

Historic Anabaptist writings to be available online

December 11, 2008

PRAGUE, Czech Republic (ABP)—Writings of Balthasar Hubmaier, one of the most well-known and respected Anabaptist theologians of the Reformation, soon will be available for online research, thanks to a project of European Baptist scholars.

The [Institute of Baptist and Anabaptist Studies](#) at International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, Czech Republic, and the German Baptist Seminary in Berlin recently announced photographic reproductions of all Hubmaier's surviving works would be scanned into digital images and made available on the Internet.

Institute Rector Keith Jones noted it probably will take six months to a year to digitize more than 30 short and long pamphlets that together amount to about 800 images.

Balthasar Hubmaier

The only Anabaptist theologian to complete theological studies leading to a doctor's degree, Hubmaier is credited with winning many converts to the movement through his preaching and writing.

Original 16th-century prints of his writings are scattered throughout libraries all over Europe. Few copies survived 500 years of history that included systematic suppression of the Anabaptist movement during the 16th and 17th centuries and the destruction of World War II. Photographic images of the originals were produced in the 1930s by an initiative of the Baptist World Alliance.

Scholars expect the digital edition to generate enthusiasm among

Anabaptist and Baptist historians and hope it will give new impetus to research on Hubmaier and early Anabaptists.

Born about 1480 near Augsburg, Germany, Hubmaier became a Protestant influenced by writings of Martin Luther. He is best known for a public debate with Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli over infant baptism.

He was baptized on Easter in 1525 as an adherent of a movement nicknamed “Anabaptists”—or rebaptizers—by its opponents. Attempts to suppress the movement by persecution—including death by drowning in a cruel parody of its beliefs—backfired, as those killed were considered martyrs by their followers.

Imprisoned and tortured in Zurich, Hubmaier fled to Moravia, where he founded an influential Anabaptist congregation in Nikolsburg in 1526.

He produced more tracts—18 in one year—than any other Anabaptist theologian. Most dealt with believer’s baptism.

Arrested by Roman Catholic authorities, tortured and tried for heresy, he was burned at the stake in Vienna in 1528. Three days later, his wife was drowned in the Danube.

Hubmaier is not considered a major influence on modern Anabaptist groups like the Mennonites, because he was not an absolute pacifist. But he is held in high esteem among many Baptists for his views on baptism, free will and the separation of church and state.