



Title: The origins of sixteenth-century Sabbatarian Anabaptism—a reassessment

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Abstract:

Scholarship provides contradictory interpretations concerning the origins of sixteenth-century Sabbatarian Anabaptism and the issue remains debated. The purpose of this study was to reassess the question of origins of Sabbatarian Anabaptism and to suggest an interpretation to the problem. Providing a historical background, the Anabaptist movement, as well as the Sabbatarian movement in Transylvania was investigated. A historical connection between the two groups could not be established.

The biographies of Oswald Glaidt and Andreas Fisher, the two most prominent Sabbatarian Anabaptists, were outlined. It could be shown that Fischer received his Sabbatarianism from Glaidt. Glaidt's Sabbatarian writing was investigated, looking for influences and motivating factors, which might have led him into his Sabbatarian convictions. No references concerning a direct influence of other Sabbatarian reformers upon Glaidt could be detected. Yet seven motivating factors were established. These are as follows: (1) the authority of Scripture, (2) literalism, (3) restorationism, (4) the impact of the Old Testament, (5) the realization of the continual validity of the Decalogue, (6) discipleship and the example of Christ, and (7) the regeneration and ascetic tradition of late medieval piety. The view that Glaidt was the founder of Sabbatarian Anabaptism was challenged through an investigation of reports about



two Sabbatarian Anabaptist preachers. These pose new questions regarding the origins of Sabbatarian Anabaptism.

The same seven motivation factors, which could be detected in Glaidt, could be established through an exploration of the only extant confession of Sabbatarian Anabaptists. This raises additional questions regarding the rise of Sabbatarian Anabaptism.

Previous scholars came up with four interpretations regarding the origin of sixteenth-century Sabbatarian Anabaptism. This study (1) confirms the biblical interpretation; (2) rejects the eschatological interpretation of previous scholars, though emphasizing eschatological elements that may have contributed positively to the origin of a literal seventh-day Sabbath rationale; (3) sees in Hans Hut's theology a field for further studies; and (4) considers Hubmaier's tradition as likely to have contributed to the origins of Sabbatarian Anabaptism. It seems that Sabbatarian Anabaptism was in all likelihood influenced by many factors, rather than mainly by one single tradition as previous researchers held. The study concludes that a multifactorial interpretation seems to best serve the purpose of understanding the origins of sixteenth-century Sabbatarian Anabaptism.