

# The Anabaptist Society of Believers and Calvin's Christian Commonwealth

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Over the course of 1500 years, the medieval Christian Church developed a particular set of doctrines which in turn led to a particular pattern of life for medieval believers. With the break-up of the church in the 1500s, revised and sometimes new doctrine developed, which again established a particular pattern of life for believers in these new church bodies. The goal of this paper is to focus on two of these new church bodies, pin-pointing particular doctrines in each, then comparing and contrasting the resultant unique patterns.

First the Anabaptists. Sixteenth century Anabaptism (from the Greek ἀναβαπτίζω “rebaptize”) arose as a reaction to both Luther and Zwingli, whom the Anabaptists felt had not carried reform ideas far enough. The *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* says succinctly that “they sought to reform the work of the Reformers.”<sup>1</sup> Anabaptism appeared as early as 1520 when Muentzer, Storch, and Stuebner, all from Zwickau, arrived in Wittenberg preaching rebaptism and other distinctive Anabaptist doctrines, and tried to turn the Reformation in their direction. While having success with Carlstadt and at least upsetting Melancthon, the so-called “Zwickau prophets” were roundly condemned by Luther.

However, it's generally agreed that Anabaptism arose formally in Zurich, Switzerland among the followers of Ulrich Zwingli. Zwingli had laid down the hermeneutical principle that whatever was not taught directly in the Bible should not be believed or practiced. He used this principle in regard to such matters as fasting, prayer to saints, pilgrimages, purgatory, celibacy, transubstantiation, and the often-called “other five” medieval sacraments. In 1522 some of his followers, not finding infant baptism directly ordered in the Bible, asked him why he didn't give it up. Zwingli decided to stand by traditional church teaching, arguing that infant baptism was strongly implied by Scripture and that it was the Christian substitute for Jewish circumcision, i.e., a sign of entry into the body of believers.

As the discussions between Zwingli and his followers intensified during 1523 and 1524, the Zurich city council, exercising its traditional medieval role as overseers of both temporal and spiritual affairs, sided with Zwingli and ordered that all infants be baptized within eight days of birth. In response to this decree, on January 21, 1525, about a dozen men met at the home of one of the Anabaptist leaders, Felix Manz. There Conrad Grebel rebaptized George Blaurock, who in turn rebaptized all the others.<sup>2</sup>

It should be noted that these men did not consider themselves as being rebaptized, but rather baptized for the first time. As they interpreted Scripture, the baptism they had received as infants was no baptism at all, since baptism was not for infants but for older people who could express their personal faith, what is called adult or believers' baptism.<sup>3</sup> As Michael Sattler puts it in the *Schleitheim Confession* of 1527, the earliest Anabaptist creed, “baptism shall be given to all those who have learned repentance and amendment of life and who believe truly that their sins are taken away by Christ,” and to those who “request it and demand it for themselves. This excludes all infant baptism, the highest and chief abomination of the pope.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 1, p. 406

<sup>2</sup> William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1975) pp. 8-14, and other sources.

<sup>3</sup> Rufus Jones, “The Anabaptists and Minor Sects in the Reformation”, *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. XI, n.3 (July, 1918): 229-30, and other sources.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis W. Spitz, ed. *The Protestant Reformation* (Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 91. Hereafter cited as Spitz.

Though believers' baptism characterizes all Anabaptists, it must be pointed out that Anabaptism is not a unified movement. Rather, as James M. Stayer says, Anabaptists are "united only by the outer sign that gave them their label: they are members of sects practicing baptism of believers and forming religious groups on that basis".<sup>5</sup> Various scholars and Anabaptists themselves have enumerated their divisions differently, sometimes based on the divergences of their teachings, and sometimes on the regions of Europe where they were found. Two sixteenth century sources list, respectively, thirty-eight and forty-three varieties. More recently, Roland Bainton, who coined the term "left wing of the Reformation" for the movement, distinguished eight kinds with overlapping among them.<sup>6</sup> George H. Williams, who preferred the term "the radical Reformation," found six major groups, again with overlapping.<sup>7</sup>

Two of the more prominent tendencies among Anabaptists should be noted. One tendency was toward Spiritualism or Enthusiasm, which involved the downplaying of the written Word, and a reliance on direct guidance by the Holy Spirit. These are the people whom Luther called the *Schwaermer*. The prominent figures, again with divergent ideas, were Thomas Muentzer, Sabastian Franck, and Caspar Schwenkfeld, who founded a church body still in existence.

The other prominent tendency among Anabaptists was the more heretical Antitrinitarianism. Within this classification were Michael Servetus, who was executed in Geneva at Calvin's instigation, and Lelio and Faustus Sozzini, who founded Socinianism. Antitrinitarians were the ancestors of today's Unitarians and Universalists.

Now let's turn to a more in-depth look at Anabaptist theology, diverse as it may be, in order to identify the doctrines which distinguished Anabaptism from other church bodies, and resulted in a unique pattern of life, a "society of believers."

Anabaptist theology moves between the poles of "pessimism with regard to the world and optimism with regard to the Church" (i.e., their particular church body), as Roland Bainton puts it.<sup>8</sup> The world, Anabaptists believed, is fallen into sin. Yet how sinful is man? Sabastian Franck, describing the Anabaptist theology of sin in 1531, says this: "Nearly all Anabaptists consider children to be of pure and innocent blood and they do not consider original sin as a sin which of itself condemns both children and adults."<sup>9</sup> Also: "As foreign righteousness does not save anybody, so will foreign sin not condemn anybody either."<sup>10</sup>

Balthasar Hubmaier, often called the "theologian of Anabaptism" because of the thoroughness of his theological musings, writing in 1527, divides humans into flesh, spirit, and soul. Before the Fall, all three were good. But after the Fall, "the flesh has irretrievably lost its goodness and freedom... and has become entirely and wholly worthless and hopeless unto death." Continuing, he writes, "The spirit... has before, during, and after the Fall remained upright, whole, and good." Concerning the third part of the person, "the soul... has through this disobedience of Adam been wounded in the will in such a way and become sick unto death so that it can on its own choose nothing good." Thus are human beings before and after the Fall. After what Hubmaier calls "the restoration by Christ.... one finds clearly that the flesh is still good for nothing and wholly ruined.... The spirit is happy, willing, and ready to do all good." The soul

sad and troubled, standing between the spirit and the flesh, knowing not what to do, is in its natural powers blind and ignorant of heavenly things. However, since it has been awakened by

<sup>5</sup> James M. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado, 1972), p. 20. Hereafter cited as Stayer.

<sup>6</sup> Roland Bainton, "The Left Wing of the Reformation", *Journal of Religion*, vol. XXI (April, 1941); 125-126.

<sup>7</sup> George H. Williams, ed., *The Library of Christian Classics*, vol. XXV; *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (London: SCM, 1957), pp. 19-38. Hereafter cited as Williams, *LCC*.

<sup>8</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1985), p. 96. Hereafter cited as Bainton, *Reformation*. It should be noted that Anabaptists do not distinguish the invisible church from particular church bodies. When Anabaptists say "Church", they mean the visible church, which is in effect in their own body.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Friedmann, *The Theology of Anabaptism*, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973), p. 63.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 62. Note that Luther says the exact opposite in *Two Kinds of Righteousness*.

the heavenly Father through words of comfort, threats, promises, good things, punishments, and in other ways prodded, admonished, and drawn, as well as made whole by his dear Son, and enlightened by the Holy Spirit ... now again knows what is good and evil. Now it has again obtained its lost freedom. It can now freely and willingly be obedient to the spirit, can will and choose good, as well as it was able in Paradise.<sup>11</sup>

In the way, then, that Franck and Hubmaier explained it, mankind is fallen into sin, though of course, from a Lutheran perspective, fallen man thus described is not totally fallen at all.

The fallenness of man implies that the state is fallen, and it further implies that the church as the Anabaptists encountered it in the sixteenth century, whether Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Zwinglian, or Calvinist, is also fallen. The church is fallen, certainly, because of its erroneous doctrines. But it is also fallen because of its union with the fallen state under Constantine in the fourth century, though some Anabaptists put the church's fall even earlier. As Henry Townsend sums up Anabaptist thinking, "When the Church was persecuted by the Empire she was pure in motive and morals: but under the patronage of Constantine it became the fashion for the Roman nobility and obsequious pagans to enter the Church: and pagans they remained within her membership."<sup>12</sup>

One of the marks that the church as the Anabaptists encountered was fallen, was the use of infant baptism before children could understand Christian teaching. Since we already described the Anabaptist stance above, we'll not do so again here. For Anabaptists, infant baptism was a false doctrine which led to empty formalism and spiritual slackness among the so-called "magisterial churches,"<sup>13</sup> i.e., church bodies which leaned on the support of the secular government to achieve their success, i.e., state churches.<sup>14</sup>

Since the Roman and Protestant churches were fallen, the Anabaptists heaped criticism on them. Priests and pastors were criticized for seeking government support; for not doing mission work; for attending universities where they absorbed pagan ideas; and for flaunting their education before the average people (One man said bluntly, "The old priests shat on us, the new ones do the same."). Anabaptists said they did not want doctors (scholars) in their sect, nor clerical apparel, nor immorality, meaning not only sexual sins, but also gluttony, drinking liquor, and dancing. Clergy guilty of such activity were contrasted with the apostles. Similarly, church services, church building, and church furnishings (especially carvings, statues, and pictures) were criticized as not in keeping with the simplicity of the early church. In some cases criticism led to acts of violence, both verbal ("You Martinians won't last long; God will strike you down and throw you into hell."), and physical (the breaking and burning of church furnishings).<sup>15</sup>

To quickly recap, the Anabaptists starting point was a pessimism about the world, due to the fallenness of man, which meant fallenness of the state and fallenness of the church shown especially by infant baptism. These became their main doctrines. It also soon became apparent to the Anabaptists that they would never change the fallen state or church, no matter how much condemning they did. Plus, they were starting to be persecuted terribly by state authorities at the behest of church authorities (more below). Powerlessness and persecution now drove the Anabaptists to the development of a particular pattern of life, beginning with withdrawal from the world. For as Bainton says, their goal was not like other Protestants, i.e., a *reformation* of the *medieval* church, but rather a *restitution* of the *primitive* church, which, they believed, could only be accomplished if they withdrew from the medieval church and society.<sup>16</sup> As Michael Sattler put it in the 1527 *Schleitheim Confession*:

<sup>11</sup> H. Wayne Pipkin and John. H. Yoder, trans. and ed., *Balthasar Hubmaier, Theologian of the Reformation* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989). pp. 439-442

<sup>12</sup> Henry Townsend, *The Claims of the Free Churches* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1949), p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> Williams, *LCC*, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> Franklin H. Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism, A Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church [The Anabaptist View of the Church, A Study of the Origins of Sectarian Protestantism]* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 65-66.

<sup>15</sup> Claus-Peter Clasen, *Anabaptism, A Social History, 1525-1618* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 77-89.

<sup>16</sup> Bainton, *Reformation*, p. 95.

A separation shall be made from the evil and from the wickedness which the devil planted in the world.... We shall not have fellowship with them [the wicked] and not run with them in the multitude of their abominations.... The Lord calls upon us to be separate from the evil and thus he will be our God and we will be His sons and daughters.... He... admonishes us to withdraw from Babylon and the earthly Egypt.... We should shun and flee from... all popish and antipopish works and church services, meetings and church attendance, drinking houses, civic affairs, the commitments [made in] unbelief and other things of that kind.”<sup>17</sup>

Withdrawal from the fallen church was not easy, because the state, encouraged by the various magisterial churches, brought pressure on the Anabaptists to conform. Still, Anabaptists withdrew and formed various colonies such as the ones in Moravia founded by Jacob Hutter (the Hutterites), in northwest Germany and the Netherlands established by Melchior Hoffmann (the Melchiorites), in Muenster led by Jan Mattys and Jan Bockelson (spelled variously), and again in Holland and Friesland by Menno Simons (the Mennonites).

Withdrawal from the fallen state was much more difficult than from the fallen church, because the state found Anabaptist teachings harmful to the state’s existence. This is what led to the persecutions we’ll mention later. Particularly troubling to the state was the Anabaptist contention that the state’s authority, often referred to as the power of the sword, was intended to punish all the wicked (i.e., all, in effect, who weren’t Anabaptists), but not to punish, only to protect, the good (i.e., the Anabaptists). This is found already in the 1527 *Schleitheim Confession*:

The sword is ordained of God outside the perfection of Christ. It punishes and puts to death the wicked, and guards and protects the good. In the law the sword was ordained for the punishment of the wicked and for their death, and the same [sword] is [now] ordained to be used by the worldly magistrates.<sup>18</sup>

The Mennonite scholar Robert Friedmann quotes an anonymous Hutterite writing around 1577 to the same effect, as follows:

The world lives according to the flesh and is dominated by the flesh. Those in the world think that no one sees what they are doing; hence the world needs the sword [of the authorities]. The Christians live according to the Spirit and are governed by the Spirit. They think that the Spirit sees what they are doing and that the Lord watches over them. Hence they do not need and do not use the sword among themselves.<sup>19</sup>

From the above we can gather that the Anabaptists supported the concept of state government and its right to punish evil doers, but state government had no jurisdiction over “Christians,” i.e., Anabaptists. It should be noted, however, that despite describing Christians as living “the perfection of Christ” (*Schleitheim Confession*), they did not think of themselves as perfect. They might break the laws of God and man. The Anabaptists were simply saying that if they became lawbreakers, they themselves, not the state, should handle that matter. As Claus-Peter Clasen sums up, “God created government and its coercive function only for fallen and sinful mankind. In the kingdom of God-among Christians-the state had no place.”<sup>20</sup>

Disavowal of the state to handle Anabaptist law-breakers led Anabaptists to forbid the holding of any civil office such as mayor, councilman, judge, and tax collector. The *Schleitheim Confession* says:

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<sup>17</sup> Spitz, p. 92.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 93

<sup>19</sup> Friedmann, p. 39.

<sup>20</sup> Clasen, p. 173.

It will be asked concerning the sword, [whether] one [shall] be a magistrate if one should be chosen as such. The answer is as follows: They wished to make Christ king, but he fled and did not view it as the arrangement of His Father. Thus shall we do as He did....

The Confession then goes on to list other reasons why “it is not appropriate for a Christian to serve as a magistrate.”<sup>21</sup>

We might cite here an example of disagreement among Anabaptists, since Hubmaier permitted Anabaptists to be magistrates. His opponents challenged him with Christ’s reply when asked to be a judge in Luke 12:13-14 (“Man, who appointed me a judge or arbiter between you?”)<sup>22</sup> Hubmaier’s response was that Christ “does not here reject the office of the judge.... Rather, he points out than nobody should set himself up as a judge, unless he is called or chosen for it.... Christ lets all of those stand to rule and judge with God and a good conscience over temporal and physical matters.”<sup>23</sup>

Again, in line with their general antipathy toward the fallen state, Anabaptists generally refused to take oaths. The *Schleitheim Confession* makes a distinction between the permitting of oaths in the Old Testament and the forbidding of them in the New Testament:

The oath is a confirmation among those who are quarreling or making promises. In the law [i.e., the Old Testament] it is commanded to be performed in God’s name, but only in truth, not falsely. Christ, who teaches the perfection of the law [e.g., in Matt. 5:33-37], prohibits all swearing to His [followers], whether true or false.<sup>24</sup>

Since, as Christ says, a man does not have the ability to make his hair black or white, “all swearing is forbidden: we cannot fulfill that which we promise when we swear, for we cannot change [even] the very least thing....”<sup>25</sup> As Christ says, a simple “yes” or “no” is enough, anything else is from the evil one.

A later document, the Bern Disputation of 1538, differs. In reference to Matt. 5, the Disputation takes this position:

[Christ] cannot be speaking at all here about the oath in general, since ‘nowhere in the Mosaic law is there any reference to the oath in general, but only to the taking of a false oath. A false oath has been prohibited explicitly, thus assuming the right oath to be allowed.... Even Paul and Christ themselves took the oath, as well as did Abraham. To confirm truth with truth is allowed... The oath is Christian. Yes, one could even go so far as to say that where there is no oath, Christ is not there either.’<sup>26</sup>

It might be added that even those Anabaptists who forbade oaths might take them when threatened with execution, but then they did not consider them binding because taken under duress.<sup>27</sup>

The Anabaptist disavowal of the power of the sword, i.e., the power of the government over them, probably offended the government most in the refusal of the Anabaptists to take up the sword and fight in the state’s armies. That is, Anabaptists practiced a strict pacifism. The *Schleitheim Confession* states:

<sup>21</sup> Spitz, p. 94.

<sup>22</sup> All quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1984).

<sup>23</sup> Pipkin and Yoder, p. 501.

<sup>24</sup> Spitz, p. 95

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 96.

<sup>26</sup> Jan P. Matthijssen, “The Bern Disputation of 1538”, *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, vol. XXII (January, 1948):32.

<sup>27</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 1, p. 411.

Therefore there will also unquestionably fall from us the unchristian, devilish weapons of force—such as sword, armor and the like, and all use [either] for friends or against one’s enemies--by virtue of the word of Christ, “Resist not [him that is] evil.”<sup>28</sup>

The principle author of the *Schleitheim Confession*, Michael Sattler, went even farther in his trial which lead to his martyrdom later in 1527. In view of the general fear of the Turks, we can imagine how shocked his interrogators were when he said:

If the Turks come, we ought not to resist them. For it is written [Matt. 5:2 1]: Thou shalt not kill. We must not defend ourselves against the Turks and others of our persecutors, but are to beseech God with earnest prayer to repel and resist them.... If warring were right, I would rather take the field against so-called Christians who persecute, capture and kill pious Christians than against the Turks.<sup>29</sup>

The document tells us that upon this speech the judges laughed. Horrible torture and death quickly followed. Perhaps you are thinking here about the Anabaptists who took over Muenster in 1534-35, using the sword both to capture the city and then defend it when Catholic and Protestant forces counterattacked. Currently, both Anabaptist and non-Anabaptist scholars tend to cite this incident as an unusual excrescence within Anabaptism.

With Anabaptist withdrawal from the fallen church and the fallen state, and the showing of their withdrawal by rejecting state authority, by refusing to serve as magistrates, or take oaths, or serve as soldiers, we have already seen the emergence of a unique pattern of life. A few more elements of this pattern should be mentioned.

Anabaptist church services were very plain, often held outdoors, and they included informal singing, Scripture reading, one or more sermons by laymen (they took to the extreme the priesthood of all believers), and prayer.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the Lord’s Supper was practiced without belief in the Real Presence or as a unique means of grace, but as a sign of unity in faith, and with a stress on remembrance of Christ’s suffering to inspire them in their own sufferings.<sup>31</sup>

The Anabaptist attitude toward property set them off from the rising capitalism of the sixteenth century, though it was not so different from the Christian community of goods mentioned in Acts 2:44, nor from the communal life practiced by medieval monks and heretical sects. Here we recall Luther’s advocacy of community chests to aid the poor. Their attitude may have resulted from observing the poverty which unrestrained capitalism produced, and it may also have arisen from their own circumstances. Persecutions destroyed property and left widows and orphans. Providing for the needy was simply the Christian thing to do.<sup>32</sup>

The greatest proponents of the Christian community of property were the Hutterites of Moravia. One of their number, Ulrich Stadler, maintained in 1537 that

...everything must proceed equally, all things be one and communal, alike in the bodily gifts of their Father in heaven. ...Now if, then, each member withholds assistance from the other, the whole thing [the Anabaptist enterprise], must go to pieces....Where, however, each member extends assistance equally to the whole body, it is built up and grows...<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Spitz, p. 93.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 99.

<sup>30</sup> Clasen, p. 94.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 115.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 183.

<sup>33</sup> Williams, *LCC*, vol. XXV, pp. 277-278, brackets mine.

A later Hutterite, Peter Walpot, writing in 1577, is more strident. He argued that according to both human and divine law all things should be held in common. Private property was the result of malice, envy, and avarice. Private property, then, must have no place among Christians.<sup>34</sup> George H. Williams speaks frankly of “Hutterite” and “Christian” communism.<sup>35</sup>

In whatever way, Hubmaier, who spent about two years at Nicolsburg in Moravia, took a more moderate approach. At his recantation in Zurich in 1526 he said:

I am accused of wanting to have all things in common. That I have not done. I, rather, have designated it as “Christian community of goods” when one has, and seeing his neighbor suffering need, that he shares alms with him so that the hungry, thirsty, naked, and imprisoned are helped. The more near a person practices such works of mercy, the nearer he is to being Christian.<sup>36</sup>

However Anabaptists described their view of property, one thing virtually all agreed on was that lending property should not result in gain for the lender, i.e., Anabaptists were against usury which in the sixteenth century meant any charging of interest or user fees. As they interpreted Scripture, usury was condemned in the Old Testament. (“Lord, who may live on your holy hill? ... He ... who lends his money without usury,” Psalm 15:1,5). In the New Testament, I John 3:17 states: “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” In taking this anti-usury position the Anabaptists were in line with Luther and Zwingli, though Calvin and Melancthon accepted the practice.<sup>37</sup>

We’ve already seen that the Anabaptists, while accepting state authority over evil doers (non-Anabaptists) refused to accept state authority over Christians (Anabaptists) who did evil. Anabaptists would take care of themselves. Their means of policing themselves, for infractions condemned by civil law, and for infractions against their own Anabaptist laws, was the ban, similar to but wider-ranging than our excommunication. The ban was based on a host of biblical passages such as Matthew 18:15-18, Romans: 16:17, 1 Corinthians 5:11, and 2 Thessalonians 3:6.

Banning could take place for almost any reason: advancing doctrines deemed wrong by an Anabaptist community, defecting from the community, rebelling against a leader, marrying an unbeliever (a non-Anabaptist), quarreling with one’s spouse, drinking too much, fornication, embezzlement of a congregation’s funds, and generally not complying with the various unique teachings mentioned in this paper.

My research did not turn up any Anabaptist writers who did not strongly support the ban. Writing on the ban in 1527, Hubmaier, commenting on Matt. 18:15-18, states that the unrepentant sinner “shall be bound according to the command of Christ, excluded and banned.”<sup>38</sup> The Bern Disputation of 1538 states that “separation from the world is promoted strongly by the use of the ban” which “is the only means of keeping sins far from the congregation and of keeping the church as holy as it is supposed to be...”<sup>39</sup>

Menno Simons, commenting on Matt. 18, says that the ban was “strictly commanded by the Lord, and practiced by the apostles,” and that “therefore we must also use it and obey it, since we are thus taught and enlightened by God.”<sup>40</sup> Simons then goes on to deal with eight questions of casuistry, such as “should a husband or wife shun each other on account of the ban—as also parents and children?”<sup>41</sup> He responds gravely:

<sup>34</sup> Clasen, pp. 192-193.

<sup>35</sup> George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 429. Hereafter cited as Williams, *Radical Reformation*.

<sup>36</sup> Hubmaier, p. 152.

<sup>37</sup> Clasen, pp. 196-200.

<sup>38</sup> Hubmaier, p. 410.

<sup>39</sup> Matthijsses, p. 33.

<sup>40</sup> Williams, *LCC*, vol. XXV, p. 264.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

“Brethren, it is a delicate matter,”<sup>42</sup> and then counsels leniency, noting that the goal of the ban is to get the banned to see his/her sin and repent. Similarly, the Bern Disputation reminds that the ban should be “practiced with Christian love and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” Hubmaier states that “once the banned person recognizes himself and his misery ... renounces sin in deed, returns, repents, prays to God for grace and ameliorates his life, immediately the church shall accept him again with great joy,”<sup>43</sup> And Hubmaier adds that this should happen not just seven but seventy times seven times (Luke 17:4), i.e., indefinitely.<sup>44</sup> Bear in mind that the Anabaptists had radically separated themselves from state authority to deal with evil doers. No matter what the offense, Anabaptists insisted on dealing with it themselves, another mark against them in the eyes of the state.

In view of their doctrines and unique lifestyle, as set forth in this paper, the Anabaptists were bound to be persecuted. In fact, they anticipated this. In September of 1524, four and a half months before the first rebaptism, Conrad Grebel wrote a letter to Thomas Muentzer which reflected his expectation of suffering. With Jesus’ words in Luke 10:3 in his mind, Gebel wrote:

True Christian believers are sheep among wolves, sheep for the slaughter. They must be baptized in anguish and affliction, tribulation, persecution, suffering and death. They must be tried with fire....<sup>45</sup>

In a stretch for legality, both church and state could hark back to the condemnation of the Donatists in the fourth century. Recall that the question arose about whether baptism by priests, who later denied their faith, was valid. Donatus insisted that those baptisms were invalid, and the recipients would need to be rebaptized. The bishop of Rome ruled against the Donatists, and then Emperor Constantine, ever seeking peace in the church as a means to peace in the empire, also ruled against them.

But the Donatists did not die out. In the sixth century, Donatists were again disturbing the peace by insisting that those baptized by openly sinful priests would have to be rebaptized. Condemned again by the church, Emperor Justinian also condemned them, not so much for their rebaptizing as for disturbing the peace. Yet, as Bainton says, “the offense specified in the law was not the breach of peace, but the divergence in the faith.”<sup>46</sup> Thus armed with both church and state strictures, sixteenth century authorities, supported by the pope, Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli, Calvin, and virtually every other major theologian, had no qualms about meting out punishments on the Anabaptists. The accounts of their tortures, burnings, and, with sick humor, their drownings, make one’s skin crawl. The number of martyrs was in the tens of thousands. If anything good can be said of this, it is that revulsion at these persecutions led to religious toleration, and the developing western ideal of the separation of church from state.<sup>47</sup>

In view of their aim to withdraw from the sinful state and state church, as well as in view of their persecution by state and church, one might expect that the sixteenth century Anabaptists would keep their faith to themselves. As far as I am aware, their twentieth century American descendants certainly do. It is somewhat surprising, then, to hear about what Friedmann terms “the extraordinary Anabaptist *zeal for missions*.”<sup>48</sup> Likewise, Williams says that the Anabaptists “turned with vehemence to the pentecostal task of converting Christendom and the world to Christianity as they variously understood it.”<sup>49</sup>

In 1537, Menno Simons, commenting on the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, 20, writes:

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 266.

<sup>43</sup> Matthijssen, p. 33.

<sup>44</sup> Hubmaier, p. 424.

<sup>45</sup> Friedmann, p. 131.

<sup>46</sup> Bainton, *Reformation*, p. 844.

<sup>47</sup> See Harold S. Bender, *The Anabaptists and Religious Liberty in the Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1970).

<sup>48</sup> Friedmann, p. 110. His italics.

<sup>49</sup> Williams, *Radical Reformation*, p. 844.



Jesus sent out his messengers preaching His peace, His apostles who spread this grace abroad through the whole world.... Their words I love, their practices I follow.<sup>50</sup>

And in 1539:

Jesus did not send out the scribes and Pharisees with Moses' law, but His disciples with His own doctrine, saying, 'Go ye into all the world....'<sup>51</sup>

Littell says that "no texts appear more frequently" in Anabaptist confessions of faith and court testimonies than Matthew 18 and Mark 16, thus indicating the high regard for mission work. He sums up:

The Anabaptists did not think of themselves as a minority witness, temporarily withdrawn until the Great Church should mend its ways. Neither did they accept the status of conventicles, little cells of piety, acting as a leaven within the great masses of baptized believers in the territorial churches. They believed that the Church of Restitution, the True Church with its disciplined laymen, carried history.... The Anabaptists believed that they were forerunners of a time to come, in which the Lord would establish His people and His law throughout the earth.<sup>52</sup>

And since there was no specific clergy, the Great Commission applied to all Christians at all times. So by 1540 the Anabaptists had spread throughout Europe.

Here let us draw together the various strands of doctrine and pattern of life which define Anabaptism.

Since human beings are (with qualifications) fallen, human enterprise such as the state is also fallen, but so is the church (visible and invisible) fallen, obviously because of Roman false doctrine, but also because of the church's union with the fallen state. The chief mark of the church's fallenness is infant baptism, which the state supports. Thus Anabaptism begins with a deep sense of pessimism about the world,<sup>53</sup> both state and church. The Anabaptist response to this fallen world is withdrawal from it, to form a unique society of believers who are the true, new church. A wide variety of marks distinguish this true church, foremost of which is believers' baptism, which, with a unique pattern of life, leads to persecution by the false, old church, Catholic or Protestant. Yet the Anabaptists' withdrawal from the world is not total, shown by their desire to engage the world by missionary work. In the end, then, Anabaptists are optimistic<sup>54</sup> about themselves to endure as a small, persecuted group in the world, exemplifying Christ in his sufferings and doing Christ's work.

We turn now from the Anabaptists' conception of a separate society of believers to John Calvin's conception of a Christian commonwealth. Our modus operandi will be the same as with the Anabaptists. We'll focus on particular teachings which established for Calvinists a particular pattern of life, noting as we go along the similarities and contrasts between Calvinists and Anabaptists.

Calvinism begins with a view of the world which is much more pessimistic<sup>55</sup> than that of Anabaptism, because mankind is fallen much deeper than the Anabaptists imagined. Since Calvin's conception of man's total depravity is well-known to this audience, we won't spend much time on it. It will be enough to say that Adam's fall plunged the whole human race into "a hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all the

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<sup>50</sup> Quoted by Littell, p. 110.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 109.

<sup>53</sup> Bainton, *Reformation*, p. 96.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Bainton, *Reformation*, p. 112. Also see Arthur Dakin, *Calvinism*, (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1946), p.28.

parts of the soul, which first makes us obnoxious to the wrath of God, and then produces in us works which in Scripture are termed works of the flesh.”<sup>56</sup>

Calvin proceeds to wonder “whether, from the period of being thus enslaved, we have been deprived of all liberty.”<sup>57</sup> After explaining that the liberty which remains relates to “inferior objects,”<sup>58</sup> Calvin concludes: “If the whole man is subject to the domination of sin, surely the will, which is its principal seat, must be bound with the closest chains.”<sup>59</sup> Certainly, “there is no man who would not be pleased with eternal blessedness; and yet, without the impulse of the Spirit, no man aspires to it.”<sup>60</sup> Thus the human will is radically impaired in comparison to the general Anabaptist understanding.

The fallenness of man implies that the state is fallen, and it further implies that the church of the Middle Ages is also fallen. However, in contrast to the Anabaptists, Calvin distinguishes the visible church which is fallen from the invisible church which is not. He writes:

I have observed that the Scriptures speak of the Church in two ways. Sometimes when they speak of the Church they mean the Church as it really is before God—the Church into which none are admitted but those who by the gift of adoption are sons of God, and by the sanctification of the Spirit true members of Christ. In this case, it not only comprehends the saints who dwell on earth, but all the elect who have existed from the beginning of the world.<sup>61</sup>

Thus the invisible. Then the visible:

Often, too, by the name of Church is designated the whole body of mankind scattered throughout the world, who profess to worship one God and Christ, who by baptism are initiated into the faith; by partaking of the Lord’s Supper profess unity in true doctrine and charity, agree in holding the word of the Lord, and observe the ministry which Christ has appointed for the preaching of it. In this Church there is a very large mixture of hypocrites, who have nothing of Christ but the same name and outward appearance: of ambitious, avaricious, envious, evil-speaking men, some also of impurer lives, who are tolerated for a time, either because their guilt cannot be legally established, or because due strictness of discipline is not always observed. Hence, as it is necessary to believe the invisible Church, which is manifest to the eye of God only, so we are also enjoined to regard this Church which is so called with reference to man, and to cultivate its communion.<sup>62</sup>

It is the visible church as Calvin first encountered it, i.e., the Roman Catholic, which is fallen. Again, since Calvin’s attacks on Romanism are familiar to us, we’ll let a single passage be sufficient:

The Church must necessarily fall whenever that sum of religion which alone can sustain it has given way.... Since this is the state of matters under the Papacy, we can understand how much of the Church there survives. There, instead of the ministry of the word, prevails a perverted government, compounded of lies, a government which partly extinguishes, partly suppresses, the pure light. In place of the Lord’s Supper, the foulest sacrilege has entered, the worship of God is deformed by a varied mass of intolerable superstitions; doctrine (without which Christianity

<sup>56</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), vol. 1, Book II, chap. I, sec. 8. Hereafter citations are to the *Institutes*, according to volume (v), book (b), chap. (c), sec. (s).

<sup>57</sup> *Institutes*, 1, II, ii, 1.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, II, ii, 13.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, II, ii, 27.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, II, ii, 26.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, IV, i, 7.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

exists not) is wholly buried and exploded, the public assemblies are schools of idolatry and impiety. Wherefore, in declining fatal participation in such wickedness, we run no risk of being dissevered from the Church of Christ. The communion of the Church was not instituted to be a chain to bind us in idolatry, impiety, ignorance of God, and other kinds of evil, but rather to retain us in the fear of God and obedience of the truth.<sup>63</sup>

Of course, with the church's fallenness, Calvin, unlike the Anabaptists, would not include infant baptism, which he wholeheartedly accepted. Most of what Calvin says about infant baptism is directed, as he says, against "certain frenzied spirits," who raise "great disturbance in the Church on account of paedobaptism,"<sup>64</sup> i.e., the Anabaptists.

This is not the place for a full treatment of Calvin's baptismal theology, nor certainly a comparison with Luther's, but a few points in passing are appropriate, because of the difference between Calvin's and the Anabaptists' view. Calvin bases infant baptism on such things as baptism's similarity to circumcision, "since prior to the institution of baptism, the people of God had circumcision in its stead," and then he goes on to show "how far these two signs differ and how far they resemble each other."<sup>65</sup> He also bases infant baptism on Jesus' invitation to little children in Matthew 19:13, and on the baptism of entire households in Acts 16:15 and 33.<sup>66</sup> The Anabaptists found none of these biblical references persuasive for infant baptism.

At this point, with the state and the visible church both fallen, the Anabaptists turned their backs on both and developed their own society of believers, optimistic that they could endure as a persecuted minority and spread their gospel by missionary activity. Here the Calvinists significantly parted company with them, thereby establishing a wholly different pattern of life. For Calvinists turned toward active engagement with the world, toward reforming church teachings, calling on the state to support this reformatory work, and then launching out with great confidence to bring, as much as possible, the kingdom of heaven to earth. In this they were as optimistic as the Anabaptists about the success of this type of reformed Christian church. As before, since this audience is familiar with Calvinist reforms of Roman Catholic doctrine, we'll bypass this and move instead, first of all, toward Calvinistic partnership with the state, and then Calvinism's missionary thrust, since these two activities will give us a clear insight into Calvin's Christian Commonwealth.

As a starting point, Calvin believed that the state, as much as the church, was a creation of God. As William A. Mueller summarizes Calvin's thought, "the church and the state are both subject to the sovereign rule of God, the *regnum Dei et Christi*. The authority of both spheres inheres in the will and purpose of the living God."<sup>67</sup> Still, as Mueller continues, "while [Calvin] frequently considered the nature and function of the state, [he] did not write a single tract that dealt exclusively with it. Wherever Calvin dealt with matters relating to it he was more concerned with existing, concrete institutions of given states than with their theoretical motivation."<sup>68</sup> To show Calvin's position, Mueller turns to the Gallican Confession of 1559, which states: "[God] has established kingdoms, republics, and all sorts of principalities, either hereditary or otherwise, and all that belongs to a just government, and wishes to be considered as their Author."<sup>69</sup>

State, then, as well as church is the creation of God, and while both are distinct entities, nevertheless, says Calvin, "they are not adverse to each other." Thus, from the very beginning, state and church function in partnership. As Calvin continues:

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 2, IV, ii, 1, 2.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 2, IV, xvi, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 2, IV, xvi, 3.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 2, IV, xvi, 7, 8.

<sup>67</sup> William A. Mueller, *Church and State in Luther and Calvin*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1954), p. 127.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 137. See *Institutes*, 2, IV, xx, 8, for Calvin on the forms of government. "It were a very idle occupation for private men to discuss what would be the best form of polity... Monarchy is prone to tyranny. In an aristocracy, again, the tendency is not less to the faction of the few, while in popular ascendancy there is the strongest tendency to sedition... I for my part, am far from denying that the form of government which greatly surpasses the others is aristocracy, either pure or modified by popular government..."

The [church], in some measure, begins the heavenly kingdom in us, even now upon earth, and in this mortal and evanescent life commences immortal and incorruptible blessedness, while to the [state] it is assigned, so long as we live among men, to foster and maintain the external worship of God, to defend sound doctrine and the condition of the Church, to adapt our conduct to human society, to form our manners to civil justice, to conciliate us to each other, to cherish common peace and tranquillity.<sup>70</sup>

Though state and church function together, Calvin assures us that the state never controls what the church teaches. He writes:

Let no one be surprised that I not attribute the task of constituting religion aright to human policy, though I seem above to have placed it beyond the will of man, since I no more than formerly allow men at pleasure to enact laws concerning religion and the worship of God, when I approve of civil order which is directed to this end-viz. to prevent the true religion, which is contained in the law of God, from being with impunity openly violated and polluted by public blasphemy.<sup>71</sup>

So the state, as Calvin often says, “aids” the church.

Calvin’s interest is always more with the magistrates within a state than with the state per se, focusing as Paul does in Romans 13:1 more on the governing authorities than on the government as a political entity. The duty of the magistrates, says Calvin, “extends to both tables of the law,” as both Scripture and profane writers teach. “For no man has discoursed on the duty of magistrates, the enacting of laws, and the common weal, without beginning with religion and divine worship.... All have confessed that no polity can be successfully established unless piety be its first care, and that those laws are absurd which disregard the rights of God, and consult only for men.”<sup>72</sup>

Calvin grants that magistrates, though “the viceregents of God,”<sup>73</sup> have not always lived up to their billing. He writes:

In almost all ages we see that some princes, careless about all their duties on which they ought to have been intent, live, without solicitude, in luxurious sloth; others, bent on their own interest, venally prostitute all rights, privileges, judgments, and enactments; others pillage poor people of their money, and afterwards squander in it insane largesses; others act as mere robbers, pillaging houses, violating matrons, and slaying the innocent; many cannot be persuaded to recognise such persons for princes, whose command, as far as lawful, they are bound to obey.<sup>74</sup>

Still, Calvin holds up before his reader “the magistrate who truly is what he is called-viz. The father of his country.... the pastor of the people, the guardian of peace, the president of justice, the vindicator of innocence.”<sup>75</sup>

As the state had its’ various administrative officers or magistrates, so the church as Calvin envisioned it would have its own administrative officers. In 1541, after Calvin and his co-worker William Farel had been recalled permanently to Geneva, Calvin produced the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, which established a pattern for church rule. There were to be four orders, all biblically based: Pastors, doctors, elders, and deacons. Calvin

<sup>70</sup> *Institutes*, 2, IV, xx, 2.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 2, IV, xx, 3.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 2, IV, xx, 9.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 2, IV, xx, 6.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 2, IV, xx, 24.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*.

explained the duties of each: “As to the pastors, whom Scripture also sometimes calls elders and ministers, their office is to proclaim the Word of God, to instruct, admonish, exhort and censure, both in public and in private, to administer the sacraments and to enjoin brotherly corrections along with the elders and colleagues.”<sup>76</sup> Before entering office, pastors were to be examined as to their doctrine and to their fitness to communicate God’s Word. Then pastors were to be duly called in a process by which other pastors first chose those considered qualified for office; then the city council gave its approval; and finally the people also had to approve, “in order that [the pastor] be received by the common consent of the company of the faithful.”<sup>77</sup>

The second order was the doctors, whose duty was “the instruction of the faithful in true doctrine.”<sup>78</sup> Showing the influence of his own humanistic training, Calvin then briefly described the sort of educational system which he wished to implement, emphasizing the need for instruction in the languages and humanities, starting with children, and including girls at the rudimentary level. Teachers, too, had to be certified by both church and state.

Likewise, Calvin outlined the duties of the elders, namely, “to have oversight of the life of everyone, to admonish amicably those whom they see to be erring... .. and ... to enjoin fraternal corrections ...”<sup>79</sup> i.e., to handle spiritual issues.

Finally, there were the deacons, whose work involved charity towards those in need and especially the hospitalized, i.e., the handling of temporal needs.<sup>80</sup> Though Calvin set this pattern for a single city, Geneva, it was to be applied generally throughout the reformed Christian church.

The state, therefore, had its various magistrates and the church had its various officers. In partnership under God, they ruled Geneva, for as E. William Monter says, “Geneva was in theory governed by God through a balance of spiritual and secular powers, through clergy and magistrates acting in harmony.”<sup>81</sup> This is a fairly good definition of a theocracy. It should be kept in mind, however, as Monter continues, that “in the sixteenth century, the intimate association of the ecclesiastical and the secular government of a community was generally assumed to be both natural and desirable.”<sup>82</sup> This could be said of Lutheran lands as well.

The same sentiment is expressed by Harro Hopfl who agrees that Geneva was a theocracy, but then points out that “study after study” has shown that “all the laws and arrangements supposed to be distinctively Genevan and Calvinian prove to have had their parallels elsewhere, amongst Romanists as well as evangelicals, and both contemporaneously and in previous countries.”<sup>83</sup> This would have to be qualified in connection with Lutheran lands.

However, Hopfl is closer to the mark when he continues: “What was distinctive about Geneva and about Calvin’s conception of the laws of a godly commonwealth is neither the content of these laws nor their theocratic orientation, but the rigor and impartiality with which these laws were enforced at Geneva,” and their enforcement by pastors and magistrates with “single-mindedness and lack of concession.”<sup>84</sup>

God’s agents, a.k.a. pastors and magistrates, derived their laws from two sources, natural law in general, and divine law in particular. Calvin made use of both. He thought that “nature” or “reason” taught “the authority of fathers over wives and children, the sanctity of monogamous marriage, the duty to care for families, breast feeding (!), primogeniture, the sacrosanctity of envoys and ambassadors, the obligation of promises, degrees of marriage, the need for witnesses in murder trials, the need for a distinction in ranks in society,” the

<sup>76</sup> *John Calvin, Selections from his Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1971), p. 230. Hereafter cited as *Selections*.

<sup>77</sup> *Selections*, p. 231.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p. 234.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p. 235.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, p. 235, 236.

<sup>81</sup> E. William Monter, *Calvin’s Geneva*, (New York, NY: John Wiley, 1967), p. 144.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>83</sup> Harro Hopfl, *The Christian Polity of John Calvin*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 188. See also p. 184.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*.

prohibition of incest, of murder, of adultery, of slavery, and the rule of one man.<sup>85</sup> Of course, “Calvin never allowed to natural knowledge of the moral law any independent adequacy as a guide to moral conduct for Christians; it was always treated as an inferior adjunct to the written divine law .....<sup>86</sup> Having set to work, “Calvin found himself able to extract from Scripture more and more detail about the form and content of positive law”<sup>87</sup> (i.e., individual laws).

Hopfl, whose sympathies lie with Calvin, nevertheless admits that at this point Calvin developed the image of “the theologian of the wet blanket, the apotheosis of the kill-joy.”<sup>88</sup> With a sure sense of correctness of his scriptural interpretation, and with the support of the magistrates, a comprehensive ordinance was issued in 1560. According to Hopfl,

It went into extraordinary detail about such things as how many rings could be worn, and on what occasions, it banned gold and silver chains, embroideries of all kinds, gilding of hair; it regulated the number of courses at public banquets, and it also consolidated previous ordinances concerning attendance at sermons, the prohibition of blasphemies, gaming and so on, as well as all manner of policing regulations. These edicts were intended to be observed ‘for all time.’<sup>89</sup>

Hopfl goes on to say that “although these ordinances were detailed, they were evidently not detailed enough: they left open questions like the wearing of bracelets, silver belts and golden ornaments in the hair.”<sup>90</sup> Such loopholes were, however, closed in ordinances of 1564, before Calvin’s death.

Lists are tiresome, but perhaps one more may be allowed. The same 1564 ordinances included

the prohibition of dancing of all kinds, indecent songs, swearing and blaspheming, all kinds of gambling, the prohibition of all games on Sundays, the legal duty to attend sermons on Sundays (and whenever possible on other days) and to see to the religious instruction of children and servants, the prohibition of the printing, acquisition or owning of all unlicensed books, and the banning of popish objects of every kind.<sup>91</sup>

Hopfl notes that “there were very few matters which were entirely exempt from the solicitude of a pious magistracy.”<sup>92</sup>

Compliance with these laws were, however, another matter, since Geneva did not have the administrative resources to do so. Penalties, at least for the lesser offenses, were normally in the form of fines, but they were difficult to collect. For greater crimes, penalties might be corporal or even capital, and banishment.<sup>93</sup>

Probably the outstanding example of the church and state working in tandem was the execution of the anti-trinitarian, Michael Servetus. Calvin was familiar with Servetus’ teaching, and had vowed that if he ever had Servetus in his power, Servetus would not escape with his life. When Servetus rashly came to Geneva anyhow, and even entered the church to hear Calvin preach, he was captured, and Calvin could follow through with his threat. In Calvin’s eyes, from the perspective of the church, Servetus was guilty of heresy and blasphemy, and “Anyone who blasphemes the name of the Lord must be put to death” (Leviticus 24:16). The church, however, could not execute. But as Hopfl paraphrases Calvin’s thinking, “the business of the Christian

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 180. Parenthesis mine.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p. 181.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p. 220.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p. 198.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, p. 199.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, and Bainton, *Reformation*, pp. 119, 120.

commonwealth is to assist the sanctification of its members. Those who not only resist the call to sanctification, but seek to involve others in their heresy and blasphemy (as Servetus had done, according to Calvin's view), have no place in such a commonwealth."<sup>94</sup> The state then recognized its responsibility and executed Servetus.

We saw earlier that the Anabaptists, when faced with a fallen world and a fallen church, turned their backs on both and formed their own society. Though they both anticipated and endured oftentimes gruesome persecutions, they then surprisingly turned outward with a great deal of zeal for missions throughout central Europe.

The same can be said for the Calvinists. Though Calvin too believed that the church would be a "beleaguered and persecuted minority until a dramatic and sudden termination of its sufferings in the last days,"<sup>95</sup> he nevertheless launched a great missionary thrust which was not restricted to central Europe, but was pan-European and eventually worldwide. As Hopfl says, "Calvin's followers, like their mentor, were often distinguished by their zeal for missions, and one is tempted to seek a foundation for this in the theology which equipped them with their interpretation of the world and their place in it."<sup>96</sup> Note that both Hopfl here, and Friedmann above in connection with the Anabaptists, use the same phrase, "zeal for missions."

According to James Mackinnon, based on a study of Calvin's correspondence, "he appears as a sort of universal mission bishop inspiring and directing the evangelical mission throughout a large part of Europe."<sup>97</sup> Mackinnon then goes on to describe the enormous flow of mission activity from Geneva into France, which is not surprising, since French was the common language of both. So extensive was French mission work that King Charles IX, in a letter to the Genevan Council, complained that what we call the French Wars of Religion were due to "the activity of the preachers sent from Geneva to propagate the Reformed faith,"<sup>98</sup> and demanded that the council recall them. Calvin did not deny that missionaries of the "true" religion had been sent, but denied that their purpose was sedition. He continued to send missionaries, though to prevent future trouble for the Genevan Council, Calvin dissociated his work from it.

E. William Monter, quoting from a book by Robert M. Kingdon, counts fifty-six trained ministers sent from Geneva to France between 1559 and 1562, plus another sixty-two sent to other destinations, 118 missions involving 100 different men. Considering that at the time Geneva itself had only eight urban and ten rural ministers, Monter calls this "a mammoth enterprise."<sup>99</sup>

Besides France, Mackinnon mentions Calvin's letters and book dedications to numerous European monarchs and their chief advisors, and to leading reformers in England (both Edward VI and Queen Elizabeth I), in Scotland (John Knox) in the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, and Hungary, in each case urging the individual to advance the reformed faith as much as possible.

While Calvin quite naturally directed his efforts to Europe, he also supported a French Huguenot plan to send missionaries along with colonists to Brazil. In 1556 three ships with about 300 Huguenot refugees (including six children "in order to learn the language of the country") and two ministers embarked. However, encountering extreme difficulties and treachery among the leaders, the attempt failed.<sup>100</sup>

We concluded our examination of the Anabaptists by noting their optimism that the true church, as they regarded themselves, would spread and endure. Calvinism arrives at the same conclusion. Mueller notes that "Calvin always speaks out of a serene confidence when he discusses the destiny of the church."<sup>101</sup> For, "though the church be engaged in endless conflict with sin and the devil, she will yet endure.... For it is God himself who sustains her in the midst of time and all its upheavals."<sup>102</sup> Calvin writes that Christians are "content that

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, pp. 182 and 202.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 194.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> James Mackinnon, *Calvin and the Reformation* (New York, NY: Russell and Russell, 1962), p. 195.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, pp. 196, 197.

<sup>99</sup> Monter, p. 135.

<sup>100</sup> Mackinnon, pp. 204, 205.

<sup>101</sup> Mueller, p. 95.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

our King will tirelessly care for us in our needs and wants, until we have won the fight and been called to triumph.”<sup>103</sup> It is this “assurance of Christ’s ultimate triumph,” Mueller continues, which has been “responsible for the spiritual aggressiveness, the strong sense of mission,”<sup>104</sup> which Calvinists displayed in the sixteenth century and still display today. Hopfl agrees, and sums up Calvin’s attitude: “If every Christian commonwealth were to do its duty, an amelioration of the world would be the result.”<sup>105</sup>

In conclusion, we hope that we have shown that the particular doctrines of both Anabaptists and Calvinists, in their respective similarities and contrasts, each resulted in a unique pattern of life for their adherents, who are still pursuing their ideals to this day. Thank you very much.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p. 96.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Hopfl, p. 193.