The Church of Monett

"Knowing therefore the Terror of the Lord we persuade men."

The Root and the Fruit of the Modern Salvation Message

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Why Luther hated the Anabaptists

Luther must have had good reason to put men like Michel Schneider and others like him away in dark dungeones, where no one would ever hear from them again. But what was it exactly that Luther hated so much about the Anabaptists? Here's what a few of their enemies had to say about them:

> “If you investigate their life and conduct it seems at first contact irreproachable, pious, unassuming, attractive yes above this world. Even those who are inclined to be critical will say their lives are excellent.” Zwingli, a Protestant reformer in Switzerland

> “I frankly confess that in most Anabaptists there is piety and consecration indeed a zeal that is beyond suspension of any insincerity. For what earthly advantage could they hope to win by enduring exile torture and unspeakable cruelties. I testify before God that I cannot say that on account on a lack of wisdom they are somewhat indifferent to earthly things but rather from divine motives” Capito the reformer in Strausborg

The irony is, that Luther concluded that such a a life was impossible to live. In a letter to a fellow preacher he wrote:

> "If you are a preacher of Grace, then preach a true, not a

> fictitious grace; if grace is true, you must bear a true and not a fictitious sin. God does not save people who are only fictitious sinners. Be a sinner and sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ even more boldly. For he is victorious over sin, death, and the world. As long as we are here we have to sin. This life in not the dwelling place of righteousness but, as Peter says, we look for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. . . .

> No sin can separate us from Him, even if we were to kill or commit adultery thousands of times each day. Do you think such an exalted Lamb paid merely a small price with a meager sacrifice for our sins? Pray hard for you are quite a sinner." (Weimar ed. vol. 2, p. 371; Letters I, "Luther's Works," American Ed., Vol 48. p. 281- 282)

While Luther concluded that a righteous life was impossible to live - except in an imaginary justified state where you are declared righteous even though you dont live that way - the Anabaptists were actually living out what they preached.

Going back to Michel Schneiders message:

> ¨If you want to be saved you need to leave sin , follow Christ the Lord and live according to his will. Christ Jesus came to earth to teach men the right way to go, to teach them to turn from sin and follow him.

> He who longs for communion with Christ and wants to take part in his kingdom, needs to do what Christ did while he was on this earth. He who wants to reign with Christ must first be willing to suffer for his name. The man who dies with Christ in this life will enter in with him to his father's kingdom in eternal joy. But the man who does not follow Christ is not redeemed by the blood of Christ and his sins will never be forgiven.¨

In Michels sermon he steadily asserts that man *is* capable of pleasing God, by leaving sin, following Christ and living according to His will. The point of contention between the Anabaptists and Luther was right at this point. According to Luther, Original Sin prevented man from being able to do the will of God, and even if he could, it would ammount to a filthy rag. Here is an excerpt from the the second article in Lutheranism's Augsburg Confession in which Luther rambles on about the supposed Original Sin

problem.

> ¨It is also taught among us that since the fall of Adam all men who are born according to the course of nature are conceived and born in sin. That is, all men are full of evil lust and inclinations from their mothers' wombs and are unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God. Moreover, this inborn sickness and hereditary sin is truly sin and condemns to the eternal wrath of God all those who are not born again through Baptism and the Holy Spirit. **Rejected in this connection are the Pelagians and others who deny that original sin is sin**, for they hold that natural man is made righteous by his own powers, thus disparaging the sufferings and merit of Christ.¨

> "That seditious articles of doctrine should be punished by the sword needed no further proof**.** For the rest, **the Anabaptists hold tenets relating to** infant baptism, **original sin**, and inspiration, which have no connection with the Word of God, and are indeed opposed to it. ... Secular authorities are also bound to restrain and punish avowedly false doctrine ... For think what disaster would ensue if children were not baptized? ... Besides this the Anabaptists separate themselves from the churches ... and they set up a ministry and congregation of their own, which is also contrary to the command of God. From all this it becomes clear that the secular authorities are bound ... to inflict corporal punishment on the offenders ... Also when it is a case of only upholding some spiritual tenet, such as infant baptism**, original sin,** and unnecessary separation, then ... we conclude that ... **the stubborn sectarians must be put to death**." Source: Dave Armstrong. "Pamphlet of 1536" in *Martin Luther and The Protestant Inquisition* (Janssen, X, 222-223; pamphlet of 1536)

It was as if Luther was saying "We have to maintain the doctrine of Original Sin and if anyone wants to disgree then theyre gonna get the burning stake treatment!"

Michel Schneider and the Anabaptists did disagree, and not only in "doctrine" but in their very lives. According to Luther, the righteous life of the Anabaptist was suppose to be an impossibility, yet somehow they were doing what Luther couldnt do himself. This must have been a royal slap in the face.

The Anabaptists revealed that Luther's pet doctrines - Original Sin and Faith Alone, were nothing more than a cloak for a half hearted Christianity. Luthers hatred of the Anabaptists stemmed from their rejection of the doctrines which he concluded were absolutely neccesary for Christianity to maintain. And for Luther they were neccesary, becasue without them his mask surely would have fallen off revealing him for who he was - a murderer. Why would you ever want to follow such a mans idealology?

Chapter 3⟶

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