

*The Rise of Anabaptism  
Neither Catholic nor Protestant*

*A short treatise on the emergence of  
a people during the Reformation era  
living in a society where the State  
dictated and controlled man's relationship  
with his Saviour and his fellowman  
but chose to follow Christ and the Scripture.*

*They were called Anabaptists,  
many of whom accepted martyrdom.  
They were willing to contend for the Faith  
which was once delivered unto the saints Jude 1:3*

*For this Faith many gave their life even unto death,  
at the stake, through fire, by sword or drowning.*

*The scriptural directives they lived and left for us today  
have their basis in Scripture since  
the foundation of the Christian Church at Antioch*

*This is the true Faith and Vision of the Anabaptists.*

*May the Lord bless your journey of discipleship to His Son*

Key Anabaptist Positions  
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Ministers Meeting Ashland. 2010

We greet you in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

This assignment is intended to show the difference between Anabaptist, Catholic, Protestant, especially Protestant, it is a big subject, I'll share some thoughts on that but I don't claim to understand everything you do for that matter. A good place to start would be with their view of the Scripture.

**1].** Key position number one.

Roman Catholic, Protestant and Anabaptist all agree that the Bible is authoritative but the Anabaptists had a different view of the relation of the Testaments, they had a step view of the Bible in which the New Testament was on a higher level than the Old Testament, it had more authority and we call that key position number one, a step view of the Bible.

Anabaptists demanded, because they viewed the Bible this way, demanded New Testament backing for every church ordinance and for the entire ethic of the Christian.

Reformers also recognized differences between the Testaments but they did not believe that the New Testament could forbid what the Old Testament allows and you still find people interpreting Matthew five and six, Matthew five especially in that way as if Christ can't possibly be saying something different from what the Old Testament said and yet the natural reading of that passage is definitely that Christ is changing the standard a bit.

The Reformers reached back in the Old Testament to justify many practices not found in the New Testament, practices like the state church, the elaborate liturgies, the oath, and so forth.

The relationship of the Testaments has many implications.

The Mennonite encyclopedia says it was, this relationship between the two Testaments, was discussed at length in each of the major disputations between the Anabaptists and the Reformers and that shows that both sides saw the importance of the question.

The Reformers, when the Anabaptists talked about the relationship between the two Testaments the Reformers said: Well you are throwing away most of the Bible!

Zwingli said: "The Anabaptists deny the entire Old Testament which I have seen with my own eyes for they wrote to our magistrate that the Old Testament has been done away with."

The Anabaptists responded something like this: "You are using the Old Testament to reason away the clear teachings of Jesus Christ."

Dirk Philips said it like this: "The false prophets cover and disguise their deceptive doctrines by appealing to the letter of the Old Testament, whatever they cannot defend by the New Testament scriptures they try to establish by the old."

The Anabaptists did recognize the inspiration of the Old Testament and used it freely for an example for instruction Menno Simons said, I'm not going to have quotations through the whole thing but I have a few at the beginning here, Menno Simons said: "The whole scriptures both the old and New Testaments were written for our instruction, admonition and correction."

And yet somebody calculated in his writings I saw in a book on theology that he quoted the New Testament three times as much as the Old Testament and I counted it myself in the Dortrecht confession and there are 25 references to the Old Testament and 140 references to the New Testament. So this difference between the Testaments as seen by the Anabaptists was one of the key positions that they based their doctrine and practice squarely upon the New Testament.

2] Key position number two, I'm going to call it full obedience.

Anabaptists were Biblicists who held that the New Testament was to be literally obeyed; they were people of the Book.

If the New Testament did not include liturgies well that they were not going to have liturgies, the same for elaborate church buildings and many other things.

And one modern Mennonite historian says about their turning away from liturgies in church buildings and suchlike he says: "The Mennonite traditions deprived of necessary beauty."

And that is interesting, I think the Anabaptists would have scoffed at such an attitude and would have said something like; God knows better than you

what we need and we are going to go by what He says – Literal obedience.

They believed in explaining the commands and then living them out instead of explaining away and then ignoring them. And this insistence upon obedience brought accusations; they were called externalists and legalists. Zwingli said: "If one looks into this matter closely it is seen that you contend only for unimportant outward things."

You are just concerned about the outward, externalists.

Obbe Philips who ordained Menno Simons and later defected from the Anabaptists cause complained: "The letter of the scriptures took us prisoner." So he is saying in legalism we are taken bondage by the letter.

Now the Anabaptists replied like this: "Whosoever boasts that he is a Christian must walk the same as Christ walked."

They would have said that is not legalism that is just Christianity, following and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ. They spoke a lot of the law of Christ.

Zwingli could call it legalism, Luther could urge to sin bravely or sin boldly because salvation is by faith alone.

The Anabaptists always objected to that they said: "Works demonstrate the validity of faith, faith without works is dead."

But the reformed clergy could make the distinctions between primary and secondary commands and they said things like love and justice and faith, they are primary, they are important but baptism and church discipline they are secondary.

The Anabaptists attitude was: "Show it to me in the New Testament, without obedience faith and love are empty noises."

The Anabaptists denied the charge of legalism, they said too that the law of Christ is not external it is spiritual, it is written on the heart, they were not in bondage but were set free to obey Christ, no one forced them, they freely chose to follow, obedience was an expression of inner liberation.

Obedience flowed from within; it was not imposed upon them externally from without.

And as far as church membership they said; None are forced to join us and all are free to leave us, this is freedom this is not legalism, voluntarily accepted discipline is not legalism.

I think these insights on legalism and freedom are very pertinent to us today, very pertinent to us as today we still face charges of legalism and the answer to the charge is still basically the same if we can still say it that this is something that is not imposed upon us from without but rather it is something that the Spirit of God writes within us and we love to do His commandments!

And may we all say that and may our young people also be able to say that.

**3].** Well key position number three is related, discipleship is the keyword here.

The Anabaptists made following Christ's central, paying special attention to His example in teachings in the Gospels, the Sermon on the Mount as well as His death and especially His resurrection.

Keywords were discipleship, following.

The theology of the Reformers tended to start in the Old Testament and when it reached the New Testament tended to skip over the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and go right to His death as interpreted by Galatians and Romans.

And I think probably that is due partly to Luther's life changing discovery that the just shall live by faith in the book of Romans, (Romans 1:17) and even today contemporary reformed writers their focus still tends to be on the theological implications of Christ's death rather than on practical discipleship.

Calvinism as an example of reformed theology where does it rest? On the Sermon on the Mount? No, on Galatians and Romans especially.

Anabaptists were more concerned with following Christ than with an intelligent understanding of His work.

They believed all the epistles said it is not that they did not believe them but they spent little time trying to explain the theology. When they spoke on theology they tended to stay with the words of Scripture and did not attempt to unscrew the inscrutable, they were not theologians they were disciples.

And it is interesting that the Roman Catholics and the Reformers both made so little of the Sermon on the Mount, I mean after all according to what I've read the Catholics considered the Sermon on the Mount, especially the words of Jesus which began; "It hath been said but I say unto you."

They considered them as counsels of perfection Capital C and capital P,

Councils of Perfection to be kept by capital C Christians, the clergy, but not by small c christians the normal person, the laity.

And some devout lay men and lay women became dissatisfied with this attitude about these teachings in this Sermon on the Mount and they took these so-called counsels of perfection to heart as well as voluntary poverty and celibacy and this was the beginning of the monastic orders in the Catholic Church.

Years later when the Anabaptists took the sermon on the Mount literally and obeyed it Martin Luther dismissed Anabaptism as a revival of mediaeval monasticism and it is interesting, I've often thought that our position as a church shares some of the good traits of monasticism, that serious commitment and separation, withdraw from the world, but even today nominal Christians fail to take the sermon on the Mount seriously.

The extreme dispensationalists relegate it to some future age and say it does not apply today.

Well the early Anabaptists took a different attitude they said the life and teachings of Jesus Christ are very important to him, he sees himself as a disciple of Jesus and attempts to follow His Lord.

And it is hard for me to see how any serious Christian could ignore the sermon on the Mount, after all it is the longest portion of Jesus teaching existing, the biggest section of red print in your Bible, it lays out the ethical framework of the kingdom of God, it is given great emphasis by Jesus himself.

And I would like you to turn just now to notice this, I like to hit this point pretty hard this morning, but Matthew chapter 7 just notice the conclusion of the sermon here, we start at verse 13, Matthew 7:13-15 "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: <sup>14</sup> Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. <sup>15</sup> Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

Starting at verse 13 it is not exactly ethical teaching but it is testing and then verse 21 and a final conclusion of the sermon he says: Matthew 7:21-27: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not proph-

esied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? <sup>23</sup> And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. <sup>24</sup> Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: <sup>25</sup> And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. <sup>26</sup> And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: <sup>27</sup> And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

These words have always been made much of by Anabaptists, this is not just 20th or 21st century Mennonitism that made much of these words but when you read those words and it says "not everybody" and then it proceeds to explain who are the true followers of Jesus Christ and it is those who "hear these sayings of mine and doeth them"

What are these sayings of mine that Jesus is talking about?

Well I think if you go back into His sermon you will see, you go back to chapter 5 and you see verses 21-22: Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: <sup>22</sup> But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Verse 27: You have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Verse 31: It has been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife let him give her a writing of enforcement, But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committed adultery.

Verse 33: Again ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths, But I say unto you, Swear not at all.

Verse 38: Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a

tooth for a tooth, But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil.

Verse 43: You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy, But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. (Matthew 5:21-43)

There is a forbidding of anger, a forbidding of lust, divorce, of oath swearing, there is the commanding of nonresistance and love for enemies.

The very things, now listen, the very things that Catholics said were not necessary for ordinary Christians and that Luther dismissed as monasticism and that the dispensationalists say do not apply today and that nominal Christians explain away as unnecessary are the things that Jesus Christ said will tell who are the real Christians and will stand in the judgment and who will not!

Let us not get too far from the Sermon on the Mount!

I'd do not want to be misunderstood, the Anabaptists did not neglect the death of Christ and the epistles teaching what His death means to the believers they just felt that the Reformers were neglecting practical obedience to a living Lord who issues real commands in favor of an intellectual emphasis on theology.

**4].** Key Anabaptist position number four. The Anabaptists saw salvation as a process.

In the Reformation days when salvation was simple, bring your baby to the clergy or the priest for baptism and the child is saved. Both Catholics and Reformers looked at it that way, get your baby saved, getting saved right away, getting saved while he is little, you get him and bring him into the church, the water will cleanse him, the water will wash away his sinful nature, his original sin. And you can make sure he is saved.

And they looked at Anabaptists who refused infant baptism as being unfair to their children, it was a terrible thing, don't you want your children to be saved?

Today some still believe in salvation by sacrament, by baptism, by the mass or salvation by formula, the four spiritual laws, repeat these prayers, sign your name on the dotted line, raise your hand up in mass evangelism meetings, put your hand on the radio while the radio evangelist prays and

the reformed doctrine of eternal security makes the transaction final and irrevocable.

They are not all so extreme as I'm saying here but too many are that way.

But if you look up saved in the Bible you will find that Christians are saved and that Christians are being saved and that Christians will be saved, you will find all that in the Bible - past, present and future.

We are saved in the past – that is called justification when our sins are taken away through our repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

We are saved in the present – that is called sanctification, it is obedience and discipleship and a purifying of life.

We are saved in the future – that is called glorification.

Salvation is a process that is finally completed only when the Christian is faithful to the end and if he neglects any part of the process before that it is not salvation

Saved, that is the Anabaptist concept.

And that is I think partly why they looked with a little suspicion upon assurance of salvation as it is taught by some because it smacks of this one time shot saying that it is all done and settled and wrapped up and it is guaranteed now and the Anabaptists say, No, no it has to continue, you have to continue in obedience and discipleship and be faithful to the very end and when you are received into glory then you are finally saved.

So really as you think through that question: Are you saved?

It is a good question but it is incomplete, a better question is do you know Jesus and are you following Him in company with the believers?

That is what it means to be saved.

The Roman road to salvation admit your sinfulness, confess your sins, believe Jesus died to save, accept Him as Saviour, that is all good but it is incomplete without Luke 9:23, If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

The Roman road is the way to justification but then there must be a growth, a sanctification, a practical discipleship to Jesus Christ if we are ever going to come to glorification.

You see salvation is a process.

That is the Anabaptist concept as opposed to the Protestant concept

## 5]. Key Anabaptist position number five.

The Anabaptists viewed the church as a separated, disciplined Fellowship of saints namely of all believing regenerated Christians, children of God, born from above by the Word and the Spirit, this is the view of the church.

The Reformed view is as Calvin would have put it is this: The church is that mass of men, (now I want you to think carefully about the difference here) "That mass (or collective body) of men among whom the Word of God is purely preached and the sacraments administered."

That is the church according to reformed theology, John Calvin.

The church is that mass of men among whom the word of God is purely preached in the sacraments and administered.

In other words if somebody is upfront and preaching from this Book, and what this Book says and then distributes the sacraments, the bread and wine, this is the church of Jesus Christ.

Does that make it a church?

I go back to the Anabaptist view of the church, A separated, disciplined Fellowship of saints, all believing regenerated Christians, children of God, born from above by the Word and the Spirit.

You see here you have a changed people and the other way you do not have changed people.

There is a drastic difference.

In the Anabaptist concept of the church you have Fellowship, it is the body, you have saints, people who actually are holy, that is the root of the word saint, believing, there is faith in there and works, regenerated, born again and in the other definition it is just "a mass of men" and it is the whole population in Calvin's mentality among whom the word is purely preached in the sacraments administered.

The question is this; is the Church of Jesus Christ an element in society, a changed regenerated element in society or is it co-extensive with society?

Is the church a body of believing saints or is it a regional body based on geographical location and civil government?

Those are two mutually exclusive concepts.

If the church is regional then all in the region are members regardless of their beliefs, actions, age or whatever.

If the church is confessional and demonstrated by works then small chil-

dren are not included because they cannot confess faith, evildoers are not included because their works do not prove their faith.

What it comes down to is do we believe in Christianity or Christendom?

One brother used that word Christendom, (*meaning those who profess to be Christians*), to say; People in Christendom don't see things like we do or don't experience what we experience.

Christendom technically in the old days was a state church set up but the New Testament Church is the ecclesia, the called out ones, God calls, "Come out of her my people, wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord and I will receive you." 2 Corinthians 6:17.

The New Testament Church is a separated subset of society in the world but is not of the world. We live in this society, the church co-exists within the society but not of it, it is separated, it is a subset.

Whereas the Reformed view, the church state/union view, is that if this is society why then this is the church, it is coextensive, if you are here if you are in this society then you are in the church. (*with the same limits, boundaries & scope as the State.*)

Well this concept of a pluralistic society with freedom of conscience was revolutionary to pre-Christian societies whether the Jewish or Roman or European, they all counted on religion being the glue, both Jew and Roman counted on religion being the glue to hold society together.

Old Testament Jewish society was not a pluralistic nation in faith or inseparably entwined, Israel was the name of both the political and the religious entity, one religion, one state, every child born in political Israel joined religious of Israel as an infant through the ritual of circumcision, had to get them in right away, get them into the religion.

Well there is more to that, in the Old Testament there was faith there too but as a type of society, the civil/religious set up that is about what it was.

In this closing portion of the message we concentrate more on the Reformation and post-reformation period.

In the Reformation era both Catholics and Reformers built societies based upon this pre-Christian model of church and state united in a sacral society, which meant that if your ruler was Catholic you were a Catholic, if he was Lutheran you were a Lutheran, and when Catholics and Lutherans battled for your region you might change from Catholic to Lutheran back to Catholic, back to Lutheran several times as armies advanced and retreated. (*In England especially from King Henry VIII on, the compulsory religion for*

*the people changed a number of times between Roman Catholic, Church of England and Protestantism - Cromwell for example.)*

Now one of the reasons the Reformers reached back into the Old Testament so much for their practices and doctrines was that they were building a pre-Christian society with the united church and state.

In the Old Testament circumcision brought babies into the state, (Israel) babies born in the State into the state mandated religious society (church) they said we will bring babies into the church by baptism which corresponds to circumcision in their view.

In such a society Jesus' teaching of nonresistance is an impossible ideal, it doesn't make sense, I mean it's impractical, it must mean it is only for some people like just the monks or just the clergy or some future time maybe, it doesn't make sense.

And oath swearing likewise, the provision of oath swearing, you have to have it for a political religious society or any political society and so if the political and religious societies are one then you have that oath swearing you cannot give it up and so the Sermon on the Mount with the direct teachings and example of Jesus Christ were swept aside, they did not know what to do with them in a society where church and state were one, they just did not know what to do with them.

The Anabaptists had an answer, a radical answer.

And I use radical in its entomological meaning and that means getting to the root of it, it comes from radicalis or root of and they said get down to the root of the matter, uproot that old idea of a unified church and state and build a New Testament church on New Testament principles and I think when we look at their answer you can see why both Reformers and Catholics feared the Anabaptists as revolutionaries and felt they must exterminate them.

And I think we can see also why they continually accused them of attempting to overthrow government.

And the Anabaptist said: We are not trying to overthrow governments, we are not political revolutionaries, we are respectful, we pray, we pay, we obey but we are going to build upon New Testament principles and let the chips fall where they will and if this means the world is turned upside down or right side up why so be it!

That was the Anabaptist view – we are building a New Testament church.

Now today when you say this in many countries the Anabaptists ideals of freedom of conscience and of voluntary church in a pluralistic society seems normal, it is the status quo but even today we would not need to travel very far before the old model makes itself felt again.

Not long after the birth of the Mennonite church in January 1525 the Anabaptist met to set forth in writing the New Testament principles guiding their movement and the result was the Schleitheim Confession of 1527 written by Michael Sattler and others, seven articles each directed toward the formation of a church based upon New Testament principles, in each of those articles is a key position of the Anabaptists and I would just now like to follow with key position six here to follow the articles of the Schleitheim Confession. (*See Footnote 1*)

**6]. Key position six: Believers baptism.**

To the Reformers baptism meant little, it was not very important, it was secondary thing in their categorizing of ethics, ethical categorizing, it was something done to babies to bring them into the church.

To the Anabaptists baptism was very important, it was a believer's baptism, you have been washed and made new, whosoever believeth and is baptised shall be saved. It is for adults, not for babies because babies cannot believe they told Reformers. And Luther said: Oh yes, babies can believe, babies can have latent faith, it is there that you cannot see it, it comes out later.

How do you know it is there?

Well you just take my word for it, it is there.

Oh yes, Calvin said, babies have partial faith.

Well how do you know?

Well take my word for it.

Zwingli said, O well babies have parental faith, the parents have faith for the babies and this kind of thing.

And well the Anabaptist said: Show it to me in the New Testament.

And the New Testament said believers are to be baptized and that's really where it is, and this was very, very important to the Anabaptists, this was the rite by which they were brought into the visible body of Christ.

That whole thing of visible and invisible is another discussion that we are not going to go into but this is very important to the Anabaptists and of

course they insisted that infant baptism did not mean anything and therefore they were called rebaptisers, Anabaptists. We think if somebody calls me an Anabaptist I think, that's nice, I will take that mantle, I'll wear it, I'll be happy with that, keep my chin up but back then that was a term of disgust to be called Anabaptists, you are part of the rabble, part of the people that were not fit to walk the earth, were not fit to live at all.

So that is the first article of the Schleithem Confession: Believers' Baptism. And that is how they define themselves and interestingly enough that is that the name their enemies gave to them – rebaptisers.

7]. Key position number seven and this is the second article of the Schleithem Confession is Church Discipline.

And this is based largely on Matthew 18, the binding and the loosing, and the Anabaptist said it is necessary to the New Testament church and you see it in the New Testament that it is not just Matthew 18, it is first Corinthians 5 and there are references in various places in the epistles that make it clear that the church is a disciplined body, a disciplined body and that exercise of discipline is necessary for the purity of the church.

Now the Reformers and the Catholics just did not see how to exercise church discipline in a sacral society (State church) because to put a member out of the church you had to put him out of society because the church and society were coextensive. (*existing as one unit*)

How do you put a person out of society? Well you stick them in jail. That was one of the forces of church discipline or you exile him, you tell him he must leave this society or you take his head off or you burn him or something like that, that's church discipline under a sacral system.

We today of course in American Anabaptist circles have that kind of church discipline but very few churches practice New Testament church discipline as the second article of the Schleithem Confession directs or as the New Testament teaches it and the Anabaptists practiced it and we should not be intimidated because not many do, we should keep on doing it because it is scriptural, it is Bible, it fits into our heritage and it is very important to have a pure church of Jesus Christ.

**8].** Key position eight, this is the third article of the Schleithem Confession, the Breaking of Bread in Close Communion.

They said it like this: All who wish to break bread together must beforehand be united in the one body of Christ by baptism, the congregation, by baptism.

And to the Anabaptists you see the communion was a symbolic event of brotherhood, they made a lot of the symbolism of Christ's death but they also made a lot of the symbolism in 1 Corinthians 10 where the grain was ground to make the loaf and we are one loaf and it symbolizes brotherhood, and that is a very Anabaptist concept.

Most churches don't make much of that as I understand it, certainly the Reformers and Catholics would not have.

The Catholics and Reformers by way of contrast said communion or mass, or whatever they call it, is a sacrament, it is a means of bringing grace to the unconverted unwashed masses of Christendom and thus they had all kinds of arguments about how is this done and to bring grace to the masses of these people that we would then somehow get them into heaven and some said, the Catholics said, the priest actually remakes or when the priest elevates the host and pronounces the proper words the host or the bread is actually changed into that literal body of Jesus Christ (*transubstantiation*) and so they are actually partaking of Jesus Christ literally and Jesus said: If you take my body that is going to bring life to you.

And so this is the way to bring life to these unconverted masses.

Luther said, well he believed in that grace came through sacraments too but transubstantiation was a little too hard for him and so he said, Well maybe the priest isn't really changing it, he is not really changing it but the presence of Christ is everywhere and so it is in the bread too.

That is consubstantiation.

And I think if you take that logically you can take that to the turkey dinner too for that matter but I don't really see how that fits.

But one interesting point that I came across in "The Reformers and Their Stepchildren" a number of years ago was that as the priest elevates the host he said words in Latin and the common people did not understand Latin and they did not really understand it at all.

Well the arguments about transubstantiation and consubstantiation and all of that the Anabaptists just swept that aside, they didn't even discuss it in their Confession, didn't even talk about it because what was important to them was that we are brethren in close communion, the communion table is limited to such brethren, we exercise Matthew 18 to keep the body pure so that we can be one loaf and then we come together as brethren, commemorating the work of Jesus Christ on the behalf of the body and that is what communion meant to them and it was not all this about grace and making people pure and all that kind of thing.

And very few churches, again, very few churches practices close communion in this Anabaptist New Testament sense where you bind and you loose, where you keep the body pure and you have counsel services and use Matthew 18 to solve and resolve problems and you keep together so you can have one loaf and then you sit down and you take the elements in representation and commemoration of what Jesus Christ did for us.

And that is the New Testament attitude about the breaking of bread in close communion and it is a very important Anabaptist position and it is that important to us today too.

**9].** Key position number nine also from the Schleithem Confession. Separation from evil or the world and unscriptural churches, they are both there I think in the Schleithem.

The Anabaptists were not ecumenical relativists who Christianized their opponents; they were absolutists who denounced evil and called for separation and withdrawal.

The Reformers wanted the Anabaptist to join and they said, Love, love, love, are you forgetting love?

Zwingli said: Whether or not you have the Scriptures on your side these things should be decided by love!

Does that sound familiar? I think so.

And the Anabaptists were not against love but they were not going to use love as an excuse to compromise with wrongdoing and wrong doctrine and this is a very necessary understanding for us in our relativistic, pluralistic religious society where doctrine no longer counts and tolerance is the highest virtue.

And I think it even touches us a little sometimes today when people are more and more afraid of saying: "Well this is an un-Christian practice or

an un-Christian idea” and thus they are Christianizing unscriptural behaviour and giving the name Christian to whomever wants the name.

That touches us just a little bit and I don't think we should do either one, I think we should leave the judgment of those without in the hands of God as 1 Corinthians 5 instructs us to do but by all means let's not start this inclusive relativistic idea of embracing whoever calls themselves a Christian.

That is not biblical and it is not Anabaptist either.

**10].** Key Anabaptist position number 10 is on Church Leadership.

The Anabaptists if you read the Schleithem Confession it is clear that they did not believe in a professional leadership, it was non-professional leadership.

The Reformers, their church leaders, worked hand in glove with civil rulers, and they received a wage for doing it, they were either trained professionals or else put into a professional position, today they are mostly trained professionals and today of course some of the Anabaptists are taking the reformed approach by having professional leaders, professional clergy. (*See Footnote 2*)

But the Anabaptist approach was to say, and you can see it in their confession way back from 1527, what was important is that leaders meet the Bible qualifications, that is the important thing, not how educated they are, not that they are authorized by the church or authorized by the state not that they stand in some apostolic succession or something like that but that they meet the qualifications of the New Testament.

Among the Catholics and the Reformers many of the clergy were admittedly wicked men, not all, but many were, even a man like Zwingli had a concubine. And how did they deal with that? I mean they knew, I said they were admittedly wicked men, and I mean the Reformers admitted it, it is not that other people accused them of it and they denied, no, they admitted it. How did they defend that?

Well Luther said something like this; Even if Judas and Caiaphas or Pilate served the sacraments it makes no difference, they still make the participants holy, it does not matter who does the serving it makes no difference, it doesn't matter who does the preaching if what is true is preached, it makes no difference.

That is confusion brethren, that is error, it is certainly not Scripture, it is certainly not New Testament.

But in the New Testament and to the Anabaptists the spiritual qualifications of the leader are central and they are absolutely necessary and we must keep that true too, I mean that is the way it has to be, and anyone of us here, and most of us are ministers, and we could all be defrocked by falling into sin. That's just the way it is, we have to understand that. That's Anabaptism, that's New Testament Scripture.

**11].** Key Anabaptist position number 11 which is article 6 in the Schleitheim Confession. Nonresistance and separation of church and state, non-participation in civil government.

I am linking a few things together there.

They don't exactly say it like this, they mention nonresistance a little bit in one of the early articles and here the idea behind a lot of the teaching in this article is that you cannot be nonresistant and be a magistrate and so forth, but this matter of nonresistance and not serving in civil government as a magistrate or as a judge I think there is no place in the New Testament that it says you cannot serve in civil government precisely but that is the assumption, that is the assumption.

And when you look at the teachings of Christ on nonresistance you say, Well how could you ever practice nonresistance in a position of civil authority?

And that's right, that's an Anabaptist idea and it has New Testament authority behind it.

Well to the Roman Catholics and the Reformers nonresistance, non-participation in civil government, it did not make sense in a sacral society where the church and state were united, it did not make sense.

And they said: Well, you remember Peter said when Jesus asked for swords Peter said: Here are two. And Jesus said it's enough. Luke 22:38.

And they said that one was the sword of the spirit, that belonged to the clergy, and the other sword of steel and that belongs to the state, you see it is two swords and that is what you are supposed to have.

But you know Luther said: Well the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus teaching on nonresistance and loving your enemies and so forth that applies in the church but not in the state. But if the church and state are coextensive how can it applied in one and not the other? It sets up a tremendous tension. A tension felt today because he also said: A Christian must function in both realms.

Well obviously if the realms are so coextensive you have to ask so what goes? Does the Sermon on the Mount go or does the participation in civil government go?

Well we know with Luther what went and it was the Sermon on the Mount.

It sets up a tremendous tension and it is a tension that is felt today by those who attempt to follow the Sermon on the Mount sincerely and also feel responsible to serve in the military and serve as judges and magistrates, it is just very uncomfortable.

It sets up a tension in the soul because you are trying to keep a foot in two different kingdoms they do not belong together and it is an impossible span, it is a tremendous stretch.

Now to the Anabaptists there are two kingdoms, there is the kingdom of Christ and the church and there is the kingdom of the world, the state.

And we belong to the church and we do not serve the state but we serve Christ and tension is resolved when you give up Luther's idea of functioning in both realms and say; I will function only in the church. And the church and state are separated and tension is dissolved but the confusion persists in most churches today.

**12].** Key position number 12, non-swearing of oaths. This is also from the Schleithem Confession.

Oaths are necessary to politics for legal proceedings and oaths for fealty or loyalty. In Reformation days the city of Strasbourg had an institution known as the Day of the Oath. On this day all the citizens in this city swore an oath of allegiance to the state in front of the cathedral and that included a willingness to support the state in time of war.

And it is interesting again to see that attempt to be in both realms, to mix politics and religion, it was an oath of allegiance to the state sworn in front of the cathedral, you see there it is again and today the mixture persists.

You put your hand on the Bible to swear political or judicial oaths, you see again that mixture and yet the New Testament is clear about oath swearing, Jesus said: Swear not at all, Matthew 5:34.

And James said above all things brethren swear not, above all things! James 5:12.

The Anabaptist stayed by the New Testament, they said oaths are not needed for a truthful people, our allegiance is to Christ.

But of course the Reformers did know what to do with this prohibition of swearing oaths in a sacral society, you have to have them and so what goes? The Sermon on the Mount goes you see again.

And they used oath swearing, some persecutors used oath swearing as an easy and almost infallible litmus test for identifying Anabaptists, just get them to swear an oath, see if they will do it and if they don't do it you will know where they belong. Get them out of society.

**13].** Key position number 13, Brotherhood assistance.

And that last one, this oath swearing was the last one in the Schleithem Confession but I'm just going to mention two more quickly – brotherhood assistance that very much was a key position of the Anabaptists.

The Hutterites made the thing legal this thing of sharing of property, the Anabaptists generally believed in private property but not private ownership exactly, I can't quite think how to say that, they believed in private ownership but they did not believe that they had any rights at all to withhold property from those that had needs, no right to do that, nobody could take property from another but the one who withheld property from the needy was immoral.

That is an Anabaptist concept and they were stronger on that than what we are I would say. The world looks at that concept today and things like barn raisings and mutual aid and it marvels, it marvels. And it is a very beautiful and powerful witness when you have that kind of witness of action than the witness of words means something, words don't mean much unless there is that kind of action behind them.

We call that brotherhood assistance or mutual aid and a key position.

**14].** And then last key position number 14, Evangelism.

I kept these very brief but the Reformers said that the great commission was fulfilled by the Apostles, that is their official position.

The Anabaptists said, No, no, no, the great commission remains in effect and it is for all believers in Jesus Christ and they went forth with the gospel eager, energetic and effective evangelists, many gave their lives in missionary endeavour and they had the concept that you are either a missionary or you are a mission field.

Of course the Reformers said: Well, if this is Christendom and if everybody in this state is in the church too whatever is the point of witnessing?

But the Anabaptists said no, oh no, no, the church is a called out, a subset in society, and there are people all around us that need the message of Je-

sus Christ and they went out and gave that message.  
Evangelism, there is a lot that can be said on Anabaptist evangelism.

With the Catholics if I think about it I'm not sure this is really the last word but if I think about Catholics the keywords that come to my mind are Ritual and Authority.

When I think about Protestants the keywords are Grace and Theology.

When we think about the Pietists, the keyword is Emotion.

When I think of Anabaptists maybe more than any other the keyword is Disciple.

And while the Catholics build their cathedrals and their institutions and the Protestants theories and systematize their theology and the Pietists enjoy ecstasies the Anabaptists humbly take up the cross and follow Jesus Christ.

And there is some truth in all these emphasis and also value but the desperately needed, mostly neglected message and rejected message is that of discipleship of Jesus Christ.

May we be faithful to give that message.



**Editor's Note:** *The original title of the message is "Key Anabaptist Positions" but for clarification purposes "The Rise of Anabaptism" has been used as the primary title.*

*Complete original audio message available at:*

[http://www.anabaptistmennonites.net/index\\_htm\\_files/GS3150.mp3](http://www.anabaptistmennonites.net/index_htm_files/GS3150.mp3)

**Footnote 1:** Schleithem Confession of Faith 1527 available at:

<https://www.anabaptists.org/history/the-schleithem-confession.html>

**Footnote 2:** Wikipedia link showing countries where Governments facilitate the payment of church leaders – [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\\_tax](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_tax)

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