

THE REPUDIATION OF ANABAPTISM BY THE DUTCH EX- ANABAPTIST LEADER OBBE PHILIPS

The famous Dutch Anabaptist Obbe Philips was [re-]baptized in 1533 -- and himself [re-]baptized and ordained the famous David Joris in 1534 and Menno Simons around 1536. So renowned did Obbe become, that the Dutch Anabaptists were often called *Obbenites*.

After Obbe later withdrew from his own Obbenites, Menno Simons took over the leadership of that group -- which thereafter became known as the *Mennonites*, to this very day. Thus the noted Scottish Baptist Rev. J.G.G. Norman, in his article on Obbe Philips in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1974).

Obbe, the brother of the equally famous Anabaptist Dietrich Philips, withdrew from Anabaptism -- once he became convinced that it was fraudulent. Around 1560, he published his *Confession* alias his *Recollections of the years 1533-1536* -- being an account of what had opened his eyes to this fraud.

Obbe's frank and honest *Confession* is of very great importance in exposing neo-Anabaptism (such as pseudo-Pentecostalism and other heresies) today. Consequently, we now present important excerpts therefrom.

Wrote Obbe: "The first church of Christ and the apostles, was destroyed and ruined in early times by Antichrist.... All who with us are called 'Evangelical' know that the whole of the papacy is a Sodom, a Babylon and Egypt, and an abomination of desolation -- the work or service of Antichrist.... Its ordinances...and teachings are false....

"Fieriness became apparent in some [Anabaptists] who could no longer contain themselves.... They presented themselves as teachers and envoys of God, professing to have been compelled in their hearts by God to baptize, preach and teach.... Among these were Doctor Balthasar Huebmaier, Melchior Rinck, John Hut, John Denck, Louis Haetzer, and Thomas Muenzer....

"Among these, Melchior Hoffmann stood out.... This Melchior was a very fiery and zealous man, a very smooth-tongued speaker who...wrote heatedly against Luther and Zwingli concerning baptism and other articles.... I know of no one who has so much calumniated and damned in his writings, as this Melchior --whereby also we all taught many blasphemies.... All who did not say yes and amen -- were 'devilish and satanic spirits'; 'godless heretics'; and people 'damned to eternity'....

"Great dissension and insurrection daily broke out among the burghers.... Baptism came rapidly into vogue -- among many plain and simple souls. At the same time, Melchior had written from prison that baptism should be suspended for two years.... Thereafter, there also rose up two prophetesses.... These also prophesied and predicted remarkable things -- and had many visions, revelations and dreams....

"One of the prophetesses also prophesied -- and that through a vision -- that Melchior was: Elijah! She saw a white swan... And that, she interpreted to apply to Melchior as the true 'Elijah'.... She also saw a vision that...Cornelius Polterman, who was Melchior's disciple..., would be: Enoch! [However,] some among them held that Doctor Caspar Schwenckfeld should be considered 'Enoch'....

"It was also prophesied that Strassburg would be the 'New Jerusalem'.... After Melchior was in prison for a half- year...he would leave Strassburg with 144 000 true preachers, apostles and emissaries of God -- with powers, signs and miracles.... Thereafter, 'Elijah' and 'Enoch' would stand upon the earth as two torches and olive trees....

"There arose a baker of Haarlem named John Matthys, who had an elderly wife whom he deserted.... He took with him a brewer's daughter, who was a very pretty young slip of a girl.... He enticed her away from her parents with sacred and beautiful words -- and told how God had shown great things to him, and that she would be his wife.... He professed to have been greatly driven by the Spirit; and how God had revealed great things to him...; and that he was the other witness 'Enoch'....

"Now when the friends or brethren heard of this, they became apprehensive.... They had also heard that Cornelius Polterman was Enoch! When John Matthys learned of this, he carried on with much emotion and terrifying alarm, and with great and desperate curses cast all into hell and to the devils to eternity who would not hear his voice and who would not recognize and accept him as the true Enoch. Because of this, some went into a room without food and drink, in fasting and prayer.... No one knew that such false prophets could arise in the midst of the brethren [Deuteronomy 13 & 18 and First John 4]....

"They attached themselves to John Matthys and became obedient. John Matthys as 'Enoch'...sent out 'true apostles' in pairs.... John of Leyden departed for Muenster. Thereafter, through his corrupt activities, John of Leyden became king of Muenster.... Two of these commissioned apostles...said we should not doubt, but that they were no less sent forth with power and miracle than the apostles at Pentecost....

"They also comforted us and said...no Christian blood would be shed on earth, but in a short time God would rid the earth of all shedders of blood.... Thus did we on that day almost all permit ourselves to be baptized.

"The following day..., they summoned us...and with the laying on of hands laid upon us the office of preaching.... We could feel the laying on of hands and...many loose words which had neither strength nor lasting effect -- as afterward we amply discovered....

"Three men...shortly thereafter -- through 'the driving of the Spirit' -- walked through Amsterdam [March 23rd 1534]. One cried out: 'The new city is given to the children of God!' Another called out: 'Repent ye, and do penance!' The third cried out: 'Woe, woe to all the godless!'

"Now, as they were captured in the midst of these outcries, they and some fifteen or sixteen other teachers and brethren were taken as insurrectionists and Anabaptists to Haarlem -- where they were all condemned and tortured to death.... Such was the reliability of their prophecies.... All they told us would come upon the world, the tyrants and the godless on earth -- that came upon us, and upon them first of all....

"After this, some others arose who were made teachers by the previous ones mentioned.... Such strange instruction was heard among them! One corrupted marriage. The second taught nothing but parables. The third would pardon no one nor recognize him as brother who fell into apostasy after baptism.... Others stood firmly by visions, dreams and prophecies.

"Some also were of the opinion that when the brethren and teachers were put to death, they would immediately be resurrected and would rule on earth with Christ a thousand years.... There were almost as many opinions as there were teachers -- each comforting himself with lies and false promises, visions, dreams and revelations. Some had spoken with God, others with angels --until they got a new trek under way to Muenster....

"The most prominent in Muenster, were John Matthys and John of Leyden.... Letters they daily sent to us -- of the great signs, wondrous visions, and revelations they had daily.... One may perceive of which spirit they were the children, and by which spirit they were led and driven....

"Diverse teachers from Holland...professed that Muenster and not Strassburg was -- the New Jerusalem! For Melchior was forgotten, with his prophets and prophetesses.... All his apostleship, prophecy, Elijah-role, and his despatch of apostles from Strassburg -- all went to nought and to shame.... Everything that he so boldly professed from the mouth of the prophets and prophetesses -- he, in the end, found it all falsehood and deception: in fact, and in truth....

"Just as John Matthys was truly 'Enoch' with the true commission and apostolic office -- so he also came to his end.... Melchior died in prison, and did not come out again as the prophets and prophetesses had predicted [he would do].... John Matthys -- as an apostle and 'Enoch' -- was beaten before the gates of Muenster in a skirmish.... He was so fierce and bloodthirsty, that he brought various people to their deaths.... His enemies...did not just kill him like other people, but hacked and chopped him into little pieces....

"Yet some of the brethren insisted that -- following the prophecy of 'Enoch' and 'Elijah' -- he would be resurrected on the fourth day, and before all people he would rise up to heaven or be carried away by a cloud.... We have here the beginning and end of both 'Elijah' and 'Enoch' -- with their commissions, visions, prophecies, dreams and revelations....

"One insurrection followed another [seven 'naked walkers' in February 1535 proclaimed the 'naked truth' of an apocalyptic judgment and the coming of a communistic paradise]. There the 'godless' would meet their end, and be punished. All that, came to nothing. All

'prophecies' were false and lying.... Those who denounced others as godless, were such themselves. And those who would exterminate the others, were themselves annihilated....

"I am still miserable of heart today, that I...was so shamefully and miserably deceived that I did not stop forthwith, but permitted myself to bring poor souls to this -- that I through the importuning of the brethren, commissioned to the office: Dietrich Philips in Amsterdam, David Joris in Delft, and Menno Simons in Groningen.... It is this which is utter grief to my heart, and which I will lament before my God as long as I live....

"I shall be silent about all the false commissions, prophecies, visions, dreams, revelations and unspeakable spiritual pride which immediately from the first hour stole in among the brethren.... As soon as anyone was baptized, he was at once a 'pious Christian' -- and slandered all people and admitted no one on earth to be good but himself and his fellow brethren.

"Was that not a great and terrible pride? And who can express the great wrangling and dissension among the congregation -- of debating and arguing about...the thousand-year Kingdom of Christ on earth, about the incarnation, baptism, belief, Supper, the promised David, second marriage, free will....

"A reasonable, impartial Christian may truly say that it is no Christian congregation but a desolate abomination -- that it can be no temple of God but a cave of murderers full of hate, envy, jealousy, spiritual pride, pseudo-piety, hypocrisy, contempt, defamation. They could suffer neither the love nor benefit of another who was not of their belief!"

-- Excerpted by Rev. Prof. Dr. F.N. Lee, from *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (edited by G.H. Williams & A.M. Mergal), Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1957, pp. 204-25.