

# Different seeings of christianity



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Digging deeper will bring to light many groups coming together under the belief that the state church was no longer leading and teaching biblical theology. There were groups that popped up all across Europe in the wake of reformation lead by Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Lurch Zinging. Even before the time of the Anabaptist movement there was a high level of persecution for those who stood against the state church and the pope.

There was a difference between what the reformers were doing and what the Anabaptists were doing. The Reformers aimed to reform the old Church by the Bible; the Radicals attempted to build a new Church from the Bible. "

There are also many great leaders from this radical group of Christians that need to be studied to know where this group was coming from. There is much more to this radical group known as the Anabaptists than meets the eye. Looking at the roller of the Anabaptist faith It Is seen as diverse and persecuted across Europe, seeking to build a biblical church and freedom from religious persecution. Anabaptist Beginnings look unto their origin.

Anabaptist with the most literal definition means re-baptizes " from Go. ; v; and Paint(w). " ; v; meaning each or in the midst and meaning to " make whelmed (I. E. Fully wet)" Ultimately they received their name because they were Baptizing their converts even if they were already baptized as Children in the state church. Cornelius Dock breaks down the way each country at the time defined Anabaptists as he states " Anabaptist, which means re-baptizes, was a sixteenth-century spiritual, moral, and social renewal movement in Western Europe.

In German-speaking lands its adherents were referred to as Taffeta-- meaning Baptists or baptizes because they practiced believers' baptism. In

The Netherlands they were called Depositing-- baptism-minded" Dock goes on to point out that while the Anabaptists were beginning to pop up at the tail end of the reformation hey are generally connected with the Radical Reformation because the Anabaptists didn't think there was a way to reform the state church from within. They wanted to start from the foundation that the apostles used when building the church from the New Testament.

Second we will have to look at the theological beliefs of the Anabaptists. The Anabaptist movement really followed in the footsteps and work of the great Protestant Reformers, biblical studies conducted by humanism leaders of the day, social and political fighting, the exploitation of people conducted by the state church, ND a deep urge to be spiritually fulfilled by the church. Bag shows how much influence their church model was able to gain in a short amount of time during their beginning.

He states " the course of the Anabaptists was so swift, that their doctrines soon overspread the whole land and they obtained much following, baptized thousands and drew many good hearts to them; for they taught as it seemed naught but love, faith and endurance, showing themselves in much tribulation patient and humble. " Most of the people that fell into the Anabaptist group also believed that the end of the world was coming to an end in the near future. Denny Weaver claims that theology of the Anabaptists is not unique to the Anabaptists that surfaced in the sixteenth-century.

He believes at the root of all the theological beliefs sits a set of beliefs that can be found throughout the ages. He points out, " The central themes from

the description of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition do not belong to Anabaptists and Mennonites alone. Rather, they depict an outlook running through the entire history of Christianity sometimes as a motif within the dominant church, sometimes gaining expression through the structural alternative to the established church. So in the eyes of the Anabaptists at the time they were not coming up with new theologies, they were bringing the church back to its original roots.

The state church has gone so far away from the Biblical teachings they saw no way to fix the church from the inside and sought reform through starting anew. Shining a light on the basic theological views of the Anabaptists we find many of the main staples you would find common in most Protestant theologies from the time period. "When it comes to the tenets of Protestant theology, most Anabaptist groups adhered to sound teaching on the Scriptures, the Trinity, Justification by faith, and the atonement of Jesus Christ. They found Christ to be the center of their salvation. The Catholic Church had been presenting for such a long time. They also believed in the infallibility and inerrancy of scripture. This allowed them to build the rest of their theological beliefs from the Word of God placing a firm foundation for most of their core beliefs. The Anabaptist did not share all the same beliefs and basic tenets with the Protestants, which placed a target on their back for both Catholics and Protestants to aim at. They faced persecution from both religious groups because of some key differences in core theology.

The first major difference in beliefs comes in when talking about believer's baptism. They outright rejected infant baptism, as they saw no evidence in scripture of this practice. Both Catholics and Protestants practiced infant

baptism and Catholics were under the belief that without being baptized you couldn't enter into heaven even as a child. " Their denial that infant baptism was true baptism led to the nickname. " Bag shows that the Anabaptist took their rejection of infant baptism a step further claiming the Anabaptist taught " that infant baptism is of the Pope and the Devil"

The second major difference was their belief in the separation of Church and State. They wanted no part in any state church; instead they were made up of small individual churches much of what we see today in many churches. They wanted the community to be involved in what they were doing and the government to stay out, keeping the politics separate as well. The first person to push for separation from the Church of England was Robert Browne and many feel that his Separatist group had many common beliefs with the Anabaptists that were forced to meet in secret or not formally meet at all in England.

The key difference seems to be that the separation from the state was meant to be temporary in order to allow the church to get back on the right path and then have the state come back in. This was not the case in the Anabaptists view; they wanted permanent separation, as they didn't believe the church could be fixed with the state attached to it at all. Many of the Anabaptists fled the country moving across Europe to avoid religious persecution. The Third was a push for Christians to live in community with one another sharing material possessions with all others within the community.

As most Anabaptists thought the end was coming soon there was not real need to hoard material things for any length of time. Bag states that " Their repudiation of all personal property was emphatic; they preached barefooted and in coarse garments, wherever they went. " At times they would only travel with their clothing, a staff, and money to fulfill their calling to preach the Word of God to the elect. It should also be noted that in the early days of the Anabaptist in Switzerland they did not set out to be radically sectarian, but this was something they slowly moved to.

They were pushed to this addict ideology because of the political hostility and a strong leadership from the sectarian movement. There is a general agreement among scholars today is that the communities of Anabaptists were small simple communities of re-baptized believers. The sign of brotherhood was a commitment to the community and being baptized into the body of Christ. Each community had a lead known as a shepherd and was typically chosen by the brotherhood of believers.

His job was teaching, exhortation and prayer for the it such as breaking of bread, community bible reading, and helping the community in alluding and upkeep. Anyone outside of these communities were considered to be heathen and an abomination. There were many small groups that had different beliefs on what the community should focus on and different rules the community was to follow. There were groups like the Silent Brothers that held to the belief that preaching was no longer needed and abolished it. They believed that the Apostle Paul taught there would be a time to be silent and they were in that time.

They wouldn't answer any religious questions even if pulled aside and asked specific questions, " they would be silent and give him owe answer". There was also a group called the Separate Spiritual Baptists that tried to take themselves out of the world and become monks. This group made all kinds of rules, from eat and drinking to standing and walking. They would scold anyone that was happy in the name of the Gospel. Many more groups existed under the title of Anabaptists that held to weird and quirky beliefs that never caught on in the larger groups.

One group in particular has stretched the Word of God so far from its original meaning they appeared to be just as far gone as the state run church. They were now as the Free Brothers and they held on to their Christian liberties and they took the freedom in Christ in the most literal sense. They thought it to be unchristian to tithe to the church and did away with the concept of debts. They also persuaded women to believe that it was impossible for them to enter into heaven without giving up their virtue.

They taught that God would only let those who were willing to sacrifice everything they held dear into the gate of Heaven. Further they taught they shame and disgrace must be taken on for Chrism's sake, " for has not Christ said that he publicans and the harlots should enter first into the kingdom of heaven, before the righteous, by which was plainly meant that women should become harlots". They taught that sin as impossible for those who were baptized as adults and having intercourse with the other members of the community was not sinful because of the spiritual bond they shared.

This brings us to what Denny Weaver tells us about the group as a whole, " Because of the variety of backgrounds, sixteenth century Anabaptist could not, and did not, develop as an entirely homogeneous movement. " So because of all these different sects they were unable to fully connect all the groups united in faith and doctrine. Fourth many of the Anabaptists groups preached both pacifism and strict forms of Church discipline. Internal pressures to conform to the rules that the group had set up ruled many of these smaller sects or communities. Their pacifism also played a role in the conformity that was seen in the Anabaptist faith.

This has stood the test of time and remained a key part in the Mennonite faith. Each of these key parts of the Anabaptist faith shows the major distinctions between Anabaptists and other Christian groups. The Founders of the Anabaptist Movement Because the Anabaptist movement was so diverse and wide spread across Europe there are a multitude of influential leaders that pned across Europe. Weaver backs up with this point saying, " The Original cast of Anabaptist players included a noblemen- who reflected an equal variety of religious backgrounds and came from a variety of regions of Western and Middle Europe. With knowing there are so many influential leaders in the Anabaptist movement there needs to be a focus on what lead to the persecution of the Anabaptists Just a few to remain focused. Starting with the radical Swiss reformer Conrad Grebes who helped found the Anabaptist movement. Grebes was a well-educated man who was working in Zurich Switzerland looking forward to Zinging coming to town. He was able to join up with Felix Mans and Zinging in studying the Greek New Testament,



with the plan to bring the reformation to the city. He began to grow impatient as Zinging slowed on the issue of infant baptism.

At this point he was already to give up on the state church and begin again, this made him wonder if anyone would really follow him. Jumping over to Mans, one will find another well-educated man who joined Zinging in 1519. Mans quickly came to reject Zinging as the ultimate authority in the reformation of the church. " He believed that the church must be made up of only those who have true faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. " He threw his support in favor from Grebes and they began to work together towards re-baptism of true believers in Christ.

Grebes and Mans gather his followers up in January 1525 and took the first step in separating from the state run church by baptizing their first convert. The state run church did not take kindly to this as one might expect and they tried to stop this event before it got out of Zurich. They did slow the spread in Zurich but they didn't stop it from spreading to other parts of the country. Three days after he gave his sermon on refusal of infant baptism many of the leaders received notice to leave their position in the church within the next week.

By taking on believer's baptism and entering into this new community, Grebes, Mans and their followers were cutting themselves off from the rest of Christianity. Zinging was not ready to jump off the deep end with them but he did understand their position much better than Luther or Calvin did. While in modern time this doesn't seem like a huge undertaking at the time it put this small group against the rest of the world. Bag show how big of a deal

this really was when he says, " The change, slight as it seems to us, has an electrical effect. Their message was something original as no other party was suggesting getting rid of infant baptism and people really seemed to connect with this new doctrine. The people of Zurich who jumped into the Anabaptist camp saw their city much like Nineveh, which was lost and broken city that would not listen to the Prophet Joana. Seeing their city Just as cost and broken aided in the spread of this doctrine in the city and beyond. This electric response to this new sect of Christianity is what lead to the persecution beginning.

While it seemed to the state church that going after these new converts would silence the Anabaptist it had quite the opposite effect. The most persecution that was faces the more followers seemed to get behind their cause. Persecution of the Anabaptists Throughout history we see different level of persecution within the Christian faith. Many of the original disciples were killed for their faith so persecution is not something new to Christianity. What as new was how much internal persecution new group of radical reformers and at least up to this point reformers like Luther wanted to change the church from within.

This allowed Luther to avoid such server persecution that the Anabaptists faced. Even before this time we know that re- baptizing someone or being re-baptized was punishable by death. According to Erwin Flashbulbs Beginning in " the 5th century, repainting could be punished by death, and the code of Justinian (527-65), which was still in effect in much of Europe as late as the 16th century, demanded for conviction only that the fact of repainting e proved. " The state run church did not quickly Jump to killing the Anabaptist

but they did swiftly kick them out of Zurich, which lead to them forming the small communities covered previously.

The state run church did not remain peaceful for long and Anabaptist began dying for their faith. While what the state run church was doing was wrong they were well within their legal rights to go after the Anabaptists with everything they had. In the sad reality of life they did give it all they had, " By 1 539, in German-speaking territories alone, the Anabaptists had recorded 780 arts. " It did not start out they harsh, it started most notably in the church of SST. Laurent. Both Grebes and Zinging went to debate their respective sides on infant baptism and ultimately they sided on Single's side.

This was only after openly hearing from both sides and allowing each side to present their arguments and counter arguments. They agreed to forbid re-baptism, making it punishable by imprisonment and banishment for those who were baptizing and a large fine for those who were re- baptized.

Banishing these pastors and leaders within the church only furthered their each as a church as they wouldn't stop preaching as they were sent to a different country. This helped lay the foundation for all of the small sects of Anabaptists that were popping up across Europe.

It took a couple of years to really get things moving but as Bag points out, " By the end of 1527 the new propaganda has done its work. The process or absorption was complete, and the great Anabaptist movement had entered upon its changeable and exchequercareer. " 1527 really kicked off a server level of persecution for the Anabaptists. Bag provides a vast amount of detailed accounts of death because people would not recant their actions. In

Salisbury in 1527 there was a plan to kill all of the priests monks and ex-priests.

Over 40 people were caught and of those that were caught three priests refused to recant and were burned alive. A group of five others were killed by the sword. Two women wouldn't recant and they were drowned in the local horse pound and burned afterwards. A nobleman wouldn't recant shortly after and he was burned. The strongest showing was when they burned a girdle-maker and a shoe-latched maker in the public square to make an example out of them. Yet time after time there would be those who wouldn't recant their decision to be re-baptized. They knew what was coming and were willing to die for their convictions.

The number of Anabaptist Martyrs in the five years pning 1 525 to 1 530 is estimated to be around a thousand in Tyro and the territories surrounding the area. Six hundred is the number slain in the southern area of Austria and the peak being sixty-six being killed in a six week time period. There were leaders such as Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria who " gave the order that all those who recanted should be beheaded, whilst those Pockets of reformed territories like Gangling and Lutheran began popping up and hill the persecution did not start out as sever there were the same number of Anabaptist facing persecution.

There was a certain level of tolerance that could be found in the early stages of the Anabaptist movement in these areas but that quickly gave away to prison time and executions. Felix Mans was still in Zurich, which fell under Single's teachings when he was put to death by drowning. " He was bound,

carried to a boat, and thrown into the river Limit near the lake, Jan. 5, 1527.

He praised God that he was about to die for the truth, and prayed with a loud voice, " Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit! Much like Mans, Grebes faced persecution on many level because of his faith.

He was " rearrested, and charged with communistic and revolutionary teaching. " Grebes was sure to use his time in prison to his advantage as he sought to carve more detail into his personal beliefs and defenses for baptism. He was one of the few leaders of the Anabaptist movement that did not die a martyr's death. He was able to escape from prison and went to go live with his sister where he died shortly there after in 1526. With their deaths more and more converts were accepting believer's baptism and the Anabaptist faith was spreading.