

# OpenTheo

## The Spread of Anabaptism (Part 2)



### Church History - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the distinctives that set the Anabaptist movement apart from other reformed churches of its time, including their belief in common ownership of goods and pacifism. The movement originated in Switzerland among young students of Zwingli who felt he was not willing to fully reform the church. Anabaptists were persecuted for their beliefs, but their influence on the reform movement is still felt today. Gregg also touches on the Moravian movement and Dutch Anabaptism, including the tragic Munster episode and the elevation of personal revelations above Scriptures in the Inspirationist movement.

### Transcript

This is our third week talking about the Anabaptist movement. I did not know that we would take three weeks on it. I could easily justify, oh, probably ten weeks on it, I think.

The history of the Anabaptists is my favorite part of church history, apart from the early centuries of the church, and I guess there's no mystery about why that is. It's because I'm an Anabaptist. At least in heart, I have never actually been a part of the Anabaptist movement in the sense of really attached to an Anabaptist denomination.

I did attend the Mennonite church in this town for several years, thinking that I was joining an Anabaptist church, but it ended up being more like a vineyard church, and so it really wasn't very much like what I thought I was joining. But that has all changed there. The Mennonite church in town now, since the days that I left it, is much more like, I guess, most Mennonite churches.

The Mennonite churches today have many of the same distinctives of the early Anabaptists, and they aim at maintaining those distinctives, although in some respects, like any movement that has become respectable and is no longer persecuted, a certain amount of placidness, a certain amount of just being complacent has settled in, although there are areas of renewal and good things happening in some quarters in the modern Mennonite and Hutterite congregations. In preparing these lectures week by week on church history, one thing that has really become clear to me is that the history of the

church is really the story of various leaders. And this isn't because the leaders are more important people in God's sight than the rank and file of the church members whose names are not remembered and whose lives we are not studying, but it's simply because whenever God does something, whenever there's a new forward thrust in the kingdom of God, usually there's somebody or some peoples, maybe some group of people or a group of leaders, who are the visionaries and the people who work it out and pay the price and in many cases die for their convictions.

They could not be successful, of course, unless there were many thousands of other Christians standing behind them, seeing the vision, following with them, but most of those Christians, we don't know their names. To learn church history involves largely, we learn the names of leaders and what they stood for, where they came from and what they promoted, what they introduced, what contribution they made to our present understanding of things. And so last time and this week, we'll be looking at some of the leaders in the early Anabaptist movement.

For those of you who were not here in any of the previous sessions and may not be all that familiar with the Anabaptists, let me quickly run over the distinctives of the movement. I've given these each of the last three weeks, but it doesn't hurt to be refreshing our memories. There are four basic distinctives of the Anabaptist movement that set it apart from the reformed churches that existed before this movement arose.

And those reformed churches were largely those that began with Luther in Germany and began with Zwingli in Switzerland. And there were, of course, places to which these spread and there were other leaders. But the reformed churches were largely like the Roman Catholic Church in many of the areas that the Anabaptists were not.

And so the distinctives that really set the Anabaptist groups apart from the other reformed churches were largely four in number. Each of these had their own corollaries. The first is that the Anabaptists emphasized discipleship, personal discipleship, meaning that each person to be a part of the church needed to be converted and needed to be committed to following Jesus Christ.

The Sermon on the Mount and the other teachings of Christ became basically the code of the Anabaptist theology. And doing what Jesus said was really what they attempted to do. They really wanted to go back to the roots.

That's why it's called the Radical Reformation. Radical means going back to the root. And their movement is often called the Radical Reformation because Luther and Zwingli did not go all the way back to the root.

They went back a certain distance. They reformed a few practices of the Roman Catholic Church. But the Anabaptists said, well, if we're going to go back at all, why don't we go all the way back? Why don't we throw out all the traditions of man and just go back to

what the founder, Jesus Christ, said and follow his ways? And that set them apart because they insisted, as Jesus did, that people must have a personal commitment to him, not just that they were born into Christendom, not just that they were born into a land that had for many centuries nominally embraced the Christian religion.

You see, before this time, if you were born in Rome or Spain, you were baptized a Catholic from birth. If you were born in Germany at this time, you'd probably be baptized a Lutheran at birth. If you were born in Switzerland around this time, you may have been baptized Swiss Reformed at birth.

The difference between the Anabaptists and the others was that no one was baptized an Anabaptist at birth because that was a distinctive of the Anabaptists. That's why they were called Anabaptists. It means re-baptized.

They had been baptized at birth because they were Europeans and all Europeans were baptized at birth. But the Anabaptists renounced their infant baptism and said, we require to be baptized as believers. And they didn't practice infant baptism after that.

They only practiced the baptism of believers. And that is because they believed a person is not a Christian unless they've had a personal commitment to Christ, to follow Christ and to believe in him. That is discipleship.

And of course, they believed in only baptism of followers of Christ. And after that, they felt like following the words of Jesus were essentially what constitutes normative Christianity. I can't think of anything wrong with that theory.

The second distinctive is their emphasis on love. Love for the brethren and love for their enemies. In both of these, they were distinctive from the other Reformed and certainly from the Catholic churches.

Because the Anabaptists believed that love for brethren is shown in practical ways, that those who have money share with those who don't have money. That was not at all an assumption of the Roman Catholic or the Lutheran or the Swinglian Reformed churches. This is something that the Anabaptists got by going back to the teachings of Jesus.

They believe that love was practical and love for the brethren. Some Anabaptist groups, the Hutterites, for example, it was a distinctive of their movement that they insisted on a common purse community, a common ownership of all goods. Not all Anabaptists held to that strict a view, but they all did believe that to share with the poor was an obligation of those who had money, if they were Christians.

And another aspect of their emphasis on love was they believed in loving their enemies. They did not believe in resistance. They took what Jesus said about turning the other cheek and not resisting the evil man.

They took it quite literally and they believed that if a man strikes you, you should turn the other cheek. I told a story, a true Anabaptist story, a couple weeks ago. And it's a well-known story in Anabaptist annals about a man who was being pursued by the police because the Anabaptists were continually being pursued.

They were put to death by the thousands for their convictions. And he crossed over a frozen lake safely to the other side. His pursuer, however, fell through the ice and would have died.

But the Anabaptists, who had safely escaped to the other side, went out to the ice, pulled his pursuer out, was then taken by his pursuer back to face court, and was killed for his faith because he saved the life of the man who came to arrest him. This is not unusual for the Anabaptists. This is what they believe discipleship involves.

It's love. Love for your enemies as well as love for your friends. Another distinctive of the Anabaptist movement was they believed in a congregational form of church government.

That is, they didn't believe in a hierarchical authoritarian rule from some group of bishops or some pope or some authorities outside the church, but that the congregation itself from within its own ranks would make decisions and choose leaders and things like that. And their final distinctive was what we would today call separation of church and state. They believed that Christians do not have any business in the government.

They believed that the government was ordained by God to punish evildoers, but that the church is ordained of God to show mercy to evildoers, and that it is not the task of Christians as members of the body of Christ to intrude into the office of the state, an entirely different institution instituted by God for a different purpose. For this reason, they never participated in war. They were pacifists.

This went along with their non-resistance convictions. And as I said, they would not run for office or hold public office because they did not believe that was the place for a Christian. Now those are essentially the distinctives of the Anabaptists.

There were offshoot groups that were called Anabaptists for no better reason, but that they believed in adult baptism. There were weird cultic groups that unfortunately were also called Anabaptists because they believed in adult baptism, but who held unorthodox views. I'll mention some of those before we're done tonight.

But tonight and last week, I've been wanting to mainly focus on what we could call the mainstream biblical Anabaptist movement. And it's not hard to identify the leaders of that movement and to identify the offshoots as exactly that, offshoots, cults, really, cults of the Anabaptist movement. Last time we talked about the rise of the Swiss Brethren.

This is where the Anabaptist movement actually began, is in Switzerland, with certain men who had been young students under Zwingli and who basically turned from Zwingli

because they felt like he was not willing to reform thoroughly. Those men included Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, George Blaurock, which was a nickname. His real name was George of the House of Jakob.

And Blaurock means blue coat because he wore a blue coat. He got that nickname somehow. And then Michael Sattler, who was one of the most eminent martyr stories to this day in Anabaptist history, although martyrs were not lacking in the movement.

As a matter of fact, as we shall see later, one group of the Anabaptists, the Hutterites, it is said that 80% of the missionaries they sent out met a martyr's death, and they sent out more than they kept at home. And they were an extremely missionary minded group. Now, having talked about the Swiss Brethren, who were really the original Anabaptists, I want to talk tonight about other centers of Anabaptist activity that had other leaders, particularly in Moravia, where the Hutterites came from, and in the Netherlands, where the Mennonites came from.

And there were certain leaders and things that led up to these movements. And I want to talk to you about them. These stories, to my mind, are very inspiring.

I don't know, maybe some people just don't like history, or they don't like hearing stories about people they never heard of before, and who have funny sounding German names that they can't even pronounce. But I'll tell you what, notwithstanding their funny sounding German names, these guys were men that you would have been blessed to know, and you can be blessed to know about. And that's why I'm going to share with you about them.

It helps to give us a sense of continuity, if we are of the same spirit, that is. Sometimes if you are of the same spirit as the Anabaptists were, you may feel like a Lone Ranger, because it's not essentially the way that the popular church has ever been. The Anabaptist spirit has never been the popular spirit in the church, and probably never will be, until the day that Jesus returns, and then it'll be universal.

My apologies to any Lutherans, or Presbyterians, or Catholics who may hear these tapes, but not a very sincere apology, I guess. The thing that made the Anabaptists what they were, is that they took what Luther and Zwingli said to its logical conclusion. Luther and Zwingli both professed to believe in the principle of sola scriptura, meaning we use the scripture alone, not the traditions of man, to determine what Christianity is.

The Anabaptists simply did this consistently, where Luther and Zwingli did not. And although that sounds like an extremely prejudiced statement, it is. I'm prejudiced, I won't deny it, but I will say this, I challenge anyone to find fault with that statement.

Who could not read the stories of Zwingli and Luther, and not conclude that these men took their own principles a certain distance, and came to a comfort level where they had

reached some popularity, they'd reached a place where they were no longer the radicals of their day, they now dominated their society, they were comfortable men of power, leaders of great movements, and comfortable enough to say, well, I'm getting a little too old for all this change, you know, and they weren't willing to go any further. And the Anabaptists come up, young men, who start where Zwingli left off, and say, hey, let's keep going, let's keep going back to the Bible, let's do what you said to do, Zwingli, Luther. And the older men were not all that eager, maybe they're just tired of all the persecution they went through to get to the place they came to, but sadly, they then turned around and persecuted the Anabaptists, who simply were taking their own principles to a more logical end.

The Moravian Anabaptists were the, Moravia was the second center of Anabaptist movement arising in the early days. Now, I must confess that the political map of Europe is not, I'm not intimately acquainted with it. Moravia, I believe, was the area roughly equivalent to what was in more modern times called Yugoslavia, if I'm not mistaken.

And also, if I'm not mistaken, I think it was under the jurisdiction of the King of Austria at the time. Now, I may be wrong in my politics, my books on church history, of which I've been reading many, they often assume we know something about the politics of, you know, 16th century Europe and the political boundaries and who ruled where. I'm afraid I don't have that kind of thorough knowledge.

But from what I can gather, this is what I, this is what I think. I believe Moravia is roughly associated with what we now, or not now anymore, but until recently called Yugoslavia. And I believe it was under the Austrian crown, if I'm not mistaken.

And that is one place where the Anabaptist movement grew after the Swiss Brethren had been stamped out basically out of Zurich in Switzerland. Because in Moravia, there were certain nobles and lords who were, who were favorable, or at least tolerant. If they weren't favorable, they were at least tolerant of religious diversity.

And so many of the Anabaptists migrated to that area and some other movement arose there. The first man I want to talk about is Balthasar Huppmeier. He lived from 1480 to 1528.

Now, that makes him older than most of the men we've talked about earlier. Conrad Grebel was born in 1498. Felix Muntz in 1498 also.

George Blaurock in 1491. And Michael Sattler in 1490. So all those four men were born in 1490s.

Whereas Balthasar Huppmeier was born in 1480. That made him 10 years older than the oldest of the previous men we've discovered, and 20 years older almost than the younger men. So he had a little more respectability in the movement.

In fact, not only respectability, he was a leading Catholic scholar. At one time the vice president of a leading Catholic university. And he had scholarly respectability that some of the other young, younger leaders didn't have.

But we'll start out with this man before he was an Anabaptist, as we do with all of them. Many of the Anabaptist leaders originally before becoming Anabaptists were Catholic priests. That may be simply because they had a call of God on their life, or they may have simply had leadership traits that led them into spiritual work before they even knew God.

But in any case, a disproportionate number of these Anabaptist leaders were originally Catholic priests before they became Protestants and then Anabaptists. Huppmeyer was no exception. He was born of unknown peasant parents in Friedberg, Bavaria.

He studied under John Eck. Now you may not remember John Eck because it was many weeks ago. We were talking about Luther.

And Luther, when he began to raise his revolutionary doctrines in Wittenberg, was opposed by many Catholic authorities. And John Eck was a Catholic scholar who was sent to debate him in Wittenberg. And it was John Eck who actually kind of tricked Luther into admitting that he was a heretic.

I mean a heretic by Catholic standards. We would not call Luther a heretic in the particular areas of doctrine that the Catholics called him one. But Luther was debating against certain Catholic principles.

And John Eck said, then Luther, are you saying essentially that you agree with the heretic Peter Waldo? No, not Peter Waldo. Who was it? Oh, John Hus. John Hus, who had been burned as a heretic.

And Luther said he did agree with him. And that was the first time Luther realized he was a heretic. Because Hus had been burned as a heretic and Luther had been a Catholic monk until this time.

And he realized, hey, I'm not a Catholic anymore. I'm a heretic. But that didn't bother him.

He knew it was right, at least in the points he was disputing with Catholics. And so John Eck was like this major Catholic scholar who was the big guns that the Catholic Church had called in to debate Luther when they really needed someone with some clout. Well, Balthasar Huppmeyer actually studied under John Eck and was very friendly with him.

John Eck wrote very flattering things about Huppmeyer, about his scholarliness and his eagerness to learn. And Huppmeyer in his letters wrote positive things about John Eck. Eck was a proud and carnal man, but Huppmeyer didn't know the difference.

He was just a Roman Catholic who was not converted at the time. And he was just impressed with the scholarliness of John Eck. In fact, when John Eck changed universities, Hupmeyer as a student changed universities too to follow him.

And eventually he held the same chair at the university that John Eck had held, at one point becoming the vice rector, which is like the vice president of the university at Ingolstadt. That would be in 1515 when he was at that time 35 years old. He was famous as a preacher because he was very eloquent, though he didn't know God.

This was true of many of these men before they became Anabaptists. They would confess later they had not known God, but many of them were gifted speakers and eloquent men and had followings as Catholic leaders before they became converted. And he received a call to be the chief preacher at the Cathedral of Regensburg in 1516.

That city was the most prominent city in the region. So it was a prestigious call. He was going to be the chief preacher in this major city because of his rank he had held at the Catholic University at Ingolstadt.

At Regensburg, when he came to that city, he found that the city was in a foment because there was an attempt being made to drive all the Jews out of Regensburg. Now, many people do not realize how anti-Semitic both Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism were. I would say today, neither of those movements would want to take an officially anti-Semitic stand.

But in those days, because the assumption was that a country has to be one religion or another, and it had been decided in the days of Luther that a country would, every, all the citizenry would be of the same religion as their prince. So if the prince was Catholic, that country was Catholic, and everyone in it was baptized Catholic. If the country is Lutheran, all the citizens were declared Lutheran by virtue of living in that country.

But when you got people who are Jews, they're obviously not going to be Lutheran, and they can't move to a Catholic country and be called Catholic. They're Jews. It's a different religion.

And there's just great hostility. Well, when when Hupmeyer came to Regensburg, the city was in a foment over an attempt to cast the Jews out of the city. Now, it'd be wonderful if I could say, Hupmeyer came in, and he brought some sanity, and he gave the Jews clemency and so forth.

But I'm afraid the opposite is true. He was a zealous Roman Catholic priest, and he helped to drive all the Jews out. He seized their synagogues.

He seized their property. He booted them out of the country, out of the city anyway. And he became the hero of Regensburg, because he managed to, by his strong influence and preaching, turn public sentiments entirely against the Jews.



The Jews were probably hated there by the Catholics for the same reason that Jews are sometimes hated today, because their successful businessmen and control a lot of the finances. But now the Jews were kicked out. Their former real estate holdings, the synagogues and so forth, were now in the possession of the rich Catholics and so forth, who felt like that was an improved condition.

And actually, Balthasar Hupmeyer changed one of the synagogues of the Jews, after he kicked the Jews out, into, he formed there a cathedral dedicated to Mary, where Mary was worshipped. And he began to proclaim that miracles were being done there by the Virgin Mary. He claimed that 54, he listed 54 different miracles that he said occurred at this cathedral, became a very popular shrine for the people of the city and other people to come to see the miracles at this cathedral of the Blessed Virgin.

Now, the interesting thing here is that Hupmeyer met with opposition in that town. Not from the Jews, because they were gone. Not from Reformers, because they weren't there.

But the people who were against this Catholic priest were other Catholics. There was a Dominican monastery in town, which also claimed that miracles were happening there. But Hupmeyer's cathedral to Mary was sort of in competition for the attendance and the gifts of the people.

And the Dominicans were very upset with Hupmeyer for setting up a rival shrine for people, to attract people who wanted a miracle. And so basically, the Dominicans put some pressure on him and he left town. I don't know if he, I don't know the details.

I'm not sure if historians know the details. I don't know if he was run out of town, or if he could see the writing on the wall that things were pretty divisive with him there. But he left town and he went to a small town, a rural town called Waldshut on the Rhine.

And there he simply became the humble parish priest of a small town. But he was very flamboyant there. He would do all kinds, with great pomp and ceremony, he would celebrate with parades and things, the Catholic festival days and so forth.

When there were lightning storms, he would stand in the door of the church and give the host and the wine to the parishioners who were afraid of the lightning to come. And he was just really a highly visible parish priest in this small town. And everyone loved him there in Waldshut.

While he was there, he actually got saved. Believe it or not, he began to read the works of Luther. And he also began to read the New Testament.

And he didn't get saved just by that. He also made some journeys to certain cities in Switzerland and Germany where the Reformation had made progress. He was curious about it.

And he talked to reformers. He just came under the influence of reformed thinking to a large extent. And by 1522, he had pretty much made his decision to be a follower of Jesus Christ, though he had not yet renounced his Roman Catholic affiliation.

And in 1522, Regensburg, where the Dominicans had run him out, called him back to be a priest again. And he came back, but he came back a different Balthasar Hupmeyer. He came back as an evangelical preacher.

And he was preaching against sin. He was preaching instead of preaching the popular things, he was preaching what people needed to hear. And he only lasted there three months.

His sermons were not well received. And he was run out of town again. And he went back to Waldshut, the smaller town where he'd been.

He actually had not resigned his post at Waldshut when he assumed this new position at Regensburg. Apparently, he may have known what would happen. So when they kicked him out of Regensburg again, he went back to Waldshut where he resumed his duties as the parish priest.

And he was always a hero in that small town. Now, he traveled to Zurich in 1523, where he met Zwingli. And he participated in the disputations in October of 1523, which we've talked about in our earlier lessons.

Those were the disputations where Zwingli debated Roman Catholics, and at one point decided and announced that the Catholic Mass would cease to be done in Zurich by Christmas Day of that year. But then he reneged, and he backpedaled. And his young students, especially Conrad Grebel and Felix Mantz and George Blaurock, felt disillusioned by Zwingli, because he decided not to end the Mass on schedule.

And that's what led them to break free and eventually study on their own and study baptism and become Anabaptists. Well, actually, Hupmeyer was also at that disputation, but he was not in the same state of mind as those younger students of Zwingli's yet. He was not quite as far advanced as they were.

But he met Grebel and Mantz and Blaurock there. And when he got back to Waldshut, he decided to do the same kind of thing that Zwingli was doing in Zurich. So Hupmeyer began to engage the local clergy in his area and in surrounding areas in debates, in public disputations, which was a time where he formed his own theology.

It was very much like that of the other Reformers and very much influenced by it. But he had four basic things that were the distinctives of his own theology that he formed in his own Bible reading. One was the doctrine of justification by faith, which was not at all original with him because he had read Luther, and that was Luther's doctrine.

But that was a hallmark of his preaching was justification by faith. A second was that the Lord's Supper was a memorial only. Now here, of course, that didn't agree with Luther.

That's where Zwingli and Luther had parted company. And this was more the Zwinglian idea. So he was indebted to Zwingli for this point.

And then the third point of his theology was a congregational form of government, which you've mentioned earlier as a typical Anabaptist idea. Now he was not yet an Anabaptist, but he had come to believe in this form of government. And fourthly, he believed in the right of priests to marry.

He was a priest, remember. And with all the Anabaptist leaders we've considered so far, once they came to the view that it was okay for priests to marry, the next thing that happens, they got married. And sure enough, he did.

He got married himself to a woman named Elizabeth Hugelina, who was a courageous wife and actually followed him and martyred him eventually. She was martyred along with him at the end of their lives. Now, Ferdinand I of Austria was very upset with the preaching of Hupmeyer in Walshut and was watching carefully.

And finally, he decided to move against him. And he commanded the city council of Walshut to expel Hupmeyer from the city and replace him with someone who's more compliant with Catholic doctrine. But the council of Walshut was sympathetic toward Hupmeyer and liked him, just like the city fathers of the city rulers in Zurich were towards Wengli, so that the king of Austria's decree was ignored.

However, Walshut was a small town and could not resist the power of the king of Austria. And so to prevent the city from coming under armed attack, Hupmeyer left the city and he fled to Schaffhausen, where the Austrian government also pursued him. But that city also would not turn him over to the authorities.

And so he stayed there for a while. While in Schaffhausen, he wrote a pamphlet called Concerning Heretics and Those Who Burn Them. Actually, Hupmeyer had a sense of humor more than most of the Anabaptist writers, at least it reflected in his writings.

And I'm not saying he was uproariously funny, but he had a lightness and a humorousness about his general approach. At one point, he challenged his former mentor, John Eck, to a debate. The challenge was never taken up, but he issued a written challenge where he referred to himself as the fly of Friedenberg challenges the elephant of Ingolstadt, who the elephant of Ingolstadt was his old mentor, John Eck.

But I mean, these would not make the stuff of, you know, sitcoms today. But it's nonetheless, it's, you know, he obviously had a certain levity about his manner. And those, of course, I haven't read his material, but the historians say that his writings in general were full of scripture, full of scholarship, but also full of humor.

I mean, not cracking jokes for the sake of jokes, but just he was apparently a fairly humorous individual. So his first treatise was called Concerning Heretics and Those Who Burn Them. And in that treatise, he made, it's the first treatise ever written in history defending a person's liberty to believe what he wants without interference with the state.

And he basically redefined heretics. The Roman Catholics and Luther and Zwingli had all defined heretics as those who teach doctrines contrary to the church. In this pamphlet, Hoopmeyer defined heretics as those who teach doctrines contrary to scripture.

He said that the inquisitors who burn the heretics are themselves the heretics, because they do not follow the scriptures in doing so. And so this was not a popular pamphlet with those outside the Anabaptist movement, and it got him into some trouble, but he didn't seem to mind that. Now, he turned out not to have quite the same courage some of the other Anabaptists did, as we shall see, but he was sincere.

He was just a man, he was a sickly man, and weak and unfortunately there were times when he was persuaded to recant certain doctrines under torture, which other Anabaptists under the same torture simply died rather than recant. Hoopmeyer, however, did repent at the end. But by October of 1524, Hoopmeyer had returned to Waldshut from Schaffhausen, where he had fled, and there he is received as a returning hero by the city.

By this time he was beginning to question the practice of infant baptism. See, all this time he was more like Zwingli or Luther, he was not an Anabaptist. But he began, as all Anabaptists eventually did, to question whether infant baptism was a scriptural doctrine or not.

And so he began to study it in the scripture, and he began to realize that the scripture does not teach infant baptism. Now, here's a... some people think he was a bit of a compromiser, because in his priest's office in Waldshut, he would teach that infant baptism is not a scriptural doctrine, and he would teach against it. But if parents insisted on baptizing their babies, he'd go ahead and baptize them.

And, you know, I don't know if that's so much compromise or if it's just diplomacy, but sometimes diplomacy is the same thing as compromise. In any case, for a while there he was still willing to baptize infants if the parents insisted, but he taught against it as an unscriptural practice. But he was at this time becoming an Anabaptist in his views.

In April of 1525, an Anabaptist fugitive named Wilhelm Reublen came to Waldshut for refuge, basically, and in contact with this man, Hupmeyer realized that he was a believer in the Anabaptist cause, and he allowed this man to baptize him. And he turned around and baptized 300 members of his own Catholic congregation, a radical move. In fact, it's the first time in history that an entire Catholic church was baptized into a Protestant faith

at one time without coercion from the state.

You see, in Zurich, the Catholic churches had all been converted over to Protestant, but that was by coercion from the state because Zwingli was in league with the city fathers, and they basically required that everyone in Zurich be Protestant. So the whole Catholic churches became Protestant there, but under coercion from the state. This is the first time in history that a whole Catholic congregation of 300 people all decided together that they wanted to be Protestant and accepted adult baptism, and Hupmeyer was their pastor.

At that same time, he wrote some treatises against Zwingli, and Zwingli wrote some treatises against him. Hupmeyer wrote in July a response to Zwingli's book on baptism, Anabaptism, and infant baptism. Zwingli was, to the day of his death, an opponent of the Anabaptist movement and authorized the killing of Anabaptists and was personally responsible for issuing the death warrant for probably 4,000 Anabaptists.

Zwingli wrote a against Anabaptism, which was entitled On Baptism, Anabaptism, and Infant Baptism. A couple months later, Hupmeyer wrote a response or rebuttal to Zwingli called The Christian Baptism of Believers. Most Anabaptist and Baptist theologians today believe that this little book on baptism is the best book written on the subject by someone other than a pedo-baptist.

Pedo-baptists are those who believe in infant baptism. That this is the best book ever written on the subject of believer baptism. Now, other Anabaptists would write books on it, including Menno Simons and others, but Hupmeyer's book, he was the most important theologian of the whole Anabaptist movement.

He was a tremendous scholar, of course, in the Roman Catholic Church before he was converted, and he had a real command of Scripture and of theology generally. So he wrote this rebuttal to Zwingli. Zwingli was not pleased with this, and he wrote a rebuttal to Hupmeyer called A True, Thorough Reply to Dr. Balthasar's Little Book on Baptism.

And then Hupmeyer responded by writing another book called A Dialogue Between Balthasar Hupmeyer of Friedberg and Master Ulrich Zwingli of Zurich on Infant Baptism. And after that, the correspondence ceased. Probably they both found other ways to spend their time.

And actually, by the time they'd each written their second treatise, they were just repeating the same arguments as before. They didn't need to write any more on it. After this, Ferdinand, the king of Austria, attacked Waldshut to capture Hupmeyer, who fled to Zurich, which was sadly a mistake.

Zurich was ruled and governed, not so much literally, politically by Zwingli, but certainly all the city rulers were under Zwingli's influence. And he fled to Zurich because Zurich

was a Protestant city. And Ferdinand was a Catholic king coming to get him, so he thought he might find some refuge there.

That was an unfortunate mistake on his part. As soon as he was found to be in Zurich, Zwingli had him arrested, along with his wife, and thrown in jail. And while in jail, he requested to have a public dispute with Zwingli, and it was granted to him.

And he did dispute with Zwingli, but for some reason, under the pressure of that dispute, Hupmeyer actually recanted his views on believer baptism to the great chagrin and shame of the Anabaptists, who saw him as their hero, and later to his own shame, as he repented later on for doing so. And in the disputation, he, who had been the great theologian in defense of believer baptism, renounced it. And so Zwingli required, since of course Hupmeyer was a prisoner there, that if he wished for his freedom, Hupmeyer must come to the next church service, reformed church service, and publicly announce at the church that he recanted his position.

So he came to the church the next Sunday, but he couldn't bring himself to recant, and so he recanted his recantation, and said he could not recant, and began to preach believer baptism there in the church. And Zwingli entered the other pulpit and silenced him, and told him to be quiet, and took him off to jail again. And so he did recant to his shame, but he also repented of recanting.

He is the only Anabaptist leader that we have, that we will study, who ever did recant any views. And he did more than once, largely because, as he would say, because of the weakness of his flesh. He was sickly, he was tortured on the rack, he was beaten with whips, he was not treated nicely.

But then other Anabaptists, enduring the same torture, remained faithful. I myself would be very slow to condemn the man. He never recanted in the sense of his Christianity.

He never renounced Christ. But those who would believe that believer baptism is part and parcel with the gospel might say, well he renounced the gospel after all. But I'm not so sure that people who believe in infant baptism can't be saved.

In fact I certainly wouldn't say that is the case. And therefore I don't think he saw himself as renouncing Christ or the gospel. He simply was, to avoid further torture, recanting his unpopular views on baptism, though he still believed them.

His recantation was dishonest. While in prison he was tortured on the rack, and while on the rack he recanted again, and was released after committing his recantation to writing this time. They didn't want to let him get away this time without writing it down.

So he did. Then he was released, he left Zurich, and he moved in 1526 to Nickelsburg, humbled by his failure to stand firm under torture. In Nickelsburg, which was one of the most tolerant cities in Europe, in Moravia, under the jurisdiction of a Moravian nobleman,

he began to preach, and many thousands were converted by his preaching.

In one year in Nickelsburg, Hupmeyer baptized 6,000 converts to the Anabaptist cause, including the leaders, the political leaders of the area. They were called the Lichtenstein Barons. And besides his teaching and preaching, he also engaged in writing.

While he was there in Nickelsburg, he wrote 17 pamphlets from 1526 to 1527. These were disseminated far and wide, and became a great encouragement to Anabaptists generally, although of course he still had the blot on his record that he had recanted at one time. But everyone knew that he had not really in his heart forsaken those views.

In August of 1527, under an edict from Ferdinand, the king, who was Catholic, Hupmeyer was taken prisoner from that city, Nickelsburg, along with his wife, and he was imprisoned first in Vienna, and then he was transferred to the castle in Grazenstein on the Danube. He was unwilling on that occasion to recant his views on baptism, the Lord's Supper, or his previous denial of purgatory, though he did back down on some of his other statements against certain other Catholic practices to a certain extent. This time, under torture, he would not recant on his views on believer baptism, or on his very un-Catholic views on the Lord's Supper, and he had denied purgatory, and he would not recant that position either.

So he was sentenced to be burned. As he was being taken to the place where he was burned as a martyr, his wife, who was with him, kept exhorting him to be strong. She knew his weaknesses, so did he, and he was very humble about his weaknesses as well.

But his wife kept exhorting him to be strong, and to not lose courage, and to keep his courage to the death, just as Michael Sattler's mother had been in the crowd as they'd torn his tongue out, dragged him to the place where he was burned, and his mother in the crowd was shouting out to her son to remain faithful and not deny the faith, and so forth. I'm sorry, it was not that. It was Felix Mance's mother did that.

Behind every good man, I guess, there's a good woman. And this man, who had backed down under torture before, endured this time, maybe because of his wife's encouragement. It's hard to say.

But at the place of burning, according to an eyewitness account, Hoopmeyer cried out in the Swiss dialect, O gracious God, forgive my sins and my great torment. And then he said to the people who were witnesses of his execution, he said, O dear brothers, if I have injured any in word or deed, may he forgive me for the sake of my merciful God. I forgive all those who have done me harm.

That would have to include Zwingli and others who had tortured him, and those who were now executing him. He then said in Latin, O Lord, into thy hands I commit my spirit, which seemed to have become sort of the last words of most Anabaptists when they

were burned. Of course, they were Jesus' last words also on the cross, a quotation from the Psalms, actually.

Then he said, after saying, O Lord, into thy hands I commit my spirit, he said to the people, dear brothers, pray God will give me my patience in this my suffering, which prayers apparently were answered because he was burned and his wife was drowned three days later in the Danube for her Anabaptist views as well. And that is the story of Hoopmeyer, who was very influential in the Moravian movement there. Now out of that time and location arose the Hutterites.

Many Americans would call them Hutterites because there's a double T, and we would therefore in English pronunciation call them Hutterites. They're named after Jakob Hutter, which the German pronunciation would not be like English. While Balthasar Hoopmeyer was in Nickelsburg, another Anabaptist leader named Jakob Wiedemann was also in the city, and he differed from Hoopmeyer in that Wiedemann believed that the community of goods was a cardinal doctrine of the New Testament.

Wiedemann believed that it was mandatory for Christians to live in a common purse community, and that Hoopmeyer believed, like most Anabaptists did, that this is not a mandatory practice for Christians, but rather it is from the heart that Christians ought to share from the heart, not have some kind of imposed communism upon them. And these differences separated the two Anabaptist leaders, though they were both in the same city. After Hoopmeyer's death, Wiedemann became the more vocal in his opposition to Hoopmeyer's party and withdrew from the other Anabaptists in the city to meet with his own followers.

Now this Wiedemann was a particularly divisive kind of fellow, and after he and his followers had separated from the other Anabaptists in the city, he still had a lot of strife and a lot of ill-feeling was generated because of the constant wrangling with the other Anabaptists. The followers of Wiedemann were made to leave the city by the city rulers, and the group that left the city formed the first Bruderhof. Now the Bruderhofs still exist today.

The Hutterites call their communities Bruderhofs. This was a common-perce community of Anabaptists. It was the first one, and it was formed under Wiedemann's leadership.

And this was in Austerlitz on the estate of a sympathetic group of lords. This group split from Wiedemann. Wiedemann apparently was kind of an authoritarian kind of leader.

For example, one of the things that was complained against him is that he actually forced young women in the group to marry certain young men in the group, whether they wanted to or not. He just kind of, he was like the forced matchmaker and so forth. And so there were some dissatisfaction with his leadership, and that was sort of his style, I guess.



Wilhelm Reublen, who had baptized Hupmeyer earlier, came to the group, and many of the people in Wiedemann's group were attracted to Reublen's teaching more. And so they split off from Wiedemann, and they basically are the ones who later gave rise to what would be today the Hutterites, not named after Reublen, but over the next leader, who was Jakob Hutter. The group was torn by internal dissension until the arrival of Jakob Hutter, or Jacob Hutter, in 1533, who was himself fleeing from persecution as an Anabaptist in southern Germany.

He did for the Moravian Anabaptists what Calvin did for the Reformed Church in Geneva. He set up an order and a stability and certain standards that everyone was required to keep in the group. And as such, he brought some consolidation of the people.

He became the head preacher of the Bruderhof, and he brought stability and order. In 1535, Ferdinand, the Catholic king again, unrelented persecution against the Anabaptists, and the group in the Bruderhof under Jakob Hutter fled from Moravia. Hutter himself returned to southern Germany where he preached and made additional converts.

In November 1535, he and his pregnant wife were arrested and imprisoned. Hutter was tortured on the rack and beaten with whips, but he did not recant any of his beliefs. So he was burned at the stake in February 1535.

The Moravian Anabaptists took his name for their group and have been since known as the Hutterites. They became aggressively evangelistic. When Hutter died, rather than being intimidated, they came out of hiding and began to evangelize throughout all of German-speaking Europe and other parts of the world as well.

Persecution eventually led them to resettle in America, where most of them are today, and the distinctive of their group, as opposed to other Anabaptists, are four. There are four distinctives of the Hutterites where they differ from other Anabaptists, for example, from the Mennonites or the Amish or some of the other Anabaptist groups. One is that they, of course, believe in the community of goods as a cardinal doctrine.

The Hutterites alone among the Anabaptists enforced this policy in their communities, the community of goods. Everyone would generate and produce income. They'd put it in a pot and they'd meet it out to people according to their needs.

They believed that this was taught in the New Testament. Now, of course, we have an example of something maybe like this in the book of Acts chapter 2, but it's not altogether clear that this was an enforced policy. In the book of Acts, it appears to have been more voluntary, but the Hutterites were convinced this was a policy required among Christians because of the practice in the book of Acts, and so it's always been one of their policies.

They have also been distinguished for their emphasis on the supreme importance of

childhood education. They were the founders of what we could call the Christian school movement. Prior to their time, there were no Christian schools and nobody was really, I guess there were some people homeschooling in those days, but most parents were illiterate and could not very well homeschool their children, and so they had a Christian educational institutions that they set up in their groups, and they began educating children at as early as two years old, and they became highly educated Europeans.

And a third distinctive of their group springs from that. They became the most skilled surgeons in Europe. They had extremely high medical standards and educational standards for their medical training, and they became known for their expertise in medical care and surgery, so much so that many countries that would have otherwise expelled them for their heresy, as they were judged to have, actually tolerated them because they needed them to keep them healthy.

And that was, I don't know if that was a strategy to make themselves indispensable or if it was just something that worked out in their favor, but the Hutterites have always been known for being medical experts. And then the fourth distinctive was their extreme missionary zeal. As I said earlier, they let, they sent out more missionaries from the group than they kept at home, and 80% of their missionaries died martyrs.

So it's not, was not uncommon for Anabaptists to die martyrs, but that's, that was the way the Hutterites were. Today the Hutterites are not altogether as evangelistic. I mean, to a certain extent, they just kind of are cloistered in their communities.

But that's true also of some of the other Anabaptist groups, or for that matter, other religious groups that started out more evangelistic and have basically become entrenched and, you know, basically spend their time trying to preserve their gains rather than to take new ground for the kingdom of God. Finally, I want to talk to you about Dutch Anabaptism or the Anabaptist movement in the Netherlands. Again, we have a group of leaders that are significant here.

The first really was Melchior Hoffman, who lived from 1495 to 1543. Now, this man was not extremely, most Anabaptists would not like to name him as their founder of their group, but he has the honor of being the man who first brought the Anabaptist message to the Netherlands. He was a disciple of Luther originally, and initially because of his zeal for evangelism, Luther sort of supported him in the ministry.

But eventually, when he sought to become a pastor of a Lutheran church, Luther basically wrote saying he had misgivings about that. He didn't believe the man was qualified to be a pastor. As it turned out, Hoffman, although he was a zealous and sincere man, he was a little imbalanced.

I mean, he did read his New Testament a lot, but he especially read the book of Revelation, and he got very caught up in eschatology. He got very fascinated with

eschatology to the point where he believed that he was the prophet Enoch who was going to come, and he believed that the Lord would come in the year 1533. He had actually had someone prophesied to him that this was the case.

I'm sorry, he didn't believe he was Enoch. He thought he was Elijah. One of his disciples, John Matthews, thought he was Enoch.

And actually, when he was being sought by authorities, he gladly, voluntarily surrendered to the authorities because an Anabaptist prophet had prophesied to him that he was going to be in prison for a year and a half, after which he would be released, and the millennium would begin. And so he was eager to see this happen, so he allowed himself to be arrested. Unfortunately for him, he rotted in prison.

He was in prison for ten years and died in prison, and the prophecy never came true. However, there were a couple of his disciples, John Matthews and John, I think, Van Leiden or something like that, who became the instigators of the Munster scandal. We mentioned this a couple weeks ago, a group of people who were somewhat Anabaptistic in their viewpoints, moved to the city of Munster, took it over by armed force, tried to enforce Anabaptist views by the edge of the sword.

They were attacked by a combination of Lutheran and Catholic troops. They fought a war against them. These men were not distinctly Anabaptist types.

Anabaptists are basically nonviolent. But unfortunately, because of the excesses of this group in Munster, which was started by some men who had been Melchior Huffman's disciples, it put a blot on Huffman's memory, although he was not personally responsible for it. And it put a blot on Anabaptism in general, because what happened at Munster sparked similar fanaticism in other regions in Europe, among some Anabaptists who've copied Munster, and it just really was an ugly scene.

And it all happened in the Netherlands. Well, there were a couple of Dutch brothers who were Anabaptists during this time, but they opposed what happened at Munster. Unfortunately, what happened at Munster got a lot of press, a lot of bad press.

And when people in the Netherlands thought of the Anabaptists, they thought of this Munster revolt. And yet there were men in the Netherlands who were Anabaptists who opposed it from the beginning. Menno Simons was one of them, and Obie and Dirk Phillips were also among them.

These men began to preach a much more biblical Anabaptist message and gained a lot of converts. And actually, Obie Phillips was the one who ordained Menno Simons, who became the founder of the Mennonites. Obie Phillips, his younger brother Dirk, continued faithful to the movement and became a right-hand man to Menno Simons in the founding of Dutch Anabaptism.

Menno Simons himself lived from 1495 to 1561, and he is the guy who is given credit for being the one who gave form and substance to the Anabaptist movement in Holland, or the Netherlands. They say that the Anabaptist movement in Holland can be divided into three periods, before Menno Simons, during Menno Simons, and after Menno Simons. And I guess what Jacob Hooter was to the Hooterites, Menno Simons was to the Mennonites, who actually began to be called by his name, even during his lifetime.

I'll give you a little background on him. He did not die a martyr. He's one of the few that did not, but he lived a martyr's life.

For the most part, he was persecuted more severely than almost the others, all put together, but he didn't die a martyr. I'm going to read some extracts from his life, but I'll give you basically a summary first. Menno Simons was born of Dutch peasant parents.

He was ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood at age 28, which was in 1524. But he confessed later that when he was a priest of the Roman Catholic Church, he knew nothing about the Bible, not one thing. He actually had a couple other priests in the same parish with him, who knew a little about the Bible.

And he knew so little about it that they would laugh at him every time they discussed biblical topics, because they knew very little, but he knew nothing about the Bible. And he knew that he knew nothing, but in his days as a Roman Catholic priest, he began to have suspicions, doubts, about the reality of the mass. You know, the Catholic mass is the priest takes the host and the cup, and these are said to be transformed by his pronouncing a blessing over it into the actual body and blood of Jesus, you know, by some kind of magic.

And he was not the first priest to wonder whether that's really true, but he had doubts about it. In fact, he went to confession regularly and confessed that he had doubts that this host and this wine was really turning into the body and blood of Jesus. And he could get no satisfaction from the priests that he talked to, they couldn't convince him.

And so he basically decided to study the New Testament of all things. It was something he knew nothing about. He figured, I'm going to figure out whether this host really becomes the body of Jesus or not.

I'm going to read the New Testament, see what it says. And as he read it, he was at peace because he realized that he had not been wrong in having these doubts. The New Testament agreed with him, not with the Roman Catholic theology.

And now he didn't renounce Roman Catholicism right away. But he did begin to study the New Testament more. He began to preach sermons from the New Testament.

And he began to have a reputation for being an evangelical preacher, even though he didn't know the Lord yet, as he himself would later confess. Let me read you some of the

things he himself said about those days in his life. Some quotes of his.

Well, let's see. Here we go. In one of his books, about 18 years after his conversion, Menno Simons wrote this.

He says, My reader, I write to you the truth in Christ. I lie not. In the year 1524, being then in my 28th year, I undertook the duties of a priest in my father's village called Pidge, Pingjom in Friesland.

Two other persons about my age also officiated in the same station. The one was my pastor and was well learned in part. The other succeeded me.

Both had read the scriptures partially, but I had not touched them during my life, for I feared if I should read them, they would mislead me. This is what the Catholic Church taught people sometimes. Behold, such stupid preacher I was for nearly two years.

In the first year thereafter, the thought occurred to me, as often as I handled the bread and the wine in the Mass, that they were not the flesh and blood of the Lord. I thought that it was the suggestion of the devil that he might lead me off from my faith. I confessed it often, sighed and prayed, yet I could not be freed from this thought.

Finally, I got the idea to examine the New Testament diligently. I had not gone very far when I discovered that we were deceived, and my conscience, troubled on account of the aforementioned bread, was quickly relieved, even without any instructions. Some other things he said about this period of time.

Well, maybe rather than read some more, I'll tell you a little bit more, and then I'll read some more. The issue of infant baptism began to be thrust on his awareness. First of all, by hearing a report about an Anabaptist martyr, he gives in his writings the name of that martyr, though this martyr is not known to historians otherwise than from this mention.

But he says, Afterwards it happened, before I had ever heard of the existence of the Brethren, meaning the Anabaptists, that a God-fearing, pious hero named Sikke Schneider was beheaded at Lew Warden for being re-baptized. It sounded very strange to me to hear of a second baptism. I examined the scriptures diligently and pondered them earnestly, but could not find any report of infant baptism.

So he began to do, having heard about this Anabaptist being re-baptized and being beheaded for it, he thought, how strange, someone being re-baptized. Never heard of that before. So he began to study the scriptures.

He actually began to even read the writings of Luther and Zwingli on the subject, but he didn't get any help there because they believed in infant baptism too. And so he began to think on his own that maybe infant baptism was a radical idea, or that his rejection of it was a radical idea, but that he could no longer teach it and believe it. Finally, a time

came, well this wasn't even finally, this was another step in his change.

The Anabaptists came to his town, at least some of them did, and they were preaching their message, but these were of the Munster type of Anabaptists, and they were kind of radical in the wrong ways. And so Menno, Simon's still a Catholic at this time, sort of, he tried to stem the tide of their fanaticism, but at the same time he felt a certain sympathy for some of the things they were saying. He believed that some of the things they were saying were true about infant baptism in particular.

And then the change, the thing that really changed him was he heard the report in 1535 that his own brother had been killed as an Anabaptist, along with 300 others who had fled to the old cloister for refuge, and when they got there they'd been murdered, 300 of them, and his own brother among them, and this got pretty close to home. And he was already beginning to sympathize somewhat with the movement from his studies in scripture, so at a certain point shortly after this he struggled all night in prayer and finally surrendered to Jesus. Now before that time he had been preaching evangelical messages, but he had just been preaching them as one who knew this academically.

He knew Christian doctrine, he'd read Luther, he'd read Zwingli, he even believed some Anabaptist ideas, but he had never surrendered to the truth that he was preaching. He had never himself been converted, never repented of his sin, but through this various set of circumstances he finally gave his life up to the Lord and became a true Christian. Nine months later he was approached by certain Dutch Anabaptist peasants who requested that he take up the leadership of their movement.

They needed a leader and he was a well-known preacher of the New Testament and now known to be an Anabaptist or suspected to be. At first he was reluctant to take up that leadership because he could foresee how much he would have to suffer if he took up a visible role of leadership in the group. Let me read you something he wrote at this time.

When he was invited to become the leader of the Anabaptists in the Netherlands he said, I was sensible of my limited talents, my unlearnedness, my weak nature, the timidity of my spirit, and the exceedingly great wickedness perverse to the entirety of the world, the great and powerful sects, the subtlety of many minds, and the woefully heavy cross that would weigh on me. But he took the position anyway and he did have a woefully heavy cross laid upon him. He was actually pursued more than any other Anabaptist leader by authorities and it's just a miracle that he didn't end up a martyr because they took measures to capture him that had not been done before.

Ferdinand and other rulers of other lands actually put not only a price on his head offering great amounts of money to anyone who would turn him in, but also offered people amnesty from any crime they'd committed if they would turn him over to the authorities. There were many Anabaptists in prison facing the death sentence themselves and the authorities offered any of the Anabaptists freedom if they would just

be a Judas and narc on Menno and none would. But no one ever did.

And there was a tremendous price on his head. But he traveled on, he had a wife and kids, but they traveled from time to time. They were virtually homeless for years and they were escaping just ahead of the authorities sometimes from place to place.

The story of this part of his life is an exciting tale. But he basically was a homeless guy going around preaching and encouraging the Anabaptists in the Netherlands and in parts of Germany for a lengthy period of time. Finally, though, in 1554 he settled on the estate of a sympathetic baron where he lived for the remainder of his years.

This sympathetic baron was not an Anabaptist himself, but he had been in the army and he had been impressed earlier when he had witnessed the execution of Anabaptists. So he was somewhat sympathetic to them. But he himself had a reputation for ruthlessness and so no one molested the Anabaptists when they were under his care on his estate because everyone was intimidated by this guy.

He was a military veteran of some reputation. And so Menno Simons spent the last years of his life in security basically in this place. In the year 1561, at the age of 66, Menno Simons died of an illness that took him suddenly.

His illness took a turn for the worse, which eventually killed him on the day that was the 25th anniversary of his renunciation of his Roman Catholic affiliations. So he was an evangelical preacher for 25 years to the day. And then he died, I suppose, peacefully.

Now the years that he spent on that baron's estate, though he was secure from persecution there, they were not peaceful years because there were disputes among the Anabaptists over certain doctrines. There were some that disputed the deity of Christ. And he had to be involved in those disputes defending the deity of Christ.

He himself had a somewhat peculiar view of the incarnation that was controversial. He disputed with other Anabaptists about that. So his final years were kind of years of establishing doctrinal norms in the movement.

But when he had died, he had done more for the Anabaptist movement in the Netherlands than any man ever had before or since. And of course the Mennonites, so named after him, are still the most prominent group of Anabaptists today. And there are now several branches of Mennonites.

Now before we close this, I had wished to bring along a letter that's in one of the books I have, written by a woman who was sentenced to be martyred, but she was given a reprieve for a few weeks so she could have her baby. And after she had her baby, her baby was given to relatives of hers to be raised, and then she was martyred. But while in prison, she wrote a letter to her baby.

And it's a fairly famous letter. It's been reprinted in quite a few of the Anabaptist history books I have. I wanted to read it to you because it's quite poignant, but she was very courageous and exhibited the typical heroic spirit of the Anabaptist martyrs.

But I don't have that letter, I'm afraid, to read you right now. It's not in the book I have with me, so I can't read that to you. But I did want to leave with you largely the impression of the heroism of these people who paved the way for us.

I mean, we believe some of the things they believed. Maybe you believe all the things they believed. But we believe them.

We have the luxury of believing them. They didn't have the luxury of believing them. They had to die for their belief in them.

We can believe them or not. We can talk about them casually. We have nothing at stake, except our souls perhaps, but nothing in terms of our earthly safety.

And so I would like to leave with you a profound appreciation for these people. But there are a couple of other branches of the Radical Reformation that were not the mainstream Anabaptists. I just want to make mention of them briefly because some of them come up for mention a little later on.

Besides the main Anabaptists, of which the Mennonites would be a good example, there were two other branches. One we'd have to call the Inspirationists. Some call them the Spiritualists.

And the others were called the Evangelical Rationalists. And these groups were opposite of each other. The Inspirationists basically elevated their personal revelations and prophecies above the Scriptures themselves, which is a very non-mainstream Anabaptist thing to do.

They were Anabaptists because they believed in re-baptism, or at least they didn't believe in infant baptism. So they were lumped among the Anabaptists. But Anabaptists proper believed that the Scriptures were the final authority in all matters of faith and practice, whereas the Inspirationists, who were in name only they were Anabaptists, they did not believe that the Scriptures had as much authority as their own private revelations.

In some ways, they resembled certain Charismatics today. Not all Charismatics, but there are certain Charismatics today that would, I would say, be guilty of the same error. One of these men was Caspar Schwenkfeld, who lived from 1490 to 1561.

He taught his followers to withdraw from the church into prayer groups for Bible study, but he did not require re-baptism, but he was mainly an inspiration of putting personal revelations above the Bible. There are still some followers of his today in Pennsylvania



called Schwenkfelders. The other group of Anabaptists that were not mainstream were the Evangelical Rationalists, and these were kind of the opposite of the Inspirationists.

The Inspirationists were mystical. They were into mystical revelations. The Rationalists, as their name suggests, were into rational, sorting things out, understanding things logically and rationally.

And because they did that, they had trouble accepting the Trinity. So the Evangelical Rationalists, though they were also Anabaptists in some of their doctrines, they were not Orthodox, they were heretical, because they did not believe in the Trinity. And they would be what we would call today Unitarians.

In fact, the modern Unitarian Church essentially holds doctrines identical to the Evangelical Rationalists of that time. Some of these Evangelical Rationalists stayed in the Catholic Church. Others were interested in restoring their own idea of New Testament Christianity and separated their own churches.

But there were a couple of these leaders that I wanted to mention because it's worth mentioning. One of them was Michael Servaitis. And if you have ever studied the history of Calvin in Geneva, the name Michael Servaitis will be familiar to him because he's the man that Calvin burned at the stake for heresy.

Good old Calvin. Now, Michael Servaitis, no doubt, is rightly called a heretic. But Calvin was more a product of his time than a product of New Testament teaching, and he believed in burning heretics just like the Inquisitors who would have liked to burn Calvin did.

But anyway, Michael Servaitis denied the Trinity. He was under a death sentence from the Roman Catholic Church, and he fled to Geneva when Calvin was in charge there. And it is thought that he might have been trying to overthrow Calvin's influence there, and he was captured, condemned, and burned at the stake under Calvin's watch.

Now, Calvin did not himself issue the condemnation to death of the man. This was done by the political officials. Calvin did not hold political office.

There's no question the whole city was in the palm of Calvin's hand. He was the brains of the city, and everyone did what he said was right. So, I mean, he cannot be totally clean of this particular tragedy.

Another of the evangelical rationalists, Anabaptists, who was not mainstream, was Faustus Socinus. He lived from 1539 to 1604. He was the founder of the Polish and East European movement of Socinianism, which is today essentially identical to Unitarianism.

So these guys were not mainstream Anabaptists, but like so many other groups, they would be called Anabaptists because of their particular views about infant baptism.

Orthodox groups at that time, through the 16th and 17th century, generally practiced infant baptism, with the exception of those who were the Anabaptists. But even those who didn't practice infant baptism or were technically, and in name, Anabaptists, many of them were not Orthodox.

But certainly the ones who have survived today as mainstream evangelicals were Orthodox, and for the most part, in my opinion, were more scriptural than those who burned them, even though those who burned them were not always Catholics. Sometimes they were Protestants who burned them. But as I've stated my sentiments already, I believe that the Anabaptists came closer to restoring New Testament Christian ideas than anybody prior to them had done.

And that doesn't mean that they were right in everything they taught. They may have been, but I'm just not saying that I would put my stamp of approval on everything they taught. I have great respect, for example, for the Hutterites in the early days, but I wouldn't agree with them on their view of community of goods as an essential doctrine.

And there are some other aspects. The Mennonites believe it's wrong to take oaths under any circumstances because of what they understand Jesus to have said in the Sermon on the Mount. I understand his words a little differently than they do, but that's fine.

As far as I'm concerned, they came closer than anyone prior to them had come to establishing a biblical form of discipleship and a biblical idea of the church as opposed to a state church. It was a church of believers who were baptized after conversion. And we, for the most part, most of us here probably take those views for granted and would find it almost surprising that any of those things were ever controversial.

They were controversial to say the least. They were controversial enough for those who introduced them to be burned and tortured and have their tongues ripped out by inquisitors and things like that. So, although I'm greatly enamored with the Anabaptist movement, we cannot afford to spend any more weeks on the study of that movement.

Next time, we will begin to discuss Mr. Calvin and his influence on the Reformation. He became the principal theologian of the Reformed churches and to this day is considered to be almost, well, no one would really call him this, but some treat him almost as if he's an infallible prophet of the Reformation. And in some cases, his ideas are treated with the same kind of respect that Scripture is, although those who do so wouldn't admit they do this.

But we can hardly avoid spending at least a couple of weeks on Mr. Calvin, but we'll have to hold that up until next time.