

Baptisms in Felix Mantz's House: January 21, 1525

Background: This drama tells the story of the first believers' baptisms in Europe in many centuries, and as such, marks the beginning of the Anabaptist movement.

Requirements: Six persons—Three persons read while three persons engage in simple, mimed action.

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Narrator: The year is 1525. Meet three friends in Zürich, Switzerland:

Conrad Grebel, [*gray-bull*] one of the aristocracy (*Conrad removes hat and bows with a flourish of his arm.*)

Felix Mantz, a learned scholar of Hebrew (*Felix is somber, bows deeply and formally with no flourish.*)

George Cajacob [*ka-ya-kob*] called "Blaurock," a straightforward simple pastor from the town of Chur [*Kur*]. (*George, standing with arms folded with sober, matter-of-fact expression, nods his head.*)

These three friends often met and talked at length on matters of faith, including the baptism of believers. They came to one mind on these things, and in the pure fear of God, they saw that a person must learn from the divine Word a true faith which shows itself in a holy Christian life with all godliness. And a person must be steadfast to the end—even in the face of tribulation, danger and difficulty.

Reader 1: On the night of January 21, 1525, the three friends were together with others in the house of Felix Mantz in the city of Zurich. They called this a "school." It was a Bible study group. As they read the Scriptures, a sense of holy awe came over the whole group. Their hearts were moved.

Reader 2: They got down on their knees in prayer and implored God, the One who knew their hearts, "Help us to do your divine will. Show your mercy towards us." It wasn't human ambition that drove them because they knew very well what they would have to bear and suffer.

Reader 1: After the prayer George, the pastor, got up and asked Conrad, the aristocrat, to baptize him for the sake of God and with true Christian baptism upon his faith and knowledge. George knelt down, and Conrad baptized him.

Reader 2: After that was done, the others similarly asked George to baptize them which he did upon their request. And so they gave themselves to the name of the Lord in the high fear of God.

Reader 1: Each confirmed the other in the service of the gospel, and they began to teach and keep the faith.

Narrator: Anabaptism was born with this group of Christians who emphasized the necessity of a personal commitment to Christ as essential to salvation and a prerequisite to baptism. The introduction of believer's baptism was not an unpremeditated act. Even though its revolutionary character might well have struck the hearts of those assembled on that January night with fear, it was a culmination of earnest searching of the Scriptures.

Sources: *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren*, in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, eds., George Williams and Angel M. Mergal (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 43-44; <http://www.anabaptists.org/history/anastory.html>.

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