

The Question of Anabaptist Identity

The Christian church's identity is clear and it needs no conference to maintain it. It's maintained by who it identifies with and as soon as it fails to identify with Him no amount of conferring with men will restore it. The true church is alive. It has no need of being propped up. When something is alive it stands of itself. Only when something is dead does it need support and restoration of men.

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ has stood since its founding and will continue until the end of the age, and beyond. The church has been called by many different names, but God saw it as His people. God doesn't care what we are called, He wants witnesses, and if being simply a Christian isn't enough then whatever we would add would only worsen and confuse the matter - not clarify it. The faithful in the past were given names by men either as a reproach or at least as a subtitle because to be only a Christian would have condemned those "Christians" around them. We must keep the message clear. To be a Christian is to obey Christ's commands. It is to bear the marks of Christianity in our lives and in our church. Anything else is simply not Christian.

Those who claim Anabaptism as a title after or before Christian seem to be trying to make a claim on the life the Early Anabaptists had. Are the present day Mennonite/Amish like the Anabaptist? Do they baptize upon confession of faith or do they wait six months? Are they vigorous evangelists and preachers, or are they content to be the quiet of the land? Have they committed all things but loss for the excellency of the Knowledge of Christ, or are their hearts set on mammon? Sadly they fall far short of the true life and fervor of the 16th century brethren.

The Early Anabaptists were known as heretics by the professing Christianity of their day. Their descendents (according to the flesh) are known for their clothes, farms, pies, and quilts. Basically, just an overall good bunch of people. Good neighbors. Early Anabaptists were hated, hunted, and hung because they loved God supremely and had nothing for this world and actively called men out of it. They not only spoke of two Kingdoms, they lived it, and it cost them everything.

Our job is to earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered to the saints. Not to strive to preserve a lifeless shell of some past era. That's like trying to revive the Waldensians, the Lollards, the Donatists, or some other group God has used. An attempt to preserve the identity of the Anabaptists is like venerating

the brazen serpent. God once used it but its day is past. Don't worship or even spend energy on an icon of the past. We must follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and not let our attention be diverted from the simplicity of the Gospel.

We sat for eight years in a post-Anabaptist group looking, hoping for life, and even trying to spark some. Finally we saw behind all their good intentions; they prefer their comfort zone, they consistently fear each other's opinion above truth - a sure recipe for death.

I stopped looking for life in some group, and simply looked to Jesus. He is now my focus. Now my brethren are those who have done the same. Our goals are the same, our worship genuine, our purpose true. We need no rules to tell us not to watch and listen to the filth and wickedness of this world, we don't want to. We need no extra biblical rules to tell us to dress modestly and for our sisters to cover their heads. We want to obey. It's not a drudgery to evangelize; we joy in it because we have something to offer - the simple, unadulterated Gospel of Jesus Christ. The same thing any faithful group of the past had to offer. When they failed to possess it they failed to offer it. Herein is a rule - people will only give what they have, it is impossible to give what they don't have. Selah.

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