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Adam Pastor (ca. 1500–ca. 1565)

*A Post-Münster Anabaptist Bishop in the Borderlands
between the Netherlands and Germany*

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Abstract

Adam Pastor was an itinerant Anabaptist bishop in the Lower Rhine region. Ordained by Menno Simons around 1542, he is best known for the division that unfolded between Dirk Philips and Menno Simons, which led to the first schism in Mennonitism. Although sixteenth-century contemporaries described him as an important bishop alongside Menno, Mennonite historiography since then has largely ignored him. Pastor's theological views are known primarily from his *Onderscheytboeck* [*Book of Distinctions*] of ca. 1554. The recent discovery of an earlier and hitherto unknown version of this writing, however, demonstrates a more gradual development of Adam Pastor's "spiritualism." In 1547 Pastor opposed Menno's Melchiorite doctrine of the incarnation. Several years later, he arrived at the inevitable conclusion and denied—at least implicitly—the Trinity. The result was his break with Menno and Dirk and a subsequent division between the bishops from the Northern Netherlands and those of the Lower Rhine.

Keywords

Adam Pastor – David Joris – Dirk Philips – Anabaptism – Melchiorite incarnation teachings – anti-Trinitarianism – the ban – Dutch Mennonite historiography

1 Introduction

Anabaptism in the Dutch provinces and northern Germany faced a profound crisis with the collapse of the “New Jerusalem” in the Westphalian town of Münster in 1535. Historiography tells us that the failure of this militant Anabaptist and spiritualist utopia from 1538 onwards resulted in a new movement led by the figurehead Menno Simons (1496–1561). However, this story leaves aside the fact that apart from Menno, several other Anabaptist bishops were active in the Northern Netherlands and the borderlands between the Netherlands, Germany, and Flanders—each with their own supporters and ideas. Adam Pastor, who was one such bishop, was active in the lower Rhine region—encompassing the Dutch territories of Guelders and Limburg, as well as parts of the German territory of Westphalia. Only after Menno’s death, when the Anabaptist movement further disintegrated, was Menno’s work considered the theological foundation of Dutch and North German “Mennonitism.”

A former Catholic priest from Westphalia, Adam Pastor was included in the circle of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips (1504–1568) around 1542 along with three other new Anabaptist bishops from the Lower Rhine and one from Friesland.¹ Mennonite historiography presents this first meeting of bishops and those that followed as the expression of the institutionalization process of Dutch Mennonitism from the 1540s until the mid-1550s.² A year later, in 1543, Holy Roman Emperor Charles v (1500–1558) annexed the Duchy of Guelders, completing the territorial unification of the Habsburg Netherlands. Since there was no formal constitutional unification, Charles v was individually accepted as duke, count, or lord in each of the areas concerned. Adding to this fluidity was the fact that there was no hard and fast boundary between the Netherlands and Germany. The overlapping of jurisdictions, disputes over border areas, and above all the religious and cultural interactions between the Netherlands and the adjoining German states form both an integral, and highly significant, part of the story which is all too often neglected.³ The Dutch provinces were ethnographically only a fragment of a larger whole. The term “Dutch” thus reflects

- 1 The other four were Gillis van Aken [Aachen] (ca. 1500–1557), Antonius van Keulen [Cologne] and Hendrik of Vreden from the Lower Rhine, and Frans the Cooper from Friesland.
- 2 Samme Zijlstra, *Om de ware gemeente en de oude gronden, Geschiedenis van de dopersen in de Nederlanden 1531–1675* (Hilversum, 2000), 179; Piet Visser, “Mennonites and Doopsgezinden,” *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521–1700*, ed. John D. Roth and James M. Stayer (Leiden, 2011), 299–345, there 307–308.
- 3 Cf. Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford, 1995), vii, 12–13.

an anachronistic unity that did not then exist.⁴ The history of religious movements was likewise “territorialized.”⁵

Since the Dutch Revolt, the history of Dutch Mennonitism became the history of the Mennonites in the former Protestant Dutch United Provinces with one addition, that of the German former County of East Friesland. Its capital, Emden, was after all undeniably the cradle of Dutch Anabaptism, where Melchior Hoffman first spread news of Anabaptism in 1530 and where Menno Simons resided between 1537 and 1544.⁶ Menno figured therein as the regenerator of the original Dutch Anabaptism. This “small” Dutch—“Holland”—perspective on Anabaptist history was maintained in the twentieth century, although the role of Melchior Hoffman (1495–1543) as the founding father of Dutch Anabaptism and the “Dutch” involvement in the “New Jerusalem” in Münster (1534–1435) was—hesitantly—recognized. The subsequent historiography fully embraced the “polygenesis” discussion of the origins of Anabaptism, confirming the continuity of the nineteenth-century territorial paradigm and opposing the “monogenesis” of all Anabaptism originating from Switzerland.⁷ Nevertheless, some solid studies on local Anabaptist history appeared in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that actually ignored this national perspective.⁸ These studies are the only ones that studied Anabaptism by going beyond the diffuse sixteenth-century borders between Belgian / Dutch Limburg and Germany. In Dutch Anabaptist historiography, however, these findings were mostly disregarded.⁹ To this day, these are useful studies that have questioned the dominant historical narrative, and their findings need to be addressed further.

4 Johan Huizinga, “How Holland Became a Nation,” *Verzamelde werken*, 9 vols. (Haarlem, 1948–1953), 2: 266–282, there 277–278.

5 Joep Leerssen, *De bronnen van het vaderland: Taal, literatuur en de afbakening van Nederland, 1806–1890* (Nijmegen, 2011), 84.

6 The characteristic example is the successively published well-documented studies of Steven Blaupot ten Cate, *Geschiedenis der Doopsgezinden*, 5 vols. (Leeuwarden, 1839–1847).

7 See James Stayer, Werner Packull, and Klaus Deppermann, “From Monogenesis to Polygenesis: The Historical Discussion of Anabaptist Origins,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* [hereafter cited as *MQR*] 49 (1975), 83–121.

8 Jos Habets, *De Wederdoopers te Maastricht tijdens de regeering van keizer Karel v* (Roermond, 1877); Karl Rembert, *Die “Wiedertäufer” im Herzogtum Jülich: Studien zur Geschichte der Reformation, besonders am Niederrhein* (Berlin, 1899); W. Bax, *Het Protestantisme in het bisdom Luik en vooral te Maastricht 1505–1557* (The Hague, 1937).

9 Albert F. Mellink, “Das niederländisch-westfälische Täuferum im 16. Jahrhundert,” *Umstrittenen Täuferum 1525–1975: Neue Forschungen*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Goertz (Göttingen, 1977), 206–222.

This essay aims to place the history of early “Dutch” Anabaptism (1540–1555) in a broader geographical (Dutch-Westphalian) context. Local Anabaptist bishops from the Lower Rhine, in particular Adam Pastor, alongside Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, have contributed more to the history of “Dutch” Anabaptism than historiography would have us believe. The analysis here will first describe Adam Pastor’s role in Dutch / Northern German Anabaptism and then consider the “spiritual” differences between the bishops from Friesland (Menno Simons) and Groningen (Dirk Philips) in the north and Adam Pastor from the lower Rhine in the south and conclude by demonstrating the relevance and the overall influence of Adam Pastor at a crucial moment in the history of Anabaptism in the borderlands between the Netherlands and Germany.¹⁰

2 Post-Münster Anabaptism in the Lower Rhine

On the Lower Rhine, Anabaptist communities existed prior to the events of Münster, inspired by ideas of Johannes Campanus (ca. 1500–1575) and Melchior Hoffman.¹¹ Before and after Münster several networks of Melchiorite “Christian brothers” can be identified in this area.¹² They stretched from the Meuse to beyond the Rhine, an area where the dialect of the Rhine-Maas region was the native language (see figure 1).¹³

The organizing principle of these networks of fellow believers was formed by a small framework of itinerant bishops. Communitarianism resulted on the

10 For more on Pastor, see Theo Brok, “Adam Pastor,” *Biographisch-Bibliographischen Kirchenlexicons* 29 (2008), 1033–1035; Aart De Groot, “Adam Pastor,” *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlandse protestantisme* 4 (1998), 11–12; Anthony F. Buzzard, “Adam Pastor, Anti-Trinitarian Anabaptist,” *A Journal from the Radical Reformation* 3:3 (1994), 23–30; George H. Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 3rd ed. (Kirkville, MO, 1992); Albert H. Newman, “Adam Pastor, ‘Antitrinitarian Antipaedo Baptist,’” *The American Society of Church History* 5 (1917), 73–99; Karel Vos, “Adam Pastor,” *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen* [hereafter cited as *DB*] 49 (1909), 104–126; and a bibliography by Jan J. Kalma, *Adam Pastor (ca. 1500–ca. 1565): Een vrijzinnige 16de eeuwse dooper* (Leeuwarden, 1985).

11 Cf. Sigrud Haude, *In the Shadow of ‘Savage Wolves’: Anabaptist Münster and the German Reformation during the 1530s* (Boston, 2000), 77.

12 Mathilde Monge, “Who Is in the ‘Society of Christian Brothers’? Anabaptist Identity in Sixteenth-Century Cologne,” *MQR* 82 (2008), 603–614, there 604 and 613; J.F. Gerhard Goeters, “Die Rolle des Täuferturns in der Reformationsgeschichte des Niederrheins,” *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 24 (1959), 217–236, there 226–228.

13 “Rheinmaasländer” is a name to describe the various Lower Franconian dialects in the current Belgian, German, and Dutch language area as a continuum in the Meuse-Rhineland area.

FIGURE 1
 “Karte mit der Lage des Rhein-
 maasländischen” [Map with the
 location of the dialect of the
 Rhine-Meuse region]

SOURCE: ET MIKKEL AT
 GERMAN WIKIPEDIA, 2008;
[HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:RHEINMAA
 SL%C3%A4NDISCH.PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rheinmaasl%C3%A4ndisch.PNG); PUB-
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one hand from the networking and mobility of the bishops, and on the other through the spiritual community experience at their meetings.¹⁴

In the historiography of Anabaptism, Pastor is best known for his provisional break with Dirk Philips and Menno Simons in 1547 when, at a gathering of Anabaptist leaders in Goch, he took issue with a central theme in Menno's theology—the Melchiorite doctrine of incarnation.¹⁵ Pastor argued that it was well-established that the flesh of children comes not only from the father but

14 Mathilde Monge, “Überleben durch Vernetzung: Die täuferischen Gruppen in Köln und am Niederrhein im 16. Jahrhundert,” *Grenzen des Täufertums / Boundaries of Anabaptism: Neue Forschungen*, ed. Anselm Schubert, Atrid van Schlachta, and Michael Driedger (Gütersloh, 2009), 214–231, there 226.

15 Melchior Hoffman proclaimed that the Holy Spirit enabled Christ “to become a man in Mary” and thus did not accept Adam's sinful flesh in his incarnation. See Rainer Kobe, “... wie Wasser durch ein Rohr: Wie kam Melchior Hoffman zu seiner Inkarnationslehre?” *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* [hereafter cited as *MGB*] 75 (2018), 9–28, there 11. See especially Sjouke Voolstra, *Het Woord is vlees geworden: De melchioristisch-menniste incarnatieleer* (Kampen, 1982), 12; Voolstra saw no profound influence from Hoffman, but this needs further investigation. On this, *ibid.*, 160.

also from the mother.¹⁶ This division, however, did not prevent Pastor from continuing his activities as an Anabaptist leader on the Lower Rhine, where he enjoyed the support of numerous adherents.¹⁷ Menno himself seems to have regretted the quarrel.¹⁸ But five years later, at a gathering of Anabaptist bishops at Lübeck in 1552, the break became irreversible when Pastor remained under strong suspicion of “false doctrine,” this time for allegedly denying the doctrine of the Trinity.

3 Adam Pastor

There are no extant documents regarding Pastor’s origins or early years, and information about his career as an Anabaptist derives from a very limited number of sources, some of them consisting of only a few words. The most comprehensive one is a small chapter, known as the *Inlasschingen* [Insertions], that Gerhard Nicolai, a Reformed preacher in Emden and Norden, added to his 1569 translation of Heinrich Bullinger’s polemic against the Anabaptists of 1560, in which Nicolai refuted the ideas of several Dutch Anabaptists.¹⁹

Adam Pastor was born Roelof (or Rudolf) Martens around 1500 in Dörpen in the Emsland, close to the border with East Friesland. He died sometime between 1560 and 1570, probably at Münster or Emden. Trained as a Catholic priest, in 1531 he became the parish priest in Aschendorf, about eight miles from his birthplace. Sometime around 1533 he resigned his office to become a traveling Anabaptist preacher and baptizer. We do not know when or why he changed his name from Roelof Martens to Adam Pastor.²⁰ Was it a pseudonym to distance himself from a Melchiorite or even a Münsterite past? The name “Adam” implies that he wanted to indicate that he had freed himself from the

16 Samuel Cramer, *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica* [hereafter cited as *BRN*], 10 vols. (The Hague, 1903–1914), 5: 375. For more on this subject, see the essay by Anselm Schubert in this collection.

17 Heinold Fast, *Heinrich Bullinger und die Täufer: Ein Beitrag zur Historiographie und Theologie im 16. Jahrhundert* (Weierhof, 1959), 69, 208. Fast called Pastor a “Lower Rhine Anabaptist leader.”

18 *BRN* 10: 21.

19 Gerhard Nicolai, “Teghens de Wederdoopers, ses Boecken Henrici Bullingeri ... Die daer bij gevoecht heeft de Wederlegginghe der leeringen van Menno Symons, Dierick Philips, Adam Pastor, Hendrick Niclaes, ende meer andere” (Emden: [Jehan Malet], 1569), in *BRN* 7: 291–487.

20 In the sources, Adam Pastor is also called “Pastoer,” “Pastoir,” “Pastoor,” or “Pastoris,” which all refer to his role as a (Catholic) parish priest.

sinful Adam and had become a “new Adam.” The choice of “Pastor” is undoubtedly linked to his decision to leave his position as a village priest and to emphasize his new role as the shepherd (Latin: *pastor*) of a flock of believers. We do not know when or how he first encountered Anabaptist ideas.²¹

It appears that Pastor had no influential position among Melchiorite Anabaptists in the northern Netherlands before 1540. Obbe Philips's *Bekentnisse*, for example, which includes a detailed contemporary description of the early Melchiorite Anabaptist movement in Groningen, Friesland, and Holland, does not mention him.²² Prior to 1540, Pastor lived and worked in locations along the Ems River, which connected the cities of Emden and Münster. Münster was an important transition point between the Ems and Rhine rivers for travel to and from Strasbourg. Thus, Pastor's homeland was more connected by trade and shipping routes with Emden in the north and Münster in the south than it was with the nearby provinces of Groningen and Overijssel, due to barriers of inaccessible heaths.²³

An early seventeenth-century description of the life of Jan Matthijs van Haarlem (ca. 1500–1534), the first prophet of Anabaptist Münster, mentions a “Rudolph Martensz” as a Münsterite missionary.²⁴ However, there is no convincing evidence that Pastor had any ties to these messengers in the 1530s or was traveling in the provinces of Holland, Friesland, and Groningen during the Münster uprising.²⁵ The suggestion that he was one of Jan Matthijs's apostles is almost certainly a false accusation, designed to discredit Adam Pastor by associating him with the scandal of Münster.

Nevertheless, Pastor was likely involved in the regional Melchiorite movement after he resigned from the Catholic priesthood in 1531, probably participating in the “Obbenite” Anabaptist network before Menno Simons, who joined in 1537. As a priest in an important parish that belonged to the Bene-

21 *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* claims, without citing any sources, that “Adam Pastor received the (re) baptism in Münster.” Harold S. Bender, ed. *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 5 vols. (Hillsboro, KS, 1955–1959, 1990), 1: 10.

22 *BRN* 7: 109–138. The *Bekentnisse* was written before 1560 as self-justification for his involvement in the Melchiorite Anabaptist movement in the years 1533–1536.

23 Otto S. Knottnerus, ed., *Rondom Eems en Dollard / Rund um Ems und Dollart* (Groningen, 1992), 11–41, there 24.

24 *Grouwelen der voornaemster hoofd-ketteren ... Naer de copye van Delft, ghedruckt voor Nicolaes de Clerck* (Leiden, [1607]), in the chapter about Jan Matthyisz, 63–68, there 65, and on Adam Pastor, 155–157.

25 Samme Zijlstra, *Nicolaas Meyndertsz van Blesdijk: Een bijdrage tot de Geschiedenis van het Davidjorisme* (Assen: Van Gorkum, 1983), 193, n. 64 claims, albeit without evidence, that Pastor visited Groningen in 1544.

dictine abbey of Corvey, located between the two competing dioceses of Osnabrück and Münster, Pastor must have been aware of what was going on, in one way or another, if only as a spectator. The Anabaptist control over the city of Münster in 1533/1534, and the subsequent call for Melchiorite groups to come to Münster in late March 1534, created a sense of solidarity among the different networks of Melchiorites.²⁶ Karl-Heinz Kirchhoff concluded in his meticulous study of Anabaptism in the region around Münster that some of Obbe's followers joined Anabaptist groups active in the Münsterland.²⁷

After Münster was retaken in the summer of 1535, the Melchiorite movement disintegrated, disillusioned by the failure of their apocalyptic expectations.²⁸ Leadership among the Anabaptists was resumed by those who had not been directly involved with the "Kingdom of Münster," such as Obbe Philips and David Joris (ca. 1501–1556), or by those who had survived the battle for Münster such as Heinrich Krechting (1501–1580) and Jan van Batenburg (1495–1538).²⁹ From 1536 to 1540, Joris was the most prominent leader of the Anabaptist networks in the Netherlands.³⁰ His influence, however, decreased noticeably after he fled from Antwerp to Basel in 1544. In addition to these new groupings, the network of the Melchiorite "Christian brothers" on the Lower Rhine—including Aachen, Cologne, and Maastricht—had been active since 1533.³¹ Pastor must also have been familiar with this last group. There was contact and overlap between these various networks.³² They can be characterized as "shifting communities" of Anabaptists, each representing a different orientation.³³ In the early 1540s, however, the struggle for direction among the various groups of Melchiorite Anabaptists gradually coalesced. Local leaders of the original and newly formed "Obbenite" networks from the northern Netherlands, Westphalia, and the Lower Rhine region supported views that were in line against

26 Zijlstra, *Om de ware gemeente* (see above, n. 2), 127.

27 Karl-Heinz Kirchhoff, "Die Täufer im Münsterland: Verbreitung und Verfolgung des Täufer-tums im Stift Münster 1533–1550," *Westfälische Zeitschrift* 113 (1963), 2–109, there 46.

28 Ibid., 91.

29 Zijlstra, *Om de ware gemeente* (see above, n. 2), 152–153.

30 Gary K. Waite, *David Joris and Dutch Anabaptism (1524–1543)* (Waterloo, 1990), 195–196: Appendix 1, "Anabaptist Leaders Active after 1535."

31 See note 12.

32 Albert F. Mellink, "Groningse dopers te Munster (1538), een bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de Batenburgse richting," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* (hereafter cited as *NAKG*) 44 (1961), 87–100, there 92–97.

33 Mathilde Monge, *Des communautés mouvants: Les 'sociétés des frères chrétiens' en Rhénanie du Nord, Juliers, Berg, Cologne vers 1530–1694* (Geneva, 2015), 1–25.

the “spiritualist” teachings of Joris and his followers who emphasized the inner faith over outer.³⁴

It was in this context that Menno Simons and Dirk Philips started their efforts at institutionalizing Anabaptist communities in Groningen, Friesland, and Holland.³⁵ This attempt to unite the various Anabaptist networks, however, was heavily dependent on larger political realities that prompted some Anabaptist bishops to move to different areas.³⁶ The emperor’s piecemeal acquisition of other provinces to the east—culminating in the conquest of the Duchy of Guelders in 1543—brought greater political unity to the region, and intensified the persecution of non-Catholic heretics in the Habsburg territories.³⁷ Thus, a menacing imperial power in the neighboring county of East Friesland³⁸ and the Lower Rhine duchies of Cleves, Jülich, Berg, and Mark³⁹ led to less tolerant religious policies and to renewed persecution of Anabaptists.

Adam Pastor’s activity as an itinerant Anabaptist preacher focused on this Lower Rhine area: the Duchy of Cleves, the diocese of Münster, and neighboring Dutch areas.⁴⁰ In the sources we find Pastor in the region of Zutphen,⁴¹ in the region of Roermond,⁴² in Odenkirchen,⁴³ and in the cities of Cleves⁴⁴ and Goch.⁴⁵ In 1549 Hinrich ton Oestendorp declared “that he [Adam Pastor] did tend to stay in the land of Jülich and in the principality of Cologne.”⁴⁶ Adam Pastor is thus a prototype of this small number of Anabaptist regional leaders who had been working in the border area between the Netherlands, Belgium,

34 Otto S. Knottnerus, “Menno als tijdverschijnsel,” *DB* 22 (1996), 79–118, there 108–109; Haude, *In the Shadow of ‘Savage Wolves’* (see above, n. 11), 70–71.

35 Zijlstra, *Om de ware gemeente* (see above, n. 2), 179.

36 Cf. Knottnerus, “Menno als tijdverschijnsel” (see above, n. 34), 113.

37 See Geoffrey Parker, *Emperor: A New Life of Charles V* (New Haven, CT, 2019), 525.

38 Heiko E. Janssen, *Gräfin Anna von Ostfriesland; eine hochadelige Frau der späten Reformationszeit (1540/42–1575)* (Münster, 1998), 89–90.

39 Franz Petri, “Im Zeitalter der Glaubenskämpfe (1500–1648),” F. Petri and G. Droege, *Rheinische Geschichte* (Düsseldorf, 1976), 2: 1–217, there 52–53.

40 H.D. Wessels, “Een proces tegen enige van doperse gezindheid verdachte Zutphenaren: Het optreden van Adam Pastor in het kwartier Zutphen,” *DB* 7 (1981), 66–81, there 67.

41 Vos, “Adam Pastor” (see above, n. 10), 112, 109.

42 Jacob De Hoop Scheffer, “Eenige opmerkingen en mededeelingen betreffende Menno Simons,” VI, *DB* 1890, 53–76, there 55.

43 Vos, “Adam Pastor” (see above, n. 10), 125.

44 Wessels, “Het optreden van Adam Pastor in het kwartier Zutphen” (see above, n. 40), 67, n. 5.

45 Peter B. Bergrath, “Das Müllenamt zu Goch: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Industrie und des Zunftwesens im Herzogthum Geldern,” *Annales des historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein* 6 (1859), 40–83, there 62.

46 Karel Vos, “Anabaptisten te Ahaus in 1549,” *NAKG* 11 (1914), 257–270, there 262.

and Germany since the end of the 1530s and who were connected to a very widespread and interwoven network of committed supporters.⁴⁷ These networks were more diverse and dynamic than they were cohesive or uniform; and they were especially susceptible to disagreements about “the truth” in doctrinal matters. Hence, Menno’s position in the early Anabaptist movement was not as central as traditional Mennonite historiography would have us believe.⁴⁸ His growing popularity was due less to his missionary work than to the success of his *Fundamentboeck* [Foundation book] of 1540⁴⁹ and the growing influence of other writings that slowly penetrated into the corners of the Dutch and German language areas.⁵⁰ It is almost certain, for example, that the *Fundamentboeck* was known in the Lower Rhine before Menno himself was.

Adam Pastor first entered the literary debate around 1540, when he published a booklet about the Lord’s Prayer.⁵¹ In the early 1540s Adam Pastor and Menno Simons both distanced themselves from the Münsterites and Batenburgers, and they especially opposed the opportunism (Pastor calls it the “pretending”) of David Joris, who began his polemics against Menno in 1542.⁵² In the same year Adam Pastor published *Dit zijn die Articulen van Davidt Jorisz Leere* [These are the articles of David Joris’s teaching]. In this widely read refutation of David Joris he summarized Joris’s views in twenty-five articles, pretending that Joris was the author of the text. Although the work itself has been lost, most of its content can be reconstructed through David Joris’s rebuttal, *Onschuldts David Joris* [The Innocence of David Joris], which appeared a year later.⁵³ In the controversy, Pastor accused Joris of personal messianism; mystical spiritu-

47 Albert F. Mellink, “Het Nederlandse anabaptisme na Münster,” *De Historie herzien: vijfde bundel ‘Historische avonden’ uitgegeven door het Historisch Genootschap te Groningen ter gelegenheid van zijn honderdjarig bestaan* (Hilversum, 1987), 113–123, there 123.

48 Knottnerus, “Menno als tijdverschijnsel” (see above, n. 34), 112.

49 Cornelius Krahn, “Menno Simons’ *Fundament-Boek* of 1539–1540,” *MQR* 13 (1939), 221–232, there 223; also see Willem De Bakker and Gary K. Waite, “Rethinking the Murky World of the Post-Munster Dutch Anabaptist Movement, 1535–1538,” *MQR* 92 (2018), 47–91.

50 Knottnerus, “Menno als tijdverschijnsel” (see above, n. 34), 104; Mellink, “Het Nederlandse anabaptisme na Münster” (see above, n. 47), 113; Peter J.A. Nissen, *De katholieke polemiek tegen de dopers* (Enschede, 1988), 107.

51 Adam Pastor, *Een boexken darinne dat Pater noster wert wtghelecht unde verclaert* (s.l., s.n. [1540]).

52 Zijlstra, *Blesdijk* (see above, n. 25), 42, 53, 247.

53 For a 22 article-by-article summary of this writing by Deventer to the magistrates of Zutphen, see Zijlstra, *Blesdijk* (see above, n. 25), 38, 247. A translation of Joris’s rebuttal is in Gary K. Waite, ed., *The Anabaptist Writings of David Joris, 1535–1543*, 2nd edition (Walden, NY, 2019), 269–286.

alism; infant baptism; the spread of polygamy; the rejection of the resurrection, heaven, and hell; and a retreat to safety under the mantle of Catholicism.⁵⁴

The polemic met with a wide reception. The text was well known in Holland, Brabant, and West and East Friesland, but also at the Imperial Court in Brussels, in Strasbourg, Wittenberg, Hesse, England, and even Livonia. There were French and Latin translations.⁵⁵ Whether readers recognized that Pastor was the author rather than David Joris is unknown. It also remains a mystery why not a single copy of the printed text has survived, despite its wide distribution. Zijlstra suggests that it seems not unlikely that Menno's sharp letter to David Joris in 1543 was motivated by this tract.⁵⁶ Likewise it may have prompted the denunciation of Davidjorism in Menno's 1558 revised Dutch edition of the *Fundamentboeck*, which is the form in which the book was published in all later editions.⁵⁷

The *Articulen van Davidt Jorisz Leere* also seems to have set the agenda for the 1544 conversation in Emden between Menno Simons, Nicolaas van Blesdijk (1520–1584), who was David Joris's mouthpiece, and Johannes à Lasco (1499–1560), the superintendent of the Reformed Church in East Friesland.⁵⁸ In fact, the cooperation between Pastor and Menno Simons seems to have mostly resulted from their shared resistance to Davidjorism. In any case, the publication of these mutual polemics, which probably circulated in manuscript before they were printed, shows that Pastor had assumed an important role within the post-Münster Anabaptist movement. It is likely that he had joined the circle of Menno and Dirk Philips as a bishop during or even before their arrival in the Lower Rhine with the intention of expanding their influence to this region.⁵⁹

Whatever the case, the attempt to expand Menno's circle to the Lower Rhine by involving local Anabaptist leaders did not ultimately succeed: after meetings of Anabaptist bishops in Emden and Goch in 1547, and in Lübeck in 1552, four of the five new bishops left the brotherhood before 1550, either voluntarily or because they had been forced to do so thanks to Menno Simons and Dirk Philips's application of strict excommunication.⁶⁰ Adam Pastor was the first

54 Zijlstra, *Blesdijk* (see above, n. 25), 52–53.

55 Ibid., 37–38.

56 Ibid., 42.

57 Cf. James Stayer, "Davidite vs. Mennonite," *MQR* 58 (1984), 459–476, there 461; Krahn, "Menno Simons' Fundament-Boek of 1539" (see above, n. 49), 227.

58 Henning P. Jürgens, *Johannes a Lasco in Ostfriesland: Der Werdegang eines europäischen Reformators* (Tübingen, 2020), 251.

59 Jan ten Doornkaat Koolman, *Dirk Philips: Friend and Colleague of Menno Simons 1504–1568* (Kitchener, ON, 1998), 25–26.

60 Cf. Sjouke Voolstra, *Menno Simons: His Image and Message* (Newton, KS, 1997), 10, n. 23.

bishop to be banned in 1547, presumably by Dirk Philips in agreement with Menno Simons, and Pastor was definitively expelled in 1552.⁶¹ Only Gillis van Aken remained connected with Menno and Dirk until he was captured and executed in Antwerp in 1557.

In addition to *Dit zijn die Articulen van Davidt Jorisz Leere*, we know of several other texts by Pastor. In the *Inlasschingen*, Nicolai identified Pastor as the author of *Van de barmhartigheid Gods* [On the mercy of God], which has not survived,⁶² as well as a text identified as *Disputation mit Dirk Philips* [Disputation with Dirk Philips].⁶³ Nicolai also refers to Pastor's *Onderscheytboeck* [Book of distinctions], a text to which we shall soon return. In this text, Pastor himself mentions a book that he published sometime before 1551 titled *Van menschengebaden* [Of human commandments].⁶⁴ In 1559, Gaillaert published *Een Concordantie oft register der gangschen Bibel: ... gecolligeert door Adam Pastor* [A concordance or register of the entire Bible ... gathered by Adam Pastor], implying that Pastor was the author of the first concordance of Dutch/Northern German Anabaptism.⁶⁵ Thus, there appear to be at least three or four publications by Pastor that have not survived or have not yet been found. Although the writings of Adam Pastor were known, they were not included in the papal "Index of Forbidden Books" until 1596.⁶⁶

4 Adam Pastor's Spiritualistic Thinking

One key to a fuller understanding of Adam Pastor and his significance in the consolidation of the Dutch Anabaptist movement can be found in the text that Nicolai identified as the *Onderscheytboeck* [Book of distinctions]. In 1909

61 Nissen, *Polemiek* (see above, n. 50), 107.

62 *BRN* 7: 410.

63 *BRN* 7: 408. See *BRN* 5: 322, n. 5, in which Cramer refers to Cristophorus Sandius, *Bibliotheca Anti-trinitariorum* (Freistadt, 1684), 40, mentioning this work among under Pastor's writings, but probably relying on Nicolai. This work has not been preserved; however, it could also be a reference to Pastor's *Disputation*. Cf. Nicolai, *BRN* 7:470 where, in his reference to "the Disputation (kept secret within Goch)," Nicolai made no distinction between what took place in Goch in 1547 and in Lübeck in 1552.

64 *BRN* 5: 509.

65 Willem Gaillaert, *Een Concordantie oft register der gangschen Bibel: ... gecolligeert door Adam Pastor* ([Emden, 1559]). This honour is often mistakenly attributed to the Mennonite pastor Pieter Jansz Twisck (1565–1636), whose *Concordantie der Heyligher Schrifturen* appeared in Hoorn in 1614.

66 Franz H. Reusch, *Der Index der verbotenen Bücher*, 3 vols. (Bonn, 1883; repr. Darmstadt, 1967), 1: 536.

the *Vnderscheit tusschen rechte vnde valsche leer ... dorch A. P.* [The distinction between true and false doctrine ... by A.P.] was edited by the Mennonite professor Samuel Cramer (1842–1913).⁶⁷ In the introduction to the *Vnderscheit*, the editor noted that despite his efforts, no other copies of the book could be found. Historians since then have assumed this to be the case—that is, until recently, when I discovered a previously unknown edition in the Franckesche Stiftungen Library in Halle: the *Onderscheet tusschen rechte vnde valsche leer ... dorch A. P.*, with a publisher's date of 1551.⁶⁸ The content of the two texts is virtually identical, with three major differences. First, the newly discovered *Onderscheet* is dated as published in 1551, whereas the *Vnderscheit* appears without a date. Second, the *Onderscheet* was printed in a kind of Dutch version, whereas the *Vnderscheit* was published in Low German. Third, the *Onderscheet* is lacking a report that the *Vnderscheit* includes immediately after chapter thirteen regarding the 1552 meeting of Anabaptist bishops in Lübeck.

The discovery of the *Onderscheet* raises once more the question of the significance of Pastor's role in early Anabaptism. The historiography until now has been based on the copy of the *Vnderscheit* from about 1554, which includes the report on the Lübeck Disputation of 1552.⁶⁹ The possibility that there was a separate edition of the text—possibly published prior to 1552, since it did not include reference to the disputation—is a new consideration. This is relevant to our perception of the development of Adam Pastor's "spiritualistic" thinking.

Like Menno's *Fundamentboeck*—of which a second revised edition, also written in Low German, was published in 1554⁷⁰—the *Onderscheet* / *Vnderscheit* deals systematically with Anabaptist topics such as conversion, faith, baptism, supper, the preacher's mission, the "false brethren," and "the age of grace." The text consists of a large number of biblical references describing Pastor's "true doctrine" in the form of an inward, intuitive faith based on the Bible. Merging biblical texts with his own views, Pastor's goal is to introduce a call and guideline for the "betterment of life" (penitence). He provides an overview of "true doctrine," about a spiritual rebirth, "the new creature," which takes shape in a concrete change of life through obedience to the model of Christ. For Pas-

67 *BRN* 5: 315–581.

68 World Cat OCLC no. 255801797. Most likely an earlier version / manuscript in Low German circulated before, which was poorly translated into Dutch. Cf. Theo Brok, "Adam Pastor's *Vnderscheit* / *Onderscheet*: The Reputation of an Anabaptist Bishop Alongside Menno Simons and Dirk Philips," *MQR* 94 (2020), 207–232, there 228–229.

69 "... this disputation ... on the deity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, as A.P. and his followers in previous years in Lübeck have addressed both verbally and in writing with M.S. and his followers." *BRN* 5: 517–581.

70 Krahn, "Menno Simons' *Fundament-Boeck*" (see above, n. 49), 226–227.

tor, the historical Christ played a role as exemplar, rather than mediator, and he regarded the Bible less as the Word of God than as a witness to that Word that could be correctly interpreted only with the gift of the Spirit.⁷¹

The book is mild in tone and does not engage in polemics. It is framed more in response to Catholic beliefs than to Lutheran convictions. Between the lines Pastor is also defending himself against associations with Joris's teachings. In oblique language, but clearly as a reference to Münster, he distances himself from "riot, multitude of wives or similar atrocities." However, he also did not want to "quiver and do everything that governments would like in order to not to be prosecuted," likely a reference to Joris, who was infamous for his dissimulation to avoid capture. Rather, his conscience must be confirmed and convinced by the Bible.

Despite its emphasis on the inner Word, the *Onderscheet* / *Vnderscheit* cites scripture passages from more than eight different Bibles.⁷² Pastor indicated also that he had copied quotes in particular from the *Chronicle* of Sebastian Franck (1499–ca. 1543).⁷³ Another work he frequently cited was the *Summa der godliker scrifturen oft een Duytsche Theologie* from 1526.⁷⁴ The *Summa* not only taught justification through faith and Christian freedom, but also provided guidelines for public and personal life. As a practical handbook for questions of faith and life, the *Summa* was unique for the period and is considered one of the most characteristic expressions of the early Reformation in the Netherlands.⁷⁵ Pastor was one of the few contemporaries who openly referred to this "ancient Dutch forbidden book." Pastor's references to other authors are limited and there is no explicit mention of Anabaptist texts. That said, the primary purpose of Pastor's *Onderscheytboeck* was to serve as a guideline for a wide circle of fellow believers, including "my brothers who are also in the faith ..." ⁷⁶ In it, Pastor identified Menno's Melchiorite doctrine of the incarnation as an "error," a "failure" which he acknowledges that he himself initially shared.⁷⁷

71 BRN 5: 386.

72 *Onderscheet*, B5v.

73 BRN 5: 476–477.

74 Jan Trapman, *De Summa der Godliker Scrifturen* (1523) (Leiden, 1978), 121, shows that Pastor used the second edition of 1526.

75 Ibid., "Inleiding."

76 BRN 5: 364.

77 BRN 5: 379.

5 Growing Tensions with the Bishops of the North

De Hoop Scheffer had earlier called attention to the fact that the *Successio Anabaptistica* of 1603, describing the 1547 meetings of the Anabaptist bishops in Emden and Goch, had referred to a disagreement about avoidance, but was rather a debate about the incarnation.⁷⁸ This account strikes a very different tone than that offered by Nicolai who, in the *Inlasschingen*, had Dirk Philips arguing with Pastor at the 1547 meeting in Goch that he would “prove the Deity of Christ.”⁷⁹ Indeed, it was Dirk Philips who particularly sought to refute Pastor’s emphasis on the humanity of Christ.⁸⁰ According to Dirk Philips, the true church could be formed only by believers who confessed the Melchiorite view on the immeasurable love of God in Christ, namely, that God himself suffers.⁸¹ Any weakening of this religious insight, such as Pastor’s insistence that God cannot suffer,⁸² would have disastrous consequences for salvation and sanctification, and also for the exercise of authority, including shunning and banning.⁸³

This context helps to explain more thoroughly the difference in content and tone between the original *Onderscheet* manuscript of 1551 and the *Vnderscheit* with its added *Disputation* published sometime around 1554.⁸⁴ The evidence suggests that Pastor wrote the first manuscript of the *Onderscheytboeck* after the meetings of the Anabaptist bishops in Emden and Goch in 1547 as a “public” representation of his views, but also as a bishop writing a handbook.⁸⁵ The structure of the argument is reminiscent of Menno’s *Fundamentboeck*, with

78 Jacob De Hoop Scheffer, “Opmerkingen en mededeelingen betreffende Menno Simons. VIII,” *DB* 1894, 18–23, referring to “*Successio Anabaptistica*, Dat is het Babel der Wederdopers ..., door V.P.” (Cologne: Sumptibus Bernardi Gualtheri, 1603), in *BRN* 7: 15–87, 50.

79 *BRN* 7: 464.

80 The following writings by Dirk Philips, “Bekentenisse onses gheloofs” (1557), “Onse bekentenisse van der schepping” (1558), “Van der Menschwerdinghe ons Heeren Iesu Christi” (1557), and “Van de rechte kennisse Iesu Christi” (1557), in *BRN* 10: 60–64; 65–68; 135–153; and 155–178, can therefore be regarded as an attempt to refute Pastor’s views.

81 *BRN* 10: 150–151, 169.

82 *BRN* 7: 377–378, 385.

83 Voolstra, *Het Woord is vlees geworden* (see above, n. 15), 160–163.

84 The Catholic scholar Georgius Cassander (1513–1566) in 1555 described the christological differences between Pastor and Menno Simons based on a version of the text that included the *Disputation*, thus it can be assumed that the publication of the *Vnderscheit* and *Disputation* took place around 1554 (Nissen, *Polemiek* [see above, n. 50], 165–166, 169–172). It may also be that the *Disputation* had already been circulating in manuscript before its appearance in print.

85 Krahn, “Menno Simons’ Fundament-Boek” (see above, n. 49), 225.

only one exception—Pastor deviates substantially from Menno's Melchiorite understanding of the incarnation.⁸⁶

The publication of the *Onderscheet* reflects an effort to reach a larger audience in the aftermath of the discussion of 1547. In contrast, the publication of the *Vnderscheit* / *Disputation* around 1554 was Pastor's effort to reach out to his supporters. He presented the *Disputation* as a report on the 1552 meeting in Lübeck, the moment at which his relationship with Dirk Philips and Menno became a clear separation. His account of the event suggests that in Lübeck his doubts about "the deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit"—which he had already expressed in Goch in 1547 and which Menno Simons noted obliquely in 1556⁸⁷—had now become a certainty. Pastor could only discern one eternal God in Scripture, namely the Father. Thus, he avoided references to the Trinity.

In a section in the *Inlasschingen* entitled "In what manner does Adam Pastor call Christ God," Nicolai wrongly accuses Pastor of denying "the eternal deity of Christ" in the *Vnderscheit*.⁸⁸ Nicolai, and later also Cramer, assumed, incorrectly but influentially, that Pastor's views expressed in the *Disputation* (of ca. 1554) also apply to the larger text.⁸⁹ Cramer argued that Pastor's resistance against Menno's Melchiorite incarnation doctrine was a consequence of his anti-trinitarian tendencies evident in the *Disputation*. Cramer arrived at this conclusion because he assumed that the *Vnderscheit* and the *Disputation* form a unity.⁹⁰ However, a better explanation is that, after the 1547 Goch conference, Pastor reconsidered the incarnation doctrine.⁹¹ Over time he reasoned that Christ came into the world as a human being and is therefore not part of one divinity. Besides, Pastor found no evidence of Christ's divinity in the Bible: "thus I confess that the Deity of Christ is the wisdom of the father in him."⁹²

Pastor therefore came to this insight gradually: first, in 1547 he rejected Menno's Melchiorite doctrine at Emden and Goch, and then, reacting to that debate, he came to what he regarded as a biblical and unitarian conclusion as expressed in Lübeck in 1552. This position may also have been prompted by the definitive break with Menno Simons and Dirk Philips and the perceived need

86 Sytze Hoekstra, *Beginselen en leer der Oude Doopsgezinden vergeleken met die van de overige protestanten* (Amsterdam, 1863), 19, had earlier noted a resemblance between the *Fundamentboeck* and the *Vnderscheit*.

87 Letter of 12 November 1556 to "zijne heymelicke Ghemeynte te Embden" [his secret community in Emden], *BRN* 7: 448–450.

88 *BRN* 7: 408, especially n. 3. It is not clear which edition of text Nicolai used.

89 Cf. Zijlstra, *Om de ware gemeente* (see above, n. 2), 181.

90 *BRN* 7: 447.

91 *BRN* 5: 383.

92 *BRN* 5: 519.

to give a sharper profile to his own views. For Pastor, the unique elements of Melchiorite theology had come to an end, despite its hold on Obbe Philips and Menno.⁹³ It is because of the tradition of this book (ca. 1554) instead of the *Onderscheet* (1551) that so much emphasis has been placed on the unitarian tendencies of Adam Pastor. The sequence of these events seems to substantiate Hans-Jürgen Goertz's suggestion that it was the polemical argument with Pastor that enabled Menno's Melchiorite Christology to penetrate into Menonitism as an important principle of faith.⁹⁴

After the break with Pastor a new generation of leaders was brought forward in Wismar in 1554 with a geographical shift from the Lower Rhine to Flanders. The "Resolution of Wismar," which summarized in nine articles the "true doctrine" of Menno and Dirk Philips and tightened the exercise of authority of the bishops, seems to have been a sequel to the meeting in Lübeck in 1552.⁹⁵ A year later, the High Germans in their *Verdraggh ghemaect by de Broeders en Ousten tot Straesborg, vergadert vanwege de wetenschap van de herkomst des vlees Christi* [Agreement made by the brothers and elders at Strasbourg, assembled because of the question of the origin of the flesh of Christ] decided not to ban each other on the basis of their differences regarding the incarnation of Christ.⁹⁶ In 1863 Sytze Hoekstra had argued that this decision was directed specifically against Dirk Philips's decision to ban Adam Pastor for his denial of the deity of Christ.⁹⁷ The discord generated at the meeting in Lübeck in 1552 could have prompted this meeting in Strasbourg in 1555.⁹⁸ This was clearly a response by Lower Rhine Anabaptists to the previous meetings led by Dirk and Menno in Emden, Goch, Lübeck, and Wismar regarding "true doctrine." However, the *Verdraggh* must also be interpreted as support for the "Lower Rhine" understanding of banning and avoidance, which had led to the actions against Pastor for his views on the incarnation.

In 1909 Samuel Cramer concluded that contemporaries considered Adam Pastor as an influential leader through to the end of the sixteenth century.⁹⁹

93 Cf. Stayer, et al., "From monogenesis to polygenesis" (see above, n. 7), 112.

94 Hans-Jürgen Goertz, "Der fremde Menno Simons: Antiklerikale Argumentation im Werk eines melchioritischen Täufers," *The Dutch Dissenters: A Critical Companion to their History and Ideas*, ed. Irvin Buckwalter Horst (Leiden, 1986), 160–176, there 172.

95 Jan ten Doornkaat Koolman, "Die Wismarer Artikel 1554," *MGB* 17 (1965), 38–42, there 38.

96 H. Alenson, "Tegen-Bericht op de voor-Reden vant groote Martelaer Boeck (Haarlem: Jan Pietersz Does, 1630)," *BRN* 7: 139–266, 226–228; see also *Later Writings of the Swiss Brethren, 1529–1592*, ed. C. Arnold Snyder (Kitchener, ON, 2017), 81–83.

97 Hoekstra, *Beginnselen* (see above, n. 86), 134, 247.

98 *BRN* 7: 227.

99 *BRN* 5: 317–359, there 317.

However, after the sixteenth century, the Dutch Anabaptists were driven by the desire to become respectable “burghers.” Hence, they accommodated themselves to a large extent to the Reformed nature of the Dutch Republic.¹⁰⁰ Thus, with the emergence of a more “confessional” Dutch Anabaptist-Mennonite identity, historiography focused on Menno Simons as a “virtuous Dutch citizen.”¹⁰¹ Consequently, Pastor from the Lower Rhine has mostly been ignored because of his alleged anti-trinitarianism. This perception, however, cannot be reconciled with the image evoked by sixteenth-century writers. Anastasius Veluanus (ca. 1520–1570), for example, in his 1544 *Der Leken Wechwyser* [The Layman’s Guide], regarded Pastor on an equal footing with Menno Simons as the head of the dissenters.¹⁰² In 1551 Gellius Faber (ca. 1490–1564) noted that although all are Anabaptists, “one is Mennonite, the other is Adam Pastorite, the third is Obbite, the fourth is Dirckite”¹⁰³ Marten Micron (1523–1559), in his report on the public debate with Menno Simons in Wismar in 1554, mentioned an Adam Pastor “sect,” which has “an appearance of holiness.”¹⁰⁴ Cassander, writing from the Lower Rhine, conveyed this same notion in 1555 when he described Menno and Pastor as two leaders in a civil war¹⁰⁵ and connected them with Caspar Schwenckfeld (1489–1561) as major culprits in a revival of anti-trinitarian errors.¹⁰⁶ Nicolai, in his *Inlasschingen* of 1569, described Pastor as having a large following.¹⁰⁷ All these references clearly demonstrate that sixteenth-century contemporaries considered Adam Pastor to be a leading Anabaptist bishop alongside Menno Simons.

100 Mirjam van Veen, “Dutch Anabaptists and Reformed Historiographers on Servetus’ Death: Or How the Radical Reformation Turned Mainstream and How the Mainstream Reformation Turned Radical,” *Radicalism and Dissent in the World of Protestant Reform*, ed. Bridget Heal and Anorthe Kremers (Göttingen, 2017), 162–172, there 171.

101 Voolstra, *Menno Simons* (see above, n. 60), 24.

102 *BRN* 4: 333.

103 Gellius Faber, *Eine antwert vp einen bitterhönischen brief der Wedderdöper* ([Magdeburg Kerkenher 1551]), fol. J2v.

104 Marten Mikron, “Een waeraechtigh verhaal der t’zammensprekinghe tusschen Menno Simons en Martinus Mikron van der Menschwerdinghe Jesu Christi” (Emden: Gellium Ctematium, 1556), *Documenta Anabaptistica Neerlandica* (Leiden, 1981), 3: 34.

105 Maria E. Nolte, *Georgius Cassander en zijn oecumenisch streven* (Nijmegen, 1951), 12, referring to Cassander’s *Opera Omnia* (Paris: Abraham Pacard, 1616), 577.

106 Nissen, *Polemiek* (see above, n. 50), 165; and Peter Arnold Heuser, “Netzwerke des Humanismus im Rheinland, Georgius Cassander (1513–1566) und der jülich-klevische Territorienverband,” *Herrschaft, Hof und Humanismus: Wilhelm V. von Jülich-Kleve-Berg und seine Zeit*, ed. Guido von Büren, et al. (Bielefeld, 2018), 501–530, there 518.

107 *BRN* 7: 464.

6 Conclusion

Adam Pastor's role in the development of post-Münsterite Anabaptism was initially shaped by opposing the influence of David Joris. Together with Menno, Dirk Philips, and a few other Lower Rhine bishops, they especially disputed and disapproved of his messianism. Consequently, in the early 1540s an attempt was made to connect the different networks around the bishops of the north (Menno and Dirk) and those from the Lower Rhine by coordinating bishop meetings in places of exile regarding doctrine and the need for regulations about discipline with the aim to build the "community of Christ."

The biblical basis—and organizing principle—was the Melchiorite monophysite incarnation doctrine, defending Christ's complete freedom from sin, because this constituted the foundation of a church without spot or wrinkle. However, since 1547 the bishops from the Lower Rhine, in particular Adam Pastor, doubted this doctrine and advocated a milder and more biblical ban practice. Adam Pastor was banned in 1547 and finally excommunicated in 1552.

Adam Pastor intended his 1551 version of the *Onderscheytboeck* primarily as a bishop's handbook comparable to Menno's *Fundamentboeck*. "Rebirth" and "new creation" to obtain "betterment of life" were the central themes in his Anabaptist theology, which he shared with Menno and Philips, with one exception—the Melchiorite doctrine of incarnation. The publication of the *Disputation* in the ca. 1554 version of the *Onderscheytboeck* reveals the spiritualization of Adam Pastor along a unitarian path, a process of religious internalization in the context of the controversy that had arisen since 1547. Adam Pastor with a large rank and file on the Lower Rhine had become a rival of "Mennonitism." Thereafter, the Melchiorite-Mennonite incarnation doctrine remained the major disagreement between the Anabaptist bishops from the north and those from the Lower Rhine. This eventually led to the breaking of the relationship of the emerging Mennonite communities and the "High German" Anabaptist networks on the Lower Rhine in 1559.

Adam Pastor's thinking can be characterized as a symbiosis of biblicism and individual rationalizing spiritualism. However, his unitarian tendencies were the reason why Adam Pastor was discounted and ignored by nationalistic "Dooopsgezind" Anabaptist historiography in the Dutch Republic and after. Nevertheless, the case of Adam Pastor provides sufficient arguments for a broader significance of the Lower Rhine in Dutch and North German Anabaptist historiography than has hitherto been assumed.