

Anabaptism 101:

Word Made Flesh

On Whose Authority?

- The Protestant reformers challenged the authority of Roman Catholic traditions, Church Councils, and the power of the Pope.
- “Sola Scriptura” (Only Scripture) is infallible guide to faith & practice of Christians.
- Problem: Doctrinal differences & disagreements over interpretations fracture Protestantism. Bible is read as a flat book to support practices that contradict the life and teachings of Jesus.

On the Authority of the Scriptures

- “We will be convinced through the Scriptures. If we see that we are wrong we will gladly bear our punishment. But if, according to the Scriptures we are not wrong, then I hope before God that you will change your minds and allow yourselves to be taught.”
Michael Sattler, 1527
- “The writings (Scripture) are the friend of God. Christ Jesus lives in the writings, and in them he makes his home and rests.”
Balthasar Hubmaier, 1526
- “We must believe Christ and His Word and abide constantly in the His Spirit, ordinance, and example, or eternal misery will be our position.”
Menno Simons, 1537

“In the beginning the Word already existed.
The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He existed in the beginning with God.
God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.
The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it.

So **the Word became human** and made his home among us.
He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have
seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.”

John 1:1-5, 14 NLT

The Word Made Flesh

“The Anabaptists had infinitely more than *sola scriptura*. They had community with Christ. And they were not “people of the book.” They were “people of the man.” The Anabaptists did not read in the Gospels that the Word was made paper and ink. They read that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Peter Hoover, *The Secret of the Strength* (p.72)

“I value the Scriptures above all human treasure, but not as highly as the Word of God which is alive, strong (Heb 4:12), eternal, and free. The Word of God is free from the elements of the world. It is God himself. It is Spirit and not letter, written without pen or paper so that it can never be erased. As a result of this, salvation is not bound to Scripture, even though Scripture may help one on to salvation (2 Tim 3:16). We need to understand, Scripture cannot possibly change an evil heart, even though it may make it more learned... If salvation depended only on reading the Scriptures or hearing them preached, many illiterate people, and many towns to who no preacher has come, would be lost.”

Hans Denck, 1528

Christ as Hermeneutical Key

- The Anabaptists believed Christ revealed the fullness of God; the NT surpasses the OT.
 - The life & teachings of Jesus have supremacy over all sacred writings (e.g. OT & Epistles).
- “The holy writings are valuable for those who use them right. But their misuse is the source of all heresy and unbelief.” Heinz Kraut, 1536

“Beware of all innovations and teachings that do not come from the Word of Christ and his apostles... Point to Christ and his Word at all times. Let all those who would introduce anything more than what Christ teaches in his Word be *anathema*. For no other foundation can a man lay than that of Jesus Christ.”

Menno Simons, 1557

Shadows of the Cruciformed God

- The OT as ANE narrative of Yahweh
- OT contains shadows / Christ is the reality!

“For in Christ **all** the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to **fullness**. He is the head over **every** power and authority...

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a **shadow** of the things that were to come; the **reality**, however, is found in **Christ**.”

Apostle Paul, Colossians 2:9-10, 16-17

Anabaptist Interpretive Method

- Everyone can & should interpret responsibly.
- Biblical interpretation is a community practice.
- Interpretation is for practical application.
- Interpretation must happen in light of the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- Transformation & discipleship is the ultimate goal of all Bible reading & interpretation.

“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”

Jesus, John 5:39-40 NIV

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