

The Family of Love in England

The Merchant Scholars

In England, where Familism often appears to have been more homogeneous than on the continent, it existed on two levels. Not only were there the indigenous groups of men and women in southern and eastern England, the recipients of the English translations of Hendrik Niclaes's works, but there was also the refugee community of merchant scholars from the Low Countries, friends and relatives of Ortelius, acquaintances and admirers of Plantin and Justus Lipsius, amongst whom the humanist variety of Familism seems to have persisted in a modified and frequently elusive form.¹ Both the merchant scholar immigrants and some of the most ardent opponents of Hendrik Niclaes – men such as Carinaeus and Micron, not to mention Adrian Gissing who supplied John Rogers with information for his attacks on the prophet, converged in the refugee churches. The suspicion that Familism had found its way into the foreign community in London finally induced the consistory to prohibit the sale of books by Franck and Hendrik Niclaes in Dutch bookshops in England in 1570,² but it was voiced shortly after the reopening of the Dutch Church under

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1. For a study of the circle see J A. van Dorsten, *The Radical Arts: First Decade of an Elizabethan Renaissance*, (Leiden 1973).
 2. A. Kuyper (ed.), *Kerkerads-Protocolen der hollandsche gemeente te Londen, 1569-1571* (Utrecht 1870), p. 187.

Queen Elizabeth in 1560, and its object was the minister Adriaen van Haemstede.³

Haemstede's popularity in the Netherlands amongst the wealthier Protestants, his sympathetic treatment of those who were unwilling to commit themselves openly to the Reformed religion, are in many ways reminiscent of Huibert Duifhuis. So, too, was his tolerant attitude towards Anabaptists, the matter which got him into trouble in London and about which the Dutch Church was particularly sensitive, since one of Edward VI's motives for permitting its existence in the first place had been 'for avoiding of all sects of Anabaptists and such like'.⁴

Although there is no evidence of any substance to support the charge of Familism levelled at Haemstede and mentioned in a letter which the poet Karel Utenhove wrote to his less tolerant step-brother Jan, one of the founders of the Dutch Church, in September 1562,⁵ Haemstede's congregation included Ortelius's friend and cousin Emmanuel van Meteren and the Italian engineer Giacomo Aconzio (Acontius), who wrote his *Stratagematum Satanae* in the minister's defence in 1565. When Van Meteren actually expressed a view on Familism,⁶ in his great history of the Netherlands written in the 1590s, he attacked it. He deplored Hendrik Niclaes's refusal to die for his beliefs and accused him of serving the interests of the Church of Rome and the anti-Protestant placards. Yet, when he was working for the merchant Giles Hooftman and travelling between London and Antwerp in the 1550s and 1560s, it is more than likely that he had something to do with the prophet. His colleague Johan Radermacher,

3. For the proceedings against Haemstede see A.A. van Schelven (ed.), *Kerkeraads-protocollen der Nederduitsche Vluchtelingen-kerk te Londen 1560-1563* (Amsterdam 1921), pp. 445-66. For Haemstede see A.J. Jelsma, *Adriaan van Haemstede en zijn Martelaars boek* (The Hague 1970); Patrick Collinson, *Archbishop Grindal 1519-1583: The Struggle for a Reformed Church* (London 1979), pp. 134-40.

4. A.A. van Schelven. *De Nederduitsche Vluchtelingenkerken der XVIe eeuw in Engeland en Duitschland in hunne beteekenis voor de Reformatie in de Nederlanden* (The Hague 1909), p. 66.

5. Hessels, p. 206. Cf. Jelsma, *Adriaan van Haemstede*, pp. 127-33.

6. Emmanuel van Meteren, *Commentarien ofte Memorien van den Nederlandtschen Staet, Handel, Oorloghen ende Gheschiedenissen van onsen tyden* ([London] 1608). fol. 10^r. Cf. also L. Brummel, *Twee ballingen 's tijdens onze opstand tegen Spanje* (The Hague 1972), pp. 121-28.

who settled in London in 1567 and who had worked for Hooftman since 1554, was involved in the joint plan of Hendrik Niclaes and Plantin to export Hebrew Bibles to Barbary.⁷ As far as religion was concerned, Radermacher's indifference to the more dogmatic aspects of the foreigners' churches is illustrated by the rapidity with which he registered first with the French, then with the Dutch and then with the Italians.

Van Meteren, Radermacher, James Cool the Elder and his son, and the painters and engravers who joined their circle – Franciscus Hogenberg, Joris Hoefnagel and Lucas de Heere – all shared the conciliatory aspirations of Cool's brother-in-law Ortelius who wrote to them affectionately from Antwerp. And to their close acquaintances should be added the errant Spaniard Antonio del Corro and the one English scholar who may well have sympathised with continental Familism – the 'magus' John Dee.⁸ Throughout their lives these Dutch immigrants remained in touch with friends and relatives in Germany and the Low Countries who had been associated either with Hendrik Niclaes or with Barrefelt. For the publication of his history of the Netherlands in German and Latin Van Meteren turned to his old friend Arnold Mylius⁹ who, but shortly before, had been seeing to the distribution of Barrefelt's works and the financial welfare of Barrefelt's person in Cologne. But if the Flemish merchant scholars residing in London ever did believe in Familism it was humanist Familism, and one of the best expressions of Lipsian Neo-Stoicism combined with Reformed Protestantism of an Arminian shade was James Cool the Younger's *Of Death a true Description* which he had written by 1623 and which Johan Radermacher the Younger (who, like his father, had finally settled in Middelburg) undertook to have printed in the Netherlands.¹⁰

7. See above, p. 73.

8. Van Dorsten, *Radical Arts*, pp. 16-18, 22-24, 77-78. Peter Baro, the liberal Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, was suspected of being a Familist on account of his friendship with Del Corro. Cf. Hessels, vol. 1, p. 670.

9. W.D. Verduyn, *Emmanuel van Meteren: Bijdrage tot de Kennis van zijn leven, zijn tijd en het intstaan van zijn geschied-werk* (The Hague 1926), pp. 174-76. Cf. Brummel, *Twee ballingen*, pp. 81-116, 121-28.

10. James Cool, *Of Death a true Description: And against it A good Preparation* (London 1629). On Cool see J.A. van Dorsten, "I.C.O." Het terugvinden van een bescheiden Nederlander in Londen', *Tijdschrift*

English precedents

In the past, thanks partly to the writings of the enemies of the Family of Love, there has been a tendency to look for its antecedents in England among radical movements such as the Lollards and the Anabaptists. In the case of the Lollards their beliefs are hard to determine, partly because of the relative laxity and unreliable means of investigation of the English ecclesiastical authorities in the fifteenth century and partly because it is difficult to tie the fifteenth-century Lollards down to any definite doctrinal system. Lollardy can indeed 'be seen as a series of attitudes from which beliefs evolved rather than as a set of doctrines'.¹¹

There is no doubt that some of these attitudes – anti-papalism, anti-sacerdotalism and exclusive devotion to the Bible – helped to prepare the way for the reception of various forms of Protestantism in sixteenth-century England. Others, however, such as millenarianism and, above all, sectarianism, were perfectly compatible with Familism and a pattern of non-conformity increasingly perceptible throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But even if there are signs of such an influence in England as a whole, Christopher Marsh has rightly pointed to other, far less radical, sources for the beliefs of the highly conservative English Familists. There was, he emphasises, a mystical tradition in England dating back to the fourteenth century and which we find in the works of Walter Hilton and Richard Rolle. They acted as mediators of the ideas of the *Devotio Moderna* and above all of the *Imitation of Christ*, the first three books of which were once actually ascribed to Hilton. Written in the vernacular, works such as Hilton's *Cloud of Unknowing* appealed widely to a lay readership.¹²

Nevertheless the insistence with which many of the opponents of the Family of Love associated the movement with Anabaptism

voor nederlandse taal- en letterkunde, 77 (1959), pp. 17-32 (now in Van Dorsten, *The Anglo-Dutch Renaissance*, pp. 8-20); and the introduction by J.A. Van Dorsten and K. Schaap to Jacob Cool, *Den Staet van London in hare groote peste* (Leiden 1962), pp. 1-11. It was James Cool the Younger who presented the Dutch Church in London with Ortelius's copies of Hendrik Niclaes's *Spiegel der Gherechticheit* and David Joris's *TWonder-boeck* (Van Dorsten, *The Radical Arts*, p. 30).

11. J.A.F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards 1414-1520* (Oxford 1965), p. 244.

12. Marsh, pp. 29-32.

warrants a brief survey of the early Anabaptists in England. Anabaptism had been steadily imported from the continent ever since the reign of Henry VIII. It had advanced with the arrival of the persecuted followers of David Joris, and it had encountered the sectarian tendency associated with Lollardy. Yet, as Carrie Euler wrote, 'there is little evidence that organised Anabaptist congregations or conventicles, or any other kind of Separatism, emerged in England during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI. What did exist were varying strands of vocal dissent with different, sometimes overlapping, origins and beliefs.'¹³ There was no systematic attempt to persecute them under Edward VI, and it was in that king's reign that they appear to have expanded, particularly in southern and eastern England and in the same areas where the Family of Love was to flourish. The Anabaptists also got off surprisingly lightly under Queen Mary, when the search for heresy was concentrated in very different circles.¹⁴

What little we do know about the Anabaptists in England, however, suggests that some of the propositions to which the early Familists confessed had their origin in the faith introduced by certain refugees from Germany and the Low Countries. Take, for example, the question of nicodemism, of the righteousness of simulation on which the English Familists prided themselves from the outset. Both the Lollards and the Anabaptists proved extremely willing to recant but, as in the case of John Champneys and a number of other sectarians interrogated in the late 1540s, their recantation was succeeded by a relapse into heresy.¹⁵ And if nicodemism was sufficiently widespread in the sixteenth century for it to have possible roots outside Anabaptism the same can hardly be said of the belief, attributed to English Familists, that baptism was of no value before

13. Carrie Euler, 'Anabaptism and Anti-Anabaptism in the Early English Reformation: Defining Protestant Heresy and Orthodoxy during the Reign of Edward VI', in David Loewenstein and John Marshall (eds.), *Heresy, Literature and Politics in Early Modern English Culture* (Cambridge 2006), pp. 40-58, esp. p. 41.

14. Cf. Irvin B. Horst, *The Radical Brethren: Anabaptism and the English Reformation to 1558* (Nieuwkoop 1972), pp. 97-158; RR, pp. 1191-1211. Philip Hughes suggests that the 'Protestant' martyrs executed under Queen Mary may have included a number of Anabaptists. Philip Hughes, *The Reformation in England* (London 1950-54), vol. 2, p. 262.

15. Horst, *Radical Brethren*, pp. 112-15.

the age of 30, or of the Arianism professed by Christopher Vittels before his complete adherence to Niclaesism.

The first of these beliefs, closely connected with the conviction, to which Champneys confessed, that the regenerate could not sin, was clearly Anabaptist. Arianism, too, was narrowly associated with Anabaptism in England: the denial that Christ was equal to the Father had been held against John Asheton, a priest from the diocese of Lincoln, in 1548,¹⁶ while the Flemish surgeon George van Parris,¹⁷ who joined the Strangers' Church at Austin Friars and was one of the only two heretics to be executed in Edward VI's reign, was primarily guilty of holding Arian views very similar to those of Vittels. As for the other heretic to be burnt under King Edward, Joan of Kent or Joan Bocher,¹⁸ who denied that Christ took his flesh from the Virgin, one of the articles to which the Surrey sectarians confessed in 1561 was that they had condemned her execution.

English Familism undoubtedly assimilated a number of popular beliefs which had been in existence for an indeterminate period of time but which can only really be charted with any degree of accuracy in the seventeenth century.¹⁹ 'There is not almost anyone particular erroneous and Schismaticall phantasie, whereof the Familie of Love hath not borrowed one braunche or other thereof, to peece unto themselues this their broken Religion', wrote the Puritan divine William Wilkinson in 1579²⁰ – and it is this adulteration which makes it so difficult to establish exactly when Familism entered England.

The generally accepted view is that Familism first appeared during Queen Mary's reign, soon after 1553. And indeed, the Familist chroniclers talk of members in England at a relatively early stage, at

16. Ibid., p. 136. On Arianism under Edward VI and Mary, see Hughes, *The Reformation*, vol. 2, pp. 130, 140-42, 191-93.

17. Horst, *Radical Brethren*, pp. 136-37.

18. Ibid., pp. 109-11.

19. Cf. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (Harmondsworth 1973), pp. 200, 202, 322, 446-47.

20. William Wilkinson, *A Confutation of certaine articles delivered unto the Familie of Love, with the exposition of Theophilus, a supposed Elder in the sayd Familie upon the same Articles* (London 1579), (facsimile Amsterdam 1970), Epistle Dedicatory, fol. 3^r.

a period which probably corresponds to the mid-1550s.²¹ The man who allegedly introduced the doctrine, Christopher Vittels from the Netherlands, possibly from Delft, was a joiner whose residence in the parish of St Olaf in Southwark can be documented in 1551.²² By 1568 he had become an international textiles merchant, a profession he shared with Hendrik Niclaes.²³ The report of his spiritual evolution is contained in a confession written by Henry Orinell, an inhabitant of the village of Willingham in Cambridgeshire, and reproduced by Wilkinson in his attack.²⁴ In 1555 Orinell went to Colchester in order, as he said, 'that my conscience should not be entangled with the Popish pitch'. Here, at an inn, he met with some acquaintances who had assembled 'to conferre concerning the safetie of their conscience', and encountered Christopher Vittels. According to Orinell, Vittels had renounced his profession as a joiner and had become the 'great and learned Scholemaister of the doctrine of a man, who lived as he sayd beyond the seas an holy life and an upright conversation'. It was only later that Orinell deduced that the man in question was Hendrik Niclaes.

The doctrine which Vittels imparted to Orinell corresponds fully to Wilkinson's description of the 'broken Religion'. The first point, savouring far more of Anabaptism than of Familism, was that 'children ought not to be Baptised, until they come to yeares of discretion'. The third of the three points, the denial that the Pope was Antichrist, does indeed reflect a concept which Hendrik Niclaes expressed in his *Evangelium Regni*, but it could equally well have been derived from other sources. The point where Vittels appears to have been well prepared for Familism, if not actually an adherent of the sect, was the second – that the Book of Common Prayer 'was not the right service

21. The evidence dating from the late 1550s is vague. The spread of Familism is reported in the Low Countries, England and France, *Cronica*, p. 45, quoted above p. 69.

22. *Publications of the Huguenot Society of London*, 10(1) (London 1908), p. 230. Cf. also J. W. Martin, 'Christopher Vitel: An Elizabethan Mechanick Preacher', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 10 (1979), pp. 15-22; Christopher Marsh, 'Vittels [Vitell], Christopher', *ODNB*.

23. Marsh, p. 78.

24. Wilkinson, *A Confutation*, fol. 4^r. Wilkinson spells the name Crinell, but the correct spelling is Orinell, see Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge 1974), p. 246.

of God' because it said, 'Have mercy upon us miserable sinners'. Christ, Vittels maintained, was not the son of God and the godly did not sin and therefore had no need of such a prayer. The former, Arian, view could easily be suited to the essentially allegorical interpretation which Hendrik Niclaes always gave of the incarnation, while the latter belief in perfectionism, although it had an English antecedent in the statements of John Champneys, was compatible with the more literal interpretation of the Niclaesite concept of the 'godded man'.

Yet it would seem that Vittels's acquaintance with Hendrik Niclaes and his work – if, indeed, the man 'who lived beyond the seas an holy life' was Hendrik Niclaes and not David Joris, who was still alive in 1555 – was superficial. Vittels later came to know the prophet far better: his reply to John Rogers's attack on the Family of Love in 1579 was the work of a man almost as well-informed as the Familist chronicles. But at this early stage it is questionable whether he even was a Familist and, shortly after Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne, he was in trouble as an Arian. Incarcerated on the orders of Edmund Grindal, then bishop of London, he recanted at Paul's Cross after being denounced by a preacher and by a cousin of his. According to the former he had denied that the Son was equal to the Father, and according to the latter he had told her 'playnely that Christ was not God: but onely a good man, and a Prophet: and that there were men that shee did know living, that were as good, and as holy men, as he was'.²⁵

The Surrey sectarians

Another piece of evidence of potentially Familist activity in England dates from 28 May 1561 when the justice of the peace, William More,²⁶ received the confession of two men who lived close to his residence

25. The episode is recounted in John Rogers, *An Answere*, sig. L2^v-L3^r and seems to date from 1559. Cf. Millar Maclure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons 1534-1642* (Toronto 1958), pp. 201-04.

26. See Alan Davidson, 'More, Sir William', *ODNB*. In 1561 William More was Queen Elizabeth's first sheriff of Surrey and Sussex and vice-admiral of Sussex. He was knighted in 1576, and in 1591, nine years before his death, was given the chamberlainship of the Exchequer. In the reign of Queen Mary he had 'stood for the true religion' and was known for his integrity as a Protestant.

of Loseley House in Surrey – Thomas Chaundler, an inhabitant of Wonersh, and Robert Sterte, a clerk from Dunsfold.²⁷ Chaundler and Sterte described in the greatest detail a community with branches throughout southern and eastern England. By and large the members of this community were ‘all unlearned, saving that some of them can reade English, and that not verie perfectly, and of them that can so reade they have chosen Bishops, Elders and Deacons’. Thomas Chaundler clearly fell into the former category since he was unable to sign his name, but Sterte, the clerk, was literate. The two men told More of a sect whose Elders summoned the members of their congregation to ‘one of their disciples houses, which they call also a Raab’. The house was chosen in as isolated a spot as possible; the owner was obliged to provide his visitors – some 30 odd – with food and drink; and the assemblies took place at night. The Elder would then order the imperfect and the weak to withdraw and pray for strength, after which the Bishop or Deacon would read the scriptures to those present, ‘expounding the same according to his owne fansie’. Hierarchy was strictly observed, the Elder not speaking before the Bishop, nor the Deacon before either, while only those members of the congregation especially called upon to do so were entitled to talk.

Members received into the congregation pledged that all their goods would be held in common amongst the rest of the brethren and were welcomed with a kiss. In apparent contradiction with this precept, each member contributed to the wealth of the Elders, and alms were only supposed to be given to fellow sectarians. Marriage, too, was to take place within the community, while adultery, also

27. My quotations are from Rogers, *The Displaying*, sigs. H3^r-I2^r, but the original confession in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Loseley Ms. Lb. 98, has been published by Jean Dietz Moss, ‘*Godded with God: Hendrik Niclaes and his Family of Love*, Philadelphia 1981, pp. 70-74. Much of the manuscript, but not all of it, is also reproduced in St. George Kieran Hyland, *A Century of Persecution under Tudor and Stuart Sovereigns from Contemporary Records* (London 1920), pp. 103-12. Cf. J.W. Martin, ‘Elizabethan Familists and Other Separatists in the Guildford Area’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 51 (1978), pp. 90-93, which includes a document in the Folger Shakespeare Library concerning ‘Anabaptist activity in the same area, dateable ... between 1566 and mid 1570’: a number of the charges made against the Anabaptists are very similar to those made against the Familists. See also Marsh, pp. 85-100.

amongst members of the sect, was sanctioned enthusiastically: Thomas Chaundler's wife, who had been brought to him from the Isle of Ely, was a keen practitioner.²⁸ As far as outward religious practices were concerned nicodemism was the rule. At the beginning of Queen Mary's reign the members of the community would not go to church but they changed their minds 'within a yere after ... openly declaring unto their brethren, that they were al bound to come unto the church, and to doe outwardly, there, all such thinges as the Lawe required them at their handes, upon paine of damnation, although inwardely they did professe the contrarie'. They justified total submission to the magistrate in all things with 1 Peter 2:13: 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme.'

The doctrine of the community consisted of a confused, and frequently contradictory, list of tenets. They regarded those who were not of their community as little better than beasts, disapproved of prayer except for beginners and, convinced of their own perfection, avoided any expression of sinfulness. They affirmed that 'Christ is come forth in their fleshe, even as he came forth of the virgin Mary'. Believing that 'all thinges are ruled by nature, and not directed by God', they taught that heaven and hell were in this life and defended pre-Adamism.²⁹ They denied the Trinity, rejected baptism before the age of 30, and held that nobody should receive the sacraments before he had received their ordinances.

The mere fact that the members of this sect believed that recantation was a glory, that loyalty was only due to other members of the community and that they should answer 'to everie demaundant (not beeing one of their sect) in suche sort as they thinke best shall please him' should put us on our guard against accepting too literally all the statements made before William More. Besides, what evidence do we have that Sterte and Chaundler were Familists?

Eighteen years later Christopher Vittels was to claim that 'of H.N. his doctrine at that time they knew not'.³⁰ But how well, one may ask,

28. The details about adultery were omitted in Rogers's version of the confession.

29. For Christopher Marlowe's views on pre-Adamism, expressed some time later, see Paul H. Kocher, *Christopher Marlowe: A Study of his Thought, Learning and Character* (Chapel Hill, NC 1946), pp. 42-45.

30. Rogers, *An Answer*, sig. K1^{r-v}.

did Vittels know Sterte and Chaundler? Was the extensive extract from their confession reproduced by John Rogers his only source of knowledge? Informative though he was, Rogers was curiously reluctant to mention any names. He named neither Sterte nor Chaundler as the authors of the confession, and he failed to append the list of members of the sect with which the two men obligingly provided William More.³¹ After specifying that their centres of activity were the Isle of Ely, Essex, Berkshire, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, Devonshire and London, they proceeded to indicate the most prominent sectarians. David Oram, a joiner from near Basingstoke, was a Bishop. Thomas Allen, a mercer who came, like Chaundler, from Wonersh, was an Elder, as were a Dutch shoemaker who 'follwyth the Courte' and John Gryffin, a mercer from Essex, who 'keepyth strange women in hys howse'.

Both Oram and Allen, like Gryffin, had been in trouble with the ecclesiastical authorities. They had been apprehended by Grindal and had been made to recant in Wonersh and Guildford.³² The 'hede of all the Congregation', however, was 'Henryke a Dutchman'. He was 'permanent in no place, but stylI wandryth to vysytte his flock'. It is tempting to think that Sterte and Chaundler were referring to Hendrik Niclaes. In 1561 he was resident in Kampen but may well have spent some time travelling, and the Familist chronicles report that Carinaeus, in a state of fury, went to England in 1562 in search of him and there died of the plague.³³ Yet they never go as far as to state that Hendrik Niclaes actually did come to England.

The question therefore remains open. We cannot dismiss the possibility that Hendrik Niclaes paid a brief visit to England and made the acquaintance of some of the men denounced by Chaundler and Sterte. But even if they did meet the prophet, Vittels was probably

31. Folger Shakespeare Library, Loseley Ms. Lb. 98, fol. 5^v; Dietz Moss, *'Godded with God'*, p. 74.

32. William More confirmed these events in Allen's life in a letter written some 20 years later. Cf. Hyland, *Century of Persecution*, pp. 332-33. Another transcription of the same letter is in the Guildford Muniment Room, Ms. 85|2|2(1), fols 154-55.

33. *Cronica*, p. 67: 'Menn dho he HN. nergent vinden edder bekomen, noch oick de Plaetze daer HN. was, nicht vorfoerschen konde, is tom lesten, mit torne synes Gemoetes, in Engelandt gereiset, daer he mit eine strenge Pestelentie geslagen wart, unde also in syne Boesheit staerve unde underginge'.

right in claiming that the sectarians of 1561 knew little to nothing of his doctrine. What they did know must have been based more on rumour than on any first-hand acquaintance with his work, since it was only ten years later that English versions of his writings began to arrive in England. Admittedly, of course, the Dutch shoemaker who followed the court may have read them in the original, but there is little in the doctrine described by Sterte and Chaundler which corresponds to Nicolaesism. Although the organisation of the sect, the hierarchy and the ritual kiss of admission do bear a resemblance to the organisation envisaged the *Ordo Sacerdotis*, it is also true that the Anabaptist communities on the continent – the most consummate example being the Hutterite community which established itself in Moravia in 1530³⁴ – had endeavoured to develop a similar structure well before Hendrik Nicolaes founded the Family of Love. Indeed, there are numerous features of the English sectarians which make them far more similar to the Anabaptists than to the Familists – their opposition to the bearing of weapons, community of property, the determination to keep marriage within the community and only allow members of the sect to help one another in childbirth, and, of course, their attitude to baptism. The most we can say, therefore, is that the sectarians of 1561 were ready to receive the Familist doctrine.

The spread of Familism

Only in the early 1570s did the distribution of Hendrik Nicolaes's works in England get underway. By this time Christopher Vittels had definitely joined the sect. He had probably encountered Hendrik Nicolaes, and was himself responsible for translating the prophet's writings into English.³⁵ For their production he and Hendrik Nicolaes used the printer Niclas Bohmbargen in Cologne³⁶ and, possibly with

34. Cf. Clasen, *Anabaptism*, pp. 210-97.

35. His English translations, with particular attention to his version of *Evangelium Regni*, are discussed by An Vanderhelst, 'Family of Love Revisited', pp. 131-71, and 'De vertalingen van het Huis der Liefde', pp. 30-31.

36. FV, 'De geschriften', pp. 182-84. Cf. also *A Supplication of the Family of Loue* (Cambridge 1606), p. 50: 'wee will ... doe our best indeuour to procure so many of the books as we can out of Germanie (where they bee printed)'.