

The Execution of Maria van Beckum (1660)

Abstract

In the sixteenth century, the emergence of Anabaptist groups disconcerted both Protestant and Catholic authorities across the German speaking lands. Anabaptist groups differed in their theological views and communal structures, but in general, their commitment to adult baptism, idealization of separation from the world, and rejection of the oath made them suspect in their communities. In the seventeenth century, as both Protestant and Catholic authorities turned to violence to control the spread of Anabaptism, stories of Anabaptist martyrs were collected by co-religionists. In 1660, Thieleman J. van Braght published *The Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians who baptized only upon confession of faith, and who suffered and died for the testimony of Jesus, their Saviour, from the time of Christ to the year A.D. 1660* in Dutch, and it appeared in 1685 with etchings by Jan Luyken. It was published in German in 1749. The collection especially highlighted the deaths of Anabaptist martyrs and remains an important touchstone for Mennonites, Amish, and other anabaptist groups. The text and accompanying images highlight the non-violence of the Anabaptist martyrs and the violence of their pursuers. This image from the *Martyr's Mirror* depicts the burning of Maria van Beckum (c. 1510-1544), a Dutch Noblewoman accused of the Anabaptist heresy, and her sister-in-law, Ursula (on the left). Stories of the bravery and steadfastness of Anabaptist martyrs, far from discouraging the spread of Anabaptism, may have enhanced the reputation of its believers.

Source



Source: Jan Luyken, *The Burning of Maria van Beckum*, etching, 1683. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

Recommended Citation: The Execution of Maria van Beckum (1660), published in: German History in Documents and Images,
<<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/from-the-reformations-to-the-thirty-years-war-1500-1648/ghdi:image-5350>> [April 02, 2025].