

Anabaptism 101:

Church as Kingdom Community

Anabaptist Vision

“The Anabaptist vision included three major points of emphasis; first, a new conception of the essence of Christianity as **discipleship**; second, a new conception of the church as **brotherhood**; and third, a new ethic of **love and nonresistance**.”

Harold S. Bender, The Anabaptist Vision (p.20), 1944.

Repentance

“If you wish to be saved, your earthly, carnal, ungodly life must first be made new. The holy writings with their admonitions, their reproof, their accounts of miracles, ceremonies, and sacraments teach us nothing but **repentance**. If you do not repent there is nothing in heaven or on earth that can help you, for without true repentance we comfort ourselves in vain.”

Menno Simons, 1537

Repent...

- Repentance (*metanoia*) – turn to God; change one's mind; feel remorse, be converted.

Jesus said... “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to **repentance**.” (Lk 5:32) “Produce fruit in keeping with **repentance**.” (Matt 3:8) “But unless you **repent**, you too will all perish.” (Lk 13:5)

Peter said... “**Repent** and turn to God...” Acts 3:19

Paul said... “God's kindness is intended to lead you to **repentance**.” Romans 2:4

...and be baptized!

- Baptism (*baptizo*) – to wash or purify in water by emersion, plunging, pouring, or dipping.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Jesus, Matt 28:19

“Repent and be **baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Peter, Acts 2:38

Inward & Outward Baptism

“Baptism saves us, like Peter teaches. We are saved not through outward literal baptism, but through inward, spiritual baptism that leads us like obedient children through the power of faith into the outward baptism of water.”

Menno Simons, 1542

Threefold Baptism

1 John 5:7-8

- Baptism of the **Spirit** (inner transformation)
- Baptism of **Water** (outward symbolic action)
- Baptism of **Blood** (suffering with Christ)

“Whoever is not willing to die with Christ nor to become a member of his body, whoever rejects the community of the holy ones and baptism with water, refuses the baptism of blood.”

Leonhard Schiemer, 1527

Entering the Kingdom Community

“I must proclaim the good news of the **kingdom of God**... because that is why I was sent.” Jesus, Lk 4:43 NIV

“Very truly I tell you, no one can see the **kingdom of God** unless they are born again.” Jesus, Jn 3:3 NIV

“You can enter **God’s Kingdom** only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell (destruction) is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.” Jesus, Matt 7:13-14 NLT

Leaving the Community of Flesh

“When you follow the desires of your sinful nature (flesh), the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will *not* inherit the Kingdom of God.

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives.”

Paul, Gal 5:19-25 NLT

The “Love Feast”

The Lord's Supper (Communion) is about...

- Remembering God's redemptive work in Jesus;
- Celebrating new life in the Kingdom by his Spirit;
- Sharing community with Christ's body, the church (ekklesia);
- Renewing baptismal covenant to Christ and his church;
- Identifying with Christ and his Kingdom;
- Forsaking all other loyalties and allegiances;
- Looking forward to the consummation of heaven and earth.

“The nighttime meal (communion) shall be practiced often and used much.” Conrad Grebel, 1524

Kingdom Living

Matt 5-7; Eph 4:1-31; Col 3:1-17

- Strict adherence to Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7)
 - Loved neighbor & enemy, no oaths, rejected materialism, blessed the poor, honored marriage, etc.
- The Holy Spirit enables resurrection living!
 - Anabaptists were not legalists, nor were they libertines. They sought to be *in* the world, but not *of* it.

“The Anabaptists have the semblance of outward piety to a far greater degree than we and all the other churches which in union with us confess Christ; and they avoid the offensive sins that are very common among us.” Reformed preachers at Berne, 1532

Keeping it Simple

- Matt 6:25-34; Acts 2:42-45; 20:35; Mk 10:23; 1 Tim 2:1-2; 6:10; 2 Cor 9:6-11; Rom 12:18; Amos 5:24; Micah 6:8

“Spirituality and economics are interconnected. In an individualist and consumerist culture and in a world where economic injustice is rife, we are committed to finding ways of living simply, sharing generously, caring for creation, and working for justice.” **Anabaptist Network (UK)**

Missional Church

- In the beginning, Anabaptism was a missionary movement. Anabaptists freely shared the Gospel of Christ, welcoming sinners and calling all to repentance and faith.

“For true evangelical faith **cannot lie dormant**; but manifests itself in all righteousness and works of love; it clothes the naked; feeds the hungry; consoles the afflicted; shelters the miserable; aids and consoles all the oppressed; returns good for evil; serves those that injure it; prays for those that persecute it.”

Menno Simons, 1539

The Emerging Anabaptists

- Anabaptist churches emerged at a time of social, political, economic, cultural, and religious turmoil when questions of authority and authenticity were on the agenda.
- Anabaptist communities developed in divergent ways and sometime disagreed with the decisions and practices of other communities of Christians.
- Anabaptists made use of emerging technology to disseminate their ideas and connect with each other.
- Many Anabaptist churches rejected the “performance mentality” of other churches and encouraged multivoiced church life, exploring Christ in community.

The Emerging Anabaptists, cont.

- Anabaptist communities welcomed the opportunity to explore alternative models and patterns of church life, free from ecclesiastical restrictions.
- Anabaptism was at heart a missionary movement, concerned not only about new ways of being church but also about personal and social transformation.
- Anabaptism was not a single movement, but freely joined with others who shared similar passions.

Stuart Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist* (p.95-96)

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