

# Anabaptist History - Part 3

by Walter Beachy

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*Walter Beachy's sermon explores the historical roots of Anabaptism, emphasizing the importance of understanding theological developments and the impact of key figures like Wycliffe and Huss on the Reformation.*

**Duration:** 1:18:35

**Scripture:** Psalm 90:1-2, Psalm 90:12, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Anabaptist History"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by discussing the influence of persuasive speakers who teach new things and how easily we succumb to their influence. He then briefly reviews the timeline of church history, focusing on the Constantinian change in 313 which brought about four theological issues that changed the nature of the church. The speaker also mentions the eight marks of the fallen church, but doesn't go into detail about them. Towards the end, the speaker refers to Psalm 90, written by Moses, and highlights God's sovereignty and his role as our dwelling place throughout generations.

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## Transcript

Well, God bless you. Nice to have you here this evening. It's good to see the crowd.

If you're here for the first time and do not have an outline, just raise your hand and some usher. Okay, we have several. So some usher will take care of that, I think, right? Yeah, they're right there at the back on the chair.

I do want to refer just briefly to Psalm 90. You might recognize this, if you've done much studying in the Psalms, as one of Moses' psalms. Moses wrote this, and it's actually a prayer.

I don't want to read the whole psalm, but just note the way he starts his prayer, and then just a few other things about it. He says, Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

Then he has a whole list of things that he says about what God does in his sovereignty. And then in verse 12, he kind of switches gears and says, in light of what he said up to that point in his prayer, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. And that would be an overwhelming burden for

me personally, for sharing about our roots.

Not that I urge us to be followers of men. I don't consider myself a follower of Menno Simons or anyone like that. I'm simply learning from them the kinds of things that they learned, and something that is not well known among us is that the first generation leaders were, for the most part, educated men.

They were educated by the Catholics for the priesthood or in the monasteries, and so they were educated men, and even some of the second generation leaders were such. But then after you get into the late second and third and beyond, they are mostly uneducated men. And we did not hammer out a good theology at all in the early eras, in the early generations, and so we wound up with what is still today plaguing us a good bit.

We don't have a real good solid theological understanding or base, and I've been told many times, and I agree with the observation, we Mennonites and Amish are really vulnerable to false teaching, and we are. We succumb to it far too readily and too easily. If there's a persuasive speaker that comes around and teaches some new thing.

Well, just as a quick review, last night we started with Pentecost and did the eras briefly, and came back and got to the Renaissance, and I want to pick up there this evening. Going to the timeline, let's just kind of quick like review from last night. The things I noted that happened in the Constantinian change, if you go back there to 3.13 and under that angled line where I have Constantinian change, under 3.13 there, because that is essentially the four theological issues that change the very nature of the church.

And in your outline, if you flip back to the next page, you'll see the marks of the fallen church there. There are eight marks of the fallen church. Now, I don't have time to spend a lot of time on that, but just so you understand a bit how to use that and understand it.

Those eight points are not original with me, although I agree with them. Marks of the fallen church and by fallen church, I have that in quotes. That comes from the writings of the early Anabaptists, many of whom referred to the Catholic church as the fallen church.

And they referred to the Constantinian change as the fall of the church. And then they talked about these kinds of things that are marks of the fallen church. I drew those all out of Anabaptist sources and put them together in a list.

There's not an Anabaptist writing that I know of that lists those eight. But in all of the writings that I've read and researched, I found these kinds of things said in their writings about the Catholic church. And then, because sacralism, remember that term, that first word under the four things listed there, where you have a formal state church, and everybody becomes a member by virtue of infant baptism and so on.

Well, that's sacralism or Christian sacralism, which today we have a lot of Muslim sacralism, where in Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, there they do not allow any Christians to proselytize. Only a few years ago, there was a Christian who was there undercover, under business, was there as a missionary, however, and he led a number of people to the Lord, and they caught up with him, arrested him, and they were going to execute him. And the pressure from our government is the only thing that saved his life.

They were going to kill him for persuading Arabian Muslims to become Christian. That is the power and the corruption of sacralism. And it was Christian during the Dark Ages and Renaissance and through to 1650 at the end of the Reformation era in the Peace of Westphalia.

But just note the kinds of things that our forebears would have said about the marks of the fallen church. And the matter of coercion, number four, coercion in matters of faith or the loss of personal holiness and the professionalism and hierarchy of the clergy. And yet that has affected us.

There are conservative Mennonite groups, including my own roots, that have elevated the bishop role to the point where, man, you just cannot disagree with the bishop. And whatever the bishop says goes. And the bishop is over the ministers and over the deacon.

The hierarchy is something like bishop, minister, deacon. And yet the difference between bishop and minister is foreign to the New Testament. It's just not there.

And it wasn't there in the early church. They used the term bishop sometimes, but they were talking about ministers. They had the pastoral ministry and they had the deacon ministry.

And they had evangelists and apostles and teachers, but they did not have a separate bishop role until into the fourth generation about 100 years after Pentecost when that began to happen. But I haven't time to spend a lot of time at that. But we have those four things just as a matter of review as the, you could call it the birth or the aborning of the Catholic Church.

Sacramentalism is where specifically baptism and communion, they actually convey the grace that we believe and is clearly taught are symbols of the grace. In other words, if you are baptized, that makes you Christian. If you take part in communion, that gives you the life of Jesus.

And did you know that Catholics are opposed to divorce, not so much because of the teachings in Scripture, but because they see marriage as a sacrament and say that when a priest marries a couple and pronounces them husband and wife, I don't know, do Catholic priests say like many Mennonite preachers, man and wife? I remember when our bishop married me. We had a bishop then, yeah, married Mary Jane and me. He pronounced us man and wife and I thought I was a man before, you know.

It's husband and wife. In any case, what happens in the Catholic idea of things is that at that point they are literally made one flesh and only the Pope can undo a sacrament. So if you want to be a communican Catholic and you want a divorce, you have to go through the long process of getting your divorce authenticated by the Pope and then you can remarry and remain a communican Catholic.

That's sacramentalism. Then sacerdotalism is the priesthood of the ministry as over against what we as Christians and evangelicals believe as the priesthood of all believers. Even Luther caught on to that one.

And of course Luther missed sacralism and he missed the use of force as not an option for Christians to follow. Well, let's go back now to the Renaissance from after the Crusades in your line there. After the Crusades and in that era from 1291 to 1517 when the Reformation began.

There you have a lot of good things happening in Europe. There was an explosion of education and knowledge and literacy and the lifestyle of people did improve some. However, then they had lots of wars during the 16th century and they had the plague.

It is actually thought that from 1500 to 1600 in that century the population of Europe may have dropped by 20 to 25% because of wars, persecution and the plague. It was a terrible time in that regard. But there were a lot of other things that were happening that were good and we'll note just a few of those.

You'll notice in my space there where I pick up John Wycliffe, I have a line there, I don't have the year of his birth but that year 1384 is the year of his death. And John Wycliffe, after which Wycliffe translators his name, John Wycliffe was a British churchman and educator and he was so esteemed as an educator that he actually managed to resist the Catholic Church in his lifetime and preach an evangelical doctrine actually and tried to get some of the Bible translated into the language of the people, English in that case, and the church opposed him strongly. They were saying of course that God's language is Latin and so they had the Latin Bible, the Latin version of the Old and New Testaments even though they were written in Hebrew and Greek, but they had the Latin Bible, all their liturgy was in Latin and they emphasized the language thing and intentionally they wrote these things so we're not just guessing at their motives.

They actually wrote these things saying that if they would put the Bible into the language of the people, what is called the vernacular, in the different languages they spoke in Europe and the British Isles, if they would have put it in those languages then the people would have read it for themselves and confused themselves and only the trained clergy can really understand the Scriptures. So they intentionally kept it from the people. But Wycliffe came along and he wanted to get the Bible into the English language and he preached and taught an evangelical doctrine that one is saved by grace through faith, not through the sacraments and the grace that is conveyed by the priesthood of the priests in administering the sacraments to you.

Well, he managed to die a natural death. He was harassed some. But his followers were so effective that it upset the church so badly that 25 years later, that would be about 1408, they dug up his bones, dug up his grave, got his bones, wired his skeleton together so it was a cohesive skeleton and put him on a chair, tied him to a chair, took him to court, tried him as a heretic, pronounced him guilty and turned him over to the state to be burned at the stake.

So they burned his bones and then they scattered his ashes on the River Thames. I've said already, I hope the Lord will let him watch just to see how foolish people can become when they're angry and motivated like the church was back then. But Wycliffe, as every other European would have done then, wrote his scholarly stuff, including now his religious theological writings, in the Latin language.

That was the language of the educated of Europe. So people could read it elsewhere. That led to the enlightenment of a man over in Prague, in what is Czechoslovakia, and his name is John Huss.

He died eight years after Wycliffe's bones were burned, but 33 years after he had died. So you have John Huss reading Wycliffe and reading his Bible and becoming an evangelical. And again, you understand that word evangelical.

He went from being Catholic in his concept, or sacramental in his concept of salvation, to now believing that one is saved by grace through faith. That's an evangelical, and that's us. We believe that.

But anyway, he went to preaching, although he was on the faculty at the University of Prague. He was an ordained priest. He never renounced his priesthood.

He was operating within the church and trying to bring understanding and light into the church. And it is said that he would preach at times at the cathedral in Prague that seated, you know, five, six hundred people. But people were standing along the walls, in the aisles, and in the summertime especially, they would stand at the windows and doors.

There were sometimes more than 10,000 people who listened to him preach. People were hungry then, just as they are now, for the truth. And it resonated in their hearts when they heard the truth of Scripture taught to them, preached to them.

But you know, I've often wondered, like in the New England revivals as well, it is said that some of those men preached sometimes to 20,000 people. Spurgeon preached to 20,000 people at times, and they had no PA system. But they didn't have jets and cars and planes and, you know, that kind of thing.

Probably not fans either. They just sweat when it was warm. But in any case, they had to raise their voices and people had to be quiet to be able to hear them.

But they managed to do it and have those big crowds. Well, Huss was doing that preaching and teaching there at the University of Prague, but the bishop of Prague was unhappy with him. And of course, he was in conversation by mail and so on with the pope and with the cardinal or archbishop who was responsible for that area.

And they set up a trap for him. It was not known at the time. But they asked him to come to Constance and make a defense for his teaching.

And he said no and the people who were with him said no as well because they kind of smelled a trap. And then the pope sent him a guarantee of safe passage to Constance and back for himself and an entourage of up to 15 people. So he decided to go.

He had this guarantee of safe passage with a papal seal on it. And so he carried that with him and they rode off to Constance. And on the outskirts of Constance, they were arrested by sheriffs or deputies and put in jail.

And Hus said to the jailer, this is not right. I have a guarantee of safe passage. I demand to see the bishop of Constance.

So the bishop came to see him. And the conversation went something like this. Hus said you can't do this to me.

I came to defend my teaching and he pulled out this paper with the papal seal and said I have here a guarantee of safe passage into and back out of Constance, back to Prague. You can't do this to me. And the bishop just quickly grabbed through the bars and snatched that paper from him and said the church has no obligation to keep its word to heretics.

And they burned him at the stake. And quite a few of his entourage, not all of them, some of them were allowed to return that under torture recanted somewhat and so on. But that's just a sad and terrible blight on the integrity of the church at that time.

That led to such an upheaval back in Prague that you had a large element of people who had been used to his teaching and there were others now preaching and teaching the same that left the Catholic Church and started what we know as the Bohemian Brethren. And that led to the formation later of what we know as the Moravians or the Moravian Brethren. There's a definite connection there.

We're not sure how much, but there's a definite connection there. And the Moravians actually probably have the distinction of even being more evangelistic and mission-minded and for a longer period than the

Anabaptists were. They gave nearly a third of their men and up to 10% or more of their women to missions.

And most of them never returned home. Many of them died and some were martyred and travel was so expensive and slow that when they left for the mission field it was a lifetime's commitment. And yet they had many volunteers to do so and the people back home raised money to enable them to go and set up and live in the areas where they were going to be missionaries.

Now the next thing you notice where I have a line coming down from that era is dated 1450. That's the printing press. I don't know if you've given much attention to history, the world history, but I feel kind of extra privileged.

One time in Plain City, of all places, we stopped at a small garage sale and I saw these several boxes of books. And here it was a new set of books authorized to be printed by the Queen of England way back in the 1800s, 1700s. And then there was a new printing made in the mid-1900s and that was what this was.

And the lady said her father, who was a history buff, ordered those books but then got sick and never read any of them and most of them were still wrapped in the paper. Twenty-five volumes from creation up to about 1900. They were initially printed in the 18th century, the 1700s, but then were several books added and reprinted later.

And I asked, well, how much do you want for them? I thought she might ask \$10 a book. They probably cost \$30, \$40 a book. She said, well, would you give me \$25 for them? And as a good Mennonite, I thanked the Lord and said, yes, and gave her her \$25.

And then I found there were two or three missing and she said, if there are any missing, I have them at home. So I called, went back, and got the other books and I said, you know, it kind of bothers me. So again, as a good Mennonite, I only gave her \$5 tip for the last three.

But that's the whole history before it was polluted with evolution and that sort of thing. Written by historians from a Christian worldview. But anyway, in the process of history, they say there are about a half a dozen major developments or inventions that have substantially changed human history.

If you recall from your learning in school, in grade school, they told you the first one was fire. And then after that, probably the wheel. And wheels do work better than sleds, right? I'm not sure how we would do cars with sleds under them.

But anyway, and all the other kinds of things that happened with the wheel. But the printing press was one of those really, really big things. I have read historians who've said that if Wycliffe and Huss would have had access to the printing press, the Reformation would have happened in their era.

Because they would have gotten it out to lots more people. And that's exactly what did happen in the Reformation. By the time the Reformation began in the 1520s, you had printing presses in most towns and villages.

Even small villages were apt to have a printer. And you could make bills of sale, or you could make short newspapers, brief newspapers, and or specifically, you could write pamphlets or tracts. And that's what the Reformers did.

Then the Catholics picked up on it to rebut the Reformers. The Anabaptists did it. The Complete Writings of Menno Simons.

It's a big, thick book. And some people are put off by it because it's so big. But it's a lot of small segments.

It's his tracts that he wrote over the course of a 25-year period that he lived and served as an Anabaptist leader, an Anabaptist minister. So the printing press came on in 1450. And then you have the beginnings of the Reformation starting in 1517.

And let me just note a few things that were happening in that time so that we know a bit about what the world was like in 1500. What the world was like in that time frame. And why the Reformation would have happened.

Many who have just a surface exposure to the Reformation would say that the main reason for the Reformation was theology or religious issues. And it was an important one. But it could be argued that it may not have been the most important one.

It might have been the most important as far as the outcome of the Reformation, but as far as what gave impetus to the Reformation. You had a growing disparity between the rich and the poor that kept getting worse during the Renaissance era. And so you have a social-economic disparity happening.

And you know how it is today yet. In fact, our present president is trying to solve the problem of the wealthy and the poor. Except that in America we hardly know what poor means compared to other places in the world.

In America, you're poor if you can only afford one television and one home and one car. That sort of thing. In fact, two years ago when I did my taxes, an older retired Lutheran man was doing my taxes.

And at the end of that, we had talked a lot of church things and so on. He said, Pastor Veatchee, you could actually apply for some money from the government. You are in poverty whether you know it or not.

I said, oh my goodness, my wife and I are both overweight and we live in a nice home. We have a good vehicle. We have no needs.

Oh, I could think of a few wants, but no needs. But the government thought I was poverty stricken. And they actually, without applying for anything, along about mid-summer, I got a check for \$44.

That really solves poverty. And when I got that check, I looked at it and it was this reverse thing. Someone just looked at my tax return and had pity on me and sent me \$44.

So we went out to eat about twice on it. We decided, well, if they are dumb enough to send it, I'll be dumb enough to spend it. But that kind of thing was happening back there to an extent that we can't imagine.

And the big issue was that the Catholic Church, there were two things about it. The Catholic Church had become very wealthy. The reason they were so wealthy is because they had been selling indulgences for a long time.

And the wealthy people especially, but also even some that were quite poor, if they were dying and were in fear of hell, and the priest would say, well, if you give your land or if you give your money or whatever to the church, I can say prayers and do masses for you that will shorten your time in purgatory, which is a

mini hell, a temporary hell, where you make satisfaction for your sins. Now, if you were on your deathbed and you didn't know the Bible, you only knew as truth what the priests told you, and you had a lot of money, would you give it to stay out of purgatory? I'd give it all. And the church became very wealthy in land, in money, in art, pictures and so on.

They became very, very wealthy. And while the Jews had begun the banking business in the Dark Ages already, and were bankers in Europe at the time of the Renaissance and the early Reformation era, the church had also gotten into banking. In fact, some of you may know people by the name of, I've just lost his name, the one who was a Lutheran, well, he was earlier a Catholic bookkeeper for the parish priest.

They're mostly in brethren circles now. George, that's terrible, but it's a part of my aging process where my computer kind of blocks out. But anyway, this particular man, who was a sensitive person, had been the bookkeeper and treasurer for his parish, for the church, and then the Reformation hit that area and his church went Lutheran.

And so he remained the secretary treasurer, but it began to bother him that the church was loaning money to its own members, and the going interest was 10%. And there are actually records yet accessible today, they're still extant, that show that there were some cases where families were paying on loans to the church into the third generation. They couldn't pay them.

They had to borrow money, you know, if they were farmers, farming for landowners and often the church or a monastery, they would have to borrow money for their seed and for any machinery or animals they bought to help them with their farming, and then they couldn't pay it back. And they were charging 10% interest. And this man said, this isn't right, we should not be doing that.

And the priest, now the preacher, said, you keep the books, the church sets the policies. So nothing much had changed on that score between being Reformed or being Catholic. Well, he had read one of the Anabaptist tracts Against Interest, that was the title, Against Usury.

The Anabaptists, because of how interest was charged by the church, took a hard position against interest. And for over a hundred years, you could not have joined a Mennonite church in Europe and kept money on interest. They would have made you stop charging interest, or you couldn't join the church.

But understand the context in which that happened. It was a suppression of the poor by the rich, and in many cases it was the church. Even though going into a monastery or a convent, you had to make a vow of poverty, where you wouldn't have any personal money, and celibacy, you'd never marry, and obedience to your authority.

Those three things. Yet, in the monastery and in the convent, they lived well. And the monasteries especially, run by the men, owned lots of land around their own sites, and the poor farmed it for them.

They had lots of money. They had no problem taking care of all their needs, even when people outside were barely getting enough to have food and shelter and clothes. So you had this strong feeling against the church, from the have-nots against the haves.

And something I hadn't thought about it until I began to really do research for teaching purposes, I remembered that yes, every picture you see that was painted during that late Medieval, Renaissance, and early Reformation era, from 1200 to 1600, when you see paintings that depict priests or bishops or popes or archbishops or cardinals, they are almost always overweight. Oh, you could say fat, but that's not

politically correct. And obese isn't even very acceptable anymore.

I really was entertained when I found out that the really politically correct way to refer to people who are overweight is to call them gravitationally challenged. Because what you are measuring when you weigh on the scale is your gravity. Some of us are more grave than others.

But in any case, the thing that was happening was that these religious people had plenty to eat, and they ate delectable food, while the poor barely made it. Just a really bad set of circumstances and a lot of reaction to it. You've heard of the peasants' war, the peasants' revolt, that kind of thing.

And Luther took the side of the church against the peasants in the final analysis. He kind of started on the other side, wound up actually because the peasants weren't submissive to the church. And by that time, he was dealing with the Anabaptists, which he saw as part of that whole rebellion.

And so he turned against the peasants. But that is a big factor in why the Reformation actually happened. Also, in the case of the political situation, the Roman Empire had fragmented so badly from the late 4th century on up through, with a couple times in between where it got a little better.

But it was fragmented so bad that the main thing that held the European people together was the Catholic Church. And the popes were actually, probably politically and of course religiously, much more powerful than the emperors. There would have been exceptions like Charlemagne and a few others like him.

Well, Charlemagne was later. But Pope Gregory would have been a very powerful pope in the 800s. But the thing would be that you had a fragmented political system, but a unified religious system that was very wealthy and very powerful and actually controlled a lot of the political ongoing in Europe at that time.

And with their money and their influence, they could pretty well decide who was going to be in control in any given country in Europe during that time. But what had happened then was that there were not only people like Martin Luther, there were others. And Luther, as I've read his life and read his writings, his theology, I would say to us, let's not be too unkind to Luther.

We certainly have a lot of disagreements with him. And it is true that he gave his blessing to persecuting, even killing Anabaptists. And that was a terrible blind spot on his part, or even worse than a blind spot.

But on the other hand, he had a lot of courage. And on some things, he was right on target. He was right.

And he didn't back down, even when it looked like it would cost him his life. And the Catholic Church would have loved to kill him when he first began the movement that we know as the Reformation. The context in which it happened was that Luther had been sent by the Church to teach at the University of Wittenberg in Germany, the same town that is Wittenberg now.

And in fact, because of its historical significance, they have pretty well restored the old city of Wittenberg. And in fact, where Luther lived with his wife, he married a nun once the Reformation had begun. He married a nun when the convent was closed and the nuns scattered.

And he and his wife lived in a building that still stands today, but today it's a hotel. Mary Jane and I and our two daughters, when they were 12 and 14 back in 1977, we stayed in that. That was then in East Germany, communist Germany, but we had a visa to get in.

And we went there, and they put us in what they called the Luther-suite. That would be the Luther-suite. And I said, what does that mean in relation to Luther? And they said, those are the two rooms where Luther and his wife lived until they had quarters to live at the university when he was transferred there.

So I've slept in the same room that Luther did. Doesn't that put a star in my crown? But it was kind of interesting to note that there was a television in it too, and I'm sure Luther didn't watch it. But in any case, Luther was sent there to Wittenberg.

Hadn't been there real long. I don't know for sure how long. That doesn't matter for our purposes now.

But one evening, he would take walks in the evening, and sometimes during the day. In fact, it is said, one of the interesting side notes is that one time when he was walking, and boys would tend to walk with him because he seemed to interact well with the boys, the young boys, one of them asked him one day, he said, Dr. Luther, what was God doing before he made the world? They said, Luther never batted an eye, broke a stride or anything, and he just retorted back and said he was thinking of ways to punish boys who ask foolish questions. And so that ended that question, I guess.

But who knows what all other questions might have been asked that he did answer rightly. But in any case, he made his walk one evening, and he saw this crowd up ahead. And here was a monk, John Tetzel, selling indulgences.

And he would sell indulgences for the dead, meaning if you had a family member or friend who had died, and you knew that they probably didn't have enough merit to go to heaven, so they would be in purgatory. Tetzel said, if you buy an indulgence for your departed friend or loved one, his soul or her soul will fly free from purgatory when your money jingles in the coffers of the Pope. And they were raising money for what is today St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.

They put a statue of Peter there. If you go there today, I've not been there, but I've been told this, saw a picture of it in fact, where they have actually kissed away St. Peter's big toe on that statue. Over all these centuries, people go there and they kiss him on the big toe.

And he's ouching over that. He's lost his toe. Well, they were building that particular facility, which still stands as magnificent architecture today.

When people were poor and they were selling indulgences, Tetzel was only one of probably thousands who sold indulgences for money. And Luther watched that, saw that happening, listened to him. He was also selling indulgences for the living, which means if I had an evil intent or desire, Tetzel would have said to me, give me some money and I'll give you an indulgence and you can go commit your sin without any fear of purgatory.

If you should die before you could make confession, you've already done your, you've made your satisfaction with this indulgence. Talk about deliberate, intentional sinning. It was an invitation to do so.

And Luther was angered by that whole thing. Yeah, he was a good German. He had a temper.

He even threw the ink bottle at the devil one time. But he was angry and he thought to himself, probably the women on the street, women will do a heavy business tonight. So that night he went out and just watched what was going on.

And it was clear that men were living up the night and painting the town red with their sin, thinking that it was okay because they'd made satisfaction according to the church. So he went home and began to write all of his disagreements. Now, it didn't just happen then.

He must have had a period of time when he, as a monk and a priest, was saying some things are not as they ought to be because he sat down and wrote 95 disagreements with the Catholic Church. Now, admittedly, if you go over those, you could probably eliminate a third of them because they're repetitious. But even if you do, you've still got 60 plus disagreements with the church.

Over the years, I would tell young people in classes, if you have a bone to pick with your church, I challenge you to sit down and find 60 or even 95 disagreements you have with your church. And they all just kind of smiled and knew they didn't have that many. And Luther's were valid.

He took those 95 pieces, as they were called, and he nailed them on what was the university bulletin board where people would nail things up. And, of course, we saw the door where that was, but the door has been replaced maybe twice since that time. In fact, that building, the church was hit by a bomb during World War II and had to be repaired.

You could see where it wasn't quite the original stones. But much of it is still the same church with new doors since, I'm sure. But they look very old.

He nailed it on there, and that opened the discussion. And, of course, his name got associated with that, and the local clergy had to make a decision. The majority of them agreed with him.

And the thing that made it work was that the magistrates, the political wing of government in that region, they agreed, for the most part, with Luther. So it tied the hands of the clergy that disagreed with him and the Bishop of Wittenberg, who didn't agree with him. And they tried different ways to shut him up.

But they finally asked him to come to the city of Worms. That's the way you pronounce that. If you have seen this in English writing, the Diet of Worms, he went to the Diet of Worms.

That sounds like he was going to eat wiggly worms. No, it's the Diet, which is a congress, of Worms, which is a city. And they don't associate Worms, that's the way they pronounce it in German, they don't associate that at all with worms.

Weilmann is worms. But the city of Worms is where he was asked to come and make a defense of his, what they called, heresy. And his colleagues, they said, Don't go, they will kill you.

He said, and here you admire the man's courage, because he knew the church, he knew how she acted, collectively and under the leadership of the Pope, who was a very bad Pope at that time. Anyway, he said, If there are as many demons in the Diet as there are tiles on the roof, I will go and defend my faith. And he did.

So the magistrates planned to protect him, even though they had also assured him that he would have safe passage. So he went to the Diet in Worms in a carriage, he didn't have to ride a horse as we had done, but he went in a carriage to the Diet of Worms. That building still stands today.

You can see where that all happened. And he made his defense there. And they asked him to recant.

He said, I will recant if you can show me from the Scriptures that I am in error. That's a good Anabaptist line. And then he said, his last statement, recorded at least, was, Here I stand.

I can do no other. So help me God. And then they made some comments, urged him to recant.

And he returned to his quarters where he was going to stay in some hotel that night and then leave the city in the morning. And having been guaranteed safe passage, he thought it was safe to do so. The next morning, his entourage left town, headed back toward Wittenberg.

But the magistrates who were on his side had gotten wind of a plan by the church to arrest him on his way out. So before the ambush that was planned by the Catholic church, the magistrates of Wittenberg ambushed him. And he thought, and so did his entourage initially, that this is it.

You know, they're going to take him back. But then they assured him that they are working for the magistrates at Wittenberg. And they whisked him off to a castle of a man who was on his side of the issues as well.

And he hid out in a castle for nearly two years. And that's where he began to translate the Bible into the German language. Today yet, I'm told, I would not know this, but I'm told and I've often read that Luther's translation from Hebrew and Greek to German is as good a translation as any of the Western languages.

I don't know if it is or not. But it was a good translation. He was a scholar.

He was very committed to what he believed. It's just unfortunate that he didn't go all the way. He did not see the believer's church.

And he didn't see repentance very well. He taught faith in Jesus as a basis for being justified and not the sacraments. He was evangelical.

But he said little about repentance. And so consequently, when he kept the state church and they kept right on baptizing babies, they wound up with a lot of carnal people in the church. And Luther, close to the end of his life, probably about a year, year and a half before he died, I read these words myself from his own writings.

He said, I do not understand why the impiety of our people is greater under the gospel than it was under the papacy. You know what he was saying? He was saying, why do our people live worse under the gospel as Lutherans now than they did when they were under the Catholic domain? Well, we can answer that. And if Luther could come back now and study the issues objectively, he would agree with us.

I've said already, he'd even probably become a good Mennonite. But in any case, what happened was he set them free from the disciplines of the Catholic church, like praying regularly, going to confession regularly, going to church regularly, not eating meat on Friday, fasting one day a week, just a lot of things like that. He just threw all of that out as works religion.

And it can be that. But these people, for the most part, were not born again. And so what happened was he took carnal, unregenerate people out from under disciplines and control and set them free.

But they weren't born again, so they lived worse than they did under Catholicism. And I've seen a good bit of that in the Lutheran circles in our community. And had the privilege, I don't have time to talk about details, but had the privilege of leading two older men, neighbors of mine, they were brothers, leading

them to a repentant faith in Jesus.

And they found peace in their hearts. And at their funerals, well, I didn't get to the second one because I was out of state, but in Henry's case, the first one, his pastor, who was himself a chain smoker, I had discussed that and some other things with him also, but in that funeral, he kept emphasizing that Henry was a sinner, just like all of us, but saved by his faith in Jesus. And I leaned over to Mary Jane and said, Henry knew some things that the pastor doesn't know.

And that is, he knew that repentance was essential. That's where Luther really broke it. Now, as a quick summary of that, if you want the three things that Luther really contributed and that we should thank him for, and respect him for, he said, of course, writing in Latin, sola fide, do you remember that term? Only faith.

Sola in Latin is only, and fide is faith. So he said, only faith. You can't be saved by works.

Only faith. Then he said, only or sola scriptura, or only scripture. The Catholic Church by then, and has more now, had a whole list of things, maybe even a book, nearly the size of the New Testament, of what they called the traditions of the fathers.

Now, not traditions in our usual sense of thinking of traditions. What it was, was the things that the popes would have spoken from Pope Leo I in 440 to the popes of the day of Luther. They had all those things written down that the popes had spoken.

In Latin, they used the term ex cathedra. They had spoken them from the lofty, they tie in the idea of the cathedral, but it was spoken authoritatively by the pope. That word, they said, is equal to, in authority and truth, equal to the words of Jesus, because the pope is the vicar of Jesus.

He stands in the stead of Jesus. Jesus is in heaven, so the church on earth needs a Jesus, needs a head of the church, and that's the pope. And what he has written and taught, authoritatively, that is equal to the words of Jesus.

And a lot of that doesn't even agree, and much of it does not agree with the New Testament. And so, Luther threw all of that out. He was right.

And that's still the thing that keeps Lutherans and Catholics from getting together, because the Lutherans have become, over the years, more Catholic, in a lot of ways, than what they used to be. The conservative Lutherans, like Missouri Synod, they are quite Catholic, but they will not put up with the traditions of the Catholic Church and the infallibility of the pope. In fact, they won't put up with the pope.

So, they are not going to get together, at least in the foreseeable future, over that big issue. Luther was right about that. Then he also said, the Bible should be in the language of the people.

That was the third thing that Luther was definitely right on, and that we should respect. Well, Luther didn't actually start openly preaching much, because he was hidden away in this castle for quite a while. You could actually date the actual Reformation, or the beginning of Lutheran churches and different worship, you could date that to about 1520.

Then you can date the Reformation starting in Switzerland, under Ulrich Zwingli, in the city of Zurich, at 1522. And then you have the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement in Zurich in 1525, but it was early

1525. The actual date is January 21.

Three weeks into the New Year, the Anabaptist movement was begun. And the thing that is noted as the beginning of the movement was that there were about five students under Ulrich Zwingli in what used to be the School of the Priests, attached to the Grossmonster church there in Zurich, Switzerland. Have any of you been to Zurich? You've been to Zurich, so you've seen the Grossmonster with the twin towers and that big attached square kind of building.

That's the same building where this all happened. That was the School of the Priests when they were Catholic. After Zurich became reformed and they had tried to mix things up or to get things together with Luther, but they couldn't make it.

They couldn't get together. And so they went their separate ways and they actually wound up persecuting each other's people. And then both of them and the Catholics persecuted our people.

But the way our movement began... Before I talk about our movement beginning, let me just inject this yet. Zwingli, to his credit, wanted to have Luther's movement and his be one movement. And Luther contemplated it as well.

And so they got together, along with some of their colleagues, and the better part of three days' conversation, it was the third day sometime in the afternoon when the thing broke up, they were trying to get together on the differences they had. And they got most of them ironed out, except the big issue was that Zwingli and his theologians and churchmen, many of them educated as Catholic priests, they said that the communion, the Mass, the communion, the bread and wine does not change. That's called transubstantiation.

It does not change. It's bread and wine. And furthermore, it does not convey grace.

What it does is symbolize the grace that we experience in Christ. But it's not arbitrarily efficacious or it doesn't arbitrarily grant us grace. We agree with him.

He was right on that. But Luther said, yeah, it's still bread. It's still wine.

But he said the presence of Christ is in, under or around those sacred emblems so that when you eat the bread and drink the wine, you still ingest grace. He was at least semi-sacramental. And when you read his stuff, even his theology, you have a hard time figuring out when he's evangelical and when he's sacramental.

And on communion, he's primarily sacramental. And his view is called consubstantiation. The presence of Christ is with, con means with in Latin.

So you have consubstantiation and transubstantiation and then our position, no substantiation, meaning it's still bread and wine. And did you know that the Catholic Church, well, I shouldn't say has because their priesthood numbers have dropped so much. But when I was in 1W service in the 1950s, 55 through 57, I discovered that they had two clinics in the U.S. that were kind of a hush-hush thing.

But they were clinics where they sobered up and dried up Catholic priests who became winos, alcoholics addicted to wine, because they were not giving the wine to the laity, but neither could they leave any wine left over. And so the priest would always drink all the wine. And a city priest might have, on a given

Sunday, he might have four to five masses drinking all that wine.

And if they had a propensity toward alcoholism, a well-meaning person could become alcoholic. And they used to have two places. My guess is they still do, but I don't know that for sure.

So I want to be careful and be correct there. But they used to have two places to dry up priests. But anyway, back to what happened there when these two got together, Luther and Zwingli and their colleagues.

They simply could not agree on that. At the end of that discussion, Luther at one point said, Well, we can't agree. I will not move.

That sort of thing. And then Zwingli stood and reached across the table with his hand and said, I wish you Godspeed even though we don't agree. And Luther stood, looked at him a bit, but did not reach for his hand and said to Zwingli, I do not extend the hand of fellowship to heretics.

And he turned around and walked out. That probably cost a number of thousands of Catholics, pardon me, Lutherans and Reformed men to be martyred by the opposite religious position because they didn't get together on that one. Now back to what happened in Zurich and we'll wrap it up with that tonight.

In Zurich, in this school of ministry, at least five men, and for our abbreviated purposes, let's go with three if you want to take these three names down. They were Conrad Grebel, or just take the last names, Grebel, G-R-E-B-E-L, and Felix Manz, M-A-N-Z, and George Blaurock. His name was actually von Jakob, but they gave him the nickname Blaurock, which means in German, in English, it means blue coat, Blaurock, blue coat.

And so these three men who were the principal leaders, the other two were not particularly leaders, and one of them went back to Lutheranism. But in any case, these three men, Grebel, Manz, and Blaurock, they were students in the school of ministry where the New Testament was the primary text. And in that school, they became devout evangelicals and they understood salvation by grace through faith.

They understood to be a Christian meant to be serious about following Jesus. And they also understood that the church is a believer's church, not a state church. Those three things are very clear in the early writings, especially of Conrad Grebel, to his reformed brother-in-law.

A priest had married his sister, and he was a highborn man from the intelligentsia and aristocracy of Zurich. And this priest had married his sister and was functioning now as a preacher in the reformed church in St. Gall. Now it wasn't St. Gall.

I forget now where it was. But anyway, he wrote a number of letters to his brother-in-law complaining about Zwingli, saying, We can't go all the way with the Scriptures because we have to take all the people with us and we have to keep the magistrates happy. And Grebel's answer to that was, What do the magistrates have to do with the church? And he's right about that.

And anyway, what happened in October of 1524, they had a meeting in which they were to debate Zwingli, and they had judges, churchmen, to judge who won the debate. Well, that was a loaded situation. Zwingli won the debate, of course.

And then the magistrates said to these young men, You must quit opposing Zwingli. Learn from him. And they also said quit preaching because they weren't ordained yet.

They weren't finished with their schooling. And so they were thinking, Man, can we wait? They were so excited about their salvation that sometimes on weekends they would go out on the street and preach. And they got crowds.

People wanted to hear what they had to say. Well, they told them not to preach. Well, they did anyway.

The school closed down somewhat over the Christmas time. Then in early January, they were again called in and warned that they should not oppose Zwingli. Listen to him.

Learn from Master Ullrich, they called their teachers then. His first name was Ullrich. And if you don't, well, they said do that or else.

They didn't say what they would do. So they met together. There were 14 or 15, we're not sure of the number.

There were 14 or 15 men who met together on that winter night of January 21, 1525 to have a prayer meeting to decide what to do. During that prayer meeting, Blahrock, who wrote an account of it, said like this. He said at one point, great fear or anxiety fell on us.

In German he wrote, Große Angst ist uns gefallen. That word angst has come into the English language, pronounced angst. Sounds kind of funny to German speakers.

But it's angst, it's anxiety. And at that point, Blahrock himself got up and said to Grebel, who was the recognized leader, he said, Conrad, for God's sake, baptize me with the true Christian baptism. So Grebel went out, it was his home, his mother and his home, and went out to the well with the milk bucket and got a milk bucket full of water.

And Grebel baptized Blahrock. Then because Blahrock was now baptized, plus he was a bit like Peter among the apostles, Blahrock then baptized the others. And then all of a sudden it just really dawned on them, now they have gone over a watershed.

They have practiced believer's baptism, which they had discussed in the classes with Zwingli. And Zwingli even wrote one time that it grieves him that he must still baptize babies because it ought not to be so. And so now the magistrate says you have to go on and baptize babies, so Zwingli said, okay, we'll baptize babies.

But now they have baptized each other as adults. And they had practiced believer's baptism. And they knew that if this were found out, they would never be ordained as reformed preachers.

They just wouldn't ordain them because that was wrong as far as the magistrates and the top churchmen were concerned. So they looked at each other and said, well, you know, here we are. We're brothers in Christ and we are a church.

So they went ahead and chose ministers. Those three. Grebel, Manz, and Blaurock.

And Blaurock was the only one who was in his early 30s. The other two were still in their 20s. It was a pretty brash move.

What would you think if a group got together, especially that young, and chose three men and ordained them? Didn't have an ordained man there to ordain them. But that was the start of the Anabaptist movement. They never went back to school.

They knew they couldn't. And immediately, the churchmen and the politicians, the magistrates, got after them. And they were in jail numbers of times and flogged and that sort of thing.

And finally, in the spring of 1527, two years and a few months later, they drowned Felix Manz. Grebel died of the plague before they got to him. His reformed sister and her husband actually hid him and took care of him in his last days while he was dying of the plague.

And we'll wrap it up for now. If you want to stand with me, we'll pray and consider ourselves dismissed. Father, we thank You for our heritage.

We thank You for those men and women of the past who have been willing to suffer and even die for what they believe to be truth from You. We pray for that same kind of commitment and persuasion in our hearts that we would be able to stand firm for truth and yet be gracious to each other. So dismiss us with Your grace and blessing and keep us in Your care, we pray.

In Jesus' name, Amen. God bless you.

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