod. Castellio was banished for undermining the prestige of the clergy.<sup>87</sup> In 1551 Bolsec was imprisoned for attacking the official doctrine of predestination. He later accused Calvin of not understanding the Bible and suffered banishment from the city.<sup>88</sup> Jacques Gruet wrote some bitter brochures against Calvin's tyrannical regime. He had written, "all laws, human and divine, are made by the caprice of man." In the margin of Calvin's book arguing for the immortality of the soul, Gruet had written, "all nonsense." A placard placed in the pulpit of St. Peter's threatening revenge for the tyranny imposed on the people was ascribed to him. He was tortured on the rack to reveal some non-existent conspirators, held guilty of treason and blasphemy, and beheaded on July 26, 1547. His ideas were a deadly insult against God's law.<sup>89</sup> Blasphemy was equal to treason in Geneva.

The anti-Calvin party in Geneva was sometimes called the libertines or Perrinists. Men such as Favre, Berthelier, Perrin, and Vandel were very influential and caused Calvin much difficulty. They were moral and patriotic but refused the yoke of an over-lorded conscience. At a wedding dance they were all arrested and imprisoned for several weeks. Francisca Favre refused to recant and after several weeks in jail she escaped into retirement on June 24, 1547.<sup>90</sup> In January, 1555, the church got the right

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<sup>87</sup>Stefan Zweig, The Right to Heresy (New York: The Viking Press, 1936), p. 87.

<sup>88</sup>Lucas, op. cit., p. 609.

<sup>89</sup>Harkness, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>90</sup>Mackinnon, op. cit., pp. 97-99.

of excommunication from the Consistory which had used it as a civil weapon previously. On May 15, 1555, the Perrinists were accused of treason, and, persuaded on the rack, they provided ample proof. Calvin now had no opposition.<sup>91</sup>

The burning of Michael Servetus has always been considered the one great blight on the character of John Calvin. Several years before Calvin arrested Servetus, they had corresponded. Unable to persuade Zwingli with his Christianismi Restitutio, Servetus had started to write Calvin. Both men used pseudonyms to conceal their true identity. Jean Frellon, a publisher in Lyons, acted as the go-between. Calvin soon realized he would be unable to persuade him and tried to break off the communication. Servetus sent Calvin a copy of his book, and also returned Calvin's writings with added insulting marginalia. He received no response from Calvin but he did make an enemy. In 1552, Calvin learned the true identity of Servetus and also found out that Servetus had one thousand copies of his book in Vienna ready to be distributed in the forthcoming spring book fairs. The authorities imprisoned Servetus. Only his timely escape prevented his death.<sup>92</sup>

On August 13, 1553, scarcely six days after his escape, Servetus passed through Geneva. It was Sunday and therefore, as everyone in Geneva did, he went to church to hear Calvin preach at St. Madeleine. Unfor-

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<sup>91</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 179; Mackinnon, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>92</sup>Michael Servetus, A Translation of his Geographical, Medical and Astrological Writings by Charles Donald O'Malley (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1953), pp. 195-196.



tunately he was recognized and immediately captured.<sup>93</sup> It was Servetus's teaching regarding the Trinity that furnished the chief grounds for his condemnation as a heretic. He denied that the preincarnate second person of the trinity was the Son of God. He affirmed that his Sonship began when he was begotten of the virgin Mary.<sup>94</sup>

Servetus denounced his opposers with fanatical zeal. This foolish baiting by Servetus only served to condemn him further. He called the trinitarian doctrine a "three-headed Cerberus."<sup>95</sup> Servetus's trial dragged on until October 27, 1553, when at the gates of Geneva, on the plateau of Champel, Servetus was burned at the stake. After half an hour in the flames, he cried, "Jesus, thou son of the eternal God, have compassion upon me!"<sup>96</sup>

To our way of thinking today, Calvin had no grounds for a case against Servetus. It was merely personal vindictiveness brought on by foolish intolerance. It was the disregard of the law by a lawyer. Only three copies of Servetus's book remain today, as the rest of them were destroyed by the authorities of Europe.<sup>97</sup> However, history can only be understood properly in the light of its time. Only the libertines in Geneva condemned Calvin for this action. The rest of Europe seemed glad

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<sup>93</sup>Joseph Lecler, Toleration and the Reformation (New York: Association Press, 1960), p. 328.

<sup>94</sup>Newman, op. cit., p. 194.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 195; Servetus, op. cit., p. 197.

<sup>96</sup>Newman, op. cit., p. 195.

<sup>97</sup>Servetus, op. cit., p. 197.

that justice had been done. The Protestant churches of Germany approved of Calvin's action. He had sought the advice of the churches of Zurich, Schaffhausen, Basel, and Berne.<sup>98</sup>

The true principles of religious toleration were little understood in the time of Calvin. They had not learned that spiritual offenses should not be punished with secular authority. The difference between crimes against the state and crimes against the church was neither realized among Roman Catholics nor Protestants. Philip Melancthon, in writing to Bullinger said,

I have read your statement respecting the blasphemy of Servetus, and praise your piety and judgment; and am persuaded that the Council of Geneva has done right in putting to death this obstinate man who would never have ceased his blasphemies. I am astonished that any one can be found to disapprove of this proceeding.<sup>99</sup>

Farel said, "Servetus deserved a capital punishment." It must be said that Calvin sought unsuccessfully to have the sentence changed to death by the sword.<sup>100</sup>

### Social Influence

"No man in the history of the Church has been more admired and ridiculed, loved and hated, blessed and cursed."<sup>101</sup> In order to understand the influence of the theocracy on the people of Geneva it is necessary to look at the actions of the government and church and the reactions

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<sup>98</sup>Lecler, op. cit., pp. 328-330.

<sup>99</sup>William Byron Forbush, (ed.) Fox's Book of Martyrs (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1962), p. 186.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>101</sup>Harkness, op. cit., p. 3.

of the people to the operation of the Ecclesiastical Ordonnances and the Consistory.

In every quarter of Geneva the grave, honest, and pious elders watched the life of everyone. All misdemeanors were reprimanded or punished. None were excepted for all had sworn to follow the Confession of Faith adopted by the Council of Two Hundred in 1541.

Taverns were substituted by "abbayes" with respectable persons in charge. Swearing, back-biting, slander, dancing, indecency, obscene songs, and drunkenness were prohibited. Card playing was permitted for one hour at a time. Religious conversation and the saying of grace over food and drink before and after participation was encouraged.<sup>102</sup> Calvin's "blue laws" for inns stipulated,

1. If any one blasphemes the name of God or says "by the body, blood, wounds" or anything like, or who gives himself to the devil or uses similar execrable imprecations, he shall be punished.
2. If any one insults any one else the host shall deliver him up to justice.
3. The host shall be obliged to report to the government any insolent or dissolute acts committed by the guests.
4. The host shall be obliged to keep in a public place a French Bible, in which any one who wishes may read.
5. He shall not allow any dissoluteness like dancing, dice or cards, nor receive any one suspected of being a debauché.
6. He shall not allow indecent songs.
7. Nobody shall be allowed to sit up after nine o'clock at night except informers.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Harkness, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>103</sup>Edith Simon, The Reformation (New York: Time Incorporated, 1966), p. 60.



After three months the abbeyes had no patronage and the taverns were reopened. The only success was in the fact that the worst ones did not reopen.

Geneva was a characteristic medieval town with all the vices of the day that a wealthy, pleasure-loving town could afford. The people guarded against the rules by setting special watches for the visits of "the religious" to the red light districts.<sup>104</sup>

Even names were to be Biblical. "A man named Chapuis was confined for four days because he persisted in naming his son Claude when the minister had recommended to call the boy Abraham."<sup>105</sup> Calvin drew up a list of baptismal names which he thought objectionable. These included especially the names of saints venerated by people living near Geneva. Calvin often selected the women he thought suitable for his acquaintances who wanted wives.<sup>106</sup>

It is hard to find the romantic side of Calvin. While in exile in Strassburg, his celibate life gave offense to some. Consequently he sent out a circular to his friends that they might find him a wife as he had no time for courtship. His qualifications reveal his unflinchingness to anything less than perfection.

I care not for personal charms; the only beauty which delights me is that she should be chaste, economical, obedient, patient, and that there should be a reasonable hope of her being attentive to the care of my health.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Harkness, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>105</sup>William Cooke Taylor, Romantic Biography of the Age of Elizabeth (London: Richard Bentley, 1842), p. 28.

<sup>106</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>107</sup>Taylor, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

In August, 1540, Calvin married Idelette de Bure, a few weeks before he returned to Geneva. Their only child died a few hours after birth. Calvin had a happy marriage but it lasted only until 1549 when his wife died. He never remarried.<sup>108</sup>

The register rolls of the Consistory show the many penalties inflicted for various offenses. Playing at cards, using charms for healing purposes, and papistical opinions were punished. The keeping of Christmas and Easter was prohibited under pain of fine and imprisonment.<sup>109</sup> Attempted suicide, possessing the Golden Legend which was a collection of saint's lives, and paying for the masses was punished. Betrothing a daughter to a catholic was forbidden. Fasting on Good Friday, singing obscene songs, and drunkenness was dealt with. A woman was chastised for taking too much wine even though it did not intoxicate her. Husbands were mildly reprimanded for rubbing salt and vinegar into the wounds after beating their wives.<sup>110</sup>

Refusal to attend sermons after three warnings was punishable by banishment.<sup>111</sup> A young man was punished because he gave his bride a book on housekeeping with the remark: "This is the best psalter." Three men who laughed during the sermon were imprisoned for three days. Another had to do public penance for neglecting to commune on Whitsunday. Three children were punished because they remained outside of the church during the sermon to eat cakes. No respect was paid to person, rank, or sex. The

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<sup>108</sup>Pollard, New Cambridge, op. cit., vol. 2. p. 116.

<sup>109</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 171.      <sup>110</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>111</sup>Mackinnon, op. cit., p. 91.

strictest impartiality was maintained, and members of the oldest and most distinguished families, ladies as well as gentlemen, were treated with the same severity as poor and obscure people. A girl was beheaded for striking her parents, to vindicate the dignity of the fifth commandment. A banker was executed for repeated adultery, but he died penitent and praised God for the triumph of justice.<sup>112</sup>

Between 1542 and 1546 there are recorded 58 executions and seventy-six banishments.<sup>113</sup> Thirty-four of these were for witchcraft.<sup>114</sup>

These burnings and quarterings were on suspicion of spreading the plague of 1545 by magical means. The plague arrived from France by means of some Swiss soldiers. The horrors were aggravated by a diabolical conspiracy of wicked persons, including some women, connected with the pest-house, for spreading the plague by artificial means, to gain spoils from the dead. The conspirators used the infected linen of those who had died of the disease, and smeared the locks of the houses with poison. A woman confessed, under torture, that she had killed eighteen men by her infernal acts. Two thousand died out of a population of less than twenty thousand in Geneva. Seven men and twenty-one women were burned alive for this offence. The physician of the lazaretto and two assistants were quartered.<sup>115</sup>

The theater was closely watched and often denounced. When men's parts were given to actresses instead of to boys, the pulpit thundered;

the women who mount the platform to play comedies are full of unbridled effrontery, without honor, having no purpose but to expose their bodies, clothes, and ornaments to excite the impure desire of spectators. The whole thing is very contrary to the modesty of women who ought to be shamefaced and shy.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>Schaff, History, op. cit., pp. 491-492.

<sup>113</sup>Lucas, op. cit., p. 610.

<sup>114</sup>Newman, op. cit., p. 220.

<sup>115</sup>Schaff, History, op. cit., p. 442.

<sup>116</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 172.



dancing accompanied by kissing and embracing was prohibited. The church was the body of Christ and was not to be polluted with fornicators, adulterers, thieves, homicides, misers, robbers, iniquitousness, drunkenness, and sedition.<sup>117</sup> A card-player was pilloried, an adulterer and his partner were driven through the streets by the common hangman, and then banished, and a hair dresser, a mother, and two bridesmaids were arrested for adorning the bride too gaily.<sup>118</sup> The Register of the city records that on May 20, 1537,

A married lady, having gone out last Sunday, wearing her hair in longer curls than is decorous, which is a bad example, and contrary to what is taught by our evangelical preachers, it is ordered that she be committed to prison, together with her two companions, and the person who dressed her hair.<sup>119</sup>

Even a magistrate was sentenced to banishment for having spoken too respectfully of the Mass. A bereaved individual was censured for kneeling at the grave of a deceased husband and saying "requiescat in pace."<sup>120</sup>

All luxury was forbidden in Geneva, public festivals were banned, no dancing was allowed at weddings, feasts for too many or on too lavish a scale were forbidden, clothes might not be made of forbidden materials or fashions, and no one might laugh at any sermon by Calvin or speak angrily of him in the street.<sup>121</sup> The color red was especially forbidden as it

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<sup>117</sup>Harry Emerson Fosdick, Great Voices of the Reformation (New York: Random House, 1949), p. 236.

<sup>118</sup>Pollard, Cambridge, op. cit., p. 368.

<sup>119</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>120</sup>Mackinnon, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>121</sup>Dorothy Mills, Renaissance and Reformation Times (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1939), p. 219.

was a sacrilegious rebuke to the pure blood of Christ. No tailor could introduce any new style without the consent of the authorities.<sup>122</sup> Even the number of dishes at meals was regulated to avoid excess. Drunkards were fined three sols for each offence. Habitual gamblers were exposed in the pillory with cords around their neck. Reading of bad books and immoral novels was prohibited. A morality play on "The Acts of the Apostles" after it had been performed several times, and been attended even by the Council, was forbidden. Adultery, after a second offence, was punished by death. A yearly inspection by the Consistory was made in every house to search out the faith and morals of the family. Every unseemly word and act on the street was reported, and the offenders were cited before the Consistory to be either censured and warned, or to be handed over to the Council for severer punishment.<sup>123</sup>

The influence of Calvin throughout the rest of Europe and into the New World shows that he enjoyed a measure of success. The success in Geneva is partly accounted for by the select population. All recalcitrants were either executed or banished. Not all acquiesced however, for Calvin's brother's wife and his step-daughter Judith were both convicted of adultery.<sup>124</sup>

This negative Christianity leads one to question the positive accomplishments of Calvin. The material prosperity of the city was not

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<sup>122</sup>Dunning, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>123</sup>Schaff, History, op. cit., pp. 490-491.

<sup>124</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 174.

neglected. Greater cleanliness was introduced. Calvin insisted on the removal of all filth from the houses and the narrow, crooked streets. The sale of unhealthy food was forbidden and the contaminated food was thrown into the Rhone River. Intemperance diminished and mendicancy on the streets was prohibited. Efforts were made to give useful employment to every man that could work. Calvin urged the Council on December 29, 1544, to introduce the cloth and silk industry and two months later the enterprise began. It reached a high degree of prosperity before Lyons took some of its trade. Watch manufacturing also began to be a prosperous industry.<sup>125</sup>

It was the job of the deacons to supervise the hospital. They kept their own records, followed strict sanitation rules, and were subject to a regular inspection every three months. Doctors and surgeons traveled and visited the sick in their homes. A special section of the hospital was set apart for quarantine purposes. All sick, aged people, widows, orphans, and poor children were maintained.<sup>126</sup>

"Altogether, Geneva owes her moral and temporal prosperity, her intellectual and literary activity, her social refinement, and her world-wide fame very largely to the reformation and discipline of Calvin."<sup>127</sup>

### Personal Influence

The theoretical division of church and state broke down because Calvin was dominating both. Theoretically Calvin was a private individual

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<sup>125</sup>Schaff, History, op. cit., pp. 516-517.

<sup>126</sup>Spitz, op. cit., pp. 128-129.

<sup>127</sup>Schaff, History, op. cit., p. 517.



giving advice. He did not become a citizen until 1559. He was never a magistrate and only once in 1543 did he serve on the constitutional commission. Geneva under Calvin could not have been all bad for between the years 1549 and 1559, over five thousand new inhabitants entered the city to take up permanent residence, and this in a city of scarcely twenty thousand. It is also true that most of these were in sympathy with the Genevan theocracy.<sup>128</sup>

The tremendous personal influence of John Calvin should not be underestimated in the events in Geneva. He followed a positive faith and discipline. The Genevese could not have found a man more able to place their commonwealth on the Reformed faith. While in exile in Strassburg, Calvin had been impressed with the lack of church discipline and the dependence of the German clergy on their secular rulers. Here he developed the idea of his theocracy. He put it into practice in Geneva.<sup>129</sup>

Entering Geneva from Neufchâtel by boat on Lake Lemman with his three step-children and his wife whose former husband Calvin had converted from Anabaptism, Calvin set to work as soon as possible. The Council voted him a house, No. 11 Rue des Chanoines, and garden near the Cathedral of St. Peter, broadcloth for a coat, five hundred florins to cover his entertaining expenses, twelve measures of wheat, and two tubs of wine.<sup>130</sup>

Until his death twenty-three years later, Calvin was busy establishing his model theocracy on the basis of Moses and Christ. Opposing

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<sup>128</sup>V. H. H. Green, Renaissance and Reformation (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), pp. 170-171.

<sup>129</sup>Schaff, Creeds, op. cit., pp. 430-432.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid; Elton, New Cambridge, vol. 2, p. 116.

Romanism, superstition, infidelity, and immorality, he preached, taught, wrote commentaries and theological treatises, founded an academy which attracted over eight hundred students the first year, attended sessions of the Consistory and Senate, entertained and counselled strangers from all parts of the world, and corresponded in every direction. For many years he ate only one meal a day. Any salary increases were used for those in poverty. After his death he left, along with his library, the equivalent of two hundred dollars which was bequeathed to his younger brother, Anthony, and his children.<sup>131</sup>

Calvin is one of those characters that command respect and admiration rather than affection. The better he was known, the more he was admired and esteemed. Censorious and austere yet behind his cold marble frame was beating a noble, loving, and faithful heart which attracted and retained to the last the friendship of such eminent men as Farel, Viret, Beza, Bucer, Bullinger, Knox, and Melanchthon.

He has been called by competent judges of different creeds and schools, "the theologian" par excellence, "the Aristotle of the Reformation," "the Thomas Aquinas of the Reformed Church," "The pope of Geneva." He has been compared, as a church ruler, to Gregory VII and Innocent III. The skeptical Renan even, who entirely dissents from his theology, calls him "the most Christian man of his age." Such a combination of theoretic and practical pre-eminence is without a parallel in history. But he was also an intolerant inquisitor and persecutor, and his hands are stained with the blood of a heretic.<sup>132</sup>

Calvin was a leader of men. He was able to appeal to the moral and intellectual faculties of others. He was willing to sacrifice to the

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<sup>131</sup>Schaff, Creeds, op. cit., pp. 433-434.

<sup>132</sup>Schaff, History, op. cit., pp. 834-835. Calvin can not be judged by twentieth century standards. Heretics were uniformly punished in Christendom. The prominent men of the time, as we have shown, favored the punishment placed upon Servetus.

highest degree for his firm belief that his cause was the cause of God. He was a combination of moral earnestness, learning, analytical power, practical organization, and administration.<sup>133</sup> Calvin always had the word for what he wanted to say. His style was a powerful instrument of his will. "The influence of his writings can largely be accounted for in his concentrated energy and lucidity of style."<sup>134</sup>

An appreciation of poetry and music was as close as Calvin ever came to the enjoyment of the beautiful in nature and art. He did, however, introduce congregational singing in Geneva. This tended to make the audience more attentive as it gave it something to do.<sup>135</sup>

Calvin's bodily presence was weak.

He was of middle stature, dark complexion, thin, pale, emaciated, and in feeble health; but he had a finely chiseled face, a well-formed mouth, pointed beard, black hair, a prominent nose, a lofty forehead, and flaming eyes which kept their lustre to the last. He seemed to be all bone and nerve. A commanding intellect and will shone through the frail body.<sup>136</sup>

His constant inflexible and uncompromising will bore his bodily weakness through all those years of toil and tension.<sup>137</sup> His physical ailments included headaches, severe indigestion, ulcers, kidney stones, pulmonary hemorrhages, and the symptoms of tuberculosis.<sup>138</sup> As Calvin grew older he

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<sup>133</sup>Newman, op. cit., pp. 202-203.

<sup>134</sup>Allen, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>135</sup>Schaff, Creeds, op. cit., p. 440.

<sup>136</sup>Schaff, History, op. cit., pp. 835-836.

<sup>137</sup>Allen, loc. cit.

<sup>138</sup>Schaff, History, op. cit., p. 839.



became thinner and long lines appeared in his face. His firm thin lips matched the flintlike qualities of his mind and personality.<sup>139</sup>

Calvin was buried like any humble citizen in a plain wooden coffin. There was no pomp, no ceremony, and no stone marker. His body lies somewhere in the cemetery of Plain-Palais.<sup>140</sup> At his death his ecclesiastical system was an established fact and Geneva was firmly entrenched in the theocracy of John Calvin. Pope Pius IV, hearing of Calvin's death exclaimed, "The strength of that heretic consisted in this, - that money never had the slightest charm for him. If I had such servants, my dominions would extend from sea to sea."<sup>141</sup>

#### A Case of Radical Theology

Calvin's theocracy was radical in the sense that it differed with the views of other theologians regarding the relationship between church and state. In the Roman Catholic church, the church was regarded as supreme over the state as the sun is supreme over the moon. The German reformers had tended to look to the secular rulers for their support and consequently they lacked any authority for church discipline. When Calvin advocated that both the church and the state had their origin in the God-head he was opening a new concept. Both were equal in their own spheres. They were not to control each other but rather complement each other in the work of God. The church set the standards of Christianity and the state

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<sup>139</sup>Harbison, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>140</sup>Harkness, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>141</sup>Schaff, History, op. cit., p. 839.

had the God-given responsibility of protecting the church and seeing to it that it could function freely. For Calvin the Bible was the important thing in his life and he felt it should also be the chief concern of both church and state. As the governments upheld true doctrine and right worship, heresy would be suppressed and the law of the Bible would prevail.<sup>142</sup>

God alone was to be sovereign in Geneva and his word was its law. The state guaranteed that the pure word of God was preached and the church decided what was idolatrous or blasphemous. All must obey the pastors and doctors in their interpretation of the Bible. Formally, the civic Council of Two Hundred remained supreme for it sanctioned every minister before he was ordained to preach. The theocracy really became an aristocracy of the godly because the Consistory, the civilly-elected body of godly elders, assured the piety of every civil officer.<sup>143</sup> The righteousness of the Council was assured in December, 1557, when it agreed to the Grabeau. This was a quarterly, secret meeting of the Council. Here, the members privately censured each other's failings. It promoted a spirit of charity and brotherly love, bound on an oath to keep it secret.<sup>144</sup> It would be safe to say that no other city council or King's court in Europe at this time had such a system to promote righteousness. In this sense the Genevan theocracy was radical. One might reflect that Calvin was a conservative in that he would not countenance any radicalism greater than his own.

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<sup>142</sup>Allen, op. cit., p. 52; Elton, New Cambridge, op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>143</sup>Allen, op. cit., pp. 64-67.

<sup>144</sup>Mackinnon, op. cit., pp. 163-164.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NEW JERUSALEM AT MÜNSTER

History does not turn corners suddenly or reveal multi-form expressions without antecedents. A movement as complex and widespread as the Anabaptist would seem to demand a multiplicity of factors. These include the lingering of medieval ideas, the immediate economic and religious commotion of the sixteenth century, and the restudy of the New Testament in terms of contemporary interpretations.<sup>145</sup>

#### Biblical Influence

"Pre-millennialism in connection with a desperate and frenzied socialistic movement, is responsible for the Münster Kingdom with its horrors."<sup>146</sup> The idea of the second coming of Christ as taught in the Book of the Revelation, was very popular among the lower orders of the people at this time. The group at Münster sought to abolish all human ordinances such as property, marriage, and social distinctions. This stringent preparation for the coming of the Lord and seeking to make ready the earth for Him gave the Münsterites the strength necessary to resist the forces of the Bishop's siege for one and one-half years. John of Leyden, the successor of Jan Matthys, dispensed with the twelve elders of Münster that Matthys had set up. The prophet Duseutschur announced Leyden as the King of all the World, by the will of God, and as the one who would establish the fifth monarchy of the Apocalypse. When a group within Münster, led by Mollenbeck, opposed the proposed polygamy, Leyden

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<sup>145</sup>Robert A. Baker, A Summary of Christian History (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959), p. 219.

<sup>146</sup>Newman, op. cit., p. 7.



cried after they surrendered, "He who fires the first shot does God a service."<sup>147</sup> The permissability of more than one wife was sanctioned from the pages of the Old Testament and actions of the Patriarchs. Leyden played out the farce of King David re-established. Since David had a harem he must also acquiesce and, consequently, he introduced polygamy.<sup>148</sup>

The New Jerusalem at Münster was not the first one in that decade. It had first been advocated at Strassburg under the guidance of Melchior Hoffmann, who will be discussed later. When his plan failed, Jan Matthys declared himself the prophet Enoch as previously prophesied by Hoffmann, and said that the New Jerusalem should be set up in Münster.<sup>149</sup>

True believers were considered God's instruments in blotting out God's enemies from the face of the earth. As the oppressed masses responded they were introduced into the covenant by baptism. In November, 1533, Rottmann, Roll, Vinne, Stralen, and Straprade published Confession of Two Sacraments which advocated believer's baptism as "dipping or completely plunging the candidate into water."<sup>150</sup>

The Anabaptist New Jerusalem in Münster, Germany, from February, 1534, to June, 1535, has usually been regarded as a product of the blind fury of the persecuted masses and the skillful demagoguery of religious

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<sup>147</sup>Pollard, Cambridge, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 226.

<sup>148</sup>Henry C. Vedder, A Short History of the Baptists (Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1907), p. 179.

<sup>149</sup>Newman, op. cit., p. 165.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., pp. 165-167; Vedder, op. cit., p. 178.

fanatics such as Jan Matthys and John of Leyden. There were about seven thousand in Münster who felt justified and obliged by God's Word to play out their revolutionary role. Bernhard Rottman was the most articulate spokesman. He was educated, eloquent, and a friend of Philip Melanchthon. Rottmann started as a Lutheran in 1532, changed to a sacramentarian in 1533, and became an Anabaptist in 1534. He was the preacher who led the Münster revolution through its phases. Rottmann addressed groups of followers of Melchior Hoffmann in the Netherlands. He felt he was "commissioned to publish books explaining the ways of God and his elect to the people of the Low Countries, in hopes that his eloquence could raise a delivering army from the ground."<sup>151</sup>

The Anabaptist idea of not resisting the godless changed in Münster within a few weeks to the theory of Christian revolution. Rottmann shaped the idea from history and eschatological theory that Münster was to play a crucial role in the drama of salvation. The rationalizations of Rottmann are the key to understanding the events which took place in Münster during the time of the New Jerusalem.

Rottmann felt that God chose different means from age to age in achieving human salvation. Therefore, human beings also changed their means by which they cooperated in that salvation. During one period God's people suffered patiently while on another occasion he summoned them to glorious revenge. "We must pay close attention to the time so that we do not undertake something too early or too late."<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup>James M. Stayer, "The Münsterite Rationalization of Bernhard Rottmann," Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. 28, pp. 179-180.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

There were three historical periods. The first covered the time from creation to the great deluge. The second was from the time of the flood to Rottmann's own time which was the "restitution" of the true faith at Münster. This second period would end with the world being purified in fire to prepare for a new heaven and earth in which justice would dwell. The third period would be the temporal, physical reign of the returned Christ and his saints. After this spanned the endlessness of eternity. History for Rottmann was the unfolding of divine revelation through the element of time. Justice and force were providential instruments to restrain wicked men from their natural, depraved inclinations to quarrel and kill and thus frustrate God's plan of salvation. God had ordained justice to maintain earthly life. In the first era, justice was wielded at the divine command. In the second era, constituted authorities were brought into vogue. As the remnant on Noah's Ark was the new era coming out of the old, so the New Jerusalem in Münster was the remnant of the second period preparing for the third era which would be the Kingdom of Christ.<sup>153</sup>

Some changes had to be made before the third era was to be ushered in. The governments of the second era had become temporal, heathen, and worldly, straying from the history of salvation. Nimrod, the originator of government, had opposed God's will with his heathen power.<sup>154</sup> God was now going to reconcile sinful government by sanctifying it. Rottmann considered it a blessing that Münster was a part of the Holy Roman Empire

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<sup>153</sup>Ibid., pp. 182-183.

<sup>154</sup>Holy Bible, Gen. 10. 9,10.



which he believed to be a continuation of the ancient Roman empire. This agreed with the prophecies of Daniel which described the four great world empires that would come into existence before the end of the world. Since Rome was the last one mentioned and corruption had increased to the place where it could not possibly get any worse, he reasoned that the end must be very near.<sup>155</sup>

Restitution, or the reformation of government, had been made from time to time by men such as Abraham, Moses, and other Biblical leaders. The government at present was in a serious state of decay and Rottmann believed that the end of the World had come and the "desolation of abomination was sitting in the Holy Place."<sup>156</sup> Since the Devil had destroyed the true church through men of learning, God had used intelligent men like Martin Luther, Erasmus, and Ulrich Zwingli to start the restitution. However, the task had been given to simple people like Melchior Hoffmann and Jan Matthys to complete.<sup>157</sup>

The date for the beginning of the New Jerusalem in Münster was 1534. A rather complicated system of logic was employed, based on the Bible, to reach this date. Three and one half is a very important number in the Bible. The drought prophesied by Elijah lasted three and one-half years.<sup>158</sup> Because of continued wickedness, the nation of Judah was placed in captivity for seventy years. That was twenty times longer. Therefore, when the church fell away from the truth of Christ, it was punished twenty times longer than the seventy years inflicted upon the nation of Judah.

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<sup>155</sup>Ibid., Dan. 2 and 7.

<sup>157</sup>Stayer, op. cit., pp. 185-186.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid., Matt. 24, 15.

<sup>158</sup>Holy Bible, Luke 4, 25.

This made a total of fourteen hundred years of church error. To reach his total, Rottmann added three things. Christ was approximately thirty-three or thirty-four at his death. This thirty-four was added to one hundred because the church was considered true for the first one hundred years. The total of one hundred and thirty-four was added to the fourteen hundred years of church error and the resulting total was 1534 or the year when Christ was going to establish the Kingdom on earth in Münster!<sup>159</sup> The Münster rebellion against the Prince Bishop was not an accident, the time of the final restoration was due. Realizing this belief, one can more easily understand the reason behind the frenzied actions performed at Münster. Even the art, learning, and enlightenment of the Renaissance was considered to be a sign that the end was near. An increase in wisdom and knowledge in the end time was also prophesied in the Scriptures.<sup>160</sup>

These ideas were not necessarily new to the Anabaptists. However, the majority held to the idea that one must wait peacefully for the Kingdom to be ushered in. Rottmann persuaded many of the saints to fight before Christ's coming by saying that vengeance was not for Christ but for the saints as a prelude to his coming. Once Rottmann had started the theme of raising the fallen throne of David and destroying the enemy so that Solomon could sit on a peaceful throne, all the stored-up violence and anger at decades of indescribable persecution broke loose. The cry went forth to prepare the way with the sword for the second coming of Christ, the Prince of Peace.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup>Stayer, op. cit., pp. 186-187.

<sup>160</sup>Holy Bible, Dan. 12, 4.

<sup>161</sup>Stayer, op. cit., pp. 190-191.

The preaching of Bernhard Rottmann was quite influential. Thousands of fresh converts from Holland and the neighboring German towns began to make their way to Münster. Legal security in Münster made it very inviting.<sup>162</sup> Early in January, 1534, John of Leyden and Gert Tom Closter, the representative of Jan Matthys, arrived in Münster.<sup>163</sup> A few days later Matthys himself arrived. By February 21, 1534, the Anabaptists had legal, popular control of the Council. Six days later a great prayer meeting of armed Anabaptists was held in the Town hall. Matthys, rousing from a trance, demanded the expulsion of all who refused conversion. Old and young, mothers with infants in arms, and barefooted children were driven out into the snow to perish at the sword of the Bishop's forces or from exposure while the reign of the saints began.<sup>164</sup>

Wholesale baptizings took place in the marketplace of those who did not want to leave Münster. Everyone had to be re-baptized. Community of goods was enforced. "What existed at first was simply an abundant Christian charity enforced by public opinion, changed to a requisitioning of everything that could be used to support the whole population of a besieged city."<sup>165</sup>

In April, 1534, Matthys and twenty followers were killed in a raid outside the city walls. His successor, John of Leyden, abolished the council,

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<sup>162</sup>Pollard, Cambridge, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 225.

<sup>163</sup>Baker, op. cit., p. 224.

<sup>164</sup>Pollard, Cambridge, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 226.

<sup>165</sup>Elton, New Cambridge, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 128.



removed the twelve elders of the city which had replaced the Town Council, and proclaimed himself the King of the World. A pamphlet, A True New Tidings, was circulated from Munster to the Low Countries. It told how that John of Leyden had been crowned with a costly crown of gold as King of the World. It told of the money and goods he had and expressed the fact that the city was well ordered and had been well defended against the many who had tried to take it.<sup>166</sup>

The secular and religious powers outside of Münster were becoming alarmed at the tenacity of the Anabaptists. Bullinger declared, "God opened the eyes of the governments by the revolt at Münster and thereafter no one would trust even those Anabaptists who claimed to be innocent."<sup>167</sup> Leyden claimed the whole world as his property and gravely appointed twelve dukes to divide it among themselves. He treated the neighboring princes as equals, even addressing Landgrave Philip of Hesse as "dear Phil" in a letter advising the Landgrave of his God-given authority as King of the World.<sup>168</sup>

It seemed that Bishop Franz von Waldeck was alone in his struggle against the city. No one seemed very interested in helping the Bishop regain his seat. On March 26, 1534, at Orsory, the councils of Cologne and Cleves agreed to send two companies of landsknechts at their own cost to aid the Bishop. On May 7, 1534, at Neuss, they again agreed to send

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<sup>166</sup>A True New Tidings (Folger Library, 1540), p. 1.

<sup>167</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>168</sup>Leopold von Ranke, History of the Reformation in Germany (New York: Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., 1905), p. 748.

each two hundred fully mounted horsemen to Münster. Money now became the critical issue and on June 20, 1534, at Neuss, the three councils of Münster, Cologne, and Cleves, deciding that loans were impractical, contributed twenty thousand gulden each. They also planned a special assault on the city. In September, they viewed the bad success of their plans and decided to raise another fifty thousand gulden to build blockhouses for defensive and offensive manoeuvres.<sup>169</sup>

Mutual jealousies over who would get Münster when it was conquered kept the various bishoprics from uniting against the common cause at first. In December, 1534, at Mainz the three circles, the electorate, the lower Rhine and Westphalia, and the upper Rhine including Hesse and Saxony met at Coblenz. They agreed to sustain a constant army of three thousand, paid with a monthly stipend of fifteen thousand gulden. Count Wirich von Daun was elected as commander with four councillors of war from Cologne, Trier, Cleves, and Hesse. The troops were to take the oath of the states of the circles. Virtually the whole nation had been called against the little city.<sup>170</sup> By April the joint expedition was in full siege against Münster. The stubborn resistance of the city was quite amazing. Had a traitor from within not led the Bishop into the weak areas of the defences the city might have held out until everyone starved to death. On the night of June 24, 1535, the walls were scaled and next day a wholesale slaughter ended the New Jerusalem in Münster. The city lost its imperial privileges and was turned over to the Roman Catholic Bishop.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup>Ibid., p. 749.

<sup>170</sup>Ibid., p. 750.

<sup>171</sup>Pollard, Cambridge, op. cit., p. 227.

The life and activities during the few short months that the New Jerusalem lasted are quite intriguing. They show a strange mixture of mysticism and rationalization. Bernhard Rottmann married the widow of Syndic Wiggers from Leipzig who was living in Münster. This lady was of doubtful character. Daily her garden was full of admirers of whom Rottmann was foremost. Her husband soon died of suspected poisoning and scandalously soon Rottmann married her. To clear his conscience and improve his reputation which was doubtful among the honorable people in Münster, he began to preach reform.<sup>172</sup>

Shortly after, Matthys and Leyden arrived. They made a great impression with their remarkable dress, enthusiastic deportment, and daring, attractive manners. Seven nuns from the Convent of St. Aegidius were baptized, enticed by the preaching of the coming life of holy sensuality. Meetings were held secretly. At first only the wives of the citizens came bringing jewels as first-fruits of their devotion. Their indignant husbands were soon converted. Soon the movement was out in the open. In eight days 1400 were baptized in order to be part of the new kingdom.<sup>173</sup>

The persuasive power of Rottmann was infectious. Women reproached the burgomaster for favoring a Hessian preacher who could not even speak the language of Münster. Nuns spoke with scorn in the open market of the

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<sup>172</sup>Ranke, op. cit., pp. 733-735.

<sup>173</sup>Newman, op. cit., p. 167.



Hessian god whom men ate. Girls of sixteen cried aloud, "Woe to sinners!" On one occasion the blacksmiths forced the council to liberate one of their comrades who had been imprisoned for preaching. When the Bishop and his peasants from the neighborhood dragged up cannon and surrounded the Anabaptists in the marketplace, the chiliasts claimed so many visions that both sides were inspired to toleration. By February 21, 1534, the Anabaptists had the voting majority.

A week later, Matthys the prophet was sunk deep in slumber. Suddenly awakening he cried, "Away with the children of Esau! The inheritance belongeth to the children of Jacob! Out with the ungodly!" On a stormy, wintry day in which the deep snow was just beginning to melt in a wind and rain storm, the houses were broken open. All refusing to abjure their baptism were driven from their homes and hearths.<sup>174</sup>

The city was divided among the Anabaptists. Seven deacons were appointed by Matthys to ration out the necessities of life to the faithful. No opposition was tolerated. Pictures and statues in the market place were destroyed. Rudolf von Langen's collection of old engravings and manuscripts illustrating the great recent revolution in literature was burned. All musical instruments were destroyed. Under pain of death all gold, silver, jewels, and other effects were brought to the chancery for common consumption. All crafts were maintained under regulations and no new garment or fashion was introduced.

The whole city was in a state of war as it sought to withstand the Bishop's siege. Boys attained extraordinary dexterity in shooting the

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<sup>174</sup>Ranke, op. cit., pp. 736-737.

bow. This weapon was not yet entirely superseded by firearms. It was a military-religious family. Only those holding a special office were exempt from the watch on the wall. At meals the two sexes sat separately. There was complete silence while one read aloud a chapter from the Bible.<sup>175</sup>

Münster had lost its municipal administration. Matthys seized supremacy. With his death on Easter, 1534, John of Leyden took command. A table of laws, similar to the law of Moses was written with several extravagant additions which abused the scriptures.

The adoption of the practice of polygamy finds its roots in the history of Matthys and Leyden. Matthys had abandoned a previous wife before he came to Münster and married a young girl by the name of Divara. He had persuaded her that this was the will of Heaven and brought her to Münster. Leyden, after taking the Kingship of Münster, decided he should have his predecessor's wife by declaring that now as well as under the Old Covenant a man could have several wives. The people were reluctant to leave their good morals even though Leyden insisted that it was in accord with Scripture because marriage was not a civil ordinance.<sup>176</sup> When dissenters rallied around Mollenhok and barricaded themselves in the town hall, cannon were drawn up. Even the women helped! In surrender, the dissenters were tied to trees and shot or beheaded. Death was the punishment for any deviation from the law. Master Truteling, a smith, of good repute, addressed disrespectful words to Matthys and was put to death.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup>Ibid., pp. 738-739.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid., p. 741.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid., p. 742.

Knipperdolling, the chief burgomaster, was given the power to put to death, on the spot, without trial, any man in whom he detected disobedience to the new laws. The wicked were to be rooted out of the land. Riding a chariot, preceded by four heralds, Knipperdolling rode through the streets with a drawn sword in his hand spreading terror wherever he went.<sup>178</sup>

The people had complete confidence in their King. The preachers supported him unquestioningly. They asked him to appoint all the officers of the kingdom. Leyden appointed himself president and speaker, Knipperdolling as lieutenant, and the most fanatical preachers as the king's privy council.

Around his neck on a golden chain, Leyden hung the symbol of his dominion. It was a golden globe transfixing with two swords, the one in gold, the other in silver, and above the sword's handles was a cross. Green was his favorite color and his attendants all wore identical badges on their green sleeves. Three times a week he appeared in the market place with his crown and golden chain. Knipperdolling had some wild ideas. Once he suspended himself over the heads of the crowded market place that he might breathe the Spirit into them all. In October, 1534, the whole city celebrated the Lord's Supper in the following manner;

Tables were set for all the adult women (who were far more numerous than the men), and for those of the men who did not hold watch on walls - four thousand two hundred persons. John of Leyden and his wife Divara appeared with all their courtiers, and served at the tables; it was a regular meal. After this they took wheaten cakes, ate of them first, and gave of them to the others - the king the bread, the

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<sup>178</sup>Ibid.



queen the wine; saying, "Brother, take and eat; as the grains of wheat are baked together, and the grapes are pressed together, so are we also one." Then they sang the psalm, "To God alone in the highest be honor." The king thought he perceived at the feast "one who had not on a wedding garment." He fancied that this man was Judas, ordered him to be led out, went out himself, and cut off his head; he believed he had felt himself commanded by God to do this, and returned cheerful and delighted to the feast.<sup>179</sup>

The mixture of piety and bloodthirstiness was surprising. One woman boasted that no man could control her. Leyden placed her among his wives where she lived for some time. Growing tired of him, she returned his presents and left him. Leyden, considering this the greatest of all crimes, led her to the market place and beheaded her himself while his wives sang, "To God alone in the highest be honor."<sup>180</sup>

The people fought with surprising zeal and animosity. One woman, after hearing the story of the Old Testament Judith and her bravery, decided to go and kill the Bishop. Hille Feike, dressed in the best jewels and provided with a sum of money from the treasury, set out for the Bishop. Arrested on suspicion, she confessed to the same Bishop her intentions and was put to death. On August 30, 1534, the Bishop's forces were repulsed by the Anabaptists. As the landsknechts scaled the walls, they were greeted with musket fire, arrows, burning pitch and lime which the women had prepared in their cauldrons.<sup>181</sup> The soldiers fought to the end. They suffered severe starvation. When the situation got desperate, Leyden allowed any to leave who wished. Those that did were killed by the Bishop's forces. Before they could leave, Leyden lined them up and searched them, leaving them only their clothing and saying, "now go your ways to the

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<sup>179</sup>Ibid., p. 745.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid., p. 746.

<sup>181</sup>Ibid.

heretics."<sup>182</sup> The end came on St. John's Eve, 1535, when several hundred of the Bishop's forces, guided by a traitor who knew the Anabaptist's watchword, crossed the walls and the next day either slaughtered all or granted some a stay of execution for a few days. Rottmann ran into the thickest of the battle to die fighting rather than endure the torture as did Knipperdolling and Leyden.

### Personal Influence

The influence of men like Rottmann, Matthys, Leyden, and Knipperdolling loomed very large in bringing about the events which happened at Münster. These leaders were able to stir the masses to fantastic heights of fanaticism.

This influence stems back to Melchior Hoffmann. This persuasive man had many followers in the Low Countries. He had chosen Strassburg as the New Jerusalem and announced that the true Gospel and true baptism would be spread by the 144,000 righteous over the whole earth from there. He set the date at 1533 when this should begin. His fanatical declarations that he was Elijah the prophet got him into difficulties with the authorities. He spent the last ten years of his life in jail. Helplessly, he watched the year 1533 pass by behind bars.<sup>183</sup>

Jan Matthys, a baker of Haarlem became Hoffmann's fanatical successor in the Netherlands. Around Amsterdam, Kampen, Zwolle, and Deventer he made hundreds of converts from the simple folk. Hearing that Münster had been chosen as the site of the New Jerusalem, many immigrated from the

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<sup>182</sup>A True New Tidings, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>183</sup>Elton, New Cambridge, vol. 2, p. 127.

Low Countries to Münster. The Anabaptist cause in Münster was strengthened by the divisions among the Lutherans, aristocrats, Catholics and the Council. The influx of immigrants greatly strengthened the chiliasts, while many of the wealthy inhabitants panicked and left. With the conversion of Rottmann to adult baptism in May, 1533, the Anabaptists had a strong leader in Münster.<sup>184</sup>

When Matthys arrived in January, 1534, he brought his wife, the radiant beauty Divara, with him. She had been a fugitive nun from a Haarlem convent. Knipperdolling's house became the center of operations, and Matthys lived there. Matthys was supreme in Münster until April 5, 1534, when he announced himself as another God-chosen Gideon. Back in Holland he had declared himself the prophet Enoch as prophesied by Hoffmann. The new Gideon announced that with twenty volunteers he would drive off the besieging troops. As they sallied forth on Easter Day they were hacked to pieces.<sup>185</sup>

John of Leyden was the successor of Jan Matthys. He too was a Dutch millennialist. This fanatic was the illegitimate son of Bockel, the burgomaster of Soevenhagen. His mother, a tradeswoman from the neighborhood of Münster, had been a servant to Bockel. John was born in 1509. Later his mother married Bockel after she had bought her freedom.<sup>186</sup> Leyden's apprenticeship to a tailor allowed him to spend four years in

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<sup>184</sup>Kautsky, op. cit., pp. 233-235.

<sup>185</sup>Lucas, op. cit., p. 537; Britannica, (11th ed.) XV, 869.

<sup>186</sup>Kautsky, op. cit., p. 231.



London. While there he became infected with the opinions of Thomas Münzer, the Lutheran leader of the Peasant's Revolt in 1525. Returning to Holland, Leyden married the widow of a mariner, became bankrupt, and in September, 1533, he joined Jan Matthys and the Anabaptist movement. He was handsome, vivacious, enthusiastic, eloquent, won people easily, enjoyed life, was neither puritanical nor austere, liked beauty, wrote several obscure plays, acted some on the stage, had an inflexible will, and a penetrating acuteness which could be dreaded.<sup>187</sup>

Leyden, taking his name from the city in Holland in which he lived, found that he and his wife were frowned upon by the reformed church for their rhetoric and operation of a rather boisterous Inn in Leyden, Holland.<sup>188</sup> Only twenty-five years of age, Leyden left his wife, and appeared in Münster as the apostle of Matthys. Moving into the Knipperdolling house, the polygamous Leyden soon married Knipperdolling's daughter, Clara.<sup>189</sup> Confounding national and religious elements, Leyden followed his imagination and applied it through circumstances to actual life. He easily won the confidence of the people after Matthy's death. Not only claiming to have predicted Jan's death, he further maintained that it was the city's duty to disregard all human law and ordinances and hold solely to the Word of God. Since he had inherited the kingdom of Matthys, he also had inherited his widow, Divara. Before it was all over, he had sixteen wives. Of these, he named Divara as his queen.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>187</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>188</sup>Ranke, op. cit., p. 740.

<sup>189</sup>Lucas, op. cit., p. 537.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid., p. 538; Ranke, loc. cit.

Bernhard Rottmann followed the new king. With this popular preacher on his side, Leyden was soon able to name the twelve elders of the New Jerusalem without any opposition from the people. Leyden, as king of the theocracy, helped these elders administer justice. On June 25, 1535, the Bishop retook Münster. Divara was beheaded because she wouldn't recant and Leyden was tortured for six months before being put to death with hot pincers.<sup>191</sup>

The influence of Knipperdolling started when he began to follow the Anabaptist teaching of Melchior Hoffmann whom he met in Sweden. Later he joined with Rottmann in Münster. Rottmann set up a secret printing press in Knipperdolling's house and began to hold secret meetings which were announced by a single musket shot. At these meetings the rich brought all to Rottmann's feet, tore up and burned all evidence of debts, and absolved debtors. Even Frau Brandsteinin, Knipperdolling's mother-in-law, a wealthy woman, restored her bonds to her debtors along with the interest already paid on them. During the uncertain days when the Anabaptists were gaining ascendancy over the Council and the Catholics, Knipperdolling stood with the Anabaptists. When the Bishop's troops were driven out in February, 1534, Knipperdolling and Kippenbroick, a distinguished cloth maker, became Burgomasters.<sup>192</sup>

Considering that Knipperdolling had allowed the use of his house for the center of operations, it is surprising that he only once made an attempt to usurp the throne from Leyden. Their differences were soon

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<sup>191</sup>Lucas, op. cit., p. 539; Ranke, op. cit., p. 741.

<sup>192</sup>Kautsky, op. cit., pp. 237-239.

patched-up and Knipperdolling became the faithful servant once more who wielded the sword of justice. He agreed to the institution of polygamy. Once his wife protested that she was not receiving enough attention because of the other women in the house. She soon repented, "being visited with a penance."<sup>193</sup> Knipperdolling played no part in the resistance against the Bishop. On June 25, 1535, he hid in a house in the city wall and would not have been discovered by the Bishop if his landlady had not betrayed him. He, along with Leyden, endured six months torture in jail until his execution on January 22, 1536. He had failed in an attempt to strangle himself on the heavy iron collar that had been forged around his neck. His body was hung in a cage on the tower of St. Lamberti Church in Münster. One can still view the cage today.

#### A Case of Radical Anabaptism

The term Anabaptist was used very loosely in the sixteenth century. Because of this it is very difficult to decide today which individuals and groups should be included in a study of this movement. In a narrow sense the term Anabaptist was used only of those who insisted on adult baptism as necessary for reception into the Church.<sup>194</sup> Such hatred was developed against these people that anyone who dissented from orthodoxy and would not conform to the State Church was likely to be called an Anabaptist. Broadly speaking, the term included those who either accepted or rejected infant baptism and were outside of the established church.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup>Britannica, XV, 869.

<sup>194</sup>Allen, op. cit., p. 35; Elton, New Cambridge, op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>195</sup>Vedder, op. cit., p. 146.



The animosities stirred by the idea that re-baptizing, which declared the individual to never have been baptized, was by immersion, caused some to look for anything to denounce this movement.<sup>196</sup> Some claimed that the madmen of Münster were true Anabaptists and that Anabaptists as such were the authors of the rebellion and excesses of that period. The truth lies in the fact that a handful of Anabaptists drew upon the whole movement the displeasure of the greatest part of the European princes.<sup>197</sup>

From the first there had been a division in the ranks of the Anabaptists between those who preached complete pacifism and those who hoped to set up the kingdom by means of the sword. This latter group, which was in the minority, spread along the lower Rhine and the Netherlands.<sup>198</sup>

Three factors must be remembered in understanding the New Jerusalem at Münster. First, bodies of Anabaptists that were fundamentally sound were sometimes led into fanaticism by unsound teachers who came among them.<sup>199</sup> Second, Münster had more to do with politics than religion. The feudal system was decaying and the common people were beginning to see their status of equality.<sup>200</sup> Thirdly, persecution and oppression have a tendency to develop manifestations of fanatical zeal in the oppressed and persecuted.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>196</sup>Elton, New Cambridge, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 119.

<sup>197</sup>G. H. Orchard, A Concise History of Baptists (Lexington: Ashland Avenue Baptist Church, 1838), pp. xvi, 361; Kautsky, op. cit., p. 215.

<sup>198</sup>Allen, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>199</sup>Newman, op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>200</sup>John T. Christian, A History of the Baptists (Texarkana: American Baptist Association, 1922), p. 158.

<sup>201</sup>Vedder, op. cit., p. 167.

As we have already seen, the movement in Münster really had its beginning in the Low Countries where the radical chiliastics had been preaching. These advocates sought to restore a millennial kingdom on earth by means of the sword and coercion. Among their number the following names stand out; Nicholas Storch, Thomas Münzer, Hans Hut, Melchior Rinck, Melchior Hoffmann, Hans Denck, Michael Sattler, Jan Matthys, and John of Leyden.<sup>202</sup> Melchior Hoffmann never advocated the use of the sword, but his dreamy mysticism and lack of thorough scripture knowledge in the original languages, and general deficiency in general mental culture made him an easy victim to speculations. "Pure in life, mild in character, his teaching contained dangerous germs of evil which were developed under his successors to the shame of the Anabaptist cause."<sup>203</sup>

The doctrine of passive resistance broke down under persecution. The conviction began that it was the saints' duty to purify the world before the Lord returned.

In Augsburg, Hans Hut proclaimed the necessity incumbent upon the saints to purify the world with a double-edged sword, and his disciple, Augustine Bader, prepared a crown, insignia, and jewels for his future kingdom in Israel. Melchior Hoffmann told Frederick I of Denmark that he was one of the two sovereigns at whose hands all the firstborn of Egypt should be slain.<sup>204</sup>

This radical preaching also expressed itself in Amsterdam. Early in 1535, five women and seven men met one night in a private house. One, a tailor,

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<sup>202</sup>Baker, op. cit., pp. 222-224.

<sup>203</sup>Vedder, op. cit., p. 175.

<sup>204</sup>Pollard, Cambridge, op. cit., p. 224.

fell into a trance after four hours of preaching and praying. Arising, he stripped naked, burned his clothes, and commanded the rest to do likewise. Together they ran through the streets howling, "Woe! Woe! The wrath of God! Woe to Babylon!" They were seized and when offered clothes they refused, saying, "We are the naked truth!" Their fate was hanging.<sup>205</sup>

The Anabaptists before and after the events at Münster were pacifists. They felt that there was a forthcoming kingdom to be ruled by "inner light" alone. Jan Matthys, infected by the teaching of Melchior Hoffmann, "the evil genius of the Anabaptists," decided to create his kingdom without waiting for the return of Christ.<sup>206</sup>

The most outstanding leaders of the Anabaptists did not in any way preach sedition. The Swiss Anabaptists sought to form a church of saints and of brethren but they had no intention of destroying the godless.<sup>207</sup> Cornelius, the Roman Catholic historian, says of the Münster uproar, "All these excesses were condemned and opposed wherever a large assembly of the brethren afforded an opportunity to give expression to the religious consciousness of the Anabaptist membership."<sup>208</sup>

Protesting the sedition of the chiliasts at Münster, the Anabaptists of Moravia who numbered by far the majority of Anabaptists in Europe, issued this statement;

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<sup>205</sup>Mosheim, op. cit., p. 438.

<sup>206</sup>Allen, op. cit., pp. 38-40; Elton, New Cambridge, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>207</sup>Lecler, op. cit., pp. 200-203.

<sup>208</sup>Vedder, op. cit., p. 180.



Rather than wrong any man of a single penny, we would suffer the loss of a hundred gulden; and sooner than strike our enemy with the hand, much less the spear, or sword, or halbert, as the world does, we would die and surrender life. We carry no weapon, neither spear, nor gun, and they who say that we have gone forth by thousands to fight, they lie and impiously traduce us to our rulers.<sup>209</sup>

There were two general views among the Anabaptists regarding civil government. Both required obedience. The first is clearly embodied in the Schleithem Confession, approved in 1527 at Schlatt. Article six stated;

The sword, which is ordained to be used by the worldly magistrates for the punishment of the wicked, but must not be used by Christians even in self-defence. Neither should Christians go to law, or undertake magisterial duties.<sup>210</sup>

The second view was expressed by Hubmaier and Denck. They said that Christians may lawfully bear the sword as magistrates, and execute laws except in the persecution of others. They made a very distinct separation between civil and religious powers. Both parties agreed that heretics should be persuaded with "holy knowledge" and that "a law to burn heretics was an invention of the devil."<sup>211</sup> Any who fell into error should be excommunicated from the church "but only after two private admonitions and a third public one."<sup>212</sup> The idea of religious toleration was a new and surprising thing to the governments of the day. The Anabaptist doctrine called for a community of voluntary believers. The whole world did not constitute a church, only the local, visible assembly. They felt it was

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<sup>209</sup>Fosdick, op. cit., p. 305.

<sup>210</sup>Elton, New Cambridge, op. cit., p. 125; Roland H. Bainton, The Age of the Reformation (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1956), p. 129.

<sup>211</sup>Vedder, op. cit., pp. 160-161.

<sup>212</sup>Elton, New Cambridge, vol. 2, p. 125.

not up to a Church-State to determine the ethics and attitudes of Christians. These advanced views of the separation of church and state were misunderstood and resulted in much persecution.<sup>213</sup>

The Anabaptists at Münster were radical in that they lacked education. Many supposed that the Anabaptists were all ignorant, low class people. They were not all opposed to learning. The first German translation of the Hebrew prophets was made and printed by two Anabaptists, Hetzea and Denck in 1527. Also it should be noted that the first leaders of the Anabaptists in Zürich, Grebel, Manz, Blaurock, and Hubmaier, were men learned in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.<sup>214</sup>

In all fairness it must be observed that some of the radical situations perhaps did not even happen. The three main sources of information all proceed from the enemies of the Anabaptists. The book A True History of the Introduction of the Gospel into Münster and its Subsequent Destruction by the Anabaptists by Henry Dorpius of Münster was written in Wittenburg to show the advancement of Lutheranism. Dorpius himself never lived in Münster. The second source, Münster Anabaptist Regime, by Kerksenbroick still can be read in the Latin original. It was published in 1573 by the Münster Council to praise the conquering Bishop and vilify the Anabaptists. Kerksenbroick had lived in Münster from 1534 until the Anabaptist victory. His whole book was written fourteen years after the event and strictly from memory. The third source is the narrative of Gresbeck. He returned to Münster in February, 1534, and left on May 23, 1535. His account is based

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<sup>213</sup>Baker, op. cit., pp. 227-228; Pollard, Cambridge, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 324.

<sup>214</sup>Britannica, I, 904.

on personal observation and was written eight or nine years later from memory. Naturally he hated the Anabaptists for he was the traitor who betrayed the weak defenses in the walls of the city and allowed the Bishop's forces to enter two days later.<sup>215</sup>

A better understanding of the situation can be had when one looks at the event impartially. The ideals of Anabaptism must be remembered in the light of the prevailing conditions. During the whole time of the Münster affair, the city was in a state of war. Much of the inhumane treatment can perhaps be fairly regarded when one remembers that the Bishop also drowned, burnt, and shot all escapees and the entire population of the town when he took control in 1535.<sup>216</sup>

Leyden's reign as king of the New Jerusalem is one of pompous display. They used the clothing of the rich who had left the city for all things were considered common. Gold was displayed for, according to the scriptures, the "New Jerusalem was full of gold."<sup>217</sup>

They appropriated everything else belonging either to the town or the burgesses, and even slew those who resisted and would no longer suffer and endure such robbery. Thus did they deck and adorn themselves for their own gratification, regardless of the fact that the means for this had been obtained by others through hard toil.<sup>218</sup>

Even though all possessions were common, the single household re-

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<sup>215</sup>Kautsky, op. cit., pp. 241-244.

<sup>216</sup>Ibid., pp. 246-249.

<sup>217</sup>Holy Bible, Rev. 21, 24.

<sup>218</sup>Kautsky, op. cit., p. 253.



mained in existence and the rights of inheritance remained to be decided by the elders. Money was abolished and barter established. Booty kept from war could be kept as private property. Knipperdolling's remark to a shopkeeper gives us a good view of the prevalent attitude toward free enterprise.

Thou wouldest be in truth holy, yet art not willing to give up thy shop. There thou sittest, and ponderest how thou canst get profit from it. Thy shop is thy God. Thou must yield it up if thou wouldest be holy.<sup>219</sup>

Expenses were paid for by the booty gained from monasteries and deserted houses. Each parish had three appointed deacons to look after the poor. A written list was made of the contents of each house and food was rationed out and a close record kept. All cultivated land was divided into sections determined by population density. Crops of cabbage, turnips, roots, beans, and peas were raised. Certain men were designated as fishers, shoemakers, and jewelers. All books were destroyed and only the Bible was taught along with German Psalms, reading, and writing. The community was regulated very severely. Good behavior and discipline was maintained. The Anabaptist principle of peaceful and lawful coexistence was maintained as much as possible in this state of war.<sup>220</sup>

The institution of polygamy was unique. The whole thing was radical to Anabaptist thinking. The population of Münster numbered about eight thousand of which only about fourteen hundred were men. Strict laws against prostitution were difficult to enforce. Since the personal example of Matthys and Leyden had advocated polygamy, the idea was broadened to include the whole city. All marriages were declared void. Since the man

<sup>219</sup>Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>220</sup>Ibid., pp. 259-264.

was the head of the household, it became the legal duty of every woman to attach herself to a household under one man. In that way everyone would be taken care of. Each woman had a free choice. It was not the enslavement of an Oriental harem. The unique feature that did not work was that only one of the women was considered to really be the wife of the man. Numerous situations arose when wives accused their husbands of acting in a "fleshly manner" with the other women of the same household. Introduced on July 23, 1534, polygamy raised so many problems that it was abrogated the same autumn.<sup>221</sup>

The end came on May 25, 1535. The Bishop, who had already lost six thousand men, feared to follow the advice of the traitor Gresbeck. Gresbeck related that only two hundred men remained within the walls. He showed the Bishop a weak place in the wall's defence. Cautiously, under the cover of a severe thunderstorm they attacked on the night of May 24. Two hundred scaled the walls under Gresbeck's guidance near the Gate of the Cross. When the gates were opened, over five thousand troops rushed in. The Anabaptists, all eight hundred who could hold any kind of weapon, arose, closed the gate and cut off the Bishop's retreat. Vicious street fighting ensued. By eight o'clock the next morning it was all over. Over four hundred were massacred. Iron collars were forged for Knipperdolling and Leyden. They were dragged around the countryside for a delightful spectacle until January 22, 1536. On that day they were executed. White hot pincers were used to pull out their tongues and pieces of their flesh until the stench nauseated their tormentors. Knipperdolling's attempt to

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<sup>221</sup>Ibid., pp. 265-275.

strangle himself on his collar had failed. Finally they were stabbed in the heart and their corpses hung in cages suspended from the St. Lamberti Church.

The pincers with which they were tortured are still to be seen in the market-place on a bolt of the town-hall where they were hung to serve as an example and terror to all rebels and enemies to the authorities.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>222</sup>Ibid., p. 291.



## CONCLUSION

similarities

Upon first glance it would appear that there were no similarities between the Genevan theocracy and the New Jerusalem. That, however, was not the case. There were several fundamental issues in each circumstance that were similar.

The Bible was the authority upon which both systems rested. Neither John Calvin nor the Münsterites would accept anything else as being superior. Both felt that the Old and New Testament scriptures applied with equal force in the day in which they lived. Calvin's whole system of state and church relations was based upon the word of God. Matthys and Leyden were careful to prove from scripture anything new. Polygamy was accepted because they felt the Bible sanctioned it.

In the political realm they had many things in common. They were situated geographically in the center of Europe. Geneva was located in such a way that she was close to the rest of the world and at the same time was securely situated so that interference was difficult. Münster was located in the center of the Low Countries. All the world knew about the events as they happened in Münster. The city was well-protected and it took superior forces a long time to break down the resistance of the city. Both Geneva and Münster were in a state of political turmoil when the reformers arrived. Calvin was recalled in 1541 because the city was divided among three political opinions. The ground had been prepared for

further reformation and Calvin made good use of the situation to advance his own plans. In Münster, a political schism had developed among Catholics, Lutherans, and the Council which was seeking greater democracy. All was in readiness for the persuasive preaching of Rottmann, Matthys, and Leyden. Thus Geneva and Münster were both geographically and politically located with good communications with the rest of the world. They were favorably divided for the creation of a model community that would show the rest of Europe what a city governed by God and a city that was preparing for the Kingdom of God should be like.<sup>223</sup>

The thinking of the Reformation and the subsequent decline of feudalism were factors aiding both cities. People were becoming infected with the idea that they were equal. No longer should a serf be tied down to the land in slave conditions. All of Europe was in this foment and the cities of Geneva and Münster were no exceptions. Both Geneva and Münster had just been emancipated from their ancient religious systems. The change was essentially political although it was disguised under the cloak of religion. Councils were empowered to take over the previous role of the Bishop.<sup>224</sup>

The cities were similar in that they required all members of the community to conform to the prescribed standards or leave. It was rebellion to disobey the recognized authority. Government existed for the sake of good life. Both believed that the church had the authority to declare

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<sup>223</sup>Robert M. Kingdon, Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1956), p. 1.

<sup>224</sup>Pollard, Cambridge, op. cit., p. 366.

all doctrine and control the moral life of the community.<sup>225</sup> Both systems went to unwarranted excesses in punishment of religious and civil offenses, innocent amusements, and errors of private and domestic life. Both were interested in human liberty. However, this liberty only increased as one acquiesced to the teachings of the Scriptures as interpreted by the recognized preachers.

The final similarity lay in the belief in the divine right of government. Calvin believed that each operated in its own sphere and was of equal importance and consequently a citizen was bound to obey each, intrinsically. God had ordained the church to interpret the word of God and set the moral standards. The government had the responsibility of regulating affairs in such a way that pure doctrine would always be upheld and that the church should always be able to operate in freedom. In Münster the governments were regarded as having gone into a state of decay. It was the responsibility of God's people to purge them, as they were God-ordained, before Christ's advent. Both church and government was to obey the teachings of God's word.

### Differences

The differences between the system at Geneva and the radicalism at Münster are quite apparent. Münster did not have the system of Bible interpretation that Geneva received from Calvin. Calvin, with his logical mind, was able to sort out the various Bible doctrines, arrive at conclusions, and arrange them in a way that all could understand. His famous Institutes

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<sup>225</sup>Allen, op. cit., pp. 52-60.



are known throughout the world. At Münster we do not find any doctrinal writings beyond a few pamphlets which were sent out encouraging other Anabaptists to join in the millennial cause.

Calvin placed a premium on education. All candidates for the ministry were required to master Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. Great stress was placed on Biblical exegesis. By 1561 over a thousand auditors attended his daily lectures. Books were important and many of Calvin's lectures and texts were printed. Students were encouraged to acquire their own personal libraries. Many sought to come and learn from Calvin. Nicolas Folian, a former doctor at the Sorbonne, begged Calvin late in 1561 to be allowed to leave his post in France and return to his studies.<sup>226</sup> Opposed to erudition, the chiliasts were satisfied if one could only read and write. All books were burned and only the Bible was studied.

Their aims differed. Calvin sought to build a strong Church-State. The group at Münster tried to establish Christ's Kingdom on earth. The theocracy was strong as a state and as a church. Calvin turned the city into a model with pure morals, generous hospitality, laws against prostitution, laws against the usury racket, employment for all, a system of loans, industry, trade in cloth, velvet, and silk, staple prices on corn and wine, improved hospitals, and sanitation regulations.<sup>227</sup> The New Jerusalem did not have definite goals. Their vague ideas were based on wild, imaginative calculations that threw them into a frenzy. They lacked

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<sup>226</sup>Kingdon, op. cit., pp. 14-17.

<sup>227</sup>Davies, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

the cold, austere, methodicity of Calvin's system. At Münster the people, arrayed in bright garments, were gloriously fighting for the coming of Christ.

At Geneva, Calvin found a people who were interested in ruling themselves. For this reason they had revolted against the House of Savoy. Calvin took that desire and placed it within his theocratic system. At Münster the Anabaptists would not have enjoyed as much success as they did if it had not been for the immigrants. Over five thousand arrived from the Lowlands. These were also chiliasts and consequently they were able to overthrow the local people by ballot or coercion.

Another great difference lay in the fact that the events at Geneva took place in peace while the whole length of the New Jerusalem's existence was in a state of war. The outcome might have been different in Geneva if Calvin had had to turn his attention to fortifications of the city. On the other hand, had the insurrection at Münster succeeded gloriously it would perhaps be considered a great achievement of human liberty today rather than a blight on the pages of history.<sup>228</sup> The fact that one system was a success and the other a failure marks the great difference between the two systems.

There is also a difference in affiliation. Geneva was not an old system. Calvin was a reformer. He took an old, decayed church and turned it into a new organization that went out throughout the whole world and has influenced Christendom to the present. The Anabaptists at Münster were radical thinkers that belonged to a vast, restless, movement

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<sup>228</sup>Christian, op. cit., p. 164.



scattered throughout most of Europe. They had the same basic ideals and everything that transpired at Münster was compared to the general beliefs of the Anabaptists for orthodoxy.

Time was a large difference. The events of Calvin's activities in Geneva cover over twenty years while those in the New Jerusalem were all over within fifteen months. Calvin had time to give a trained ministry that was tested to Geneva. He had time to educate the people to be able to give a reason for their faith. Above all he had time to instill in the city of Geneva a heroic soul that made it a citadel of refuge for all the oppressed protestants of Europe.<sup>229</sup> In Münster there was scarcely time to fight the continually pressing forces of the Bishop. Time did not permit the establishment of any permanent institutions.

The last great difference was in zeal. In Geneva Calvin pressed on with a progressive zeal that over the years did not diminish but rather accomplished his desired goal. In Münster the people fought with great zeal as they sought to prepare for the coming Kingdom of Christ. It was quickly begun and quickly ended. They were looking for divine intervention. One questions what the outcome would have been if the people had been allowed to set up the New Jerusalem in peace.

### Reflections

Religion played a great role in the formation of the societies of Geneva and Münster. It gave the cities their character and coherence.

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<sup>229</sup>Lindsay, op. cit., p. 131.



directly it affected their behavior and indirectly it gave them a code of morals and customs which have remained to some degree.<sup>230</sup>

Eschatology played an important role in the affairs at Münster. It was also prevalent in the background of the Genevan theocracy. The difference lay in where the line of setting dates was drawn. The group at Münster set a specific time while Calvin refused to do so. He, instead of preparing a kingdom, prepared men for the kingdom with the establishment of a righteous city. Geneva was the most religious and moral city in Europe. But in reality it was a failure, for vice was only driven indoors and the hypocrite came into view. But the system of a Christian church and state remained for the Puritans to use in the next century.

Upon closer inspection, the tyrannical rule of Calvin is really responsible for our religious freedom of today. Calvin rigorously stood for the equality of man. Each man was free to follow his conscience. The conflict arose when he demanded that all in Geneva follow his interpretation of the Bible. Calvin added no small influence to the establishment of a sound, moral government that has as its prime task, the protection of the freedom of the church. Forbush summed it up;

Much as the name of Calvin has been scoffed at and loaded with reproach by many sons of freedom, there is not an historical proposition more susceptible of complete demonstration than this, that no man has lived to whom the world is under greater obligation for the freedom it now enjoys, than John Calvin.<sup>231</sup>

The men of that time cannot be judged by the standards of our time.

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<sup>230</sup>Arnold Brecht, Political Theory (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 456.

<sup>231</sup>Forbush, op. cit., p. 188.

They must be understood in the time in which they lived. The most cruel laws against witchcraft, heresy, blasphemy, and adultery were inherited from the Catholic Middle Ages and were accepted by all until the end of the seventeenth century. Tolerance is a modern virtue and those who advocated it to some degree in the early sixteenth century are to be congratulated for their daring.

The "pope of Geneva," as all men of genius and character, was loved by some and hated by others. His theocratic system worked for some time but did not last. It was not a system for a large country but could be useful in smaller assemblies. The theocracy in Geneva might be called the bridge leading to the complete separation of church and state. The flame of individual freedom was kindled in Geneva's theocracy and it has since become a great fire of freedom in many countries today.

In comparison with Münster, the Genevan theocracy cannot be considered extreme. Calvin sought to remove as much evil as he could in safety. In Münster, the chiliasts sought to remove all evil and live in a world of complete righteousness. The New Jerusalem at Münster shows clearly the extremes to which men will go under the right circumstances. These chiliasts found at Münster, when Strassburg failed, the right climate for carrying out their ideals. The illogical, fanatical misuses of Biblical interpretation stirred them into a state of excitement that knew no bounds. There was a complete absence of rationalization. Fear, propelled by ignorance, drove them on until they were defeated. Extreme in eschatology, monarchism, illiteracy, marriage, and Biblical exegesis, they left the moderate course of the mainstream of Anabaptism.

Both systems were anachronistic. Geneva's theocratic toleration was ahead of the thinking of the day and no one wanted to revert to the human inequalities involved in the kingdom suggested by Münster's New Jerusalem.

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