

Love is like
The Confession
of an
Anabaptist Prisoner
Fire



PETER RIEDEMANN

Peter Riedemann

LOVE IS LIKE FIRE

THE CONFESSION OF AN

ANABAPTIST PRISONER

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Love is like fire –

When it is first kindled in a man,
small troubles and temptations smother
and hinder it; but when it really burns,
having kindled the man's eagerness for God,
the more temptations and tribulations meet it,
the more it flares, until it overcomes and consumes
all injustice and wickedness.

PETER RIEDEMANN

Peter Riedemann (1506-1556) was born in Hirschberg, Silesia, and was a cobbler by trade. The earliest we hear about him is that he was imprisoned from 1529 to 1532 at Gmunden, Upper Austria, on account of his faith. This strongly suggests that he had joined the Anabaptist movement there between 1527 and 1529.¹ Because we know that the movement owed its existence in particular to the missionary activity of the well-known Anabaptist apostle Hans Hut, we may assume that Riedemann was either converted or baptized (possibly in Steier) by Hut or by one of his co-workers. The fact that Riedemann was able - at the age of twenty-three or twenty-four - to write such a comprehensive work during his imprisonment shows that he must have been one of the strongest and most active leaders among the Anabaptists of his period.²

Of course, at that time there was no living experience of an ordered communal life such as Riedemann was to find later among the Hutterites. It follows that this first or "Gmunden" Confession is less concerned with practical questions than the second "Hutterian" Confession of 1540-42, written in Hesse. The great tradition of the Anabaptist churches was still missing; having suffered heavy persecution in Upper Austria, they had had neither time nor peace for real inner construction. So it is not surprising that this first detailed Confession, in addition to including a song in praise

of brotherly love, devotes a disproportionately large space to biblical history (as illustrating what faith really means).

The Gmunden Confession contains two important supplements: "How we should build the House of God, and what the House of God is" and "The Seven Pillars of this House," both meditations of a deeply spiritual character. This peculiarity of spiritualistic allegorical interpretation of the Bible was soon given up, it is true, to make room for a more radical biblicism. We can see Riedemann's great intimacy with the Bible from the great number of Bible references in our text. Nevertheless, the quasi-mystical or spiritualistic element so characteristic of early Anabaptism must not be overlooked, especially in the sections about love, for it gave its representatives an amazing certainty in interpreting the Bible. We do not know if Riedemann had a Bible with him in his imprisonment of 1529-1532; it is very likely that he knew large passages of scripture by heart and quoted them from memory.

In 1532 Riedemann escaped from prison and seems to have gone straight to Moravia, where he joined the young Hutterian church there. Though founded as early as 1529 on a quasi-communistic basis, it was only organized on a solid basis, strictly observing community of goods, in 1533, by Jakob Hutter from Tirol. For Riedemann there now began a rich time of missionary activity and pastoral care during which he traveled several times to Franconia and Hesse. He was imprisoned for about four years in Nürnberg (till 1537), and later in Hesse (Marburg and Wolkersdorf) for almost two years.

In the fifty years of his life Riedemann was held nearly nine years in prison, partly under severe conditions, though fortune was kind to him and he could escape again and again. During his imprisonment in Hesse, he wrote (mainly for the landgrave Philip of Hesse) his second, much larger statement of belief, an account in the original sense of the word, which became the standard confession of faith for the Hutterian Brethren. This Account and Confession of Faith was first printed in 1545 (only one copy is known) and reprinted in 1565 (about seven copies are extant).³

From 1542, Riedemann, with the assistance of Leonhard Lanzenstiel, served as Elder or Bishop of the Hutterian Church. Courageously sharing in its hard early lot, he held the brotherhood together and led it into a more hopeful era.

Riedemann died on December 1, 1556, at Protzko Bruderhof in Slovakia. The Hutterian Chronicle says of him:

He was a man inspired and highly gifted by God....He wrote many wonderful epistles from prison and from the community to brothers and sisters who were also prisoners or living elsewhere....Both in prison and in the church community, he wrote many beautiful Christian songs, spiritual and biblical, for he was rich in all the secrets of God.⁴ The gift of God's Word flowed from him like a running river and brimmed over. All who heard him were filled with joy.

Robert Friedmann

THE LOVE OF GOD

God in his almighty power and divine nature hovered in the wind before there was a place to stand, and before the foundation of the world was laid; he, the infinite Being, was alone in his glory. It seemed to him not enough to be alone, however, as there was nothing to praise and glorify his name, for he wanted praise. So in his wisdom, which endures for ever and never changes, he created heaven and earth and filled them with his glory - that is, with all creation, the work of his hands in which we recognize his invisible being and eternal power, if we note and observe it. On looking at it, he declared that everything was very good, made according to his will and without blemish; but among them all there was no creature able to give him the praise he wanted. So he said, "Let us make human beings in our image, that is, beings who are perfectly pure and completely without blemish."

Then he made a man and a woman and gave them dominion over all the work of his hands, except the tree of life and of the knowledge of good and evil. Regarding this tree, he said, "When you eat of it you shall die." But the human beings whom God had made for his praise soon turned away and forgot their Creator's command and all the good things he had given them. They exchanged obedience for disobedience and ate of the forbidden fruit. This caused them to fall, and their descendants also, for the wrath of God came

over them, and as a result the earth, too, came under a curse, and as a punishment bore thistles and thorns where they had hoped for good. God had expected goodness and obedience from them, but they had been disobedient and caused thistles and thorns to grow. Therefore eternal death and damnation came over them and all their descendants, and it became impossible for any of them to attain what the one man, Adam, had lost - that is, God's favor and grace; for the wrath of God had come upon them and they lay in the power of death under sin, as under a heavy load that none of them could lift. Only the one eternally powerful God, against whom they had sinned, could do so through his dearly beloved Son.

But God in the very great wrath which had befallen us could not restrain and hide his love. This was impossible, for he himself is love. So he had to show himself and make himself known, and extend love to the human race, and after the curse give comfort once more through his promise. In order that man might have comfort and hope, he said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between your seed and the woman's seed, and her seed will crush your head." This seed is Christ our Savior, who crushed the serpent's head, that is, robbed the Devil of his power and dominion.

What great love that is! God comforts us, his greatest enemies, with such a glorious and wonderful promise to free us from death (which we had willfully deserved) and give us everlasting life freely, without our earning or deserving it.

So loving is his compassion! Like a spring that overflows, his mercy flows over all who desire it, calling them to this grace and saying, "Everyone who is thirsty, come to the water, and those of you who have no money, come buy wine and milk without price!" Who has ever shown anyone such love as the Ruler of all has shown, even to those who despised him? He still cares daily for them, and gives them food and drink, clothing and all they need, also strength of body. Truly, what can a man have that he did not receive from him? And what could he achieve that was not done by God beforehand and given him? Yet who is thanked less for a gift than the One from whom everything comes, the One who cares for us as a mother does for the child at her breast, and wants nothing evil to befall us, but wants to save us from it all, if only we listen to his voice? For as a bird cares for its young, he watches over us to help us, saying, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will hear you and help you." He is a faithful God who soon forgets all our transgressions and favors us with his noblest gifts.

God's love is seen in that he did not spare his dearly beloved only Son, but sent him into the world and gave him up to death as atonement for our sin. What great love that is! He makes his only Son whom he loves alive again in us who were dead, and leads us to his kingdom. What more should he have done than he has already done, or what more should he have shown us than he has already shown? God wants to give us everything with him. But not only that; he

has already given himself to us to be our Father and accepted us as his children by freely forgiving our sins. We have not repaid him for this, nor does he want any recompense except that we believe in his name and in Jesus Christ his Son, whom he sent to be the Savior of the world.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Christ Jesus, the eternal Word of God Most High, was with the Father before the creation of the world and made all things together with his Father - as it is written, "Before the world was, I was, and rejoiced in his presence continually, and when he prepared all things I helped him, for through him all things are made, and nothing was made without him." Everything that has been made, however, has being and remains in him and through him will once more be perfected. He came from above to his property, but they did not receive him; but to those who received him he gave the power to become children of God. What great love that is! Christ Jesus, the eternal Father's Son, left the glory beside the Father which he had had before the world was made and came into the world in the form of a servant, endured poverty, temptation, and suffering to set us free from the yoke of misery and servitude. The lord of all lords and king of all kings became poor for our sake that we might become rich in him. We see the love of Christ in that he gave his life for us and suffered death to free us, who were guilty of death; for it is written, "No one has greater love than to give his life for his friend, and you are my friends, if you do all that I command you. I lay down my life in order to receive it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down myself." Christ had such love for us that he gave his life and suffered the most humiliating death, namely death on the

cross. Thus he became a curse for our sakes. For it is written, "Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree."

How could he have a greater love than this: he suffered so much poverty and misery, and shed his blood in death and so broke down the middle wall of partition and wiped out all that was written against us. He made a sure path to the Father for us and earned for us the Father's favor. See how he spared no effort but did all that was necessary for our blessedness simply so that we might find joy with God and that he might cast off the heavy load that had lain upon us. We could rid ourselves of this in no other way than through him, since Satan had bound us so tightly with his ropes and stood like an armed man, keeping us in his power until the appointed time of grace came to us from God, when he sent the strong hero, Jesus Christ our Lord, against whom no one can prevail. He took away Satan's power, burst the chain and the prison that held us, and forced Satan to obey him. He redeemed us, his people, in order that we might cleave to him alone and serve him with all our hearts.

Now, whoever recognizes the love of God the Father and of his dearly beloved Son, and takes to heart the great grace that has come to us through him, will truly set his heart to serve him, obey his commandments, and delight in them by day and night; he will treasure and love the testimony of his God, and have no fear of what may happen to him as a result. He will let nothing hinder him in this or turn him aside: as it is written, "What can separate us from the

love of God - tribulation or death, hunger or thirst, heat or frost, fire, water, or sword? As it is written, we are killed all day long and are counted as sheep for slaughter, but in all this we more than overcome for the sake of him who loved us." Such a man, however, will watch carefully over his witness to the Lord, and will hold unhindered to God's will against his own will, which he gives to die with Christ. He strangles and kills it, so that his whole will is changed and renewed, and he becomes a new creature in Christ. He puts on Christ and truly surrenders himself to God. Just as previously he surrendered to sin, obeying it and serving it, and going from one sin to the next, now, after having recognized God, he gives himself and his members to God as weapons of righteousness that they may be holy. Now he no longer lives, but Christ lives in him and brings to perfection everything in him that is pleasing to God, so that he may praise God with an honest heart. For the true praise of God is to keep his testimony and love his name wholeheartedly.

LET US LOVE GOD

Let us love God; for he has loved us first and sent his Son into the world, through whom he has made us holy and sanctified us to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices well-pleasing to him through Jesus Christ. This is the love of God: that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. But whoever says he loves God and does not keep his commandments is a liar. In such a man there is no truth, for whoever loves God remains in God and God in him. We recognize that we remain in God and he in us if we keep his commandments.

The chief of all God's commandments is, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one. You must cleave to him, serve him and love him with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and all your strength." So to love God is the fulfillment of all his commands, and to love him with all my powers is to honor him with all my works and to give him praise. This means that in all I do and want to do, I look first to see whether I seek to increase God's praise in it. If I find that he will be praised by a deed, I joyfully carry it out for God's sake, regardless of the consequences for me. Where that is not so - where I do not find God's praise in it - it is useless work. I should leave it undone in order that God's name not be profaned in my work (regardless of who becomes my enemy because of it), and so that what I do may be done or left undone in God.

To love God with my whole soul means to watch all the words I speak so that they serve for God's praise and the edification and betterment of my neighbor, as Paul teaches. One should speak words that are gracious to listen to, necessary, and beneficial for the body of Christ; words that accord with faith and serve to confess and testify to the Son of God, heedless of grumblers - as it is written, "I believe and so I speak." For all speech that comes from faith brings betterment and merits God's Spirit and praise. But if I consider my words and find neither God's praise nor the betterment of my neighbor, I should stop, as James teaches, keeping my tongue in control and remain silent, lest my words grieve God's Holy Spirit; for the wise man says, "Where there are many words, lies are not lacking." This is enmity to God and cannot come from truth. Hence the Holy Spirit teaches us, saying, "Do not accustom your mouth to indecent words, for they give rise to sinful thoughts."

To love God with all my heart and soul means that in all my thoughts I praise God, and give no room to sinful thoughts that arise from my flesh, nor listen to them, but fight against them with all my power, and through God's mercy turn to the throne of grace and cry for help and deliverance: "O Lord, free me from this body of death, and do not let the Enemy overcome me! Come quickly to help me!" In this way your devil with all his wickedness is overcome. This is the good fight God wants us to fight, the fight in which he has placed us. Only he who fights honestly will

receive the crown.

Everyone who loves God with his whole heart, mind, soul, and strength would rather be dead to the world, and would rather die than continue for even a short time thinking a useless or vain thought. I will be silent lest he bring forth words and work through which he profanes God's precious name. It befits us to have such love for our God and Christ - not only with our words, but with power, for he dearly loved us first in his Son, and showed us great kindness. For not everyone who says, "I love God" (and everyone says this) really does love God, but only he who shows it in power. As is written, he who loves me keeps my word and walks in my precepts. Such love works God's work and makes us alive in faith. Whoever loves like this is born of God.

LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Now, whoever loves him who gave him birth should also love one who is born of him, that is, whoever loves God should love his brother too; for whoever says he loves God and does not love his brother is a liar; for how can he love God, whom he cannot see, if he does not love his brother, whom he sees. So the man of God should also have brotherly love, as it is written, "Love one another with brotherly affection and each serve the other." Christ gave us this command. Finally, when he wanted to leave the world and return to the Father, he said to his disciples, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: even as I have loved you, you also love one another. If you have love for one another, men will know you are my disciples." But brotherly love implies that we lay our lives down for each other, just as Christ did for all of us, and gave us an example to follow in his footsteps. So I should not live for myself alone, but live to serve my brothers - not seek my prosperity and betterment, but theirs, my whole life long; also, I should take care not to let my brother be grieved or weakened by my work or words. For when my word has grieved a brother, I have lacked love. Whoever does not love his brother is still in death and darkness, as John writes. "Anyone who does not love his brother is a murderer, and we know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." Whoever loves

his brother, however, penetrates through from death to life, for he loves his brethren. So let us love everyone - not with words and with our tongues, but in deed and truth. For if someone who has the goods of this world sees his brother in want and does not share with him, how can God's love abide in him? It is rather Cain's love that is in him. He was evil and slew his brother, because his works were evil and his brother's upright.

Christ, our Master, gave himself completely to us with all he had and kept nothing back. He himself said, "All that I have received from my Father I have given to you." He has become our own with all that he has, and we have become his, so that he is in us, and so that we live and move in him. In the same way we should give ourselves to our brethren and keep nothing from them, but gladly give them love, life, and all that is ours in order to become one indivisible body whose head is Christ. Whoever remains in such love remains in Christ and Christ in him, and he will bring forth much fruit for eternal life. But whoever does not abide in me, says the Lord, will be cast out to wither and be burned. That is the end and the recompense for the hypocritical and ungentle love of which the world is full.

Brotherly love should come wholeheartedly from pure hearts and not be tainted but remain pure. God the Lord knows what is in man; he searches the heart and mind. Thus neither outward show nor hypocrisy means anything to him, no matter how fine they seem, for God is not de-

ceived. He wants a sincere, renewed heart. As it is written, "A broken and contrite heart you will not despise." God wants to be praised in spirit, heart, and conscience. As he is a spirit, he does not look for outward ceremony which is not founded in the heart. That is an abomination to him however fine and good it seems. What comes from the heart in faith, however, and is carried out in deed is a pleasing and fragrant offering to his glory.

Love your neighbor as yourself. This is the second commandment and is like the first. On these two depend all the law and the prophets. Indeed, the law: you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not commit fornication, you shall not defame, you shall not covet, and all other commandments, however many there may be, are fulfilled in the saying, "Love your neighbor as yourself." But love of one's neighbor, as Christ himself teaches, consists in this: what you would like men to do to you, do to them first - then you will fulfill God's law. Now, no one desires evil to befall him; he desires good from all, therefore, in obedience, we should first show men love, loyalty, and goodness, then they will not speak against the praise of God. In this way we gladly make ourselves of service to all men for Christ's sake, that his name may be praised through us, also by unbelievers, for when they see how we serve they will have no ground for blasphemy. Such love flows from brotherly love, as Peter shows us when he says, "Supplement your faith with virtue,

and virtue with modesty, modesty with godliness, godliness with brotherly love, and brotherly love with the love of all. If these things are in you, you will not be lazy or unfruitful in the knowledge of God and of Christ." It follows that every human being who is born of God is inclined to show his neighbor love, loyalty, and all that is good spontaneously and without end.

If you ask, "Who is my neighbor?" listen to Christ's teaching in the Gospel:

A man went from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves who beat him and left him wounded and half-dead. Then a priest went the same way, and on seeing him passed by; then a Levite did the same thing. But a Samaritan also went that way, and when he saw him he was moved to compassion. He went to him and poured wine and oil in his wounds, took him to his inn and cared for him. The next morning, before continuing his journey, he took a coin from his purse, gave it to the innkeeper and said, "Look after him, and on my return I will repay you for whatever more you have spent." Which of these is neighbor to the wounded man? The man who showed him compassion.

From this we recognize that we are all one another's neighbor - whoever is in need of help or whoever gives the other help. No one is excluded.

But whoever wants to strive for perfection is obliged, in order to reach this goal, to love all who hate and despise him as well. For Christ taught, "to the men of old it was said,

'You shall love your friend and hate your enemies,' but I say to you love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven, who makes his sun rise over the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust." For that is God's way: through patience he calls sinners to repentance. So the children who have received his Spirit should walk in its footprints and be disciples of God. Paul teaches, "Be followers of God as beloved children." Through patience and through returning good for evil, they should point their enemy to uprightness, for it is written, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink, for in so doing you will heap fiery coals on his head." Perhaps this kindness may affect him so that he considers deeply and turns over a new leaf. He will think, "I treat this man badly, and he repays me with kindness and does all he can to serve me and is my friend. Oh, what am I doing? I want to change and do as he does - leave the evil and pursue the good, for what does it help me to live in wickedness and oppose the will of God?" When this takes place - when you move a human being to have a good conscience - you have helped a soul from death to life, which is sure to be rewarded by God. Where this does not take place - where God sees you repay evil with good - he will say in his heart (even though he does not let it be seen), "This man accepts everything patiently that I maliciously do to him, and is so ready to do good to me - he is truly better than I

am." In this way your well-doing becomes a witness to him. Such love is a band of perfection. But if he does not better himself and repent after such a witness, he increases God's wrath upon him in the day of judgment. When love takes hold of a man, he is pleasing to God and approved by man. Where there is need, he walks and abides in God, and God in him, and his life and all his work is accomplished in God; for God's clarity enlightens and surrounds him so that he walks in the light of God's grace and is no more surrounded by darkness. Bright radiance and great light has enlightened his heart, and he is defended by the Holy Spirit and led with sure conscience to the peace of the saints. Whoever does not have this is blind; groping for the wall, he does not know where he will fall or that the pit of hell is close to him.

WHAT LOVE IS

As so much has been said about love so far, we must show what it is like in order that it is better understood, that one may not think he has love when it is only an illusion. Love cannot hide itself because its nature is light. It must shine and show itself in active work, serving all men and doing good. For love does everyone good. It is ready to serve; it is kind, gentle, mild, patient, humble, pure, temperate, modest, sympathetic, brotherly, warm-hearted, good, compassionate, gracious, lowly, forbearing, loyal, and peaceable. Love is not repulsive; it is not proud, puffed up, boastful, envious, or drunken; it is not self-willed, disobedient, deceitful, quarrelsome, or thieving. Love does not gossip; it is not jealous, irate, or spiteful, it despises no one, but bears all things and suffers all things; it is not revengeful; it does not repay evil with evil; it does not rejoice in what is wrong, but rejoices in truth. Only love does God's work.

Love is like fire, which goes out before it really ignites if one puts too much wood on it, as those who work with it know. But once it really flares, the more wood one puts on it, the better it burns, so that even houses and whole forests are burned. But when there is no more wood, however, it dies and grows cold. It is the same with love. When it is first kindled in a man, small troubles and temptations smother and hinder it; but when it really burns, having kindled the man's eagerness for God, the more temptations and trib-

ulation meet it, the more it flares, until it overcomes and consumes all injustice and wickedness. But when love is not practiced, when the man grows lazy and careless, it flickers out again; the man's heart grows cold, faith declines, and all good works cease. Then the man stands like a withered tree fit for the fire, as Jesus himself says. Love flows from faith; for where there is no faith there cannot be love, and where there is no love there cannot be faith. The two are so entwined that one cannot be pleasing to God without the other.

WHAT FAITH IS

Faith is a certain assurance of what we hope for, a clear revelation and a conviction of things that are not seen, a conquest of the world, the Devil, and the flesh; it is a sure guide to God, an assurance of the hope and purification of the heart; through it a man becomes completely pure, holy, and godly. But faith is also a justification, because through faith in Christ we become devout and just before God - as a gift. Faith is a power that can do everything - nothing is impossible for it. As Christ testifies, "If you have faith like a mustard seed, say to this mountain, 'Get up from here and cast yourself into the sea,' and it will obey." Or, "Be it done for you as you have believed." Faith is also an assurance of the conscience that it stands firm and trusts God's promise. Thus it is a confirmation of the supplication, for God does not disdain the prayer of the believer, but must grant his request since it comes from faith. John says, "We are certain that we have received what we have asked him for."

As Paul teaches, faith is a power that works righteousness and easily carries out all God's will. A man who says he cannot carry out God's will shows that he is not a believer but an unbeliever, for all things are possible to him who believes. It is easy for him to walk in the footsteps of Christ, who has said, "My yoke is easy and my burden light." The man who does not believe considers him a liar and accuses him of not meaning it; that is, he accuses him of load-

ing unbearable burdens upon us, although in fact, he has placed the very lightest that he could upon us; for he took upon himself and carried a heavy burden which we could neither move nor carry, and he has reduced the burden of all the commandments to one commandment, namely love, that we may the more easily grasp it and reach our goal.

Whoever believes also confirms and testifies that God is faithful in all his promises. "For he who is righteous through faith shall live." However, it is impossible to believe before one knows God and the strength of his power as well as his love and faithfulness to us. Paul writes, "How can they believe before they hear?" Therefore God sent his own Son into the world, who has proclaimed to us the name of God, our Father, in order that we can believe and have hope in God, as it is written: "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sing your praise in the great congregation." Further, "I have made known your name to the children of men." John writes, "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son of the Father has made him known to us." And "We have believed and bear witness that God is light, and we know that our witness is true." He revealed God's will so clearly that nothing is left that he has not told us. He went before us, not with words only but also with deeds and power, and he has shown us the way to follow him. For he walked in obedience to his Father unto death - even death on the cross, which he endured for our sin. So the Father awakened him again and raised him up as king over all the kings of the earth and gave

him a name that is over all names; at the name of Jesus every knee will bow in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and all tongues will confess that God has made him lord of all lords and king of all kings. His kingdom endures for ever and has no end, as is written: "I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill." Mount Zion is the community of believers gathered and united in love by the Holy Spirit through unity of faith, building up those who are consecrated through the blood of Christ to be a holy house. That is why Christ, after he had risen and before he took possession of heaven, appeared to his disciples and commanded them to be his witnesses of all they had seen and heard, and said, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creatures; he who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

Here Christ follows the method of his Father, who arranged everything in his creation not in confusion, but in the right order. First he created the earth, and then the grass that came from the earth as food for the cattle, in order that they, when made, might have fodder and not suffer want. The cattle, however, were food for man, prepared before man was made, so that each created being would have what it needed before it actually was. God acts wisely in all his works and sees that everything is rightly ordered. Christ did the same: when he wanted word of his good deeds to be spread among the children of men, he first sent the disciples saying, "Go!" and commanded them to preach the Gospel.

They did not go of themselves, but through being sent they received strength for their task and were not unfruitful. In the same way Paul writes:

How can they hear without preachers; how can they preach before they are sent? Yet, have they not heard? Their voice has gone out into all the world, its sound to the end of the earth; thus faith comes from hearing, hearing through preaching, but preaching through the Word of God.

PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

The voice of those whom God draws, teaches, and sends is heard by the hearts of believing people. They do not speak their own words but God's, so men gladly listen to them and follow his word not only with their ears, but with their hearts. Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice; they do not listen to the voice of a stranger. I go before them, and they follow me, for I know who are mine, and they know me." From this we can recognize that up till now many - indeed all - have run without being sent by God, and have not been shepherds of the sheep, but hirelings who sought their own gain more than that of the sheep. As no betterment results from their preaching, they have not proclaimed God's word but their own fabrication (even though their deceit was covered up with godly words). That is why the sheep did not hear them. For when God's word is proclaimed in its purity, it will not return empty but will accomplish all that is commanded it, says the Lord. As Christ wanted to send to his sheep shepherds who would faithfully pasture them, he said to them, "Go out into all the world, preach and proclaim the Gospel" - that is, the good news about him and what good things he has done for us. He has made us blessed through his death. Much has been said already about this elsewhere.

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT BAPTISM

"Whoever believes, that is, receives your words, will have your peace come over him, for you proclaim it and I bring it about in him, and he is baptized - that is, he submits to your word and becomes a partaker of my death through killing and mortifying the flesh." This takes place in baptism, as Paul says: "All of us who have been baptized were baptized into Christ's death." And again, "All of us who have been baptized have put on Christ." Yes, they have changed and become new creatures in Christ, so that they live from now on no more for themselves but for God through Jesus Christ.

Whoever does this will be blessed, but whoever does not believe, that is, does not accept your words and the witness to me that you proclaim, makes himself unworthy of it. Then your peace will not remain in him but comes over you again. Leave that place and shake the dust from your feet as a witness against it. Truly I say to you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for such a man, for he is condemned.

This is Christ's purpose in his advice, which is sufficiently founded in scripture, where each devout heart can rightly recognize what he must do in accordance with Christ's command. But that this knowledge may be better assured, I will quote one passage (and, for the sake of brevity, omit many others): Peter says, "It is as it was in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few, namely eight

people, were kept safe in the water through God's word. The counterpart of this ark today is baptism, which saves you, not as the removal of dirt from the body, but as the bond of a good conscience with God." That is, I recognize I have a gracious God who has forgiven my sins and accepted me into the community of his saints as his child and has given me himself as Father; so I may bind myself to him, to walk henceforth in accordance with his will, never again to transgress it as formerly, and ask that my heart become firm in the hope of his grace and trust God's promise assuredly. That is the bond of baptism, which no infant can make, as it knows neither good nor evil. Thus infant baptism is no baptism at all, but idle talk. For baptism is not what takes place outwardly; it takes place in the renewal of a man's heart and conscience, though after that he also receives the outward sign through which he is written in the book of life and is incorporated into the body of Christ and his holy church, the community of saints.

Since Peter says the ark is symbolic of baptism, we ought to examine the symbol to see what it teaches us. God commanded Noah to build the ark for the flood. He said, "Make yourself an ark in which you and your household can be saved, because I am going to destroy the world." God told him how to make it: its form, height, length, and breadth, and he gave him the time to do so, namely one hundred and thirty years. Noah obeyed God and did not alter his command, holding in firm faith to what God had told him;

he was thus preserved in it together with his whole household, as God had promised him. But if he had not listened to God's voice, if he had made the ark a different way, according to his own design and not God's, it would have been of no use to him, and he would have perished with the rest. In the same way, Christ has also commanded and given us true baptism and shown us how it should be done. Whoever listens to his voice and receives baptism in accordance with his command and with firm faith in his promise will be preserved and saved, but whoever does not listen to Christ's voice, neglects baptism, or receives it in a different way from what Christ has commanded, will perish with the unbelieving. For God's will is that we immediately obey his command and do not alter it. He said to Moses, "See that you follow the plan I showed you on the mountain," but those who from the beginning of the world were disobedient and altered God's command - even if they did so with good intentions - brought punishment upon themselves, as we see in Saul and in the prophet whom God sent to Bethel from Judah. So let no one rely on being able to say he baptizes infants with good intentions, for God wants his will to stand, not ours.

THE ERROR OF INFANT BAPTISM

Christ says, "Every plant which my heavenly father has not planted will be rooted out." It is clear enough that infant baptism is not from God, but appointed by the Antichrist and child of destruction, the Pope. This is clearly seen in the statements of the Pope, though everyone fights for it today, thinking they have their safeguard in God's word; but if one really looks at it, one sees it is as far from that as heaven and earth are from each other. Everyone has a Bible passage of his own which he holds on to and brings out here and there, rejoicing that he has won the battle. But if one looks at it thoroughly it strikes him from his perch. He says the apostle baptized the whole household, in which there were also children, and that they were baptized. But we are told clearly which household members were baptized and which were not. When Paul was imprisoned in Philippi, he was praying in the night, and suddenly an earthquake occurred opening the doors of the prison, and loosening all the prisoners' fetters. When the jailer awoke from sleep and saw the prison doors open, he thought the prisoners had escaped, and taking his sword, he thought to kill himself. But Paul called out, "Do yourself no harm - we are all here." The jailer called for a light and rushed in trembling and said, "Men, what must I do?" Paul said to him, "Believe in the Lord Jesus!" Then he took them into his house, washed their wounds, and set food before them. Then Paul spoke the word of God to him

and his whole household, and he and his whole household believed. Here we see which household members were baptized: namely, those who had observed the works of God and believed the words of Paul. It does not follow that infants were among them. Thus their whole foundation is built on sand and must fall, however firmly they believe it stands, and however cleverly the worldly-wise argue about it. It was not for nothing that the Lord said of them through the prophets, "The Lord knows the thoughts of man, and they are vain." And again, "He traps the cunning in their own craftiness." The reason for their struggle is that they do not want to come to nothing and humble themselves before God, to seek their own praise no longer, but God's praise. They think by their knowledge they can fathom God's wisdom. So the Lord has allowed them, in the blindness of their hearts, to want to make truth lies and lies truth, to make the straight crooked and the crooked straight, to make light darkness and darkness light.

Every sincere and simple heart that loves God can learn from what I have said, even though briefly, to distinguish error from truth. I have used little scripture, but there is much that testifies in complete accord with it which can be sought out and compared. I have spoken briefly because I do not want to make my message too long-winded and thus too tedious to pay attention to. May God give grace to all simple hearts and lead them in certainty of his word, so that they grasp the promised blessedness with all saints through

Jesus Christ, his dearly beloved Son. Amen.

May the eternal God, our compassionate Father, who is a father of all grace and a God of all comfort, open the eyes and the ears of your minds, that you may see and know his eternal will, which is written in your hearts. Amen.

I BELIEVE IN GOD

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. Since it was not sufficient for God's honor and glory to be alone, and since he did not want to be praised except by the work of his hands recognizing him as father, creator and source of life, he created man, who was to know him and rightly praise and thank him through whom he had being, life, protection, food, and support. Since, however, God wanted man to know him, it was necessary for something to be there already in which his power and glory could be seen and known; therefore he created heaven and earth in the beginning. Then, at his command, heaven and earth were there. But it was dark upon the deeps, so he said, "Let light come out of the darkness," and it took place; there was evening and morning - the first day. After this he separated the waters between the firmament and the earth, and divided the land from the water. He called what was dry "earth" and called the water "sea," and there was evening and morning - the second day. Then God created all manner of green foliage and grass, and there was evening and morning - the third day. Then he created two great lights: the one to light the day, which he called sun, and the other to shine by night, which he called moon, and he gave it stars as helpers. Then evening and morning became the fourth day. Then he created all manner of creeping and four-footed animals, and evening and morning became the fifth day. God saw

that everything he had created on these days was good, and he said, "All I have made is very good," but among all his creatures none was found able to know God in truth and praise him. So God said, "Let us make human beings in our own image." He took a clod of earth and formed a man and placed all created things before him so that he could name them, each according to its kind. But no creature was found resembling Adam who could be his helper, so God made Adam sleep and while he slept God took one of his ribs and made a woman of it. When he awoke God placed her before him, and when Adam saw her, he said, "This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall therefore be called woman." For that reason a man will leave father and mother and remain with his wife, and the two will be one flesh. And evening and morning were the sixth day.

THE FALL OF MAN

On the seventh day God rested from all his work. Then God made Adam and Eve rulers over all he had created. He placed them in the midst of the garden and said, "All things are subject to you, and you may eat of all the fruits of the garden, except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for as soon as you eat it you will die." When God made them to rule over all creatures, he explained to them, that as they were lords over the creatures, God was Lord over them. That was why he had laid down a law for them. Soon after, however, aversion arose in the creatures, so that the serpent, the deceitful devil, said to Eve, "Did God really say 'As soon as you eat the fruit you will die?' It is not so; as soon as you eat you will be as wise as gods and like them." When Eve heard this, she looked at the fruits and desired them, for they looked delicious. Besides, she wanted to be somebody, so she listened to the serpent and ate the fruit and then gave some to Adam as well. But as soon as they had eaten, their eyes were opened and they saw that they were naked - that is, they recognized that they had left God's will, and were stripped of his grace, which had covered them. Beginning to feel ashamed, they reached above them, tore leaves from the fig trees, and made aprons of them to cover their shame. Then they hid themselves under the bushes. In the evening, when it was cool, God's voice called to them, "Where are you, Adam?" But he was silent until God had called three

times. Then he answered, "Lord, I have hidden myself, because I am ashamed of my nakedness." God said, "Who told you that? You have clearly eaten from the tree of which I forbade you to eat." Adam answered, "Lord, the woman whom you gave me offered me the fruit, and I ate." Then God said to Eve, "Why have you done this?" She answered, "Lord, the serpent seduced me."

Then God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you shall be cursed above all creatures. You shall crawl on your belly your life long, and eat earth, and I will put enmity between your seed and the seed of the woman, and her offspring will bruise your head, but you will bite his heel." And to Eve he said, "As you have listened to the serpent, you shall bear your children in great pain." To Adam God said, "Because you paid more attention to your wife than to me, the earth shall be cursed on your account. It shall bear thistles and thorns for you, and only by the sweat of your brow will you eat bread." And God sighed: "Man now knows good and evil; he would eat of the tree of life and become like me." So he thrust them out of the garden and set an angel with a fiery sword to guard the gate.

Then Adam in his disobedience decided to obey God no longer. But through this he was to recognize that creation also became disobedient to him: just as he had disobeyed God's command, the creatures now disobeyed him, and they could only be made to obey once more by using great force. Man, too, can only live in obedience to God by his

carnal will and dying to his self, which is achieved with great tribulation and suffering.⁵

A PARABLE

Many trees are in a wood. All alike are God's creation and good for building a house, but nothing will come of it unless they first endure the master builder's work: they must be cut down, squared, planed, and prepared according to the master's pleasure, and then joined together as a house. Thus many people are alike good creations of God, made for his praise, and all made to serve as God's house in which he wants to live. But the house of God will not be made of everyone, but only of those who accept God's working and discipline: they must be hewn down from all vanity and wickedness, cut with Christ's circumcision, purified in their hearts, and truly surrendered to God the Father to follow Christ. These will be united in the bond of love as a house of God in which he lives. As is written, "You are the temple of the living God." And again, "I will live and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." We are taught by this and other parables that when we have transgressed, we should submit once more in obedience to God and suffer and bear the discipline by which he makes us fit and pleasing for him to live in.

The purpose of all that has been said so far is to make God's power and might more easily recognizable. Paul also taught that God's invisible nature and eternal power can be recognized in his works since the creation of the world.⁶

In all this we see the power of God: how he redeems all his own at the right time; how wonderfully he leads his saints and teaches them what faith has worked in them and what God's power is; and how we should truly rely upon and trust the Lord. So search scripture, and recognize clearly how you can please God. May the eternal God help you to do this with his inexpressible grace and power.

I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

I believe in Jesus Christ, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell, rose from the dead on the third day, appeared to his disciples and ascended into heaven. He sits at the right hand of God, the Father, from whence we await him, the coming judge of the living and the dead.

When the immortal God, our faithful Father, wanted to fulfill his promise and send the promised Seed who was to crush the serpent's head - that is, take away the Devil's power, destroy his kingdom, and efface his dominion - he sent his eternal Word, who became man in Mary. The angel Gabriel brought the message from God and greeted her saying, "Hail Mary, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled and pondered the meaning of this greeting. As she stood afraid, the angel comforted her and said, "Do not be afraid, Mary. Listen, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son who will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High." Then Mary asked, "How can that be? I have no husband." The angel answered, "The power of the Most High will come from above into you, so he who will be born of you is holy." When Mary heard that it was from God, she said, "So be it! See, I am a handmaiden of the Lord." When she submitted herself to the word of the Lord, she conceived through the working of the Holy Spirit

and bore for us the Son whom God had promised beforehand through the prophet Isaiah, who had said, "Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a son whose name will be Immanuel." He came as a light into the world to shine upon those who sit in darkness. As it is written, "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and the people who sat in the shadow and power of death have received a great salvation."

Now since the Sun of discernment and understanding has arisen and the glory of goodness has appeared to us, we should walk in it as children of the light, so that darkness does not lay hold of us again. For whoever walks in darkness does not know where he will fall. But Christ came that we might have the light of life in us and that we might be redeemed from death by his voice. That is why God promised him to us through Moses, his faithful servant, and commanded us to listen, saying, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet such as I from among your brothers; him you shall heed." And the soul of anyone who will not give heed to that prophet will be cut off. For God himself commands him to hear, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am reconciled. Listen to him." Yet although he came to his own property, those who were his own neither listened to him nor received him. To those who did receive him, however, he gave power to become children of God, born not of the flesh, but of God, through the living Word whom he sent into men's hearts. Thus in future no one need

say to his brother, "Know the Lord, for all of them who have been born like this, high and low alike, shall know him."

Christ was sent that he might be the Savior of all men. He did the will of the Father, quieted the Father's wrath, broke down the dividing wall [of enmity], and abolished the law. Out of two [Jews and Gentiles] he has made a new man and prepared a sure way to the Father. Through him we have access to the Father in one Spirit and are fellow citizens of the saints and members of God's household, made fit to receive all the glory. He has bought us this inheritance with his blood, which he shed to make us saints and cleanse us from our sins. Through his stripes we have been healed, for he took away all our diseases and bound up the deep wounds made by Satan's hard blows. He has gone before us so that we may follow in his footsteps. He did not revile when he was reviled, nor threaten when he suffered, but he trusted everything to the Father, whose will he carried out, obedient unto death - even death on the cross. Here the just suffered for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty, to lead us to God. Then, when God set such joy before him, he suffered the cross, despising its shame. Look at what great cost Christ won us! He spared neither work nor effort, but willingly laid aside all his glory (for he was Lord of heaven and of earth) and became poor for our sakes to make us rich and whole in him. He took upon himself the form of a servant and made himself servant to everyone. He himself said, "I have not come to be served, but to serve." As a

mighty king who willingly left his kingdom and took upon himself a low condition, he has shown us by example that whoever is high should become a servant to the one who is low. He commanded, "Whoever wants to be the greatest among you must be the slave of all the others."

Christ learned obedience through suffering. Because out of love to us he did not spare his own life, but gave it for us all, the Lord raised him again, crowned him with praise and honor, and gave him a name above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven, on earth, and in the deep, and every tongue confess that he is Lord. God anointed him with the oil of joy over all his comrades. With a mighty arm he awoke him from death, after it proved impossible for death to keep him. As David said, "You will not permit your holy one to see corruption or leave his soul in hell." Therefore he arose with power and appeared to his disciples and was seen by many brothers. But when the time was fulfilled, he was taken to heaven in the sight of the apostles. There he was set at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high (Stephen also saw him seated there), where he waits until all his foes are placed under his feet. We believe he is also there to represent us.

WHAT EATING CHRIST'S FLESH MEANS

We do not believe Christ is in bread, nor that he lets himself be handled by every sinner. For when Mary Magdalene wanted to touch him (after the resurrection) he did not let her do so - even though he had cleansed her from all evil and sin. Since he did not permit one whom he had made upright and holy to touch him, how can he want every whore, every avaricious, abusive, impure person to handle him now? For scripture says, "He will not be served by human hands." Now you say, "Christ permitted Thomas to touch him when he said, 'Put your finger here and see my hands, and put out your hand, and place it in the wound in my side; and do not be faithless, but believe.'" It does not follow from this, however, that Thomas touched him, for as soon as he heard and saw Christ, disbelief left his heart and he knew Christ was truly arisen. He witnessed to this by saying, "My Lord and my God!" He no longer wanted to touch him, and the text clearly shows that he did not, for Christ says, "Because you saw me, Thomas, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Thus we see he speaks only of seeing and not of touching.

It does not even matter if one finds, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood will live for ever." Just look at what comes before and after these words, and you will find what eating Christ's flesh means. Before this stands, "When

he had fed the people in the desert and crossed the water, early next morning the people also crossed over, and when they found him they said to him, 'Master, when did you come here?' Christ answered, 'You do not seek me because you saw the signs, but because you ate your fill of the bread; seek for the bread that does not perish but endures eternally in heaven.'" He continued, "Your fathers ate heavenly bread in the wilderness, and they died." We read, "He gave them bread from heaven, and each one ate the bread of the angels." Christ said, "Moses did not give you bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven, so that whoever eats it will not die but have eternal life; the bread I give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." Now listen carefully: Did flesh and blood come from heaven? You will clearly see that his flesh and blood did not come down from heaven, but he only became flesh in Mary. So Christ is not speaking here of his physical flesh and blood, but of the faith of the living Word of God, who came down from heaven and gives life to the world. Whoever believes this Word and surrenders himself to God as Mary did has already eaten the flesh of Christ. As it is written, "If a man believes in me, my Father and I will come and make our home with him." So believing the truth means eating Christ. Later you see clearly that he is not speaking of eating his physical flesh and blood, nor does he want us to eat him. The disciples also did not understand. They were appalled at his words, and said, "This is a hard saying; who

can listen to it?" meaning "Who wants to eat his flesh?" He answered them, "Do you take offense at this? What then if you will see the Son of man ascend to heaven where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is of no use" - that is, it is no use to eat. But flogged for us, killed, and raised from the dead, it is of very great use to us, and without it we could not be saved. That is why he says, "The words I speak are spirit and life." If they are spirit and life, they are not flesh and blood.

THE ERROR OF THE MASS

Even though Christ says, "Take and eat, this is my body," he does not mean we should make a god of it, right away as the belly-preachers do, who misuse these words to please themselves and avoid suffering. They are truly devoted to a god: their stomach. If it were true, as they say, that Christ was eaten in the bread, why then do they need to be worried about damnation? For it is written, "He who eats of me will have eternal life," and God does not regret his gift. Since he says, "Father, I will that where I am, there my servants will also be," so each one who truly receives and eats Christ is certain of his glory. Because they are not certain about God's promise, however, but waver about it, they witness by their deeds that they have neither received nor eaten Christ - that Christ is not there at all. So the saying, "This is my body" must not be understood in such a physical sense. You will hear later how to understand it when I speak of the Lord's Supper. But in order to keep back nothing from you, and to tell you what I really think of your communion bread, I say it is bread upon which the Lord's curse comes, and all who eat it make themselves unclean and cannot come into the Lord's house. Your blessing banishes it from God's sight, as it is written: "Since they transgress my covenant and do not walk in my law, I will curse all their blessings." In short, all the praise rightfully due to the living Christ is taken from him and given to the dead element, bread, which can nei-

ther see, hear, nor speak, and is of no use to itself, let alone to any other. But we have a living Christ through whom everything has been made, has being, and is sustained, and from whom each one receives help. He has been appointed by God a judge of the living and the dead. He testifies himself that he does not want his body (with which he ascended into heaven) to remain in bread or in any other place on earth, for he says, "You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me." And again, "I am leaving the world and going to the Father." However, he is always near us with his almighty divine strength, for he says, "I am with you always, to the end of the world."

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE LORD'S SUPPER

I cannot praise and glorify the Lord's Supper enough as described figuratively in the Old Testament and as kept in the New. When God had plagued Pharaoh, and then, wanting to plague him still more, decided to strike down the first-born in the whole of Egypt, he commanded Moses that the people should kill a lamb, take its blood, and smear it on the lintel of their doors, so that when the angel of death came he would not enter and do harm. The lamb was to a yearling without spot or blemish, and the people were to cook it without water - roast it. Where there were not enough people in a house to eat it all, they were to invite their neighbors, provided they were circumcised, so that nothing would be left overnight. In addition, not one bone was to be broken; what remained, however, was to be burned with fire. When they were about to eat, they were to stand, their clothes tucked up ready for action, white staves in their hands and shoes on their feet, like men prepared for a journey, that is, ready to leave the slavery of Egypt.

This lamb is a symbol of Christ. For just as the children of Israel were saved by the blood of the lamb smeared on the lintel, and the plagues that struck the whole of Egypt did not harm them, in the same way we are saved when our hearts are smeared, washed, and purified with the blood of Christ, when we accept him and make ourselves partakers of his suffering and death. The eternal plague prepared for

all the world cannot harm us. As with the lamb, no bone of Christ's was broken when the bones of those who were crucified with him were broken. The lamb was to be without blemish - that is no sin was found in Christ and no deceit in his mouth. He was killed as an innocent and spotless lamb. Now, if we want to be partakers of this lamb (the divine Word) and eat the bread of the Lord, we must eat it standing; that is, we must stand firm in faith and trust in the Lord, expecting his coming with clothes tucked up in readiness, girded with truth and wearing the armor of righteousness. We must have in our hands a white staff - a clear conscience toward God - as those who are purified and reconciled in him, and certain of being his children - and experience on our feet the mailed shoes of the gospel of peace. Readied like men wanting to embark on a journey, we must prepare ourselves in Christ to endure cross and death, if necessary, in passing through this vale of tears to the true fatherland.

When the people of Israel wanted to eat the lamb, they were not allowed to take leavened bread with it, but only unleavened bread. This means we must rid ourselves of all leaven - all sin and wickedness - and take a sweet bread, that is, become new creatures in Christ, well pleasing to him, as Paul teaches: "Since we also have a pascal lamb, Christ Jesus, let us keep Easter, not with the old leaven of wickedness, but with the sweet dough of sincerity and truth." Later when it was kept and children asked their parents, "What is this; what does this mean?" their parents answered, "It is the

Passover of the Lord, as in Egypt, when he slew all the first-born in the whole land, but kept the angel of death from coming to us." Now the lamb itself was not the Passover of the Lord in Egypt, but a sign to remember it by, so that his people would not forget his loving kindness.

It was just about this lamb that the disciples asked, "Where do you want us to prepare the pascal lamb?" Christ said, "Go to the town and you will meet a man with two jugs of water. Follow him and say to the master of the house, 'Where can we prepare the pascal lamb?' He will show you a large, furnished room; prepare it for us there." In the evening Jesus came and sat there with the twelve. While they were eating, he said, "I have yearned with very great longing to eat this pascal lamb with you before I suffer." (With these words he annuls the old sign and appoints a new one, namely bread and wine.) Then after they had eaten, he took the bread and thanked his Father, and broke it. By breaking of the bread in the sight of his disciples he indicated that he would break his body for them and all men, in order that all who believed in him might have eternal life and come to him. He said of himself, "After I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everything to me."

"He gave it to his disciples." Through this Christ taught them that, just as after breaking the loaf he gave them bread to sustain the body, in the same way after giving up of his body, he wanted to give them eternal life and redeem them from death. For through his death we receive life - as the

whole of scripture says - and the true food of the Spirit, which revives, comforts, and upholds our souls.

"He said, 'Take and eat.'" Just as Christ commands his disciples to share the broken bread and eat, it is his will that we accept and share in the breaking of the true bread, that is, the suffering and death of Christ, so that we also shall share in his resurrection and glory. For Paul says, "We are God's heirs and fellow heirs with Christ if we suffer with him in order that we, too, may be raised to glory with him."

"This is my body, which is broken for you." Paul explains clearly what the body is. He says, "We, who are many, are one loaf and one body - we who all partake of one bread." It is this body that he means, for he says in another place, "In my own person I am making up whatever is still lacking and remains to be completed [on our part] of Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, which is the church." You might say, "I understand - you attribute your blessedness to your suffering." Far be that from us! It is Christ only, as the head, who gives the whole body salvation and boldness, provided the members accept the suffering of the head in order that his friends, too, may be blest. A branch can bear no fruit unless it shares the sap of the vine, for the sap that nourishes it all comes from the root. In the same way, all blessing comes to us from Christ, the head who sustains the whole body.

"As often as you do this, do it in memory of me." Now as he commands us to do it in memory of him, it is clear that

he himself is not there and eaten, even though he also says, "Take, eat; this is my body." A simile: if one says, "Drink St. John blessing," one does not mean one drinks the blessing itself, but that the wine is blest. Similarly, the words, "Eat; this is my body" do not mean that we eat Christ's flesh and blood, but that [with the bread and wine] he demonstrates his body to us. That is why he commands us to do it in memory of him. In the same way the lamb is not the pass-over which took place in Egypt, although the Israelites told their children that it was. They did not say so because it was actually the passover, but because the lamb reminded them to think of it and to thank God for it. Similarly the bread is not the body, but reminds us of Christ's body - that is, it reminds us to think of his suffering and death - for he says, "As often as you do this, do it in memory of me." Paul says similarly, "Proclaim the Lord's death till he comes." Thus at the Lord's Supper it is necessary to consider Christ's death and our death, and also Christ's love and our love.

THE SYMBOLS OF BREAD AND WINE

Christ's love and our love are shown to us in the bread and wine.⁷ Just as there are many grains of corn, which are ground by the millstones and become flour, then baked and become bread - and in the bread we no longer distinguish one particle of flour from another - the same thing is true of us human beings, many as we are. When we are ground by the millstone of divine power, believe his word and submit to the cross of Christ, we are brought together, bound with the band of love to one body of which Christ is the head. As Paul puts it, "We who partake of one bread, though many, are one bread and one body." Those who truly surrender to the Lord become of one mind, heart, and soul just as the grains of corn unite in the bread; and as Christ, the head, is one with the Father, the members are of one mind with the head as the head also was. As it is written, "We have the mind of Christ," but whoever does not have the mind of Christ is not his. And just as each grain of corn gives the others all it has in order that there may be one loaf of bread, Christ our captain has given himself to us as an example that each should love the other as he has loved us, no longer living for himself, but giving his members to live for the whole body and serving the others with the gift he has received so that the body may grow and build itself up.

Now, just as Christ loved his own, he loved them unto

death. Thus the Lord's Supper proclaims to us the death of Christ and our death. For as Christ broke the bread in the sight of his disciples, he later broke his body for the salvation of the whole world. In the bread Christ showed us his body broken for our salvation; we too, when we break the bread, show our willingness to give our bodies out of love, for the sake of his Word and for our brothers - strengthening and comforting them when we find them weak, whether they are in pain or in the agonies of fire or water or whatever distress, no matter what the world does to us as a result. For whoever eats and drinks from the Lord's cup unworthily eats and drinks judgment upon himself. Truly, whoever eats the Lord's bread and drinks from the Lord's cup without first examining himself to see if he is ready to give his life for the truth of the Gospel and for his brothers eats and drinks judgment upon himself.

What I have just said about the bread is also true of the wine, for wine is made of many grapes which are crushed in the winepress and then flow together and become wine, and one cannot recognize which grape it comes from. Since Christian unity is likewise proclaimed in the bread and in the whole practice of the Lord's Supper, however, it is not necessary to explain this symbol as well. Just see if the wafer you eat at Mass is like this or not.

**CHRIST'S PRACTICE VERSUS THAT OF THE
ANTICHRIST**

When Christ had eaten the pascal lamb with his disciples, he took bread and thanked his heavenly Father, but the Antichrist does not give thanks; he blesses the bread. Christ broke the bread; the Antichrist does not break it but gives a whole oblate, and if he does break it at Mass he devours all three pieces, and gives no one else anything. Christ gave it to his disciples and said, "Take, eat." The Antichrist does not do this, but forbids men to touch it. Christ says "eat;" the Antichrist does not. He says it is a food that must not be crushed by hands. Christ says, "This is my body, which is broken for you," but the Antichrist says it is broken every day at Mass for us and so must suffer and be sacrificed every day - opposing Paul's teaching where he says that Christ has perfected all who should be sanctified by a single offering, and that he himself has sat down at the right hand of God's throne, and is sacrificed no more. Christ says, "As often as you do this, do it in memory of me." I ask, does the word "do" mean here to bring Christ from heaven and rob him of his place beside the Father? Does "do" mean to worship the dead element, bread, or does "do" mean to banish Christ into the bread and enclose him in a little cage? On the contrary, with this word Christ tells us to think of his suffering and dying and to thank and praise the Father. When the creator of abomination wants to make a god out of bread,

he says, "This is my body." Now if we should follow the letter of his words, it would have to be the priest's body and not Christ's, or he would have to change the words and say, "This is Christ's body." But if you say it stands in place of Christ, where must Christ be meanwhile? Behind the oven, perhaps? Oh, woe to the great blindness everywhere in the whole world today - they prepare only bread to house him who has built for himself a living temple to dwell in, namely the heart of those who believe!

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

I believe in the Holy Spirit, who builds up a Christian church, the community of the saints in which there is forgiveness of sins; I believe also in the resurrection of the body and eternal life. May God help us all to it! Amen.

The Holy Spirit is the power of the Most High that brings all this about in all men. He renews the new man in his Son, brings him to know Christ and God, and reveals all the treasures of the mystery hidden in them. As Paul testifies, Christ has revealed God to us through his Spirit, for the Spirit searches and knows all things, even the depth of the divine Being. For which man knows what is in another except the spirit of man that dwells in him? Likewise, no one knows what is in God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit that comes from this world but the Spirit that comes from God, so we are able to know what is given us by God. Through thus revealing and imparting his gift, he brings together the church and house of God, founded and built up on Christ. She is made pure and holy by the blood of Christ, who leads all poor, miserable, battered, and worried souls with the gathering comfort of his grace into the house of God, where they receive forgiveness of sins. There they are bound together with a band of love as one body by the one Spirit who brings it all about. He is a father to the poor and miserable, strength to the weak, comfort to the mourning, a guide to the truth for those who go

astray; he is a light to those who sit in darkness, an uplifter of the fallen, and a giver of all the varied gifts of God, quiet rest to those who labor, and coolness and stimulation in the heat of distress and affliction. Through him everything becomes light and easy for us to carry and endure. He leads us through and gives us victory in order to take us to the place Christ has prepared for us.

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT MARRIAGE

In the beginning God created heaven and earth and all that lives, and finally man. As Adam found no helpmate among the creatures, God sent him into a deep sleep and then took a rib from his side and made of it a woman. When Adam awoke God placed her before him, and seeing her, Adam said, "This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, so she shall be called woman." Because of this a man will leave father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This tallies with what Christ says: "They are not two, but one flesh." Since they are now one flesh through their agreement to live together in love, no one can separate them, for what God has joined man must not separate. Whoever divorces his wife, except on the grounds of adultery, commits adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman also commits adultery. So we know that no adulterer will have part in the kingdom of God and Christ. Thus men ought to love their wives as their own flesh. Who has ever hated his own flesh? On the contrary, one cares for it and nourishes it with great diligence.

For just as the church of God is united in marriage with Christ, so a woman is united with a man; and just as Christ cares for his church, supporting and nourishing her, men should protect, nourish, and care for their wives. Further, just as Christ loved the church, not sparing himself but giving his life for her salvation, husbands also should love their

wives as their own bodies and look upon all their wives' afflictions as their own. Wives should be godfearingly submissive to their husbands as to the Lord; Sarah obeyed her husband and called him lord, and those women who stand firm in faith are now her daughters. Husbands, however, should treat their wives with great gentleness and kindness - as the weaker vessels, but also as their partners in the grace of God. They should live together in the love of God and do his work in pure fear of him, seeking in everything to praise him. For he who created them in the beginning said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." Thus Paul teaches that each should voluntarily give the other his or her conjugal dues; for the husband does not rule over his own body, but his wife does, and the wife does not rule over her body, but her husband does. But I say, where there is no conjugal due, it should be left undone in order that we do not live like horses and mules without understanding, but as those who have been made holy by the blood of Christ and have died to all fleshly lust. Paul also says, "Let those who have wives live as those who have none." And Jesus says, "He who is able to accept this, let him." So I say if a man wants to marry, he should go about it carefully, and see that he does in order not do so to please the lust of the flesh; for it is written, "Let the marriage bed be undefiled." Let it take place out of God's love and love to children, as Tobit shows us.⁸ As the angel said to the young Tobias, "I will tell you over whom the Devil has power: over those who marry

more out of fleshly lust than out of God's love and love to children." So let those who marry do so in the fear of God. In this way each will learn the will of God. What a blessing marriage is if it is kept as befits the saints; but what a wretched thing when not kept as God and Christ will! It is no better than fornication in God's sight.

Let the wife be subject to her husband in all that is right and good, and the husband be the head of his wife; and let the wife revere her husband, but not the husband his wife, for the man was not made for the woman, but the woman for the man's sake. Adam was not the first to transgress, but Eve, who brought in the curse. Yet neither can man exist without woman nor woman without man, for just as woman came from man, man also comes through woman, and everything from God. So the wife should obey her husband, but the husband should love his wife. Whoever hates his wife hates himself. For a good wife is the crown of her husband, strength for his bones, and an adornment to his whole house.

HOW WE SHOULD BUILD UP THE HOUSE OF GOD

Christ says that no one who wants to build a house does not first sit down and consider the cost - to see whether or not he has enough to finish building. If he finds he has not enough, he does not build, for he does not want to lay the foundation and then have to stop, and be laughed to scorn, with everyone saying, "He began to build a house but cannot finish it." It is the same with us: if we begin building for eternal life, we must first count the cost. Will we find ourselves able to bear all that meets us and is laid upon us for the sake of God and Christ? Can we endure and suffer persecution and contempt to gain him? Can we strangle the flesh with all its lusts, leave the world with all its pleasures and splendor, and withstand the Devil and all his wickedness to guard the precious treasure, Christ? Now, if we find we are able, we can begin to build joyfully on the foundation of all the apostles, whose corner stone is Christ. Paul says, "No other foundation can a man lay than the one that is laid, which is Christ."⁹ Like a wise master builder I have laid a foundation through God's grace, and now another may build upon it. But each should take care how he build on it, for he will receive his wages according to his work - whether good or bad. That is why Peter says, "You have come to the living stone, rejected by the builders - that is, by the scribes - but in God's sight chosen and precious. Let yourselves also be built as living stones into a living temple of God that

he may live and do his work in you." But if one wants to build a fine house, one must hew the stone, and we likewise must circumcise and purify our hearts from all sin and unrighteousness as Peter teaches: "Put away all malice and cunning, slander and hypocrisy, and desire pure spiritual milk (that is, the living Word of God) like a newborn babe, so that in it you may grow." In this way you can adorn the house with precious stones, so that it is inviting, clean, and well-pleasing for the Father to live in. But such hewing of the stone can take place only through much tribulation and persecution for the Word's sake, as it is written: "Whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." But today everyone says, "Oh, there is still time. I must first get my house in order, see to my business and my family and support my friends." Of such people the Lord says through the prophets, "This nation says the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord." But he answers them: "Is this the time for you to sit in your paneled houses, while my house lies in ruins?" Yes, it is truly so over the whole world that men live willfully and seek only how to fill their coffers in order to beautify their houses and properties more extravagantly for their enjoyment and pleasure. They have no thoughts whatsoever for the poor man, nor do they worry how they might show him love. They would sooner leave him to be eaten by maggots under a fence than go to help him. Therefore the Lord says, "They eat much but are not satisfied;" that is, they are not satisfied with the truth which they often

hear, because they do not expect to live truth in actual deed. They are forever learning, but cannot reach true knowledge because their hearts are darkened. They drink much, yet never become drunk with the sweet wine of the knowledge and wisdom of God, that is, with the Holy Spirit, whom they are unable to receive on account of their disbelief and malice. They clothe themselves, yet have no warmth; that is, they boast about truth and faith, but their faith is weak and dead in God's sight since it does not give itself to be fruitful in love. When one of them receives wages, he keeps them in a bag with holes - that is, though he receives from God the gift of the knowledge of Christ, he does not perceive it but thinks little of it. Just as one who keeps his money in a bag with holes loses it and finds nothing when he is in need, likewise the man who receives a gift from God and does not perceive it and increase it - who thinks little of it and hides it because he is afraid of the world - will find that the Lord will take it away. He will give it instead to one who is faithful and spares no effort, but works hard to build the house of the Lord with the gift given him.

That is why the Lord, who desires his house built, commands him, "Climb the mountain and get wood for my house, so I may dwell there and be gracious to you and serve you honorably - otherwise, though you expect much, you shall receive little; even if you take it home I shall blow it away, because my house lies waste." This mountain is Christ, as scripture testifies: "I saw a stone cut out from the mountain

by no human hand, and the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth and was set upon Mount Zion, raised above all mountains and hills." We must climb this mountain through faith and firm trust in Christ, and take with us the wood, that is, receive from him the gift of the Holy Spirit which he has promised all who love him. He said, "When I go I shall send you the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who will teach you the whole truth; for he will take it from mine and proclaim it to you." When Christ says that the Spirit will take the truth from what is his and declare it to us, he testifies that in him there is the whole fullness of divine nature, from which, as John says, we all receive grace upon grace. Through such wood, namely the grace of the Holy Spirit, the house of the Lord is built in which he lives and wants to be gracious to us. This house is the church of God. Paul tells us, "You are the temple of the living God, and whoever desecrates it he will shame, for his temple is holy, and you are that temple." As God says, "I will live in them and move among them and be their God, and they shall be my people." Therefore he says, "Come out from among the unbelievers and be separate from them, and touch nothing unclean; then I will accept you and be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters."

David also tells us about this house, "One thing I have asked of the Lord will I seek - that I may dwell in his house all the days of my life." And again he says, "I will speak of your name to my brethren and sing praise to you in the

congregation." This house, the church, is not built by men but by God, and Christ has become its guardian and head. God, who is the builder of this house and who knows all things, knew beforehand the rushing violence of the strong winds and the great floods that will beat against it, and so that it may withstand them, he has fortified it upon the firm foundation of Christ, against which all the powers of hell can do nothing. He has also surrounded it with unshakable pillars, so that it may be protected and not fall when the winds and floods of tribulation beat against it.

THE SEVEN PILLARS OF THIS HOUSE¹⁰

The first pillar of this house is the pure fear of God, for as it is written, "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." Against this pillar beat the mighty wind and damaging water of the fear of men, showing us how Christians are treated. The king and his lords will not tolerate you: they will drive you from house and home, wife and children, take everything that is yours, and rob you of your life as well. Men say, "Oh, you will never hold out against such things; leave well enough alone and be content." We must withstand this, however, in the fear of God, and must fear God more than men, as Christ teaches us saying, "Have no fear of those who kill the body but cannot do anything more; rather fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast body and soul to destruction." Moreover, Esdras says, "They will drive you from house and home and rob you of your goods. That shall be the time of testing for the faithful." Do not let this make you afraid; for there is no one, Christ says, "who has left house, home, meadow, field, wife, child, father, mother, sister, or brother for my name's sake and for the Gospel's, who will not receive it again many times over in this world and in the world to come, life everlasting."

The second pillar of this house is the wisdom of God, for he who fears God will know wisdom. Against this pillar beat the mighty wind and destructive water of the wisdom of men, saying, "It is a foolish thing to voluntarily go into

danger." To them the teaching of the Cross is foolishness. They say, "How can it be right when no one follows it except simple folk who are led astray?" But even though a wise man or a scribe or rich person thinks in this way, we must oppose him with the wisdom of God, which is Christ, who was despised by all men. Wisdom must be vindicated by all its children. Paul says, "The wisdom of God is foolishness to the world, for it cannot be recognized by worldly wisdom." The foolishness of God, however, is wiser than the world with all its knowledge, so we must use it to strive against the world; its wisdom is foolishness in God's eyes. For this reason not many of the wise of this world are called, as is written: "Where are the wise men? Where are the scribes? Where are the debaters? Has not God put to shame the wisdom of this world?" And again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are foolishness." And also, "The Lord traps the wise in their own cleverness." Therefore Christ says, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and the scribes and revealed them to babes; yes, Father, for such was thy gracious will."

The third pillar of this house is God's understanding. Against this pillar beats the mighty wind of human understanding, which wants to consider and recognize everything in its arrogance and says, "This is an intelligent man. You will not easily find his equal - he is so well versed in the Scripture and is such a good commentator that he

must also understand it rightly." But we must oppose him with God's understanding and not listen to him who follows his own wishes and does not follow Christ. For God says, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will thwart." Because all men's understanding is empty and useless, we should consider only that which comes down from above from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or change due to darkness. Christ says, "You must be taught by God. Everyone who has heard and learned from my Father comes to me." As Paul says, we must never make man a cause for pride, but await all knowledge from God; that is, the understanding that comes from God himself. For if the Spirit of God himself gives understanding, and Scripture is explained by Scripture, nothing will be mistaken or misunderstood.

The fourth pillar of this house is the counsel of God. Against this pillar beats the mighty wind of the counsel of men, who come and say: "You are a fine a person; you can yet come to something - become a well-regarded man or woman, raise children, and at the same time serve God. Don't you see, you are guilty of harming yourself [by your belief]; it is just as if you were strangling yourself. Don't do it! Can't you see that we want to be saved too? And if this doesn't happen right away, after all, God is merciful. Besides, Christ has done enough for our sins. What need do we have of all that? If only one believes, everything is already put right. Keep your ideas to yourself - why should

you tell everyone what you believe?"

We must withstand all this human counsel with the counsel of Christ, who asks, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffers harm to his own soul, or what will he give to redeem his soul?" He also says, "You will be despised by all men," and "He who seeks his own life will lose it, but he who loses his life for my sake will find it." Further, "No one comes to the Father but by me." "You share in Christ, provided you hold firmly to your beginning in his nature." And, "I am God, who visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, and shows mercy to thousands who love my name." And, "We have become heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." And, "Man believes with his heart, and so becomes upright; he confesses with his lips and so is saved."

The fifth pillar of this house is the might of God. Against this pillar beats the powerful wind of man's might and power, which speaks thus: "Look, how are you going to carry this out? The whole world is against you. Do you really think you can fight against the whole world? See how kings, lords, and all the powerful persecute you in order to kill you." We must withstand such words with the might and power of God, for Christ says, "My Father is stronger than all the world," and no one is able to snatch anyone out of his hand. He also says, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the

world." And again, "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." As it is written, "Even the hairs of your head are numbered, and not one will fall from you without your Father knowing it, so do not be afraid." David says, "It is better to put confidence in God than in princes; it is better to trust God than to rely on man." So do not put your trust in princes or in the children of men, for they cannot help you. Again, "God smites all our enemies upon the cheek and breaks the teeth of the wicked." If God be for us, who can be against us? No one, for with the Lord there is salvation.

The sixth pillar of this house is the knowledge of God. Against this pillar beats the mighty wind of human knowledge, which claims to know much and to be capable of many things; yet, as Paul says, "If anyone imagines he knows much, he does not yet know as he ought to know." Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. They come and say, "Do you really think cobblers and tailors know more than those who have studied the arts all their lives and are learned and well practiced in them?"¹¹ Paul answers this when he says, "Claiming to be wise, they became fools." For the word and knowledge of God is not learned in schools of higher education, but as Christ says, "The man who hears and learns from my Father comes to me." We must, therefore, reject all human knowing so that we may attain true knowledge. Such may be learned only in the school of the Father's discipline, which we must enter as David did. As God says through the prophets, "To whom will I teach my wisdom but to those

weaned from milk?" With this knowledge we must strive against everything that is in the world, so that we may await the Bridegroom, Christ, and be ready when he comes. We must put aside all this world's wisdom in order to gain the true knowledge of God. As Paul says, "If anyone among you desires to be wise, let him become first a fool, that he may become truly wise."

The seventh pillar of this house is the grace or friendship of God. If a man overcomes everything in this, he will be called a friend of God. Against this pillar beat the mighty wind and destructive water of the friendship and favor of the world, love of possessions, arrogant living, and the like. A man who strives for these and other trappings of wealth is loved by the world - as Christ says, "The world loves her own" - but we must withstand such friendship with the grace and love of God and beware of it. For it is written, "Whoever wants to be a friend of God must be an enemy of the world, for friendship with the world is enmity to God." Again, friendship with God is enmity to the world. And so Christ says, "If you were of the world, the world would love you, but because you are not of the world, the world hates you." He says, "It will come to pass that whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God." We must be hated by all men for his name's sake in order to overcome all things through the grace and love of God; for if we love him with our hearts, everything that is laid upon us for his name's sake will become light for us to bear. Therefore he

says, "Blessed are you when you are persecuted, for your release will come." He who endures in all this will find that his work will stand and not be consumed, even if tested by fire. Christ will come and hold his Supper with him and grant him to sit with him on his throne, as he himself has conquered and sat with his Father on his throne. May the power of God help us thus to overcome! Amen.

You children of Lot, go out from Sodom, that you may not receive her plagues.

Written in the prison at Gmunden [Upper Austria] in the land on the Enns.¹²

NOTES

¹About Anabaptism in Upper Austria, see Grete Mecenseffy, *Die Herkunft des oberösterreichischen Täuferturns*, ARG XLVII (1956), 252-259.

²For additional biographical information see Robert Friedmann, "Peter Riedemann: Early Anabaptist Leader," in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* January 1970, 5-44; *Mennonite Encyclopedia IV*, 326-328; *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren I*.

³See Peter Riedemann, *Rechenschaft unserer Religion* (Plough, 1938); in translation, *Account of our Religion, Doctrine, and Faith* (Plough, 1950, reprinted 1970, 1974).

⁴For Peter Riedemann's letters see *Hutterische Episteln 1527-1767 I* (James Valley, MB, 1986), 120-243; see also *Journal of Mennonite Studies* Vol. 7 (1989), 183-189; *Mennonite Quarterly Review* July 1991, 340-343; Robert Friedmann, *Die Schriften der hutterischen Täufergemeinschaften* (Vienna, 1965), 123-125; Josef Beck, *Die Geschichtsbücher der Wiedertäufer* (Vienna, 1883), 206-207.

For Riedemann's songs see *Die Lieder der hutterischen Brüder*, 450-537; see also Rudolf Wolkan, *Die Lieder der Wiedertäufer*, 185-206.

⁵See Hans Hut, "Ein christlich Unterrichtung" (1526-27), in Lydia Müller, *Glaubenszeugnisse oberdeutscher Taufgesinnter I* (Leipzig, 1938) 33, 67.

⁶Here, following Friedmann's edition of the *Rechenschaft*, a lengthy section of Riedemann's text, mainly a retelling of stories from the Old Testament, has been omitted.

⁷The following parable was very popular among the Anabaptists, especially the Hutterians. Cf. *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren, I*, 258; (Plough, 1987); Peter Walpot, *True Surrender and Community of Goods*, in *MQR* Jan. 1957, 45-46; Andreas Ehrenpreis, *Sendbrief* (Scottsdale, PA, 1920); Lydia Müller, *Der Kommunismus der Mährischen Wiedertäufer* (Leipzig, 1938), 66;

The parable appears for the first time in the *Didache* or "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" of ca. 120 AD (see Eberhard Arnold, ed., *The Early Christians*, Plough, 1970, 181-189); it also appears in Martin Luther's book *Von der deutschen Messe* (1519).

⁸The Book of Tobit in the Apocrypha, especially Tobit 8:9, is often quoted by Anabaptists regarding marriage; it is still popular among the Amish today.

⁹This was later Menno Simon's motto.

¹⁰The biblical source of this allegory is Proverbs 9:1: "Wisdom has built her house, and she has set up her seven pillars."

It seems that Riedemann took the main idea from a tract which the peasant leader Jörg Hauck von Juchsen published in 1524 with the title, "A Christian Order, or the Beginning of a Christian Life;" see excerpts in Lydia Müller, *Glaubenszeugnisse I* (Leipzig, 1938), 3-10. In this writing Jörg Hauck teaches that "a Christian life follows rungs or steps until it reaches perfection," and that there are seven such rungs. The "seven grades to perfection" are the spirit of the fear of God, the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of counsel, the spirit of strength, the spirit of knowledge, and the spirit of godliness. In Riedemann's tract we find the first six pillars with the same names, but for the seventh pillar he has "God's grace and friendship" where Jörg Hauck has "godliness."

The basis of this enumeration is clearly Isaiah 11:2, where six of these qualities are named: the spirit of wisdom, of understanding, of counsel, of strength, of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord.

¹¹The "arts" (*freien kuensten*) Riedemann refers to are the *septem artes liberales* or seven liberal arts, which we today call in general terms "the sciences."

¹²Some mss. have the additional words "Im 1530er jar. Peter Rideman." The Brünn codex has neither date nor signature.