

REFORMATION 500 WEEK 9 THE ANABAPTISTS

Conrad Grebel, a prominent member of the church in Zurich, “had been led to the evangelical faith by Zwingli and heartily approved his work of reformation” (Kuiper, 204-205). But soon he and others of like mind felt that both Zwingli and Luther’s reform movements had not gone far enough. They were not satisfied with separation from catholic corruptions; they wanted separation from all the ungodly.

These radical reformers felt that the root cause of all the corruption in the Church was the compromising State-Church bond that had existed since the days of Constantine, where every citizen was born and baptized as a member of both church and state. This “brought much of the world into the Church” (Kuiper, 205), and allowed too much State interference. “The churches looked to the state for salary and support. Official Protestantism seemed to differ little from official Catholicism” (Bruce Shelley, *Ch. History in Plain Language*, 249). “In Zwingli’s Zurich, the Council of Government had the final word in religious matters” (Gonzalez, 70).

Zwingli’s critics argued that Scripture requires true believers to be separate from the ungodly world; and therefore, a Christian “should not hold government office because this involved ‘the use of the sword,’ should not be a soldier, should not take an oath, and should not sue in the courts” (Kuiper, 206). The disciples in Jerusalem knew nothing of a state-church alliance, but rather they “left the synagogue and the world, gathered in an upper room, sold their goods, and held all things in common” (Schaff, 8:75). Apostolic churches were composed only of heartfelt believers, baptized only after a public commitment to live for Christ. Thus, “infant baptism must be rejected, for it takes for granted that one becomes a Christian by being born into a supposedly Christian society” (Gonzalez, 67-68).

In the fall of 1524, when Grebel’s wife gave birth to a son, the Grebels refused to baptize their baby. To deal with the crisis, the City Council of Zurich arranged a public debate on January 17, 1525. Zwingli defended infant baptism as a sign of the covenant, replacing the old sign of circumcision (Col. 2:11). He also appealed to 1 Cor. 7.14 and to the NT examples of family baptisms. “Bullinger, who was present at the disputation, reports that the Anabaptists were unable to refute Zwingli’s arguments” (Schaff, 8:81). The Council agreed and “warned all parents who had neglected to have their children baptized to do so within a week or face banishment from Zurich” (Shelley, 250).

“George Blaurock, a former priest, stepped over to Conrad Grebel and asked him for baptism in the apostolic fashion – upon confession of personal faith in Jesus Christ. Grebel baptized him on the spot and Blaurock proceeded to baptize the others” (Shelley, 247). Thus, Anabaptism was born. They rejected the name *Anabaptists* (“re-baptizers”) because they never considered their infant baptism a real baptism.

We will meet the Anabaptists again, but to sum up for now: “The Reformers attempted to reform the old Church by the Bible; the Radicals attempted to build a new Church from the Bible.” They “went directly to the apostolic age, and ignored the intervening centuries as apostasy.... Nothing is more characteristic of radicalism...than an utter lack of historical sense and respect for the past” (Schaff, 8:71).

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REFORMATION 500 WEEK 9: HEIDELBERG CATECHISM, QUESTIONS 26

Question 26: What do you believe when you say: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth? **That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of nothing made heaven and earth with all that is in them, who likewise upholds and governs them by His eternal counsel and providence, is for the sake of Christ, His Son, my God and my Father, in whom I so trust as to have no doubt that He will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul; and further, that whatever evil He sends upon me in this troubled life, He will turn to my good; for He is able to do it, being Almighty God, and willing also, being a faithful Father.**

QA 26 begins explaining the biblical basis of the first phrase of the Apostles Creed. To “believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,” is to believe that He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Creator, Sustainer, and Governor of the universe, and that He is a Father to **me** for Christ’s sake.

Before Jesus existed as a Man, He existed as the eternal Son of God (John 17:5). God the Father created all things *through* His Son (John 1:3). To create is to produce something out of nothing (Heb. 11:3). Once there was nothing except the Triune God in all His eternal glory (Psalm 90:1-2). Even *time* was created by God (Titus 1:2). By His almighty power, God *spoke* the space-time-matter-energy universe into existence (Psalm 33:6). The Fourth Commandment reminds us that God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh day in order to set a pattern for us to follow, so that we might imitate God in all of life (Exodus 20:8-11).

God the Creator also upholds and governs all things by His eternal counsel and providence. This will be explained further in Question 27. For now, we are simply told that God in Christ “*upholds* all things by the word of His *power*” (Heb. 1:3; cf. Neh. 9:6). Just as nothing could have ever existed without the creating power of God, so it is impossible that anything should *continue* to exist, even for a moment, without God’s almighty power, “since He gives to all life, breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25).

Wonder of wonders! The eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is for the sake of Christ, His Son, my God and my Father! Since we are not natural children of God, the only way for God to become our Father is by adoption (this is explained further in Question 33). Because of what Jesus did on the cross for His people, all who believe in Him are adopted children of God and call God *Father* (John 1:12; 20:17; 1 John 3:1).

By God’s grace, I trust in my Father that He will never fail to provide everything that I need for my body and my soul (Matt. 7:9-11) – even in times of trouble and pain. God never promised to save us from suffering in this fallen world (John 16:33), only that His grace is sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9).

Does God really *send evil* upon me? Yes, but *indirectly*. Though God controls all things, including evil, God does not *do* the evil (1 John 1:5). “He is not the author of sin – He merely permits it” (Ursinus). For example, in the case of Job, the Bible says his friends “comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him” (Job 42:11). But it also says the Lord brought the evil upon Job *indirectly* by giving Satan permission to inflict Job *directly*. “*Satan struck Job* with painful boils” (Job 2:7). By God’s grace, I trust my almighty and faithful Father to do for me what He did for Job, turn evil to my good (Rom. 8:28; James 5:11).

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