

The Protestant Reformation

(and those who separated from it)

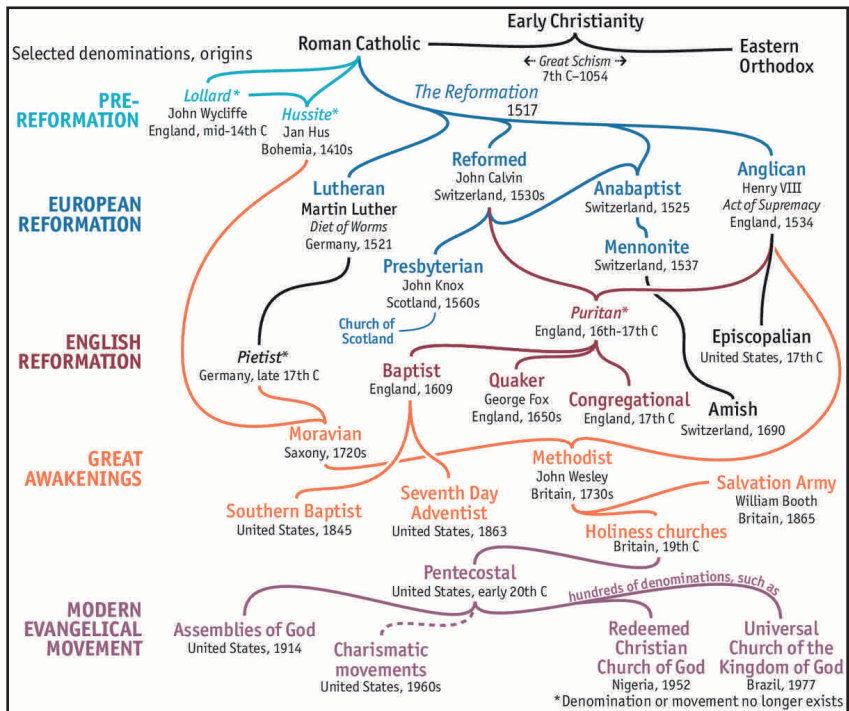


The picture on the front cover depicts Martin Luther nailing his famous 95 theses to the door of the All Saints Church in Wittenberg, Germany, an event which allegedly took place on October 31, 1517, kindling the fire that came to be called the Protestant Reformation.

The Ninety-five Theses or Disputation on the Power of Indulgences is a list of propositions for an academic disputation written in 1517 by Martin Luther, professor of moral theology at the University of Wittenberg, Germany. They advanced Luther's positions against what he saw as the abuse of the practice of [Catholic] clergy selling plenary indulgences, which were certificates believed to reduce the temporal punishment in purgatory for sins committed by the purchasers or their loved ones... Luther's ecclesiastical superiors had him tried for heresy, which culminated in his excommunication. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninety-five_Theses]

Although there had been many other dissenters before him, his excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church opened the floodgates for many discontented and courageous souls to leave the established churches and suffer the consequences. This paper tells a small but very significant part of the story...

A Denominational Family Tree



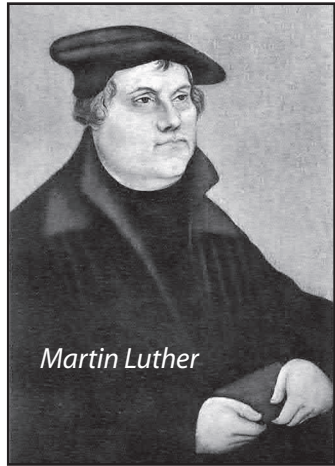
THE FATHERS OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

Martin Luther, John Calvin, and several others are recognized as the fathers of the Protestant Reformation.¹ The word *fathers* used this way means those who originate or institute something. They surely did so, bringing about one of world history's most important revolutions. They split up the international Church of Rome and replaced it with national, or state churches, mainly in northern Europe. They are known as the *magisterial* reformers.

For historians and theologians, this name serves two purposes. First, it identifies their cooperation with the princes and governing authorities of their realms, which they thought necessary for the success of their reforms. Secondly, it distinguishes them from the radical reformers, who are much less well-known figures – men like the Anabaptists Conrad Grebel and Menno Simons.

These radicals, also known as *evangelicals*, had departed from the historic foundation of Christianity laid by the emperor Constantine and the popes as to the proper relationship between church, state, and society. What had happened twelve centuries before with Constantine was (and in many ways, still is) the normal condition by which Christians judge their participation in the world. One historian said much in these few words:

The conversion of Constantine had aligned the Roman Empire with the Christian Church in a working partnership. But the empire, as the earlier institution, had changed the less of the two; in some ways it had barely changed at all – it had replaced one State religion by another. The Church, by contrast, had changed a great deal. It had adapted itself to its State and imperial function; it had assumed worldly ways and attitudes, and accepted a range of secular responsibilities; and in the emperor it had acquired a protector and governor whom it might influence but could not directly control. Hence the Church, by marrying the imperial Roman State, was necessarily influenced by changes which overcame that State in the fifth and sixth centuries.²



Martin Luther

¹ They are counterparts to the early church fathers, men like Augustine and Ambrose, who are widely accepted by the Catholic Church as authoritative witnesses to its teachings and practices. ² Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, Atheneum Macmillan Publishing Company, 1976, p. 126

The magisterial reformers had not departed from this foundation, merely seeking to reform the church in matters of doctrine. As a consequence, they were continuously caught up, as the church of the fifth and sixth centuries was, with the fortunes and changes affecting the worldly powers they were aligned with. While seeking to be advisers to princes on matters of conscience, they were transformed, as many before (and after), into “relievers” of conscience.

Elector Johann Friedrich was prone to solicit advice from Luther and Luther’s colleagues only after policy had been set: The original function of the Wittenburg opinion, to advise conscience, was increasingly transformed by Johann Friedrich into the function of relieving consciences, as a religious sanction and assurance.³



If such was the case of Luther, what was the situation with less-influential reformers?⁴ The radicals harkened back to an earlier time, seeing no Scriptural basis for such involvement — even collusion — with the state. So they reaped, as others had before them, the same treatment at the hands of the state and its church. The radicals viewed such reformers as hopelessly compromised, protected and upheld, as they were, by the power of the state.

On their part, the magisterial reformers viewed the radicals as dangers to societies, if not heretics. Using their connections with the princes, they caused the radicals to be hunted down. Thousands were put to death in a persecution that both Protestants and Catholics could agree on. The principle issues, but not the only significant ones that caused them to kill the radicals, were infant baptism, their opposition to the state church, and war. The magisterial reformers clung to these as essential supports in maintaining order in both society and church.

But there were others for whom this was only half a reformation... The “evangelicals” were the largest and most important group. They desired a more thorough reform in the light of the Bible. They rejected the idea of a

³ Marc Edwards, Jr., *Luther’s Last Battles, Politics and Polemics*, Cornell University Press, 1983, p. 205. ⁴ In a more recent example, the powerful and popular Pope John Paul II worked with Presidents Reagan and Bush in a highly cooperative and effective fashion in bringing down the Iron Curtain. Yet his support of American goals there and in Central and South America did not matter much when he attempted to influence American policy in Iraq in Gulf Wars I and II. The iron of the state prevails over the clay of the church unless the state is very weak. See Carl Bernstein’s and Marco Politi’s *His Holiness: John Paul II & the History of Our Time*, Doubleday, 1996.

state church and infant baptism, which inevitably accompanied it. Their opponents seized on their practice of 'rebaptizing' those baptized in infancy and called them 'Anabaptists' or 'Rebaptizers.' This was a convenient label as rebaptism was already a capital offense.⁵ The Anabaptists were bitterly persecuted and largely exterminated, but their ideas survived and have become steadily more influential.⁶

The effects of the reformers' accommodation with the state (not to mention the Catholic Church for a millennium before them) defines Christian history in a way that is profoundly at odds with the witness of the New Testament church. No search of the Scriptures can find infant baptism, state churches, taking oaths, believers waging wars, or even the clergy-laity system that marks all the great divisions of Christianity – Eastern, Roman, and Protestant. Yet there have always been those (out of the mainstream, to be sure) who cannot believe in things that are not in the Scriptures, no matter how well accepted they are culturally.

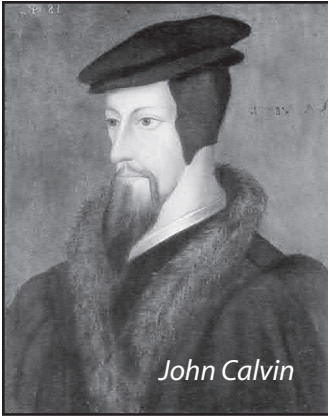
BY YOUR WORDS YOU SHALL BE JUSTIFIED

The beginnings of the Reformation are well known. Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses on the door of the Wittenberg Church in 1517. His prodigious output of tracts, books, and even songs, propagated by the printing press, changed the world.⁷ Not least by his translation of the Bible into the German of the people, he transformed Germany, which bears his mark to this day. John Calvin wrote his first edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536. His awesome intellect influenced the world of the Reformation at least as much as Luther's.

The beginnings of the radical reformation are not well known.⁸ In the very early years of the Reformation, in the city of Zurich, the radicals and the mainstream reformers enjoyed a brief time of fellowship.

In the early years of the reformation, Zwingli worked hand in hand with a group of radicals — Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz and others. They maintained a common front until 1523. But the issues of the state church and infant baptism divided them. It seems that Zwingli himself opposed infant baptism for a time — but drew back when he realized that it is essential if a state church is to be maintained. The radicals' opposition to infant baptism hardened and in 1525, after a public disputation with Zwingli, they began to (re)baptize believers. The town council responded by ordering the exile of

⁵ The Justinian Code, published in three books from AD 533-565, forms the basis for the law of many European nations to this day. One provision, no longer observed, mandated the death penalty for the "crimes" of denial of the doctrine of the Trinity and denial of infant baptism. ⁶ Tony Lane, *The Lion Book of Christian Thought* (Lion Publishing Company, 1984), page 121 ⁷ His collected works in English are fifty-five large volumes long, the last being an index. He is probably the most prolific author in the history of the world, writing a book or pamphlet every two weeks, on average, his entire adult life.



all those rebaptized, and in the following year the death penalty was introduced for rebaptizing. In January 1527 Felix Manz was executed by drowning.⁹

A most unusual event forced the hardening of the radicals' position: the wife of Conrad Grebel had a baby, which they did not want to baptize! The City Council ordered all families to baptize their children within eight days or leave Zurich. Thus, a great movement was born. They suffered relentless persecution for their opposition to the pillars necessary to uphold the state church. Conrad

Grebel was soon imprisoned for life for his actions.¹⁰

Luther finally took a decisive stand against them in 1531 over the issue of whether believers could rise in church and interrupt the preacher. This was, in his opinion, "the sinner's right from the pit of hell," and "even though it is terrible to view," he gave his blessing to the death sentence for the Anabaptists, issued on March 31, 1527.

They called this the "sinner's right" and calmly implied that they, when moved by inner conviction, had as great a right to speak and to act as any pastor, any priest, any reformer or bishop or pope.¹¹

Luther's chief concern was that the Anabaptists "brought to nothing the office of preaching the Word." He cared not that he indicted Paul in this, for the apostle had instructed the members of his churches to stand up and speak when one of them had a revelation, inspiration, or teaching. When this happened, Paul taught, the one already speaking should sit down!

How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification... But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. (1 Corinthians 14:26,30)

This was not the first time in Christian history that people were executed for *obeying* the Word of God, by those who were *disobeying* it. While the contrast between the disobedience of the orthodox and the obedience of the unorthodox has been a frequent occurrence (almost defining the two, one could say) seldom has the contrast been so extreme as in this instance. Over

⁸ The victors in every struggle write the histories, dominate the universities, and control the media. They lay claim not merely to the battlefield, but to the future. ⁹ Tony Lane, quoted in "A Historical Survey of Baptism" by B. Gordon at solagratia.org/article.cfm?id=97 ¹⁰ He escaped with the help of friends and died less than a year later of the plague (1526). ¹¹ Peter Hoover, *The Secret of the Strength*, Benchmark Press

the twenty subsequent years, no less than 116 laws were passed in the German lands of Europe that made the “Anabaptist heresy” a capital offense.

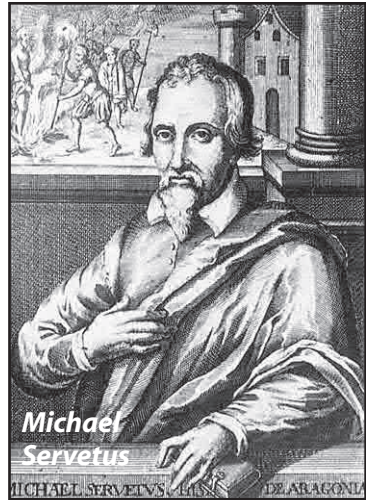
WHAT WILL A MAN DIE FOR?

“Stranger than fiction,” the old saying goes about the truth. The tales of history and the events of today prove this to be true, practically on a daily basis. There is a man unique in all history: burned in effigy¹² for heresy by the Catholics, and burned in reality by the Protestants!

The sentence of the Inquisition against Michael Servetus in the Catholic city of Vienne, France, that “he should be burned at a slow fire until his body was reduced to ashes” was carried out at the instigation of John Calvin by the Protestant city of Geneva, Switzerland.¹³ And burned at the stake for what? Protestant historian Roland Bainton wrote in *The Travail of Religious Liberty* that “he put the adjective in the wrong place.”¹⁴

The judges wrote that Servetus deserved to die for dividing the church of God and thereby ruining many souls. This, of course, was exactly the charge the Catholic Inquisition made in their death sentences against Protestants and Anabaptists. For both, such spiritual ruin was tantamount to murder. The fact that both could not be right at the same time did not bother either the Protestants or the Catholics. The possibility that maybe neither were didn’t even occur to them. The endless possibilities of interpreting theological truths did not give them pause that perhaps they shouldn’t enforce their beliefs on others.

The end was neither merciful nor swift. What was exacted of him “for setting yourself against the divine majesty” calls into profound question how those who could do such things could know, in any way, shape, or form, the Prince of Peace.



*A crown of straw and leaves sprinkled with sulphur was placed upon his head. His body was attached to the stake with an iron chain. His book was tied to his arm. A stout rope was wound four or five times about his neck. He asked that it should not be further twisted. When the executioner brought the fire before his face he gave such a shriek that all the people were horror-stricken. As he lingered, some threw on wood. In a fearful waft he cried, “O Jesus, Son of the Eternal God, have pity on me!” At the end of half an hour he died.*¹⁵

¹² Effigy: a likeness of a person, often roughly and insultingly made. ¹³ Roland Bainton, *Hunted Heretic*, p. 3, 165 ¹⁴ Roland Bainton, *The Travail of Religious Liberty: Nine Autobiographical Studies*, (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1951), p. 94 ¹⁵ *Hunted Heretic*, p. 212

William Farel, Calvin's mentor, and the man who persuaded him to make Geneva his home, steps into Servetus' story at this point. He accompanied Servetus to the stake, pleading with him "openly to admit his errors and confess that Christ is the eternal Son of God." Do you see the turn of phrase for which Michael Servetus died?

WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE

The magisterial reformers believed that the support of secular, worldly power was necessary for the success of their reformations.¹⁶ Governments punish criminals by the sword. With Christian involvement in government, matters of conscience – even of private beliefs – become criminal matters. This had been the case since Constantine. None of the magisterial reformers objected to this. In fact, they supported such authoritarian and intolerant governments enthusiastically. They saw societies filled with a variety of religious sects as the great danger lurking in freedom of conscience.

Lending all the power of their persuasion and prestige as men of God to their governments, these men supported, with very few exceptions, the decisions, policies, and even wars of their rulers. Or, as frequently happened, they urged on their rulers and their societies to shed blood, either in religious persecution or war. Calvin taught that mercy is not allowed in the defense of good doctrine and the punishment of bad doctrine:

Whoever shall maintain that wrong is done to heretics and blasphemers in punishing them makes himself an accomplice in their crime... There is no question here of man's authority; it is God who speaks... We spare not kin nor blood of any, and forget all humanity when the matter is to combat for His glory.¹⁷

This was published after the execution of Michael Servetus.

Among his many calls to arms, Luther's most famous, which also contains an interesting doctrine of works salvation, was against the peasants of Germany:

Stab, beat, strangle to death whoever can. If you lose your life in doing so, blessed are you; you can never attain to a more blessed death. For you die in obedience to the divine word and command.¹⁸

In his famous "Table Talk" – notes of conversations around the table in his house, Luther commented on the war.

¹⁶ Edwards, p. 208: "Through compromise and accommodation to political realities, [Luther] tried to maintain his influence in order to preserve his central insights into Christian faith." ¹⁷ Quoted in J. W. Allen, *History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, (London, 1951), page 87 ¹⁸ "Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants," *Werke, Der dritte Teil* (Jena, Germany: Donatum Richtzenhain, 1560), vol. 3, pp. 124-125 (tr. Andreas Merz, 1997)

*Preachers are the biggest killers of all. For they stir up the rulers to resolutely carry out their duties and to punish pests. I killed all the peasants in the riot; all of their blood is on my neck. But I blame it on our Lord God; it is He who commanded me to speak thus.*¹⁹

It is easy to be offended by the many extreme and radical things Luther and Calvin said and did, and miss the significance of power and influence they had in their day — and that they *still* have in our day. Of course, such exhortations to pick up the sword are not new for Christians. Neither is the credit — or the blame, depending on one's point of view — for inciting bloodshed. Pope Urban II ignited the fire that burned through eight crusades in his call to arms in 1095.²⁰

Many of us grew up as patriotic Americans who made, even in this day, a strong connection between God and country. So it is hard, even at the distance of centuries, to ask the question, "How could the Prince of Peace be served by so much bloodshed?" If we were to ask it, then inevitably our thoughts should carry us to the present day, where it is natural and easy to assume that every use of the sword by our nation is justified — if not divinely sanctioned. And so has every generation justified the sword, and in many nations, religious persecution.

Martin Luther often condemned the pope as the antichrist. Protestants used to say this a lot, but it is politically incorrect today. But what could be more contrary to Christ than Luther's calls for violence and death against the Jews,²¹ the Anabaptists, and his outright calls for war against the Catholics and the Turks? What could be more antichristian than to attach the name of Christ to war and wealth, or as cynics put it, "God, gold, and guns"? ☩



¹⁹ Dr. Martin Luthers Werke - Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Tischreden (Table Speeches), (Weimar: O. Brenner, 1914), vol. 3, p.75 (tr. Andreas Merz, 1997) ²⁰ See "The Crusades: God Wills It!" in *The Mystery of the Black Box* (<http://twelvetribes.org/publication/mystery-black-box>). ²¹ Julius Streicher, one of the most notorious anti-Semites even in the perverse world of the Third Reich, used Martin Luther's seven recommendations against the Jews in his defense at the Nuremberg Trials. See "The Legacy of Martin Luther" in *The Mystery of the Black Box* (<http://twelvetribes.org/publication/mystery-black-box>).

THE SEVEN THESES OF THE ANABAPTISTS

The ninety-five theses Martin Luther posted on the door of the Wittenberg church on October 31, 1517, are very famous. They began a revolution in world affairs religiously, politically, and even socially. Four years later he was called to account before the greatest spiritual and secular powers on earth: representatives of the Pope and Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Luther's answer still rings out as a monument to the freedom of conscience and the dignity of the individual. Indeed, his stand that day has been called one of the greatest moments in history:

Unless I am convicted by scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me, Amen!

Just ten years after Luther's ninety-five theses shook the world, another young priest posted seven theses on the door of the same cathedral in Worms in which Luther was called to account by the Imperial Diet.¹ The seven articles of Jacob Kautz were posted in exactly the same style and for exactly the same purpose as Luther's ninety-five theses — to stimulate discussion and debate. However, Kautz and his movement, the Anabaptists, met the fate the Pope had also desired for Luther's Reformation — fire and the sword.

THE THREAT OF THE ANABAPTISTS

They achieved the dubious and dangerous distinction of being labeled *heretics* by both Catholics and Protestants. And why?

It was because their radical theology was a threat to the existing social order in which church and state were collaborators. This radical criticism of the very structure of society resulted in the unrelenting attempts of Catholics and Protestants to stamp it out.²

To understand why they were viewed that way takes us to the heart of Christian theology and its age-old insistence on encompassing all of society in an authoritarian embrace — no exceptions allowed. And in many ways, even today in nations where church and state are separate, this fundamental world view remains in Christian theology, and its expression may well see the darkness of night once again.

¹ Official government and religious council. ² F.F. Hiebert, "The Atonement in Anabaptist Theology," *Direction Journal*, Vol. 30, #2, p. 122-138.

INFANT BAPTISM AND FREE WILL

Jacob Kautz and two others, Hans Denck and Ludwig Haetzer, defended the seven articles in the town square of Worms on June 13, 1527. The third thesis they had posted on the door of the cathedral struck at what many saw as a pillar of society — infant baptism. One was tied from birth to his church and to his state. But these men objected:

*The baptism of infants is not of God. It is against God and his teaching given to us through Christ Jesus, his beloved Son.*³



This rejection of historic Christian doctrine was founded upon two things. First, the baptism of infants was found nowhere in the New Testament, and secondly, infants could make no free choice in the matter. Anabaptists could not stand Luther's insistence that man's will was enslaved, either to God or to the devil, and man could not freely choose whom he would serve.⁴ This was a point of contention between not only the Reformers and the Anabaptists, but between the Reformers and the Catholics.

THE PROTEST AGAINST THE PROTESTANTS

The essence of what the Anabaptists said, which got them in so much trouble, was that the life of believers had to be different or else the Reformation was just a farce. People had to live their convictions out. Their challenge to the Reformers in the Seven Articles was simple: "How can you say all these things and not live by them?"

The sixth thesis of Worms said that if they weren't living them out, then all that Christ had done for them was of no value. In other words, the An-

³ Peter Hoover, *The Secret of the Strength*, Benchmark Press, Shippensburg, PA (chapter 7). ⁴ They were appalled by Luther's ascription to God of evil-doing, which Luther both did and denied doing in the same breath: "Here then you see, that, when God works in, and by, evil men, the evils themselves are inwrought, but yet, God cannot do evil, although He thus works the evils by evil men; because, being good Himself He cannot do evil; but He uses evil instruments, which cannot escape the sway and motion of His Omnipotence." (Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, Discussion: Second Part, Section 84. Luther was a master of the use of contradiction in his logic (and his life).

abaptists taught that whoever did not follow Christ and obey His commands did not believe in Him. For them, Christ may as well not have come:

*Jesus from Nazareth did not suffer for us in any way, he did nothing to satisfy God for us, as long as we do not follow him in the way he went before us — unless we follow the commands of the Father, like Christ follows them — every man according to his ability.*⁵

This was revolutionary talk! Two weeks later, the councilors of Worms expelled the “troublemakers” from their midst. They had dared to expose the Reformation’s nakedness, like the child in Hans Christian Anderson’s famous parable, *The Emperor’s New Clothes*. Just as the foolish emperor’s “new clothes” were imaginary, so was the Reformation’s connection to Christ. It was, in their view, only adorned with the intellectual doctrines of clever men like Luther.

Naturally, the Reformers responded on the basis of theology, not on whether their religious instruction made any difference in the lives of the people. Indeed, it was an essential aspect of their theology that the Reformation need make no radical difference in the lives of the people. Their works were irrelevant to God. Only their “faith” mattered. To expect the Reformation to make the people more holy or godly would be advocating “works righteousness.” This charge was hurled at the Anabaptists.

CHURCH, STATE, SCHOOL, AND ARMY

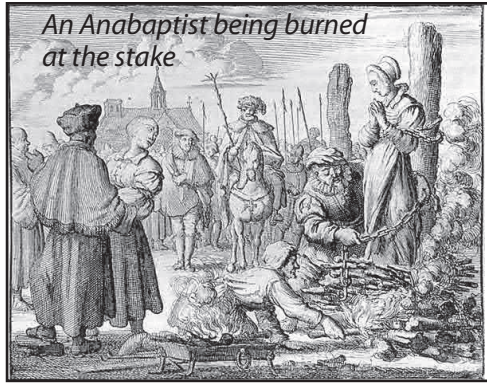
There were areas where Luther did want his reformation to make a difference in society. One of them was compulsory education. He compared it to the state’s supposed right of appropriating a man’s life and compelling him to bear arms and kill other men in war. If the state could do one, it could do the other.

*But I hold that it is the duty of the temporal authority to compel its subjects to keep their children in school, especially the promising ones we mentioned above... If the government can compel such of its subjects as are fit for military service to carry pike and musket, man the ramparts, and do other kinds of work in time of war, how much more can it and should it compel its subjects to keep their children in school.*⁶

The state could compel citizens in this manner because to Luther the citizen was the property of the state. So you can see how Reformation theology would be very useful to princes! In fact, the Reformation, especially that part of it under Luther’s leadership, ended up exalting the authority of the state even more than it was under Catholicism. He upheld in his teaching what scholars call “princely absolutism.”

⁵ Hoover, *The Secret of the Strength*, chapter 7. ⁶ Martin Luther, “Sermon, that children should be Kept to School.” Luther’s Works, Vol. 46 [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967], pp. 213-57.

Because they taught that believers should imitate Christ and obey His commands (including the commands to lay down the sword, to not take oaths or serve in government), the Anabaptists were charged with preaching “works righteousness.” Disobeying Christ’s commands was not “works,” but to put any urgency on obeying them was. For this heresy, the state churches, Catholic or Protestant, ruthlessly persecuted the Anabaptists.



ATONEMENT

Underlying this charge against the Anabaptists was the theological issue of the atonement of Christ for sin. What was its nature? Or, to put it another way, since the Reformers and Anabaptists believed similarly in many ways about the atonement, what was man’s part? What was his response to the atoning sacrifice of Christ? Luther gives the typical Reformation response – man has no part in or response to atonement at all:

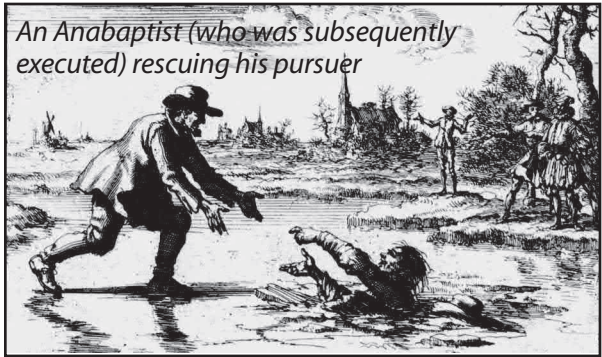
There was no counsel, help, or comfort until this only and eternal Son of God in His unfathomable goodness had compassion upon our misery and wretchedness, and came from heaven to help us. Those tyrants and jailers, then, are all expelled now, and in their place has come Jesus Christ, Lord of life, righteousness, every blessing, and salvation, and has delivered us poor lost men from the jaws of hell, has won us, made us free, and brought us again into the favor and grace of the Father, and has taken us as His own property under His shelter and protection, that He may govern us by His righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and blessedness.⁷

This view of man’s redemption as something doctrinal, relating to man’s legal status before God, as essentially something *done to him*, profoundly shaped Reformation theology. But such a view of the atonement was inadequate or insufficient for the Anabaptists, since,

It concentrated chiefly on Christ’s death and had been reduced to a passive or forensic doctrine which concerned only a change in humanity’s legal status before God. It was an external benefit bestowed by God regardless of human involvement. No wonder that Luther and Calvin who followed this line of thinking resorted to the Augustinian doctrine of predestination.⁸

⁷ Martin Luther, *Large Catechism, Part Second, Of the Creed, Article II.* ⁸ Hiebert, “The Atonement in Anabaptist Theology”

The benefit of Christ's atonement was bestowed on those who, like the citizens in Luther's Reformation, had no more choice in the matter than they did in schooling their children or waging war. So, Luther quite rightly regarded his



An Anabaptist (who was subsequently executed) rescuing his pursuer

book, *The Enslaved Will*, as his greatest work, for it encapsulated his whole view of humanity's relationship with God and the devil. For the Anabaptists, such views of God and man were contrary to Scripture and abhorrent to conscience.

Atonement was far more than a legal transaction in the heavenly court. It meant "at-one-ment" with God, and referred to all the ways in which God and humans have been reconciled through the work of Jesus Christ... In what way does the atonement bring God and humanity back together again? To them Christ was not only *redeemer*, he was also *example*. The gospel was not only the good news of salvation but also a series of directives for the Christian on how to live, how to follow Christ, the example. And in following Christ, humanity could be brought back into the life of God.⁹

DEATH OF A MOVEMENT

Yet in the end the Anabaptists proved that they also lacked the power to overcome sin in their lives. Their keen understanding of Christ's work towards them and in them, which set them apart from their fellow Christians (who murdered them), did not, in the end, keep them from relentlessly dividing. Whatever kept their groups together through the intense persecution they endured from without was not sufficient to deliver them from the disputes within. The evangelistic fire was quenched and they took their ranks among the legions of Christian laity silenced under their preachers and their doctrines.

But the memory of the often-noble lives and courage of the Anabaptists serve as stepping stones for those who would someday go beyond them to restore all things that have been lost. For all things must be restored, beginning with the *Good News*. The Scriptures promise that it will happen.¹⁰ ❀

⁹ *Ibid* ¹⁰ Mark 9:11-12

TILL KINGDOM COME

The Pilgrims were part of a greater movement – stretching back to Wycliffe and Tyndale – to place the Scriptures into the hands of the common man. Yet what they tried to do with those Scriptures is virtually unknown, even though their moving story is told year after year in America. Vivid images remain with us: fleeing persecution in England, leaving Holland, crossing the perilous sea, settling in Plymouth, suffering heroically through their first winter, receiving gracious help from the Indians.

For most of us, their story ends a few months later with the first Thanksgiving. They went on with a life we know very little about, and eventually this great and free nation was born. It is not too clear in the textbooks anymore, but somehow the two – their life and our nation – are connected. These brave but simple and humble men and women had more in their hearts than the great idea we associate with them: religious freedom.

That was certainly part of it, but they came for more than a safe haven for their children from the worldly temptations of Holland. They actually came to recreate on the shores of America the life of the first church – what the world saw in Jerusalem in the first century. We tend to see “the Pilgrims” in a certain way that makes it hard for us to understand what their life together meant to them.

They shared all things in common, not just as a business arrangement with their financial backers, but as an expression of their fervent faith. They were out to bring the “Kingdom of God” to earth. At the least, they sought to be “stepping stones” for those who might come after them, “one small can-



dle” that “may light a thousand.”¹ But they wanted to be stepping-stones to somewhere, a light on the path there.

In their own estimation, they failed. They didn’t become what they wanted to be, but settled for something far less. This was their sorrow, their heartache, and their profound disappointment. They dreamed much more greatly than we have understood, even though the whole story is written in Bradford’s own journal, *Of Plymouth Plantation*. In their own words, the Pilgrim story raises profound questions about the dream, the cost, and even the possibility of bringing the Kingdom of God to earth.

That such a goal filled the hearts of a group of English countrymen is perhaps the greatest wonder of the story, which begins, in this sense, long before any of them were born. It begins with the “morning star” of the Reformation, John Wycliffe, whose work was continued a century later by William Tyndale. Tyndale’s translation remains the foundation of English translations of the Bible to this day. In them burned a fire to purify the church and to give the common man the Word of God. For many centuries it had lain hidden in the hands of the clergy and in the dead languages of scholars. They thought that perhaps if the common people had the Bible, the first, pure love of the primitive church might blossom on the earth again.

WHAT WILL THE PLOWBOY DO WITH THE WORD OF GOD?

In the most famous incident of his life, Tyndale insists on the necessity of the common man knowing the Scriptures and no longer being held in ignorance. When confronted by a clergyman as to what was wrong with their ignorance, since they have the Church to teach them, Tyndale cuts to the heart of the matter. What about the times when the pope is at variance with God’s laws? The priest responds that it would be better to do without God’s laws than the pope’s. In the answer that shaped his life, and secured its violent end, Tyndale vowed, “I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that drives the plow to know more of the Scripture than you do.”

Some seventy years after his death, that plowboy – that *everyman* – joined a group of Separatists in Scrooby, England. They were the most radical of the Puritans who believed in complete separation from the established church. That twelve-year-old boy was William Bradford, whose devotion to the cause cost him the loss of his family, for they disowned him. But his decision meant much more than alienating his family. It placed him at odds with the governing authorities of the English church and state, at whose hands he and the others suffered persecution.

Bradford saw this treatment as nothing less than the opposition of Satan. As he would write in his journal, the Evil One was “loath his kingdom

¹ William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Random House (paperback edition), 1981, pp. 26, 262.

should go down, the truth prevail and the churches of God revert to their ancient purity and recover their primitive order, liberty, and beauty.”²

The desire to see the churches restored to how they were at first, back to their “primitive order,” was the powerful motivation that sustained the Pilgrims through all their difficulties. It is why they were given the despised name of “Separatists” and known as radicals, and driven out of England. It set them on a course to the “wilderness” and “strange lands” and a life filled with “weal and woe.”³ They knew blessings and the keenest of sufferings in a way those who safely adventure less in life will never know.

It was through Bradford’s eyes that history would see the Pilgrims, as his journal, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, forms our chief record of their remarkable life. His poetry and history reveal the deep stream from which this spiritual movement flowed, and the rocks over which it floundered, and upon which it died.

The depth of the bond these men and women had, and the cause to which they dedicated their life, can be glimpsed in this passage from Bradford’s journal, concerning their time in Leyden, Holland:

*Being thus settled (after many difficulties) they enjoyed many years in a comfortable situation, enjoying much sweet and delightful society and spiritual comfort together in the ways of God, under the able ministry and prudent government of Mr. John Robinson and Mr. William Brewster... So as they grew in knowledge and other gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, and lived together in peace and love and holiness and many came unto them from different parts of England, so as they grew a great congregation.*⁴

Of this great congregation, fifty or so would adventure the journey to America in 1620 after lengthy discussion of the dangers and the costs, and the rewards. Concerning the hope that filled them, Bradford wrote:

*Lastly (and which was not least), a great hope and inward zeal they had of laying some good foundation, or at least to make some way thereunto, for the propagating and advancing the gospel of the kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of the world; yea, though they should be but even as stepping-stones unto others for the performing of so great a work.*⁵

Of all that happened to them there, many books are written and many stories are told. It is part of America’s rich heritage of freedom and courage. Many even take note of what they say was their brief flirtation with communism. Later editors even use the word to subtitle that portion of Bradford’s journal. Yet such was not their word for their way. Rather, it was their com-

² Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, pp. 1-2 ³ And at the end of his life, Bradford would say those things had been “the means of grace” and through which “a pilgrim passed I, to and fro.” Poem written on his deathbed in 1656, which may be read at: www.pilgrimhall.org/bradfordwilliampoem.htm ⁴ Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 17-18 ⁵ Bradford, p. 26



mon course, which was to them the ancient purity and primitive order, liberty, and beauty of the first church, where “all who believed were together and had all things in common.”⁶

THE END OF THE COMMON COURSE, AD 1623

After sufferings greater than most of us have known, they faced another lean year, with little prospect of supplies coming to them from England. One issue above all dominated discussion – their “common course” was not working.” So they began to think how they might raise as much corn as they could, and obtain a better crop than they had done, that they might not still thus languish in misery. At length, after much debate of things, the Governor [Bradford writes of himself] gave way that they should set corn every man for his own particular, and in that regard trust to themselves.”⁷ And this decision “had very good success, for it made all hands very industrious... and gave far better content.”

Among those who had survived those first terrible years only a few were left for whom the common good made them very industrious and gave them far better content. Bradford notes very wisely that such a “common course and condition” will not work among men, as generation after generation of utopians, socialists, and communists have learned to their hurt (and to the hurt of countless others). Bradford says they dream that the “taking away of property and bringing in community into a commonwealth would make them happy and flourishing.” Then he tellingly adds, “as if they were wiser than God.”

For this community (so far as it was) was found to breed much confusion and discontent and retard much employment that would have been to their benefit and comfort. For the young men, that were most able and fit for labor and service, did repine that they should spend their time and strength to work for other men’s wives and children without any recompense... And for men’s wives to be commanded to do service for other men, as dressing their

⁶ Acts 2:44 ⁷ All quotes in this section: Bradford, p. 132-134

meat, washing their clothes, etc., they deemed it a kind of slavery, neither could many husbands well brook it... Let none object this is men's corruption, and nothing to the course itself. I answer, seeing all men have this corruption in them, God in His wisdom saw another course fitter for them."

No, they couldn't live this way. They could separate from the corrupted church, cross the ocean to escape the corrupt societies, but they could not escape the corruption of man's condition. Nor have others been able to live this way. All who try strike hard against selfish human nature. Alas, the "common course and condition" is the way of dreamers... but still, Bradford writes: charge nothing against "the course itself." The pain he felt at giving way to the grim taskmaster of necessity he hid away in his heart. There was no time to think of it with their survival at stake. But the ache and the doubt and the sorrow never went away.

Had they abandoned the gospel way, the "primitive pattern," and settled for something much less? That it was God's way for men today, he had no doubt, for creation and the nature of mankind bore witness to it,⁸ but long ago, when the church was young, in the days of their "ancient purity... order, liberty, and beauty," they had done it. What had changed from the days of the apostles? Why couldn't they do it now? Bradford turned away from the question, unable to face the answer.

THE FAIR PRETENSE OF NECESSITY

Time, diligent labor, and the chances of history – all these brought prosperity, finally, to the little band of Pilgrims. The second decade of their existence, the 1630s, saw the Great Migration of Puritans fleeing England to establish their own theocracy in the Bay Colony just to their north. Trading with them changed everything:

And no man now thought he could live, except he had lots of cattle and a great deal of ground to keep them; all striving to increase their flocks.⁹

But as the Pilgrims spread out, Bradford recorded in his sorrow:

The church also was divided, and those who had lived so long together in Christian & comfortable fellowship now parted and suffered many divisions. And thus was this poor church left, like an ancient mother, grown old, and forsaken of her children.⁹

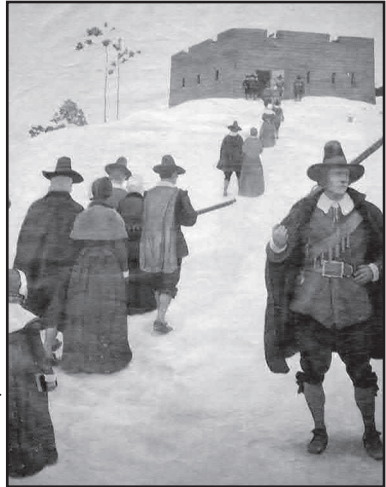
Sometime after 1650, historians believe, several years after his last entry, Bradford was reading over his journal. An old man then, he came upon a section he had written in 1617. As he read, his heart was pierced with sadness as it spoke of how his people had once been.

⁸ See also: "What about the Heathen?" (<http://twelvetribes.org/articles/what-about-heathen>). ⁹ Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 281-282

So that it is not with us as with other men whom small things can discourage or small discontentments cause to wish themselves home again. For we were a body in a most strict and sacred bond and covenant together, the violation of that bond was a serious matter. In that bond we held one another strongly tied to care for each other's good, and for the good of the whole...

Suddenly, the compromises they had made became blindingly clear to him. He took his pen to the original manuscript and penned words in the margin that are still legible. They tell us a great deal of the deep regret of Bradford's last days. His words ring out as a death knell through the halls of time, telling of a movement overcome by the very sins it strove to escape:

O sacred bond, whilst inviolably preserved! How sweet and precious were the fruits that flowed from the same. But when this fidelity decayed, then their ruin approached. O, that the ancient members had not died or been dissipated (if it had been the will of God) or else that this holy care and constant faithfulness had still lived, and remained with those that survived,



and were in times afterwards added unto them. But (alas) that subtle serpent, the devil, has slyly wound himself among us under fair pretenses of necessity and the like, to untwist those sacred bonds and tried, and as it were insensibly by degrees to dissolve, or in great measure, to weaken the same.

I have been happy, in my first times, to see, and with much comfort to enjoy, the blessed fruits of this sweet communion, but now it is a part of my misery in old age, to find and feel the decay and want therefore (in a great measure) and with grief and sorrow of heart I lament and bewail the same. And for others' warning and admonition, and my own humiliation, I do here note the same.¹⁰

Many have taken Bradford's warning and learned his "lesson" not to share all things in common. But was he merely telling us that it doesn't work? If this is truly what he meant, then the stepping stones the Pilgrims laid lead nowhere man has not already gone time and time again. But if the Pilgrims began to walk the way of the primitive church in purity, order, liberty, and beauty, as the believers in Acts 2 and 4 did; if they thought they

¹⁰ Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Introduction, p. xvi.

were no longer natural men, bound to seek after all that the Gentiles seek after, but that by seeking first His kingdom, God would supply all these things to them;¹¹ then anything less than what the Pilgrims adventured is far, far from the path of those stepping stones, in some great darkness away from the light of their one small candle.

Bradford's humility allowed him to face the reality of why their "common course and condition" ended: the devil prevailed over them, dividing them as he has always divided men, in the fear for their own lives and prosperity. If you feel his sorrow, then perhaps you will, as we did, hold the stones of Zion "dear, and have pity on its dust," and sense that now is the time for compassion and favor upon her.

You will arise and have compassion on Zion; for it is time to be gracious to her, for the appointed time has come. Surely Your servants find pleasure in her stones and feel pity for her dust... He has regarded the prayer of the destitute and has not despised their prayer. This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD. (Psalm 102:13-14,15-18, NAS)

King David wrote this long ago. He was speaking of the spiritual nation that would yet bear the fruit of the Kingdom and become the witness of the Kingdom of God to all the earth.¹² Its beginning will be nothing less than the place the early church began, which the Pilgrims had the courage to attempt, even if they lacked what they needed to finish.¹³ They will know that the belief in the most famous verse in the Bible, John 3:16, is realized in Acts 2:44-45:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.¹⁴

Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.¹⁵

And they will understand that there is a way to know they have passed from death and into life:

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.¹⁶

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.¹⁷

Any spiritual movement not built on this foundation will see the gates of hell prevail against it, just as they did against the Pilgrims.✠

¹¹ Matthew 6:31-33 ¹² Matthew 21:43; 24:14 ¹³ Luke 14:26-33 ¹⁴ John 3:16

¹⁵ Acts 2:44-45 ¹⁶ John 5:24 ¹⁷ 1 John 3:14

ROGER WILLIAMS: THE FATHER OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN AMERICA

Roger Williams came to the New World in 1631 with much the same hopes as the first Pilgrim Separatists. In William Bradford's moving words, the Pilgrims desired to see "the churches of God revert to their ancient purity and recover their primitive order, liberty, and beauty."¹ On his part, Williams desired to see a pure church raised up, one with no ties to the Church of England and its corruption, compromise, and oppression.

Ironically that desire is what led to his banishment from the Massachusetts Bay Colony at the end of 1635. His outspoken zeal for "soul liberty" proved too radical for the Puritan leaders of the colony. They had brought with them the same spirit of religious intolerance from which they had fled.

Slipping away just before his arrest, Roger Williams fled into the wilderness and found refuge among the Indians. In later writings, Williams recalls how he was "denied the common air to breathe... and almost without mercy and human compassion, exposed to winter miseries in a howling wilderness [for fourteen weeks] not knowing what bread or bed did mean."² During these bitterly cold winter months, whatever shelter he found was in the dingy, smoky lodges of the Indians. Their hospitality to him in his time of need was something he sought to repay with kindness all the rest of his life.

In early 1636, Williams purchased land from the Indians and with a few friends founded a settlement they called Providence Plantations. As they intended, this soon became a refuge for those "distressed of conscience." Williams eventually obtained a royal charter for the colony, which later became the State of Rhode Island, based on this mandate:

No person within the said colony, at any time hereafter, shall be anywise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question for any differences in opinion in matters of religion ... but that all persons may ... enjoy their own judgments and consciences in matters of religious concernments.

What is most significant about the royal charter is that it acknowledges at the foundation of Rhode Island's government two important principles. They were republicanism (democratic governments made up of representatives elected by its citizens) and religious liberty —what Roger Williams would call "soul liberty." These principles characterize our American government and are later expressed in both the Declaration of Independence and

¹ William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Random House, 1981, p. 1-2. ² Roger Williams, *Complete Works*, Vol 1, p. 319 (Mr. Cotton's Letter Examined and Answered, p. 1), Russell and Russell, 1963.

the Constitution of the United States.

Neither republicanism nor religious liberty can be found in any of the charters of the other colonies in which the church and state were united. It is therefore easy to determine the original source of those principles which have protected our religious freedom and made America a refuge for the oppressed of every land. The nation's debt to Roger Williams is a debt that can never be canceled.

THE BLOODY TENENT

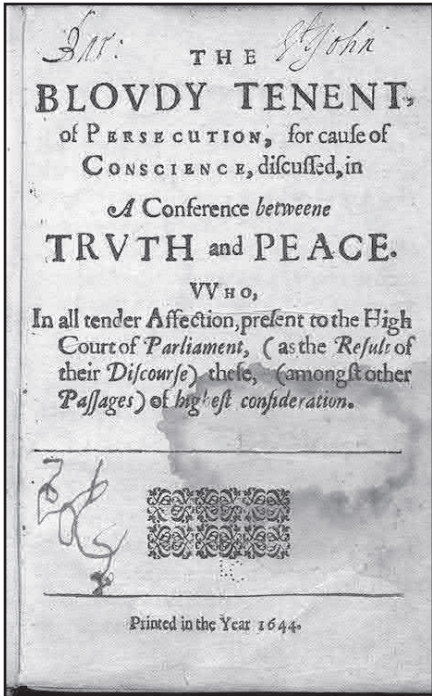
His bitter experience of the English Reformation, from the horrible smell of men burning at the stake in England to his banishment from Massachusetts, caused Roger Williams to write his famous *Bloudy Tenent*

Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience. In it he argued his case for something hitherto unseen in the Western world — the complete separation of church and state. The Puritan society of Massachusetts, on the other hand, through its civil magistrates, attempted to force its religious conscience on all who lived there.

Disenfranchisement (loss of the right to vote or participate in politics), loss of property, banishment, whipping, and even hanging were all employed with the utmost self-righteousness. This was consistent with the bloody history of Christendom since the reign of Constantine. Such persecution revealed to Williams "that religion cannot be true which needs such instruments of violence to uphold it."³

In the great struggle of his soul, Roger Williams finally came to the conclusion that the true church had long ago ceased to exist on the earth:

*The Christian Church or Kingdom of the Saints, that Stone cut out of the mountain without human hands, (Daniel 2) now made all one with the mountain or Civil State, the Roman Empire, from whence it is cut or taken: Christ's lilies, garden and love, all one with the thorns, the daughters and wilderness of the World.*⁴



³ Roger Williams, *Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* (1644), p. 139

⁴ *Bloudy Tenent*, p. 174-5

*Christianity fell asleep in the bosom of Constantine, and the laps and bosoms of those Emperors who professed the name of Christ. The unknowing zeal of Constantine and other Emperors, did more hurt to Christ Jesus his Crown and Kingdom, than the raging fury of the most bloody Nero's.*⁵

Consciously choosing Paul's euphemism for death in 1 Corinthians 11:30, Williams saw the embrace of the Empire fatal to the church. The trail of evidence that proved the death of the church led from the Puritan society of New England all the way back to Constantine's nationalization of Christianity in the fourth century.⁶ Since that time, Williams concluded, the world had been under the dominion of the "anti-Christian" Roman Catholic Church.⁷ Gone was the cultural and spiritual wall that had separated His garden, the church, from the wilderness of the world.⁸ As legal scholar Timothy Hall put it:

*According to Roger Williams, there was no garden to be protected any longer. Weeds grew where cultivated flowers once bloomed. He did not advocate a wall between church and state; he mourned the wall's destruction and the destruction of the church. There was no church left to be separated from the state. The most that true believers could do was wait in expectation that God would one day send apostles who would replant the garden.*⁹

Did Williams attempt to erect that wall and replant that garden in Providence? After all, he was baptized there, and Williams is credited with founding the first Baptist church in America. Roger Williams and eleven friends did form the first Baptist church in America in Providence, Rhode Island. Ezekiel Holliman¹⁰ baptized him by immersion in March of 1639, after which he proceeded to baptize Holliman and ten friends. Shortly after this, however, he came to a most remarkable conclusion, as one of those friends describes:

*I [Richard Scott] walked with him in the Baptists' way about three or four months, in which time he brake from the society, and declared at large the ground and reasons of it; that their baptism could not be right because it was not administered by an apostle. After that he set upon a way of seeking (with two or three other men that had dissented with him) by way of preaching and praying; and there he continued a year or two, till two of the three had left him.*¹¹

Roger Williams' actions declared what his later words would make abundantly clear: all Christian baptisms were and are invalid, unless apostles,

⁵ *Bloudy Tenent*, p. 184 ⁶ There are few things Williams inveighed against more than the "national churches" of this world imitating the nation state of ancient Israel...and so taking the sword, literally, against her enemies. ⁷ *Bloudy Tenent*, p. 184; Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent Yet More Bloudy*, p.442 ⁸ *Bloudy Tenent*, p. 175 ⁹ Timothy L. Hall, *Separating Church and State* (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1998), p. 25 ¹⁰ He had followed Williams from the Salem church where Williams had briefly taught several years before. ¹¹ Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, volume 1, page 222.

like those of the first-century church, administered them. Roger Williams expressed this in his radical statement regarding the conversion of the Indians of New England:

How readily I could have brought the whole Country to have observed one day in seven; ... to have received a Baptism ... to have come to a stated Church meeting, maintained priests and forms of prayer, and a whole form of Antichristian worship in life and death ... Why have I not brought them to such a conversion as I speak of?¹² I answer, woe be to me, if I call light darkness, and darkness light ... woe be to me if I call that conversion unto God, which is indeed subversion of the souls of millions in Christendom, from one false worship to another, and the profanation of the holy name of God.¹³

In Roger Williams' eyes the church had died and would remain dead until God rekindled the spark of the early church through the love and authority of the apostles he would raise up at some point in the future. It did no good to try to convert people to a dead religion. Williams began to call himself a "waiter," for he saw no alternative but to wait patiently until that restoration.¹⁴ Meanwhile, he and the rest of mankind must find a way to live in peace and practice their diverse and divided religions according to the persuasion of their own conscience.

THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

This conclusion brought Roger Williams to his understanding of the proper role of the state. He realized that the affairs of the state ought to be purely secular.¹⁵ He rejected John Winthrop's "City on a Hill" vision of the Puritan colony in Massachusetts, in which the civil government had the power to enforce religious correctness. He believed that no nation had a mandate from God to bring His redemptive plan to the world,¹⁶ therefore the affairs of the state should be separate from the affairs of religion. Individual believers of all faiths should be protected from the tyranny that results when religion forms an alliance with secular government.

It was from this conviction that Roger Williams established the colony called Providence Plantations, which later became the state of Rhode Island. Nowhere in the colonies was there more personal freedom and acceptance of diverse religious expression. Believing that government in the nations was "merely human and civil," Williams did not see civil government as redemptive. He recognized that the political skills and moral fortitude necessary to preserve civil peace might easily be found among Jews, or Turks, or Chinese

¹² The trust the Indians accorded him because of his friendship, fair dealing, and the effort he put in to learn their language, made him uniquely qualified to do this.

¹³ "Christenings Make Not Christians," *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams*, vol. 7, pp. 36-37. (Russell and Russell, 1963) ¹⁴ Hall, p. 27; *Bloudy Tenent*, pp. 293-294

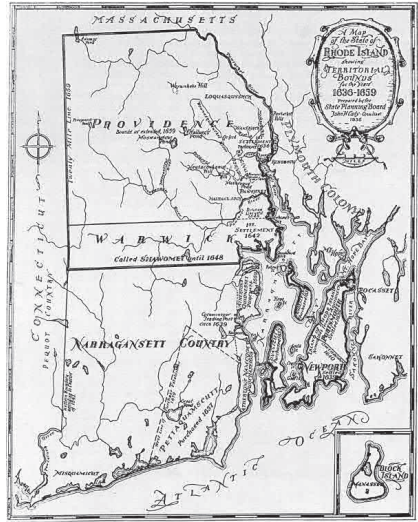
¹⁵ *Secular* means not bound by religious rule; it does not mean *godless*. ¹⁶ *The Godless Constitution*, p. 50-51

as among people who professed Christianity.¹⁷ As Timothy Hall observed, “Although they had the wherewithal to dictate the terms of Providence orthodoxy and thus erect their own brand of religious establishment, they declined to do so.”¹⁸

Years later, the foundation of secular government laid by Roger Williams in Rhode Island came together with the social and political views of John Locke, who lived in England in the mid-1600s. Locke proposed a radical view of government that consciously separated the realms of church and state. Locke and others like him in England who promoted this new model of government were not so much concerned about the purity of true religion. Although they came from a completely different perspective than Roger Williams, Locke and others contributed powerfully to the ideals that triumphed in the American Constitution.

In a letter written to the town of Providence in 1654 or 1655, Williams addressed in more general terms the relationship between civil duty and individual conscience. His analogy of the seagoing vessel has become perhaps the most famous excerpt of all his writings:

There goes many a ship to sea, with many a hundred souls in one ship, whose weal and woe is common; and is a true picture of a commonwealth, or a human combination, or society. It has fallen out sometimes, that both Papists and Protestants, Jews, and Turks, may be embarked into one ship. Upon which supposal, I do affirm, that all the liberty of conscience, that ever I pleaded for, turns upon these two hinges — that none of the Papists, Protestants, Jews, or Turks, be forced to come to the ship’s prayers or worship; nor, secondly, compelled from their own particular prayers or worship, if they practice any. I further add, that I never denied, that notwithstanding this liberty, the commander of this ship ought to command the ship’s course; yea, and also command to that justice, peace, and sobriety, be kept and practiced, both among the seamen and all the passengers. If any seamen refuse to perform their service, or passengers to pay their freight; if any refuse to help in person or purse, towards the common charges, or defense; if any refuse to obey the common laws and orders of the ship, concerning their common peace or preservation; if any shall mutiny and rise up against their commanders, and officers; if any shall preach or write, that there ought



¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.54 ¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.100

*to be no commanders, nor officers, because all are equal in CHRIST, therefore no masters, nor officers, no laws, nor orders, no corrections nor punishments — I say, I never denied, but in such cases, whatever is pretended, the commander or commanders may judge, resist, compel, and punish such transgressors, according to their deserts and merits.*¹⁹

The civil government in the Providence Plantation had legitimate authority over religious conscience in certain areas basic to maintain civil order. However, Williams recognized that civil government's authority was only within the specific scope of government's ordained responsibilities. This applied to all men impartially, believer or unbeliever, Englishman or Indian. Williams believed, Hall wrote, that there was a moral virtue, a moral fidelity, ability and honesty' that all individuals, Christian and non-Christian, could recognize.²⁰

In his extensive travels with the Narragansett Indians, Williams saw, "The conscience of good and evil which every savage Indian in the world hath."²¹ There was then an innate sense of justice and morality in all people, Christian and not. Morality was endowed in human beings naturally: "It is granted, that nature's light discovers a God, some sins a judgment, as we see in the Indians."²²

Williams recognized that all men are accountable to the instinctive moral law that God has put in every man's conscience, which is the basis upon which civil authorities can "praise those who do good and punish those who do evil."²³ His theory of government rested on both civil authorities and individuals of all religious persuasions respecting that covenant of conscience. He established in Providence the beginnings of a society in which the civil government could allow religious freedom of conscience, and individuals could respect the legitimate authority of the civil government. Without this mutual respect for the legitimate spheres of authority of each, democracy could not work.

These principles of government won the debate a century later in the drafting of the Constitution which established the legal foundations of the United States of America. In establishing the first truly secular state Roger Williams opened the door to the freedom necessary for the restoration of the true church — a land where every man's right to grope for God would be protected.²⁴

In that protected ground, and in the fullness of time, "Christ's lilies, garden and love" could again be planted. But it would be another two hundred years before the fullness of time would come. ✽

¹⁹ "Roger Williams to the Town of Providence," c. Jan 1654/55, in *The Correspondence of Roger Williams*, ed. LaFantasie, 2:423-24. For a similar use of the ship metaphor, see Williams, *The Examiner Defended*, p. 209. ²⁰ Hall, p. 82. ²¹ Williams, *Complete Writings*, IV, p. 443. ²² Williams, *Complete Writings*, IV, p. 441. ²³ 1 Peter 2:14 ²⁴ Acts 17:26-27



We who wrote this paper actually live together like an extended family, sharing all things in common, just as the first disciples did in the first century. The Bible plainly says regarding the first church, “All who believed were together and shared all things in common.”¹ It goes on to describe how they were of one heart and soul, and that there was not a needy person among them, for they gave up all their possessions to meet the needs of their spiritual brothers and sisters.² Some people say this was only for back then, but we’ve been living this way for over 40 years. You can come and see for yourself at any of our addresses, which are printed in the back of this paper and on our web site, www.twelvetribes.org.

In each of our communities, there are one or more houses in a cluster, some in cities and some on farms. Several families and single people live together in each house, according to the size of the house. We like large houses because we like to live together. Married couples have their own rooms, plus as many adjacent rooms as needed for their children. The single men share one or more rooms, as do the single women. We all share a common kitchen and dining room, where we take our meals together “with gladness and sincerity of heart.”³

In at least one house in the cluster we have a large gathering room where we gather together every morning and evening to worship our Creator in song and dance as in Psalm 150, using the prescribed musical instruments that we are learning to build and play. We are all free to speak from our hearts the things we are learning, as our heavenly Father teaches us through one another, according to the gifting and grace given to each per-

¹Acts 2:44 ²Acts 4:32-35 ³Acts 2:46



son.⁴ As a spiritual priesthood, we pray together for the pressing needs of our people and for our Father's will to be done on earth.

After our morning gathering we have breakfast together and then go to work in our various places, doing the deeds prepared for each one of us.⁵ We work together in our own cafés, farms, cottage industries, and trades, not as independent contractors or employees of outside companies. All income from our various endeavors goes into a common purse from which all of our needs are met equitably. We don't have our own independent income or debts to carry by ourselves, except for the debt of love we owe to our Savior, which we repay by loving and caring for one another.

We love and cherish our children. We teach them at home, using a curriculum we are developing ourselves, to give them the basic skills they need to read, write, and speak effectively, to live together in peace, and to fulfill their created purpose. Our children's training goes far beyond the classroom, however, as they are fully integrated into every aspect of our socially and spiritually rich tribal life. They learn to cook and sew, build and farm, care for animals, sing and dance, play musical instruments, and most importantly, extend hospitality to the constant flow of guests who are drawn to the light of our life of love.

Together we are experiencing and demonstrating the restoration of all things spoken of by the prophets of old,⁶ and by our Master Yahshua,⁷ whose life, death, and resurrection make this life possible. ✨

⁴1 Corinthians 14:26; 1 Peter 4:11; Romans 12:6 ⁵Ephesians 2:10 ⁶Isaiah 49:6; Jeremiah 30:20; 31:1,4,13,14; Malachi 4:5-6 ⁷Matthew 5:17-19; 17:10-11; 22:37-40; Luke 1:17; 24:44 (*Yahshua* is the original Hebrew name of the one called *Jesus* in most English translations of the Bible.)



COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE!

He called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! ... Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities." (Revelation 18:2-5)

Many religious extremists have taken it upon themselves to call Christians out of the traditional churches, believing the Catholic Church, or Christianity as a whole, to be the Harlot described in chapter 17 of the book of Revelation. But they entirely miss the spirit of this call of compassion from the One who is Love. They call Christians to leave the pews, but they have nothing to offer them other than another set of beliefs. They do not make a home for the lonely, the orphan, or the widow.¹ So these vulnerable ones continue to be *"tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."*²

The true spirit of the call in Revelation 18:4 is found in these words of the true Messiah:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate." (Matthew 23:37-38)

Yahshua was calling people out of the established religion of His day, but He wasn't going to leave them as orphans. He wanted to gather them into a full-time life of love and care, of warm fellowship and purposeful service, a prophetic life with consequential effect toward the tearing down of Satan's kingdom.³

We also are calling you *out* because we want to gather you *in* to a restoration of that very same radical life of love and care — if you are willing! ✿

¹ Psalm 68:5-6 ² Ephesians 4:14 ³ Hebrews 10:12-13

Continued from back cover...

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Yellow Deli 18 South River Street, Cocksackie, NY 12051 ☎ 518-655-1655

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Community Conference Center 471 Sulphur Spr Rd, Hiddenite, NC 28636 ☎ 828-352-9200

Yellow Deli 5081 NC Highway 90 E, Hiddenite, NC 28636 ☎ 828-548-3354

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Yellow Deli & Hiker's Hostel 23 Center St, Rutland, VT 05701 ☎ 802-775-9800

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Yellow Deli Pedro Whelan 501, 1748 General Rodriguez, Buenos Aires, Argentina ☎ 54-237-485-1584

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Yellow Deli 214 Katoomba St, Katoomba, NSW 2780, Australia ☎ 61-2-4782-9744

BRAZIL

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Yellow Deli Estrada Major Achilles Pimpão 5000, Jardim Vale Verde, 86020-040 Londrina, Paraná, Brazil ☎ 55-43-3337-4562

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Yellow Deli 45859 Yale Rd, Chilliwack, BC V2P 2N6, Canada ☎ 604-702-4442

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Community in Skalna 481 Česká, 35134 Skalna, Czech Republic ☎ 420-355-455182

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Yellow Deli 43-47 High Street, Honiton, Devon EX14 1PW ☎ 44-1404-378023

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Au coeur du grain 47 Rue Riquet, 31000 Toulouse, France ☎ 335-82-755873

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Yellow Deli Kyotofu Kyotoshi Ukyouku Uzumasa Tayabucho 14-11, Japan ☎ 81-75-881-6886

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Yellow Deli General Etxagüe 5, 20003 San Sebastian, Guipúzcoa, Spain ☎ 34-943-477441

Comunidad de Igeldo Benta Aldea 6, 20810 Orío, Guipúzcoa, Spain ☎ 34-943-632316

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Yellow Deli Bakery, 22 N. Polk Avenue, Arcadia, FL 34266 ☎ 863-884-1212

Community on Pine Island 15621 Quail Trail, Bokeelia, FL 33922 ☎ 239-558-2266

GEORGIA

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Maté Factor 401 East Hall Street, Savannah, GA 31401 ☎ 912-235-2906

Community in Brunswick 927 Union St, Brunswick, GA 31520 ☎ 912-264-2279

Yellow Deli Bakery 801 Egmont Street, Brunswick, GA 31520 ☎ 912-264-1069

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Fieldstone Orchard & Farm 7049 E 149th St, Overbrook, KS 66524 ☎ 785-665-7643

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Community in Plymouth 35 Warren Avenue, Plymouth, MA 02360 ☎ 508-747-5338

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Yellow Deli 7771 State Route 81, Oak Hill, NY 12460 ☎ 518-239-4240

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THERE IS A PEOPLE who woke up this morning with one thing on their minds: to love their Creator with all their heart, soul, and strength, and to love one another just as He loved them. Being ordinary human beings, we are far from perfect in our love, yet, in hope, we persevere. Our goal? That the Kingdom of God would come on earth as it is in heaven, so that love and justice can rule on the earth. Sound impossible? It would be, were it not that Yahshua, the Messiah, came to redeem mankind, to set us free from the curse of sin, and to enable us to love. Because we have come to see His worth and our own desperate need, we have surrendered everything in order to follow Him. Our hearts and our homes are open night and day to any who are interested in our life or are weary of their sin and want to know the purpose for which they were created. ✨