

The Reformation and the Anabaptist Movement

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宗教改革とルネッサンスは、中世から近世への歴史的変革の大きな2つの運動であった。特に宗教改革とアナバプテスト運動について言及する。

ドイツにおいてマルチン・ルターによって引き起こされた宗教改革運動が実施されたが、それ以前のフス、ウィクリフによるチェコにおける改革運動の始まり、そしてルターにおける改革運動がカトリックとの関係でどのように起こってきたか、またどのような神学論争が行われたのか。さらにスイスにおけるツウイングリの宗教改革と宗教改革急進派と言われるアナバプテスト運動の内容と歴史的展開を述べる。

There may be various views regarding the causes of the Reformation⁽¹⁾, but one of them, confrontation⁽²⁾ between papal authority and royal authority, may be worthy of our attention.

One of big issues for the Catholic Church was the confrontation between the secular power (or royal authority) and the papacy. The medieval world of Catholic in the Middle Ages was unified when the Church sanctioned royal authorities of Germanic peoples after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. Thus, at least in form, the Church sat above the royal authorities. However, as the Church was also an organization having a secular power on this earth, sometimes it happened that its secular power confronted with a royal authority or authorities.

One issue emerged from such a conflict was over the appointment of bishops within the realms of feud. Feudal lords considered that they could nominate any one of their choice as a bishop within his domain. On the contrary, the Holy See wanted to select a person who were familiar with the position of the Roman Catholic. Humiliation of Canossa in 1077 was a conflict of a German king Henry IV with the Pope Gregory VII. The king who had been excommunicated by the Pope had eventually to yield to the Pope

In 1173 archbishop Thomas Becket of Canterbury was assassinated by four knights of sent by Henry II, king of England, over the rights and privileges of the Church. Becket had refused the king's arbitrary intervention in the matter of the Church. As a result, he was murdered. Eventually, however, the king was forced to publicly repent of his activity by pressure from the Pope, and to provide funding of the Crusades together with making other concessions.

Bishops are members of the Catholic Church and it seems only natural that they support the Holy Father against the royal authority. However, there was a bishop who supported the royal authority and further theologically rationalized its validity. The person was John Wycliffe⁽³⁾ (1320 to 1384), who was an English scholastic philosopher theologian, Biblical translator, reformer and seminary professor at Oxford. He attacked transubstantiation (the faith that the bread and wine of the Communion service become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ after they have been blessed), and placed the Bible over the teaching of popes and clerics.

The authority of the Bible is often neglected as it is a self-evident fact to Christians. Historically, early church called the Bible as canon of Scripture. Decisions of Ecumenical Councils were also called canons, which

meant that the Bible was one of canons, not the only authoritative document. Therefore, from a historical viewpoint, it is only natural for the Catholic Church today to rank the Bible and the tradition of the Church on the same level. We cannot say this as an act that the Catholic Church trampled down the Christian history. Rather, the Protestant has introduced a new element not found in the tradition of early Christianity, that is, acceptance of the Bible as the only one canon for the Christian faith and the Church.

I approve of this new concept that the Bible as the only one authority from my point of view as a Protestant. However, I don't think that history of Christianity should be altered according to the Protestantism. It's history in the hands of God and cannot be changed even if it's not convenient for the Protestant. The Reformation made the Bible the only one authority; it's not the tradition from early Christianity.

Considering these points, John Wycliffe's thesis is very important though it may sound paradoxical, and his idea regarding the authority of the Bible is worth to study more deeply. In addition, we should make an effort to research any other theologians in the Middle Ages who argued for the only one authority of the Bible if there were such persons.

At the same time, we should not neglect the importance of the English Bible translated by Wycliffe. In those days many Protestants thought lightly of the work as a translation from a Latin version, not from the original one. This was a terrible mistake because we know that the translator was the first person who put his faith in the authority of the Bible over papal authority. His work should be treated as an epoch-making episode in the history of Christianity.

Wycliffe was well regarded by King Richard the Second, because Wycliffe clearly claimed the supremacy of the king over the priesthood. Also it happened that his wife was Anna, younger sister of the Czech King Vaclav the Fourth. In those days England had a close relationship with Czech, and works of Wycliffe were translated into Czech, resulting in an anti-transubstantiation movement in Prague. Some argued for communion under both kinds (two kinds of Lord's Supper), which caused a scene of utter confusion between supporters and opponents within the Church. Jan Hus⁽⁴⁾ was one of the representatives of Wycliffe's supporters.

During this period, the Catholic Church was in the middle of so-called "Schisma" (Avignon Papacy). In the middle of a struggle for power, the attitude of critics against Jan Hus was greatly influenced according to which pope held the power within a chaotic situation. Secular lord Vaclav IV, who was a supporter of Hus, officially kept a neutral attitude in such circumstances. However, many of Czech people supported Hus and they conducted communion under both kinds, instead of the Sacrament. Hus also criticized the sale of indulgences, claiming that man obtains forgiveness of sin by true repentance, not by money.

Under such circumstances, the Council of Constance, which was held to find a final solution of the schism, invited Hus to attend the meeting to explain his views. There he obtained three hearings and defended himself and succeeded in refuting some of the charges against him. The council urged Hus to recant but he refused and he was sentenced on July 6, 1415, and burned at the stake immediately. Once I visited his monument in Konstanz, where he was executed. Considering that today's Protestant churches were established upon his sacrifice, this place should be set as a holy sanctuary for Protestant Christianity.

News of execution of Hus soon reached Prague. The decision of the Roma Catholic Church vehemently angered the people of Bohemia, and they moved rapidly away from Papal teaching. In 1419, when the Bohemian government decided to return to the Catholic-style Sacrament, many citizens against the decision attacked the city government office, threw the mayor and officers there out of the windows (the first Defenestration of Prague) which triggered the outbreak of a war. There were two sects among Hussites. The radicals of the two, led by the famous leader Jan Zizka, entrenched themselves in Tabor and continued to fight until 1436. At this

war a new type of weapon hugbut (musket) was first used in the world history.

Martin Luther and the Reformation⁽⁵⁾

Luther's Ninety-Five Theses (on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences) immediately spread around all over Germany. Not much was mentioned about who propagated his propositions about the sale of indulgences but there was no doubt that some attendant of the elector Frederick III of Saxony translated them from Latin to German and made several copies with a printing press of Johannes Gutenberg which had already been used in those days.

Although there were not a few people who were critical about the sale of indulgences, they kept silence due to concerns about the intention of the Roman Curia. Being brought their true feelings open, Luther's action gained support from many persons.

One of the first supporters was Andreas Bodenstein Karlsdat (1480-1541), Luther's colleague at Wittenberg University. Philipp Melanchthon⁽⁶⁾ was another one. At that time Luther had no intention to initiate the Reformation, nor did his supporters when they lined up behind him.

What motivated (caused) Luther to part ways with the Catholic Church was probably a public debate with Johann Eck, a theologian from Ingolstadt and an able defender of the church. The public debate was held in 1519 where Eck successfully showed that Luther's position on the issue of papal primacy was identical to that of Jan Hus. Until then, Luther simply believed that the Pope would support him, and that the sale of indulgences was against the religious principle of Catholic. However, Eck pointed out that the church had been selling the indulgences for more than 100 years under official sanction of the Roman Curia, and that was the reason why Jan Hus who had against the practice was executed. Eck insisted that Luther's argument was basically the same with Hus's. As Luther was a frank person, he probably admitted this at the debate. After this Luther became aware of his tendency as a Reformist and started to act as such.

Realizing that the church was not trustworthy, Luther started to publish a lot of articles, among which "Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation," "A Preclude Concerning the Babylonian Captivity of the Church," and "On the Freedom of a Christian"⁽⁷⁾ were called as three important documents of the Reformation. With these works, Luther criticized the Pope for the first time and called for reform of the church. The Roman Curia naturally could not tolerate such a move, and eventually Luther was invited to appear before the Diet of Holy Roman Empire convened in Worms. His friends advised him not to go to Worms as they were aware of the example of Jan Hus, but Luther chose to attend saying "I will go even if there were as many Satans as the number of roof tiles of Worms." As was expected, he underwent severe interrogations but he stood by his opinions and, according to a traditional account, he ended his statement with the words, "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen." The Diet issued the sentence of banishment, meaning he shall lose imperial protection, and those who do harm him shall not be punished. On his journey back to Wittenberg, Luther was "kidnapped" and supposedly killed by some unknown persons. Actually, however, Frederick III of Saxony secretly took him to Wartburg Castle. Hidden there and using the Bible of Erasmus' Greek version, he began to work on the translation of the New Testament into the German vernacular.

Meanwhile, Karlstadt and Melanchthon started to reform the church in practice at Wittenberg. At this stage the Reformation meant to introduce reforms of the mass as a matter of first priority. Although many books of history named Melanchthon as the central figure who pushed ahead with this reform, there was no doubt that Karlstadt was the one when we consider his age and career. As a collateral evidence, when Luther

came back one year later, this reform (carried out in his absence) was abandoned and Karlstadt experienced an ignominious transfer, while Melanchthon stayed with Luther.

Karlstadt's reforms of the mass was thus denied and no trace remains today, a fact which surprises us visitors from Japan, because there are crucifix with a figure of Christ, many candles, and statues of saints or liege lords ornamented on the wall in a church as if it were a Catholic church. Yet it is a Protestant church established within the very central place of the Reformation This is a result of Luther's action against the achievements of Karlstadt.

One of the reforms carried out by Karlstadt was sermon in vernacular language of Germany. Others were communion under both kinds⁽⁸⁾ and removal of sacred pictures and statues. While Luther was in Wartburg Castle, Karlstadt introduced these reforms and criticized transubstantiation. Wittenberg attracted many supporters of the Reformation including some radical reformers. From Zwickau came three persons who were called "Zwickau prophets." They denied infant baptism and preached coming of End-Time. Karlstadt listened to them, too. However, Friedrich III must have felt uneasy about these reforms, and Luther's return to Wittenberg might be connected with the uneasiness of Frierich III. Luther's return could not have been done against the intention of the Lord.

After having returned to Wittenberg in May 1522, Luther urged reformers to proceed more slowly and not to burden the consciences of the faithful with new laws. He undid the reforms of Karlstadt and indefinitely postponed removal of images from the church. As it turned out, solifidianism was established in the Reformation and also sermon by vernacular language was maintained, but other reforms were not carried out in Germany.

Karlstadt, who had left Wittenberg in frustration ,was invited in May, 1523 to take over pastoral duties at a small rural church in Orlamunde in Thuringia. There he was able to bring about the reforms he had proposed at Wittenberg, including a simplified order of worship, the removal of images and even the proscription of clerical titles. He also wrote prolifically, many of which were directed at Luther and provoked further disagreement with him. Soon he was removed from duty and expelled from Saxony.

Huldrych Zwingli⁽⁹⁾ and Anabaptist⁽¹⁰⁾

The Peasants' War in Germany and Anabaptism were like fraternal twins. They were born in the same political situation, but had different DNAs. Anabaptism appeared as an extreme form of Zwingli's theology.

Huldrych Zwingli was often given a minor role in the history of the reformation; however, Protestantism of today cannot exist without Zwingli because John Calvin belonged to the school of Zwingli and nowadays the Calvinists are one of very influential and active Protestant groups while Lutherans form a rather moderate and quiet section though they have considerable members in the state church system. Of course Protestants produced some great men of history (such as Johann Sebastian Bach and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel). One theory expounds that Calvinists had an effect on the birth of Puritans, who in turn urged emergence of modern society and capitalism; a theory whose validity is yet to be verified. Anyway the United States of America exists between the influence and counteraction of Puritans. Considering that we Japanese live under the cultural influence of the United States, Zwingli is an important personality for us Japanese, too.

Huldrych Zwingli was born in 1484 at Wildhous in the east part of Swiss, three months later from the birth of Luther. He ordained to the priesthood at the age of 22 and went to Glarus (a city located 70 km south from Zurich), then moved to a new charge at Einsiedein. There he drew his inspiration from humanists and valued his correspondence with Erasmus⁽¹¹⁾. He read the New Testament in Hebrew, and was surprised by the

words “Such people (deceitful liars) teach that it is wrong to marry and to eat certain food,” (1 Timothy 4.3) because Zwingli had a lady whom he loved and wanted to marry her, but priests were not allowed to marry.

Zwingli considered reform of the church, independently and following a different way of thinking from Luther. The church should be based on the New Testament; the idea was similar to that of Wycliffe and Hus, and resulted in the criticism of transubstantiation as well as the practice of decorating church with images. In this respect, Zwingli followed almost the same way with Hus except the issue of clerical celibacy. The results of their reform efforts seem to have shown somewhat similar tendency. For instance, after the execution of Hus, radicals of his supporters formed so-called “Tabor group” and took military actions in an attempt to defend the church based on the Bible. Some young disciples of Zwingli also insisted the supreme authority of the New Testament over any other authorities.

The concept of this “supremacy of the Bible” is now popular among Protestant believers. Many misunderstand that the concept was first introduced by Luther. He certainly used some similar expressions, but his main point was “supremacy of faith” and not “supremacy of the Bible.” A symbolic event was his defense at the imperial Diet in Worms. It is said that Luther concluded his defense by saying “Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by other clear reasons (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.” Here, Luther acknowledged other authorities together with one on the Bible.

A little later, Luther wrote “St. James’ epistle is really an epistle of straw…” and thus changed the order of the New Testament, the act which was rightfully criticized by Karlstadt.

In the case of Zwingli, his prime concern was the supreme authority of the New Testament. The words of the Scripture were the text of the highest law for him. Therefore, interpretation of the holy words brought up many problems, which caused no end of trouble at the time of Calvin, and have been the source of quarrels for many in the Protestant churches.

Zwingli’s initial challenge was a biblical justification of infant baptism. Following Hus, he rejected communion under both kinds and supported removal of images from the church. He criticized transubstantiation, arguing that the bread and wine of the institution only signify, and do not literally become, the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This thesis, which became the disputed issue with Luther later, was uneventfully accepted by the reformers in Zurich. However, when the issue of infant baptism became the point in question, he defended the baptism of children, rejecting the argument of critics of the practice. In those days, of Cantons in Swiss favoring for the reformers, only Zurich was considering separation from the Catholic. It was very important to keep bond of solidarity of its citizens. To defy the infant baptism meant to dissolve unity of the regional community and it was politically a very dangerous action. For this reason this issue kept rather vague.

However there were Jacob Grebel, Felix Mantz and others among Zwingli’s followers who didn’t mind political situation surrounding them. They thought that the church should be reformed through the authority of the Bible without thinking of any mundane affairs. There were also some ministers who willingly encouraged such young men.

Personally I believe that Wilhelm Reublin should be called the originator of the Anabaptist movement, though, as a result of various reasons, nowadays he is criticized as a dropout from the movement.

Reublin belongs to the same generation with Luther. He became a priest of the parish of St. Alban’s Church

in Basel after studying at the Universities of Freiburg and Tübingen. No record was left why he became a reformer, but he was already an ardent reformer when he became a priest in Basel. He vehemently attacked the Catholic Church and preached that the Catholic devotions were not based on the Bible. The city of Basel had cathedra in those days and the Catholic was the only officially recognized faith. His powerful advocacy of the new faith won him a large following, and his audience was said numbered up to 4,000. He preached against the ceremonies of the old church and its hierarchy, annual Masses, the regulations of fasting, and offered to give an account on all these points from the Bible. The authorities of the city could not leave the situation as it was, and Reublin was expelled from the city in June 1522. Then he appeared in Zurich in the same year. There he joined the Reformation circle and became one of the most radical proponents to the worry of Zwingli. He was made assistant preacher in Wytikon and Zollikon, where he preached against the baptism of infants and causes a number of parents not to present their children for baptism. Considering Reublin's behavior harmful, Zwingli made him arrested and imprisoned for a time, worrying about the unity and solidarity of the city. In response to such a situation, the city called for a disputation, which was held in January 1525 (the First Anabaptist Disputation). As a result of the disputation, the city authorities decided that the infant baptism was biblical, that all children born thereafter should be baptized, and those who would deny it should be expelled from the city.

That night opponents of the infant baptism gathered together at the house of Mantz and prayed to God. Then Blaurock was moved by the Holy Spirit and asked Conrad Grebel to baptize him based on declaration of faith.

Accepting that request, Grebel baptized Blaurock. It is recorded that then Blaurock baptized every one attending there. It was at night of January 17th, 1525.

In the Christian world, adult's baptism means that the person in question baptized twice, because all Christians were baptized when they were born. Ecclesiastical law set down that it was against the law to be baptized twice, and that such a person should be executed. At least the ecclesiastical law in those days stipulated so (it is said). Therefore, the action of these radicals was a serious violation of the law, and their view was a formal denial of a core doctrine of the Christian faith. Thus the word Anabaptist (the person who was baptized twice) came to be used to refer to this heresy.

The above is the history officially recognized by the Anabaptist (Mennonites) today. The name Anabaptist is no longer used today. They are called Mennonites as formal successor of the movement. Personally, however, I strongly suspect the truth of this story. In the first place, leaving Chur, Blaurock came to the city for this disputation, and was not yet recognized as an important person at the time of January 1525. In truth, this story appeared on a history book written in Moravia and the writer was a member of Blaurock's followers. Accordingly, it was possible that the writer wanted to give his group leader a historically important role as the founder of his religious denomination. On the other hand, Leublin had different opinions from this group and opposed them in Moravia and dropped out of the movement. There would be enough motivation to rewrite the history concerning the beginning of the Anabaptist movement.

When we look at the situation of Zurich at that time in an unemotional manner, it was certain that the leader of the group to which Grebel and others belonged was Leublin. He emphatically denied the infant baptism, which was supported by young supporters and resulted in the decision of the city to expel him from the city. The incident in question happened that night, so it was highly possible that Leublin was the person. Other possibility was that Leublin might have been imprisoned at that time. There is a record, however, which indicates that Leublin was in attendance at the disputation in January. After being expelled, he preached the

Gospel here and there and laid the foundation of the movement. It would be impossible if he was imprisoned. Therefore, we could surmise that he was released by some reason from the prison after the disputation. If so, the baptizer could be Leublin himself.

With these reasons, I'm inclined to believe that adult baptism was carried out by Leublin himself. And if not because he was in prison at that time, I am sure that the Anabaptist movement, being inspired by the theology of Leublin, initiated by his hands. It was because there was no other person in Zurich who could put such an idea into practice.

Just at that time, in January 1525, the Peasant War in Germany broke out. Leublin was also a supporter and instigator of the War. After being expelled from Zurich, Leublin preached here and there, and achieved the most successful outcome in Waldshut where Hubmaier was taking part in the battle. Leublin and Hubmaier had known each other and shared their belief in the denial of infant baptism. With Leublin's urge, Hubmaier baptized all the citizens of the city and made the place Anabaptists' base. However, the war was against him and he had to escape from Waldshut at the end of the year. He left for Zurich and then went to Moravia. (The story of Hubmaier in these cities will be written at another setting.) Eventually Hubmaier was arrested and burned at the stake.

Anabaptists of later age have adopted "non-arms, non-resistance" attitude as a biblical teaching. Accordingly they dislike to recognize Anabaptists with arms such as Leublin and Hubmaier. But Hubmaier's achievement was impressive and we should place a high valuation on his life as spiritual source of the Anabaptism.

The Reformation of Zwingli started with a key word "solely by the Bible" and thus had the seed of trouble from the beginning. The Anabaptist movement had just the same problem: Hubmaier was positive about the use of arms, but Grebel and others believed that banning of the arms was biblically right, because the Bible says, "Don't use weapons." These ways of interpretation may produce no end of different comments. "Do not use any vow" may be well understood, but "Bad companions" could be interpreted to mean any companionship in this world leads to the sin; such as attendance to the Anglican Church is sin, or to enter government service is sin ..., and eventually resulted in the formation of closed communities like the "Jehovah's Witnesses".

[Notes]

- 1) *The Reformation and Society* (Shinn Watanabe, Kyoto University Press, 2001) is a detailed account of the Reformation and society. Theological subject of the Reformation is explored by *The Reformation and its Impact on the World History* (edited by Kiyoshi Tsuchido & Katsuhiko Kindo, Kyobunkan Co., Ltd. 1998)
- 2) See *The Thought of Reformation* (pp.58-61, Kyobunkan Co., Ltd. 2000)
- 3) See Vol. 1 of *Collection of the Reformation Writings*, pp.246-255, Kyobunkan Co., Ltd. 2001)
- 4) See Vol. 1 of *Collection of the Reformation Writings*, pp.256-264, Kyobunkan Co., Ltd. 2001)
- 5) See Vol. 3, 4 of *Collection of the Reformation Writings*, pp.256-264, Kyobunkan Co., Ltd. 1983, 2003)
- 6) See Vol. 4 of *Collection of the Reformation Writings*, pp.169-349, Kyobunkan Co., Ltd. 2003)
- 7) See Vol. 3 of *Collection of the Reformation Writings*, pp.7-35, Kyobunkan Co., Ltd. 1983)
- 8) See Vol. 4 of *Collection of the Reformation Writings*, pp.265-292, Kyobunkan Co., Ltd. 2003)
- 9) Regarding Zwingli and Calvin, see *Study on the Reformation in the Switzerland* (Akira Demura, Board of Publication, United Church of Christ in Japan, 2004)
- 10) See Vol. 8 of *Collection of the Reformation Writings*, pp.494-510, Kyobunkan Co., Ltd.)

11) See Vol. 2 of *Collection of the Reformation Writings*, pp.469-495, Kyobunkan Co., Ltd. 1989)

[References]

- 1) *The Collection of the Reformation Writings* Vol. 1-15, Kyobunkan Co., Ltd.
- 2) R. H. Bayton, *History of the Reformation*, translated by Akira Demura, Shinkyo Shuppan Co., Ltd. 1974
- 3) K. G. Attupolt, *A Short History of the Reformation*, translated by Toshikazu Tokuzenn, Kyobunkan Co., Ltd. 2012
- 4) Akira Demura, *Study on the Reformation in the Switzerland*, Board of Publications, United Church of Christ in Japan, 2004
- 5) Franklin H. Little, *The Anabaptist Vision of the Church: A study in the Origins of Sectarian Protestantism*, (Boston; Starr King Press, 1952), Guy F. Hershberger, ed.
- 6) *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision. A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S. Bender* (Scottsdale, PA; Herald Press, 1957)