



THE REFORMATION: After Darkness Light

Lesson 6: Martin Luther & the Anabaptists

Introduction

Anabaptist belief

- Sola Scriptura
 - They stated that they believed in the authority of Scripture alone, hence why they rejected infant baptism
- Sola Spiritus Sanctus
 - Meaning: Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot know the truth of Scripture to be infallible, for the Spirit of God opens our eyes to its truth and power.
 - Thomas Müntzer, thinking of Luther, said, *“He who has not the Spirit does not know how to say anything deeply about God, even if he has eaten through a hundred Bibles.”*

- Christian Living
 - The radicals, as they are called, did not deny justification by faith, but were much more concerned about regeneration and the holiness of the Christian life

- Christian Tradition
 - They believed there was little to be gained through church history
 - One of the Anabaptists said, *“Foolish Ambrose, foolish Augustine, foolish Jerome, foolish Gregory, of whom not even one knew the Lord, so help me God, nor was sent by God to teach. Rather, they were all apostles of anti-Christ.”*

- Church and State
 - The Anabaptists saw the unity of church and state as a throwback to Constantine and believed it had created a worldly church

Anabaptist beginnings

- It had its beginnings in Zurich under Conrad Grebel

- On 21 Jan, 1525, Grebel performed the first “believers” baptism by baptising George Blaurock

- Anabaptist means to re-baptise (from Greek ana, “again”)

- Zwingli, Luther and the church believed they were re-baptising because they had been baptized as Catholics as infants – hence Anabaptist

- The practice to re-baptise someone was illegal under the code of Justinian (AD 529)

- In 1527, an Anabaptist confession was established, by Michael Sattler, called the Schleitheim Confession
- The confession outlined seven fundamental practices and principles:
 - Believer's baptism
 - Church discipline
 - Communion
 - Separation of Believers from the World
 - Duties of Pastors
 - Separation of Church and State
 - Rejection of Oaths & War (Pacifism)

Anabaptist persecution

- After, the beginning of the Anabaptist movement, persecution (of these ones) began to break out from all quarters, from both Catholic and Protestant opponents
- Many saw them as enemies of the state, since the church and state were combined
- For many, re-baptism was not only heresy, but it was against the laws of the land
- Their refusal to swear oaths of allegiance to governments was a problem
- Also, many were pacifists, which once again caused a problem when land was won and lost in battle throughout the 16th century
- In May 1527, Sattler was arrested, along with his wife and several other Anabaptists. He was tried and sentenced to be executed as a heretic in Rottenburg. The sentence to execution read, *"Michael Sattler shall be committed to the executioner. The latter shall take him to the square and*

there first cut out his tongue, and then forge him fast to a wagon and there with glowing iron tongs twice tear pieces from his body, then on the way to the site of execution five times more as above and then burn his body to powder as an arch-heretic."

- The other men in the group were executed by sword, and the women, including his wife, Margaretha, were executed by drowning.
- During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I John Fox said, *"I do not agree with them. I do not support their teaching. I think it is wrong and false. But to burn up with fiery flame the living bodies of men who err through blindness of judgement rather than deliberate the truth is a hard thing and belongs more to the spirit of Rome than to the Spirit of the Gospel."*
- The 1561 Belgic confession states, "We detest the Anabaptist and other seditious persons".

Anabaptist teachings we should defend today

Anabaptists ...

- 1) dedicated themselves to the Reformation truth of Sola Scriptura.
- 2) emphasised the believer's church, which consists only of people who are baptised after professing faith in Jesus.
- 3) submitted themselves and their congregations to Christ Jesus, who alone is Lord.
- 4) endorsed religious liberty and insisted that the civil authorities shouldn't tamper with the church or its theology.
- 5) exemplified how Christians should stay true to the faith even amid persecution.