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“Withdraw from Babylon and worldly Egypt”: America’s Cultural Wars, Michael Sattler (c. 1490-1527), and the Radical Otherness of Christian Identity

DARIN D. LENZ

I. Introduction – Cultural Dissonance

For the last several decades America’s culture wars have raged and brought to the forefront competing visions of what America was, is, and ought to be.¹ In the 1980s scholars began to map the battlefield,² but it was sociologist James Davison Hunter’s 1991 book, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, that most thoroughly articulated the phenomenon.³ In the book Hunter observed, “this is a conflict over how we are to order our lives together. This means that the conflict is inevitably expressed as a clash over national life itself.”⁴ For Hunter, every aspect of American life that was being debated at the time, from the family and approaches to childrearing to gender roles, sexuality, education, media, law, and politics, was marked by deep divisions that were not easily reconciled.⁵ Hunter’s depiction of the struggle came to define the 1990s when one of the 1992 presidential candidates, Patrick Buchanan, popularized the notion of America being in the midst of a culture war with his speech at the Republican National Convention.⁶ The idea that America was irreparably divided into warring camps has become part of the ongoing national political dialogue for ordinary Americans ever since.

More broadly, religions, whether Muslim, Christian, or Jewish according to their traditional (orthodox) tenets, are at the crux of the debates over gender identity, sexuality, abortion, and shifts in contemporary morality. As for Christianity, this recent culture war has involved Christians from the beginning. Unsurprisingly, the politicization of Christianity in American history is nothing new. From the Revolution and the early Republic to the Civil War era,⁷ Reconstruction, and the Progressive age, churches and those who led them often forwarded their political hopes for America without hesitation and often at the expense of their religious and political rivals.⁸ Throughout the twentieth century, religion and politics have remained bedfellows. As James

L. Guth notes about mid-twentieth America, “liberal Protestants developed a theology of politics that stressed religion’s role in accomplishing social reform, responding to issues such as civil rights, the Vietnam War, and the arms race, while their more orthodox peers stuck to soul winning.”⁹ In the mid-1970s a seismic shift in voting behavior among American Christians was stunningly apparent with the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980.¹⁰ What surprised observers was the politicization of evangelical Christians who had, for most of the twentieth century, focused on leading godly lives rather than expressing their religious beliefs at the ballot box.¹¹ Televangelists, most notably Jerry Falwell, sparked a new political consciousness among pastors, especially Southern Baptists, who turned church lecterns into bully pulpits.¹² For this new breed of clergy, laity were first and foremost seen as vote-casting citizens who must be directed toward the aims of partisan politics that were reframed as a choice between the moral paragon of the Republican party or a nefarious cabal of the Democratic party. Following the Equal Rights Amendment, *Roe v. Wade*, and a whole host of social, cultural, and moral issues that defined the 1960s and 1970s, Evangelical laypeople in the 1980s went where their pastors prodded and willingly entered the political fray in an effort to save America from wickedness and, ultimately, self-destruction.¹³ They brought with them the same zeal to save the nation that they employed to save individual souls and Americans have been fighting over the future of the nation ever since.¹⁴

Scholars and intellectuals continue to debate the causes, consequences, and the ways in which a solution can be found to mitigate the ongoing culture war. Sheila Kennedy, for example, argues “that much of what divides Americans these days is rooted in our particular religious histories.”¹⁵ Kennedy is not claiming that Americans are especially knowledgeable about theology or, for that matter, are sectarian in their worldview. Instead she argues that Americans “simply do not realize that we are operating out of a particular set of assumptions about the nature of reality that may not be shared by others”¹⁶ —what she labels “incommensurate worldviews.”¹⁷ Kennedy believes that Americans do share common values (“equality,” “tolerance,” “individual rights,” “rule of law,” and the “value of science”),¹⁸ and she believes that Americans need to engage in more thoughtful discussion in order to reform education, media outlets, and government institutions.¹⁹

Another attempt at resolving this chasm in American life comes from University of Washington political scientist Mark A. Smith. Smith believes “that the general public does not participate in the culture war waged by intellectual, political, and religious elites” and that “most Americans hold relatively moderate views but find themselves surrounded by politicians, activists, and interest groups who take extreme positions, use inflammatory rhetoric, and coarsen our political discourse.”²⁰ Smith is certain that Hunter’s culture war thesis is off the mark based on his analysis.²¹ He contends “that culture is more powerful than religion in determining a person’s moral code. Culture is so powerful, in fact, that it shapes how Christians define their beliefs, interpret the Bible, and form political stances.”²² Smith goes on to explain that, “Through the processes of cultural accommodation, evangelicals on many issues now hold the same moral beliefs as mainline Protestants, Catholics, members of other religions, and even atheists.”²³ For Smith, only groups like the Amish “who wall themselves off from society”²⁴ are capable of fending off the power of cultural accommodation that remakes faith to fit the prevailing political, social, and moral norms of society.²⁵ In his desire to promote reconciliation among the combatants in the ongoing culture war, Smith concludes his book with the hopeful observation,

Rather than a battle of incompatible worldviews, the culture war is best described as a struggle between people with overlapping worldviews who fight over their differences. The issues dividing them often do not persist. Divorce, for example, does not create political controversy in contemporary America, even though it did in earlier times. Homosexuality emerged in the 1970s as a major front of the culture war, but it is now becoming less contentious with each passing year.²⁶

Smith believes that Christians will, given the power of culture over their lives, “adjust and update their values” to be in agreement with their fellow citizens.²⁷ In the end, Smith believes his book will “[show] that religious diversity need not lead to moral and political conflict.”²⁸

Opposition to the dominant culture, of course, is not something that is easily accomplished and as Smith notes is often only accomplished by those on the margins of mainstream society.²⁹ In the past societies and political rulers were not so kind to those who opposed the prevailing spirit of the age regarding cultural, religious, and social norms. Taking seriously the counter-cultural claims of Christianity comes at a cost even when those societies perceive them-

selves to be Christian.³⁰ One could examine the various persecutions of Christians that occurred under Roman and Byzantine rule, the medieval European inquisitions and the internal crusades against heretics, or the religious wars that defined much of the sixteenth and seventeenth century to see the cost of autonomy from the status quo.

How Christians should (or did) accommodate to culture has long been debated by ordinary Christians, pastors, and theologians. From the first century onward, Christians wrestled with how to live out their faith in societies that were not receptive to their theology and morality. Whether one examines the New Testament writings, the *Didache*, or other early Christian texts, one finds culture and piety in tension. As the second century writer of the *Letter to Diognetus* explains,

For Christians cannot be distinguished from the rest of the human race by country or language or customs. . . . They live in their own countries, but only as aliens. They have a share in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign land is their fatherland, and yet for them every fatherland is a foreign land. They marry, like everyone else, and they beget children, but do not cast out their offspring. They share their board with each other, but not their marriage bed. It is true that they are ‘in the flesh,’ but they do not live ‘according to the flesh.’ They busy themselves on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, but in their own lives they go far beyond what the laws require. They love all men, and by all men are persecuted.³¹

In this statement we see that Christianity is lived both within and outside society. Christians were a despised Other who continued to love the Other as themselves.³² This ethical and moral trajectory, in fact, imbued Christians with a strength that was intellectually and spiritually dynamic and gave their faith a vitality that allowed it to grow exponentially over the following centuries.

Recently, Ross Douthat, a Roman Catholic Christian and columnist for the *New York Times*, has raised questions about what happens when Christianity accommodates to the culture and loses its essence. Douthat argues that Christianity in America is facing a crisis, much like the early church, as it seeks to negotiate a decadent religious marketplace. Douthat warns that in the contemporary context, history “looks increasingly as if it’s replaying that story

with a very different ending—one in which orthodoxy slowly withers and only heresies endure.”³³ For Douthat, Christianity, both at the institutional level and in the lives of individual persons, has played an enormous role in making America American. The age of heresy he describes may be “complicit in our fragmented communities, our collapsing families, our political polarization, and our weakened social ties.”³⁴ Ultimately, Douthat believes that Christianity’s most important contribution to America (or to any nation or society) is through the individuals who are reoriented to God and transformed by that encounter. Christianity puts the Other first by transforming individuals through an encounter with Christ and the Church. This remaking of self ultimately transforms society. As Douthat explains, “To make any difference in our common life, Christianity must be *lived*—not as a means to social cohesion or national renewal, but as an end unto itself.”³⁵

Taking seriously tension between alienation and belonging as elements of Christian Otherness, this essay will examine the first attempt at religious independency launched by radical Anabaptist reformers in the sixteenth century. Reformers in the sixteenth century were as concerned about the state of their culture, their societies, political power, and their practice and understanding of the Christian faith as those who are engaged in the current culture wars. Reformers opened new avenues for innovation that lead to radicalization and eventually repression of those who innovated and challenged the cultural norms of the era. The radicals sought to reform, revitalize, and live out the Christian faith by seeking a new identity in the radical Otherness of Christ. In doing so, they rejected accommodation to the dominant culture and faced ruthless persecution.

The most important document to survive from this period of radical innovation was penned by Michael Sattler (c. 1490-1527), “the leader most revered in Swiss Anabaptist history.”³⁶ Although Sattler was not the first Anabaptist leader in Switzerland, he authored the first written framework³⁷ as to what Swiss Anabaptists believed to be a true church body—a “free church” independent of state interference and “based on voluntary membership.”³⁸ The *Schleitheim Articles* are usually interpreted along the lines of Christian separation from the state emphasizing pacifism, rejecting of oath taking, and refusing to hold any positions the wields the power of secular authority.³⁹ This essay contends that religious independency, as presented in the *Schleitheim Articles*, involved not

only a political break but also the rejection of the dominant culture.⁴⁰ In the sixteenth century there was no distinction between culture and politics due to the nature of the church, society, and political power. For the Sattler and those who embraced the *Schleitheim Articles*, rejection of the dominant culture was as much part of their thinking as rejecting the power of governing authorities. Although Sattler was the author of the *Schleitheim Articles* and a charismatic leader “with the inner gift of spiritual vision,”⁴¹ his real influence came with his network of Anabaptists who shared a common vision for the transformation of the church and were willing to die for that hoped for reality.⁴² Such a radical stance is at variance with succumbing to a “secular faith” that Smith posits in his accommodationist thesis, but is worth examining to appreciate how Christians, past and present, have questioned and rejected the cultural status quo in order to live radically. Other lives as disciples of Jesus.

II. Michael Sattler’s Journey to Anabaptism

Although the necessary primary sources to provide a complete biography of Sattler’s life do not appear to have survived the sixteenth century, biographers have pieced together a basic narrative of his early life.⁴³ Because these biographers often brought their own biases to bear on Sattler’s life the account they provide has often been misleading and unsubstantiated.⁴⁴ Based on the fragmentary evidence that has survived, Sattler was a literate, theologically perspicacious Benedictine monk who resided at St. Peters of the Black Forest monastery near Freiburg.⁴⁵ Though we cannot determine why Sattler left the monastery in the early 1520s other than his statement at trial citing “a ‘call from God,’” his life in the subsequent years included getting married, traveling to Switzerland, joining with Swiss Anabaptists, and spreading Anabaptist teachings near Zurich.⁴⁶ Regardless of Sattler’s exact movements through the mid-1520s, what can be known is that he was a committed Anabaptist who was in contact with leading reformers in Zurich and Strasbourg.⁴⁷

Sattler’s story becomes far clearer when in February 1527 he can be traced to Schleithem where, as C. Arnold Synder observes, “the evidence is considered conclusive that Michael Sattler was the primary figure responsible for framing the *Schleitheim Articles*.”⁴⁸ After the meeting concluded, Sattler left Schleithem and was arrested by Austrian authorities with a group of fellow Anabaptists. Fourteen radicals were put on trial for both civil and religious crimes

that ranged from acting “contrary to the decree of the emperor” to defaming the “Mother of God” and “condemn[ing] the saints.”⁴⁹ The defendants were also indicted for their rejection of transubstantiation and their denunciation of infant baptism.⁵⁰ Denying the authority of the court over religious matters, Sattler acted as spokesman for the defendants to no avail.⁵¹ As William Estep notes, Sattler engaged in a “defense [that] was both skillful and courageous”⁵² asserting that certain charges applied to Lutherans, denying some charges as spurious, while accepting other charges as accurate to Anabaptist theology that he then defended based on his interpretation of the Bible.⁵³ Declared guilty of violating imperial law established at the Diet of Worms in 1521, Sattler, his wife Margaretha, and the other defendants were executed in the days following their sentencing on May 18, 1527.⁵⁴ Sattler suffered the worst punishment as he was brutally tortured before execution. Part of his tongue was cut out, chunks of flesh were ripped from his body, and when he would not recant the end came with his being burnt alive.⁵⁵ According to one account, while being immolated he prayed aloud, “Almighty, eternal God, Thou art the way and the truth: because I have not been shown to be in error, I will with thy help to this day testify to the truth and seal it with my blood.”⁵⁶ Such gruesome executions did not cause his fellow Anabaptists to abandon their distinctive form of Christian belief and practice. Rather, contrary to the intentions of their tormentors, martyrdom seems to have encouraged more people to become Anabaptists.⁵⁷

III. “Child’s Play” Run Amok

The *Schleitheim Articles*, as previously stated, were written by Sattler and established the foundation for the first autonomous (or free) church to come out of the Reformations of the sixteenth century.⁵⁸ The notion of an independent or free church describes a voluntary church congregation that is autonomous from civil governing authorities.⁵⁹ George H. Williams framed the revolt along the following lines, “The Radical Reformation broke on principle with the Catholic-Protestant *corpus christianum* and stressed the *corpus Christi* of committed believers.”⁶⁰ The practice that created the possibility of a *corpus Christianum* from late antiquity through to the late medieval period was the ubiquitous practice of infant baptism that linked church with secular authority and gave everyone citizenship in political kingdoms that so thoroughly mixed with the symbols, theology, and practice of the church they seemed indistinguishable.⁶²

In a world where church, state, and culture⁶³ were so thoroughly united, Sattler's role in creating the framework for the first church body independent from *corpus Christianum* was brazenly radical⁶⁴. Not only did Sattler and his fellow Anabaptists evoked outrage for their attempt to claim autonomy from secular authorities but, most troubling of all, they provoked violent repression⁶⁵ for their counter religious-political claims from fellow Christians who embraced the cultural and political power derived from the harmonization of church and state.⁶⁶

The social context for this break can be traced to the nature of church politics that were already underway among the Swiss. In 1518 Ulrich Zwingli, along with the Bishop of Konstanz (Hugo von Hohenlandenberg), and others began to protest the "papal poaching on Swiss ecclesiastical revenues" by Bernhard Sanson, a Dominican indulgence preacher.⁶⁷ Not yet elected to the post that would define his life in Zurich, Zwingli and other Swiss church leaders openly challenged clerical abuses by their fellow Catholics. The source for this, as Steven Ozment argues, was not Luther's example but Zwingli's "own impulses" as a scholar of the biblical languages, humanist, and devotee of Erasmus.⁶⁸ In December of 1518 Zwingli was elected as the people's priest (*Leutpriester*) of Grossmünster Cathedral.⁶⁹ Zurich, a city of 6,000 people, would begin down the reformation road beginning in January 1519 when their new priest began to preach the Bible verse by verse to the churchgoers.⁷⁰ For Zwingli, the purpose of reform was to make Christian practices biblical. As Ozment explains, "Zwingli's reform principle was to test the biblical foundation of traditional ceremonies, practices, and teachings and ask whether they promoted the central message of the New Testament, the redemption of the world in Jesus Christ."⁷¹ Zwingli's reforming sermons attacked the Mass, iconography, and other non-biblical traditions of the Roman Catholic Church.

Zwingli's strategy for defending himself from counterattacks was conceived in, as Carlos Eire explains, "conflating the Bible and all of his teachings, insisting that he was simply citing the only authority that mattered in a direct, unmediated way, without engaging in any kind of interpretation. In other words, he argued, he was speaking for God himself: 'I am confident and indeed I know, that my sermons and doctrine are nothing else than the holy, true, pure gospel, which God desired me to speak by the intuition and inspirations of His Spirit.'"⁷² This approach worked while Zwingli was attacking the traditions

and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, but as he soon discovered this approach would not thwart those who were some of his most zealous followers. They too would claim clear-eyed insights into the biblical text inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Zwingli launched his reforming efforts with the support of the city council and soon captured the imagination of those who began to dream of a revitalized faith. With Zwingli and other educated laymen and priests questioning the established order, soon people with no standing in society saw an opportunity to make their voice heard. Frustrations with the rights and privileges of the few over the many, epidemic disease, poverty, and the lack of any real avenues for redressing life's problems weighed heavily on much of the population and made religious reform appealing.⁷³

Among the Swiss, the push for spiritual reform was more than simply a challenge to the powerful by the poor and powerless. The Swiss thought and behaved differently than their German, French, and Italian neighbors. The Swiss believed strongly in liberty. That liberty, as Alec Ryrie explains, was "a liberty that was communal and communitarian rather than individualistic."⁷⁴ However, those bonds of communal and communitarian liberty were torn asunder in Zurich when Zwingli's most committed followers broke with his teachings and radicalized beyond where he was willing to go in his understanding of the Bible.

Two of the radicals to move beyond Zwingli were Felix Manz and Conrad Grebel. Both had university educations and had even studied Erasmus's Greek New Testament with Zwingli.⁷⁵ Soon Manz, Grebel, and those who shared a like-minded desire for even more radical reform openly challenged the practice of infant baptism.⁷⁶ These radicals argued that the example of Jesus showed that he "never intended this sacrament to be administered to infants."⁷⁷ They saw adult believer's baptism as the distinguishing element in recovering New Testament practice. For Anabaptists, the practice held enormous possibilities. As Olof H. de Vries explains, "'believer's baptism' meant the inauguration of a new, messianic age, heralded by contemporary cultural, social, and political transformations."⁷⁸ For these radicals' re-baptism separated the wheat from the chaff. Believer's baptism marked those who were genuinely engaged in biblical reform from those who were not prepared to fully embrace New Testament teaching.

To bring this internal revolt under control Zwingli did not hesitate to seek the support of civil officials, who in his thinking were tasked by God to rule over the Church.⁷⁹ The forces in Zurich that came to bear against the re-baptizing radicals resulted in their persecution, imprisonment, and ultimately execution.⁸⁰ Zwingli would write of the situation with the Anabaptists, “All of the previous fights were child’s play compared with this.”⁸¹ He was now faced with radical reformers who redrew the map of ecclesiastical, political, and cultural authority in the same ingenious manner that he had employed against the Roman Catholic Church. Zwingli and his supporters now faced a foe who fought them chapter by chapter and verse by verse claiming a definitive understanding of God’s word and will.⁸²

IV. “A Third Way”

Sattler’s connection with Zurich and the Anabaptists in the surrounding countryside is important for understanding his approach to this ongoing culture war. After joining the Anabaptists and becoming one of their leaders in the mid-1520s, Sattler traveled to Strasbourg where he debated Martin Bucer and Wolfgang Capito in December of 1526. Here Sattler placed “utmost importance” on “the Sermon on the Mount, whose commandments Christians were called to obey unreservedly.”⁸³ The approach of Sattler took was in direct opposition to the Strasbourg reformers. Bucer and Capito maintained “that love of one’s fellow humans” also necessitated a “political responsibility for the common good.”⁸⁴ Rather than simply argue that his reading of Scripture was exactly as God intended, Sattler used the concept of unity as a vehicle for understanding the relationship between Christ and his followers. His goal was simply to define the ultimate source of Christian practice—Christ. Sattler held that if Christians live in obedience to Christ then Christ is the head of the Church and believers are the body of Christ doing what Christ intends. As J. Denny Weaver explains this “unity worked by Christ thus manifest itself intellectually, through coming to agreement on issues, with consequent unification in a visible, social fellowship, separated from the worldly society.”⁸⁵ What this also meant for Sattler was that the visible body of Christ on earth—the Church—could not be out of alignment with teachings of the Christ—unless Christians chose not to be obedient to Christ. If that situation occurred, that body was not truly the Church because they were not living as Christ. Although Bucer and Capito were not

convinced by Sattler's arguments, they were deeply moved by the man himself and would praise "him as a 'martyr of Christ'" when he was executed in 1527.⁸⁶

Sattler, and those who collaborated with him at Schleithem, brought to the forefront a desire to transcend the partial and incomplete reforms that had occurred among the evangelical reformers. The vision was based on the hope of establishing a radically remade Church that was a physical manifestation of the spiritual and not simply politically and culturally captive to the spirit (*Geist*) of the age. In Wittenberg, Luther as a university professor, priest, and leader among the Augustinians in Electoral Saxony had the support of powerful ecclesiastical and civic authorities, including Frederick III, Elector of Saxony, who ensured that his voice was not silenced by the pope or the Holy Roman Emperor.⁸⁷ In a similar manner in Zurich, Zwingli was able to rely on the city council to protect his reforming efforts from interference by the Roman Catholic Church and even radicals like themselves.⁸⁸ Sattler and his network of followers wanted nothing to do with this type of domesticated Christianity.

Contrary to this reliance on powerful allies, the peasants sought a different form of reform when they put forward their *Twelve Articles* (1525)⁸⁹ that demanded a new role for ordinary people in both church and society.⁹⁰ These demands were part of a larger insurgency that occurred between 1524-1526 that raged across southern and central Germany that is more popularly known as the Peasants' War.⁹¹ This revolt from the bottom up failed miserably and revealed how the lack of ideological solidarity and common strategic goals could undermine any resistance to the political elites and their determination to maintain power.⁹² In response to the approaches of the magisterial reformers and the peasants, according to Carter Lindberg, the Swiss Anabaptists at Schleithem

sought a third way. Their reform program was no longer focused on the expurgation of existing Christendom, but rather on radical separation from the world. As children of the light, they refused even to greet the children of darkness; they wore simple clothes, shunned worship services, and supported one another. They were now reading the Bible from the standpoint of the powerless; a very different perspective from that of the powerful. Thus they concluded that the community of Jesus is a small, indeed voluntary but also suffering, separated and defenseless community. . . . The free church was a radical alternative to the church of Rome and to the churches of Wittenberg and Zurich.⁹³

Lindberg's intriguing analysis gets at the radical separation that Sattler and his fellow Anabaptists sought as they described what they believed being a Christian disciple demanded. The notion of being powerless and counter-cultural in terms of what marked a Christian and congregation as biblical was an intolerable break from the status quo for Roman Catholics and evangelical reformers who were trying to control the radical excesses that threatened to undermine the weakening bonds that held *corpus Christianum* together.⁹⁴

V. Sattler's Vision of a "Free Church"

Curiously, the *Schleitheim Articles* did not put forward a simple creedal formulation of Christian theology. In fact, as Fritz Blanke observes, "these articles say nothing about God, Jesus Christ, and justification by faith."⁹⁵ The articles do not address those points where the Anabaptists agreed with reformers like Luther, Zwingli, and Bucer. Rather, they emphasize points of difference and describe a completely counter-cultural vision of Christian practice.⁹⁶ Comprised of seven articles, the confession of faith addresses the following issues: 1) believer's baptism and voluntary church membership are for adults only, 2) church discipline is to be implemented using "the ban" (excommunication), 3) personal holiness and purity are required to receive the memorial meal of the Lord's Supper, 4) Christians must completely separate from all that is evil in the world, including "the devilish weapons of force" such the sword, 5) local churches will appoint a godly man as a pastor and support him, 6) Christians must never serve as a magistrate or hold any position wielding secular authority because the government embodies the sword and is contrary to Christ's example, 7) and, finally, Christ forbids his followers to swear oaths "because we cannot fulfill what is promised in swearing."⁹⁷ The vision of the church that Sattler and the Anabaptists gathered at Schleitheim supported appears to be focused primarily on the political separation of Christians from the influence of the state. They were embracing a radical remaking of church and state. Taken together, the seven articles repudiate the authority of existing church-state relations by asserting congregational autonomy, a disavowal of both Roman Catholics and evangelical reformers, along with the condemnation of Christian political participation.

Yet, to view the *Schleitheim Articles* as exclusively about politics misses the more radical cultural vision set forward by Sattler. The *Schleitheim Ar-*

ticles argues for a biblical understanding of Christian Otherness in everyday life.⁹⁸ As Sattler proclaimed, “we will abide in the Lord as obedient children of God, sons and daughters, and as those who are separated from the world – and who should be separated in all that they do and do not do.”⁹⁹ This separation was not just about renouncing the dominant culture, it was about reconceiving the very nature of Christian identity by denying the established social and cultural order. In doing so, Sattler and his fellow Anabaptists rejected *corpus Christianum* and the linkage between church, state, and culture.¹⁰⁰ Curiously, Sattler did not focus on a shared community of goods that typically defined Anabaptist economic solutions for those in need.¹⁰¹ Rather, Sattler’s remaking of the Christian life harkened back to the charges made against early Christians who were, according to Tacitus, persecuted for their “hatred of the human race” because they refused to remain committed to the social, political, and religious bonds that governed Roman society.¹⁰² Of course, in the context of the Roman Empire the charges brought against Christians were centered on the fact that they failed to pay homage to the pantheon of Roman deities that protected the empire. This purposeful alienation from the dominant culture and politics resulted in Christians being despised as subversive to the government, as well as enemies of their fellow citizens. New Testament scholar Larry W. Hurtado describes this early Christian behavior as “a kind of religious and social apostasy, an antisocial stance.”¹⁰³

In a similar manner, by demanding a complete separation from society, culture, and politics, Sattler was reestablishing a Christian identity that existed in the early church that fostered suspicion and persecution. However, in the sixteenth century context this revolt was not against pagan Rome, but instead this critique was levelled against fellow Christians whom Anabaptists viewed as not embodying a godly society through *corpus Christianum*. By taking such a view, Sattler and his fellow Anabaptists were engaging in open conflict with all of Christendom—Roman Catholic and the reforming evangelical churches commonly called Protestant.¹⁰⁴ Frankin H. Littell identifies the crux of the problem precisely when he explains that “the Free Church fathers might have been accepted had they not made such unreasonable demands for the community of discipleship that Christendom could not contain them.”¹⁰⁵ The demand for separation from the world was profound. Cornelius J. Dyck notes that the Swiss Anabaptist aims were not just about reclaiming a biblical past but as-

serted a “new social and cultural option as well as the only valid theological reality. This new society was the coming total society of the future – in God’s own time; meanwhile they were willing to serve and witness in the old society, the world, as best they could.”¹⁰⁶ Led by Sattler, the Anabaptist gathering at Schleithem found unity in a set of common principles¹⁰⁷ that distinguished them from Roman Catholics, other evangelical reformers, and some other radicals who they believed were sorely misguided in their understanding of the Bible.¹⁰⁸

VI. An “Anabaptist Vision”?

The revolt of the Swiss Anabaptists from the dominant form of politics and culture put them in opposition to the accepted notions of a God-ordained society where church, state, and culture were understood to be inseparable.¹⁰⁹ Sattler, like Luther, believed the Last Days were nigh,¹¹⁰ and he and his companions hoped to see the world transformed into God’s kingdom to come.¹¹¹ In their understanding, this kingdom relied on breaking from the world. However, to challenge the status quo, to assert religious independence, to be solely reliant on God as one’s protector from harm was seen, as historian Meic Pearse notes, “as a form of treason.”¹¹²

In his presidential address before the American Society of Church History in 1943 Harold S. Bender, drawing on the ideas of his father-in-law, reframed the essence of Sattler’s vision of by labeling it the “Anabaptist Vision.”¹¹³ In this profoundly influential essay Bender described his idealized understanding of what Swiss Anabaptists initiated in the 1520s¹¹⁴ even though Schleithem Articles had been forgotten by the eighteenth century and were not a source of consist thought or practice for Anabaptists over the centuries.¹¹⁵ Bender’s outline of Anabaptism in the essay is straightforward. First, discipleship, living like Christ in all things, is the core of the Christian life. Second, community, a life shared together, is the purpose of church.¹¹⁶ Third, “the ethic of love and non-resistance” encompasses all human relationships. Meaning, as Bender detailed, the “complete abandonment of all warfare, strife, and violence, and of the taking of human life.”¹¹⁷ Bender affirmed separation from the world as “a judgment on the on contemporary social order.”¹¹⁸ Bender’s heroic narrative and his staunch belief that Anabaptists should be seen as the true heirs of Luther, Zwingli, and were the final arbiters of genuine religious reform in the

sixteenth century, gave the essay persuasive quality that was mesmerizing for Mennonites and others who were bowled over by his interpretation.¹¹⁹ Bender's essay marked a pivotal moment in the history of modern Anabaptist thought.¹²⁰ His history of the Anabaptist Vision was not merely useful to explain the past but was aimed at provoking action.¹²¹ As historian Paul Toews explains,

The Anabaptist Vision was a call for a different kind of people and different kinds of institutions. Using words implying transiency and alienation—pilgrims, sojourners, strangers, exiles—to describe the people of God, the vision was a warning to a people increasingly comfortable in the dominant culture. Bender would conclude his 1943 address with a call to withdraw. . . . But like many ideas, this one had a dual quality. . . . Ironically, a sense of the past alleviated much Mennonite fear of cultural adjustment and change—fear that had been strong among Mennonites as late as the first third of the century. History became the paradoxical handmaiden of the Mennonite modernizers.¹²²

Toews' shrewd observation that Bender's influential interpretation of the Anabaptist Vision lead in directions that Bender did not imagine only affirms the problem that all historians face when attempting to make the past relevant to the present. Over the ensuing decades others noticed this conundrum as well.

In his controversial but enlightening critique of the Anabaptist Vision, Stephen F. Dintaman highlighted three areas where Bender's work failed. He noted that Bender did not illuminate the human condition, failed to fully appreciate the Christ's redemptive work through his death and resurrection, and modern-day heirs of Bender's vision were left with a "pre-pentecostal" form of discipleship that lacked insight into the Holy Spirit's empowering presence.¹²³ Dintaman's most telling critique was aimed at academics like himself when he stated, "Mennonite academics, especially, are embracing a program of peace and justice activism that puts them in the mainstream of liberal, socially-aware academia and does not require them aggressively to proclaim a specifically biblical, scandalous message whereof the academic world in general knows almost nothing. This is not a call for us to forsake social awareness and active work for social change, but just a reminder that ALL THIS IS NOT THE GOSPEL!"¹²⁴ In a later reflection on his article, Dintaman admitted that what troubled him when he wrote the article was "that in some church and academic settings the language of 'The Anabaptist Vision' had come to be a language code that de-

fined who was in and who was out.”¹²⁵ What Dintaman had hoped to address was the behavioralist approach to Christian discipleship that Bender’s work had unintentionally fostered. He believed that the Mennonite focus on social justice and peacemaking without an explicit connection to the radical otherness of Christian identity found in the New Testament showed that Mennonites were, in effect, cultural captives. Or, in the words of the *Schleitheim Articles* they were living as those who belonged to “Babylon and worldly Egypt.”¹²⁶

If Bender’s vision of sixteenth century Anabaptism launched an era of reflection and on Mennonite identity,¹²⁷ many non-Mennonites remained focused on church-state issues.¹²⁸ This emphasis on the political dimensions their reforming efforts has remained foundational for interpreting sixteen-century Anabaptists to the present. In an article from 2017 entitled, “The Unfinished Reformation,” that examined the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Jürgen Moltmann, a German Reformed theologian, argues, “Who were the ‘Anabaptists’ and why were they persecuted so cruelly by Catholics and Protestants? Martin Luther called them *Schwärmer*, fanatics; historians speak of ‘the left wing of the Reformation.’ I think they were the only Reformation movement ‘by faith alone’ (*sola fide*).”¹²⁹ Moltmann goes on to explain that for all other sixteenth century reformers the “magistrate of a town or the prince of a country carried out the reformation of churches and schools.”¹³⁰ Moltmann insists that the only Christians from the Reformation era to truly engage in dynamic reform were those who rejected governmental interference over the church and their understanding of the Christian faith. Moltmann’s point is that Swiss Anabaptists who embraced the *Schleitheim Articles* broke from the traditional sources of power that controlled culture and society to seek genuine, biblical-based reform.¹³¹

Moltman’s emphasis on the Anabaptist rejection of politics may only reflect his concerns as a theologian about contemporary politics and where Christians fail to comprehend the danger of linking church and state. For Sattler and the Swiss Anabaptists gathered at Schleithem that issues they confronted were both internal and external to their movement. They were applying the spirituality and ethics they read about in the New Testament to their immediate social context and trying to stop false teachings from proliferating.¹³² They hoped to see fellow believers “withdraw from Babylon and worldly Egypt” and live a life devoted to Christ.¹³³ Not versed in the nuances of the first century political,

social, and theological world of Jews living under Roman rule they were unable to situate the biblical text into its historical context. Their simple reading led to an irreconcilable dualism that they saw separating the world from the words and deeds of Jesus.¹³⁴ To put it another way, for the Swiss Anabaptists who read the New Testament there was a realization that neither the Roman Catholic Church nor the politically-nuanced reforms of the magisterial reformers forwarded the behavioral, ethical, and eschatological claims they saw in Scripture.¹³⁵

For those who met at Schleithem, the teachings of Jesus and actions of the disciples served as a clarion call for a new society that demanded a renewed emphasis on personal piety and the way Christians live in the world. In fact, Sattler and the Swiss Anabaptists may have embodied the most “this-worldly” approach of the Reformation era that “met people at the place and level of their real need.”¹³⁶ The *Schleithem Articles* intended to address real world issues by providing “a unified foundation and direction” for the everyday practice of Christianity.¹³⁷ What they desired for their churches were leaders who enabled fellow believers to experience the “joy, peace, and mercy” of the Father, better follow the example of Christ, and use the “gifts of the spirit” so that ordinary believers had the “strength, consolation, and perseverance through every grief until the end.”¹³⁸ Doctrinal purity was not the focus of those who met at Schleithem. Instead, they placed their hope in the work of God through Christ and the Holy Spirit, rooted in “the testimony of Scripture and the custom of the apostles.”¹³⁹ This gave them a confidence that the new society of Christ they sought was a possibility if they were obedient to Christ, the Head of the Church. Although no Anabaptist communities (nor has any church past or present) ever embodied these aspirations, those at Schleithem were willing to suffer persecution and even die for their belief that such communities, as encouraged in the New Testament, must have the possibility of existing.

VII. Conclusion – “If there is too much accommodation . . .”

With the ongoing culture war that troubles the conscience of Christians living in America, we need to keep in mind that the culture wars of the sixteenth century were fought viciously and needlessly ended the lives of tens of thousands of Christians who were killed by other Christians. Whether one believes that an accommodationist approach to culture is correct or not, Mark A. Smith’s claim

that “Christians are part of society, not separate from it, and they often fail to realize how much they absorb from the surrounding culture. Their political stances often resonate with contemporary opinions, values, and behaviors but clash with the moral commitments and biblical understandings that Christians held in previous eras” is a troubling assertion.¹⁴⁰ Smith’s common-sense observation may appear accurate at first glance. Yet, upon further reflection one recognizes that Christians from the first century to the present have struggled with how best to live out their faith. Christians over the centuries have been ridiculed for their belief in Christ as Messiah, often lived out of step with the dominant culture at great sacrifice, and even suffered violent persecution and death.¹⁴¹ Roland Bainton addressed this conundrum in an article he wrote for *Mennonite Life* in 1954 when he states, “if there is no accommodation [to culture], Christianity is unintelligible and cannot spread. If there is too much accommodation it will spread, but will no longer be Christianity.”¹⁴² Christians need to know the culture in order to be able to communicate the Gospel effectively, but as the *Letter to Diognetus* reminds us, “[Christians] live in their own countries, but only as aliens. They have a share in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners.”¹⁴³ Christians know their ultimate allegiance is to Christ, which requires that they acknowledge a different reality, a different hope, a different reason for being. To know and experience this, as Ross Douhat reminds us, “Christianity must be *lived*”—and to be lived Christianity must be rooted in obedience to Christ that is directed by the Holy Spirit within the visible body of Christ—the Church.¹⁴⁴

For centuries, the culturally and politically dominant Roman Catholic Church and Protestant churches rejected the notion that Anabaptists were even Christians.¹⁴⁵ They were outside their authority—their magisterial churches—and from their limited vantage point outside of Christ. This made Anabaptists enemies of the law as seditionists and heretics and, consequently, worthy of death.¹⁴⁶ Although many today would prefer that Christians acquiesce to the prevailing culture, looking back over five hundred years of history it is not the winners in the immediate fight or the accommodationists that are admired for accepting or maintaining the cultural status quo.¹⁴⁷ Rather, men and women like Michael Sattler and his wife, Margaretha,¹⁴⁸ who sacrificed so much to be like Christ—to be in the world and not of the world—are remembered for their faithfulness to Christ in the face of brutal persecution.¹⁴⁹ Maybe the *Schlei-*

them Articles did not bring about the Christian community that Sattler and his network of Anabaptist radicals imagined, but Sattler’s spiritually-minded vision for a truly reformed church that would confront “the old order of this world” also shows that Christians are not merely products of the culture in which they live.¹⁵⁰

NOTES

- ¹ The term “culture war” is derived from the German word *Kulturkampf* (“culture struggle”) that described the fight between the Protestant German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and the Roman Catholic Church in the 1870s. Roger Chapman, “Introduction: Culture Wars—Rhetoric and Reality,” in *Culture Wars: An Encyclopedia of Issues, Viewpoints, and Voices*, ed. Roger Chapman (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2010), xxvii, xxix.
- ² Robert Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society: The Contemporary Debate* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 51.
- ³ Chapman, “Introduction: Culture Wars—Rhetoric and Reality,” xxix.
- ⁴ James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 50.
- ⁵ Hunter, *Culture Wars*, 50-51.
- ⁶ Irene Taviss Thomson, *Culture Wars and Enduring American Dilemmas* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 4.
- ⁷ One of the most interesting examples of the mixing of Christianity and politics was the establishment of the Beecher Bible and Rifle Church in Wabaunsee, Kansas, in the late 1850s. The Free-State settlers from New England were supplied Bibles with Sharps rifles (a technologically superior weapon to the muskets commonly carried at the time) by the celebrated New York preacher Reverend Henry Ward Beecher. The aim was to stop proslavery activists—even with a bullet—from turning Kansas Territory into a future slave state. Barbara Schwarz Wachal, “Beecher’s Bibles,” in *Encyclopedia of Emancipation and Abolition in the Transatlantic World: Volume 1-3*, ed. Junius P. Rodriguez (New York: Routledge, 2015), 65-66; also see W. H. Isely, “The Sharps Rifle Episode in Kansas History,” *The American Historical Review* 12, no. 3 (April 1907): 546-566.
- ⁸ For additional accounts that analyze the interplay between religion, politics, and culture see Barry Hankins, *Jesus and Gin: Evangelicalism, the Roaring Twenties and Today’s Culture Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), and Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).
- ⁹ James L. Guth, “The Bully Pulpit: Southern Baptist Clergy and Political Activism, 1980-92,” in *Religion and the Culture Wars: Dispatches from the Front*, John C. Green, James L. Guth, Corwin E. Smidt, and Lyman A. Kellstedt (Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996), 160.
- ¹⁰ Clyde Haberman, “Religion and Right-Wing Politics: How Evangelicals Reshaped Elections,” *The New York Times* (October 28, 2018), accessed September 8, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/28/us/religion-politics-evangelicals.html>.
- ¹¹ Robert Wuthnow observes that “until the mid-1970s, election studies consistently showed that fundamentalists, evangelicals, and deeply religious people of all kinds were less like

to vote than their less religious counterparts; since the mid-1970s, that pattern is reversed.” Wuthnow, *Christianity and Civil Society*, 29.

¹² Guth, “The Bully Pulpit,” 168-169.

¹³ Ross Douthat, *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 122.

¹⁴ Ross Douthat notes that the same issues that “inspired many Catholics to turn against accommodationism—specifically abortion, and more broadly the social costs of the sexual revolution—drew many Evangelicals who had voted for Carter back toward the political right.” Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 122.

¹⁵ Sheila Kennedy, *God and Country: America in Red and Blue* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 2.

¹⁶ Kennedy, *God and Country*, 9.

¹⁷ Kennedy, *God and Country*, 13.

¹⁸ Kennedy, *God and Country*, 220-221.

¹⁹ Kennedy, *God and Country*, 223-232.

²⁰ Mark A. Smith, *Secular Faith: How Culture Has Trumped Religion in America Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), viii.

²¹ Smith, *Secular Faith*, ix.

²² Smith, *Secular Faith*, 211.

²³ Smith, *Secular Faith*, 218.

²⁴ Smith, *Secular Faith*, 219.

²⁵ Smith argues that “Christians often reinterpret or ignore the Bible, their moral and political positions evolve from within their own society. Wide-ranging cultural trends affect Christians and non-Christians alike, leading to changes over time in the prevailing morality. The best predictors of people’s moral beliefs are not their religious convictions or lack thereof but rather when and where they were born.” Smith, *Secular Faith*, 214.

²⁶ Smith, *Secular Faith*, 220.

²⁷ Smith, *Secular Faith*, ix.

²⁸ Smith, *Secular Faith*, ix.

²⁹ Smith, *Secular Faith*, 219.

³⁰ Today, around the world, Christians are being violently persecuted because they have not accommodated to the dominant culture and politics. Nigeria and China both present disturbing contemporary examples of what happens to Christians in these situations. Bernard-Henri Lévy, “The New War Against Africa’s Christians,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 20, 2019, accessed December 21, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-new-war-against-africas-christians-11576880200?fbclid=IwAR2-qaQK8NZBJGiNjEAUSloybQcHWvVvEri-thWtgKpD6UcdYXY7ICfvEiyU>; “China’s pre-Christmas Church Crackdown Raises Alarm,” BBC News, December 18, 2018, accessed December 21, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-46588650> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-46588650>.

³¹ *The So-Called Letter to Diognetus*, in *The Library of Christian Classics: Volume 1, Early Christian Fathers*, translated and edited by Cyril C. Richardson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), 216-217.

³² The ethical obligation associated with the Other is described by the Jewish philosopher and Holocaust survivor Emmanuel Levinas when he writes, “The Other becomes my neighbour

- precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question. Responsibility for the Other, for the naked face of the first individual to come along. A responsibility that goes beyond what I may or may not have done to the Other or whatever acts I may or may not have committed, as if I were devoted to the other man before being devoted to myself.” Emmanuel Levinas, “Ethics as First Philosophy,” in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. and intro. by Seán Hand (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1989), 83.
- ³³ Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 14.
- ³⁴ Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 16.
- ³⁵ Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 293.
- ³⁶ C. Arnold Snyder, “Revolution and the Swiss Brethren: The Case of Michael Sattler,” *Church History* 50, no. 3 (Sept. 1981): 277.
- ³⁷ John C. Wenger, “The Schleithem Confession of Faith,” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* XIX, no. 4 (October 1945), 246, 248 footnote 23.
- ³⁸ Fritz Blanke, *Brothers in Christ: The History of the Oldest Anabaptist Congregation Zollikon, Near Zurich, Switzerland*, translated by Joseph Nordenhaug (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 15.
- ³⁹ The *Schleitheim Articles* were originally entitled *The Brotherly Agreement of some Children of God concerning Seven Articles* or in German *Brüder Verinigung etzlicher Kinder Gottes Sieben Artikel betreffend*. Michael Sattler, “*The Schleithem Articles: The Brotherly Agreement of some Children of God concerning Seven Articles*,” in *The Radical Reformation*, edited and translated by Michael G. Baylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 172; J. C. Wenger, “Bruederlich Vereinigung,” in *The Mennonite Encyclopedia: Volume 1, A–C* (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1955), 447–448.
- ⁴⁰ Although the *Schleitheim Articles* are commonly referenced as a key source of Anabaptism, they were unknown by the eighteenth century. They were recovered in the nineteenth century with the rise of the modern historical methodology that used archives and published rediscovered primary sources. Arnold Snyder, “The Influence of the Schleithem Articles on the Anabaptist Movement: An Historical Evaluation,” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 63, no. 4 (October 1989): 324.
- ⁴¹ Robert Friedmann, *The Theology of Anabaptism: An Interpretation* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973), 94.
- ⁴² James Davison Hunter argues that “within any network, there is usually one who provides a certain unprecedented leadership, who offers a greater degree of articulation or who puts more at risk financially, socially, and reputationally, or who provides the connective tissue of the network itself. This is where we do find the greatness of Martin Luther or John Calvin, a William Wilberforce, a Dorothy Day, a Martin Luther King, and so on.” James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 38.
- ⁴³ In one of the more thoughtful efforts to address this dearth of sources on Sattler, Myron S. Augsburger penned a historical novel based on his doctoral dissertation to fill the void. Myron S. Augsburger, *Pilgrim Aflame* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1967).
- ⁴⁴ G. Arnold Snyder, *The Life and Thought of Michael Sattler, Anabaptist* (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 1981), 5–10. Also see C. Arnold Snyder, “The Life of Michael Sattler Reconsidered,” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 52, no. 4 (October 1978): 328–332; William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism*, 3rd ed. rev. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 58; Harold S. Bender, “Sattler, Michael,”

in *The Mennonite Encyclopedia: Volume IV O–Z*, Supplement (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1959), 427-434.

- ⁴⁵ Snyder, *The Life and Thought of Michael Sattler*, 7. There are many questions about the influence of the Benedictines and monasticism on Sattler's theology and practices of the Swiss Anabaptist in general. For an analysis of this issue see Dennis D. Martin, "Monks, Mendicants and Anabaptists: Michael Sattler and the Benedictines Reconsidered," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 60, no. 2 (April 1986): 139-164; and Arnold Synder, "Michael Sattler, Benedictine: Dennis Martin's Objections Reconsidered," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 61, no. 3 (July 1987): 262-279.
- ⁴⁶ C. Arnold Snyder, *The Life and Thought of Michael Sattler*, foreword by Cornelius J. Dyck (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984), 25-26.
- ⁴⁷ Historian C. Arnold Snyder argues that biographers have given an order and rationale to events that cannot be supported conclusively by the evidence. Snyder, *The Life and Thought of Michael Sattler*, 25-26.
- ⁴⁸ Snyder, *The Life and Thought of Michael Sattler*, 27.
- ⁴⁹ Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 68.
- ⁵⁰ Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 68.
- ⁵¹ Sattler's approach here is the opposite of Luther who believed that secular rulers had the right, if not the obligation, to intervene in the life of the church. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Obedient Rebels: Catholic Substance and Protestant Principle in Luther's Reformation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 71-72.
- ⁵² Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 69.
- ⁵³ Hans J. Hillerbrand ed., *The Reformation: A Narrative History Related by Contemporary Observers and Participants* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 238-241; also see C. Arnold Snyder, "Rottenburg Revisited: New Evidence Concerning the Trial of Michael Sattler," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 54, no. 3 (July 1980): 208-228.
- ⁵⁴ Claus-Peter Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History, 1525-1618: Switzerland, Austria, Moravia, South and Central Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), 376; Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, translated by Trevor Johnson (London: Routledge, 1996), 121.
- ⁵⁵ Peter J. Klassen, *Europe in the Reformation* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1979), 119.
- ⁵⁶ "The Trial and Martyrdom of Michael Sattler, Rottenberg 1527," in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers: Documents Illustrative of the Radical Reformation*, edited by George H. Williams and Angel M. Mergal (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), 143; also see, George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 187.
- ⁵⁷ Estep notes that "the testimony of the martyrs led to phenomenal growth." Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 75.
- ⁵⁸ For a short history of terminology referencing Reformations see Carlos M. N. Eire, *Reformations: The Early Modern World, 1450-1650* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), ix-xi.
- ⁵⁹ Paul Peachy asserts that Fritz Blanke, a professor at the University of Zurich in the 1950s, observed that the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century established "the first modern 'free church.'" Blanke closed "his Anabaptist research seminar with the comment, 'Their only error was that, historically speaking, they embraced the free church prematurely.'" Paul Peachy, "The 'Free Church?': A Time Whose Idea Has Not Come," in *Anabaptism Revisited:*

Essays on Anabaptist/Mennonite Studies in Honor of C. J. Dyck, edited by Walter Klaassen (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992), 173.

- ⁶⁰ George H. Williams, "Introduction," in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers: Documents Illustrative of the Radical Reformation*, edited by George H. Williams and Angel M. Mergal (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1957), 25.
- ⁶¹ Georg Jellinek notes that Romans 13: 1-7, Titus 3:1, and I Peter 2: 13-17 influenced how Christians came to describe secular political power as authorities when he explains, "In der christlichen Welt hat diese Anschauung durch die Ausdrucksweise des Neuen Testaments, das vom Staate nur die Obrigkeit betont, eine bedeutsame Stütze erhalten." ("In the Christian world this view receives significant support in the New Testament, the state is expressed simply as authorities"). Georg Jellinek, *Das Recht des Modernen Staates: Erster Band, Allgemeine Staatslehre* (Berlin: Verlag von O. Häring, 1905), 139.
- ⁶² *Corpus Christianum*, according to Heinrich de Wall, "refers to the medieval concept of a unity of church and 'state,' of spiritual and secular dominion. According to it, sacerdotium and imperium, empire and papacy are two powers within a unified *respublica Christiana* encompassing all of Christianity, membership in which is mediated by baptism. The invisible, unifying head of this *corpus mysticum* is Jesus Christ; it is governed by emperor and pope as earthly heads." Heinrich de Wall, "Corpus Christianum," in *Religion Past and Present: Chu-Deu, Volume 3: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion*, edited by Hans Dieter Betz, Don S. Browning, Bernd Janowski, and Eberhard Jüngel, 4th ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), accessed 25 November 2019, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1877-5888_rpp_SIM_03244.
- ⁶³ Lewis W. Spitz explains that, "the term 'state' seems to have come into common usage only in the last half of the 16th century via French jurists drawing on Italian sources. Luther as a rule spoke of *Obrigkeit*, or secular authority." Lewis W. Spitz, "Impact of the Reformation on Church-State Issues," in *Church and State Under God*, edited by Albert G. Huegli (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 63.
- ⁶⁴ Garrett Mattingly contends that in the late medieval era "Latin Christendom still knew itself to be one." Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), 18.
- ⁶⁵ There were several legal actions taken against Anabaptists that allowed for them to be executed. The first legal mandate specifically passed against re-baptizers was issued at Zurich in 1526. However, legal action was taken based on the Diet of Worms (1521), local mandates issued in cities and territories, as well as those that followed the mandate issued against Anabaptists at the imperial diet at Speyer in 1529 and reconfirmed in 1544 and 1551. Hans-Jürgen Goertz overviews the development of the Anabaptist Mandate of Speyer (1529) that outlawed Anabaptism "in order 'to preserve peace and unity with in the Holy Roman Empire.'" Lyndal Roper, drawing on Goertz's work, also follows this line of thinking for explaining Philip Melanchthon's view of Anabaptists as seditious and worthy of execution as heretics based on "the imperial mandate against Anabaptists of 1528." Claus-Peter Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History, 374-377*; Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, 119; Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* (London: Vintage, 2016), 348; also see Klassen, *Europe in the Reformation*, 118-119.
- ⁶⁶ Luther was not sympathetic to the Anabaptists and other radical reformers. Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 269.
- ⁶⁷ Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 321.
- ⁶⁸ Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 321.

- ⁶⁹ Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 322.
- ⁷⁰ Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 192.
- ⁷¹ Ozment, *The Age of Reform*, 324.
- ⁷² Eire, *Reformations*, 230.
- ⁷³ G. R. Elton explains that, “in the sixteenth century, movements of protest were bound to take a religious form and draw their strength also from spiritual dissatisfaction.” G. R. Elton, *Reformation Europe 1517-1559* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), 87.
- ⁷⁴ Alec Ryrie, *Protestants: The Radicals Who Made the Modern World* (London: William Collins, 2017), 62.
- ⁷⁵ Eire, *Reformations*, 257.
- ⁷⁶ Olof H. de Vries, “Anabaptist Sixteenth-Century Baptism as Exponent of Christian Spirituality in a Time of Cultural, Social, and Political Breaches,” *Religion & Theology* 23 (2016): 112, 122-124.
- ⁷⁷ Eire, *Reformations*, 258.
- ⁷⁸ de Vries, “Anabaptist Sixteenth-Century Baptism as Exponent of Christian Spirituality in a Time of Cultural, Social, and Political Breaches,” 112.
- ⁷⁹ Elton, *Reformation Europe 1517-1559*, 69.
- ⁸⁰ In Bern, Swiss reformer Berchtold Haller held “that Anabaptism was a symptom of the spiritual poverty of the masses and [he] could not easily bring himself to approve of the death penalty for deprived people.” Leland Harder, “Zwingli’s Reaction to the Schleithem Confession of Faith of the Anabaptists,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* XI, no. 4 (1980): 54.
- ⁸¹ Quoted in Harder, “Zwingli’s Reaction to the Schleithem Confession of Faith of the Anabaptists,” 51.
- ⁸² Leo Jud, Zwingli’s collaborator in Zurich, wrote of “the continuing struggle with the re-baptizers” (*Die forwährenden Kampfe mit den Widertäufern*), that “the fight is fiercer and the war far more difficult with these [Anabaptist] people who eclipse the darkness by the light of the Word itself.” Quoted in Harder, “Zwingli’s Reaction to the Schleithem Confession of Faith of the Anabaptists,” 51-52; also Leo Jud to [Joachim] Vadian, August 8, 1525, in *Vadianische Briefsammlung der Stadtbibliothek St. Gallen: Volume III*, ed. Emil Arbenz (St. Gallen: Fehrsche Buchhandlung, 1897), 118-119.
- ⁸³ Martin Greschat, *Martin Bucer: A Reformer and His Times*, trans. Stephen E. Buckwalter (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 69.
- ⁸⁴ Greschat, *Martin Bucer*, 69.
- ⁸⁵ J. Denny Weaver, “Discipleship Redefined: Fourth Sixteenth Century Anabaptists,” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 54, 4 (October 1980): 259.
- ⁸⁶ Greschat, *Martin Bucer*, 69.
- ⁸⁷ Andrew Pettegree, *Brand Luther: 1517, Printing, and the Making of the Reformation* (New York: Penguin Press, 2015), 168.
- ⁸⁸ Pettegree, *Brand Luther*, 246-247.
- ⁸⁹ “The Twelve Articles of the Peasants (1525),” in *A Reformation Reader: Primary Texts with Introductions*, edited by Denis R. Janz, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 168-170.
- ⁹⁰ James D. Tracy asserts that the *Twelve Articles* show that the peasants believed that “the law of scripture—godly law—is a guide not just for personal conduct, but also for social

- relations within a Christian society.” James D. Tracy, *Europe’s Reformations, 1450-1650: Doctrine, Politics, and Community*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 69.
- ⁹¹ Bernard Cottret, *Historie de la Réforme Protestante: Luther, Calvin, Wesley, XVI-XVIII siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 2010), 92-97.
- ⁹² Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 152.
- ⁹³ Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 205.
- ⁹⁴ Peter J. Klassen observes that “Calvin, too, used the weight of his powerful pen to castigate Anabaptism. He knew less of the movement than any other major Reformation leader, but he did not hesitate to pronounce sentence even though he had only fragmentary evidence.” Peter James Klassen, *The Economics of Anabaptism. 1525-1560* (London: Mouton & Co., 1964), 14.
- ⁹⁵ Fritz Blanke, “Anabaptism and the Reformation,” in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S. Bender*, ed. Guy F. Hershberger (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1957), 65.
- ⁹⁶ Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 65.
- ⁹⁷ Sattler, “*The Schleithem Articles: The Brotherly Agreement of some Children of God concerning Seven Articles*,” 172-180.
- ⁹⁸ Sean F. Winter argues that “Schleithem was the first attempt to distil the thought of many into a document which would form the basis of a new vision of a church separated from the world and living in unity.” Sean F. Winter, “Michael Sattler and the Schleithem Articles: A Study in the Background to the First Anabaptist Confession of Faith,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (April 1991): 64.
- ⁹⁹ Sattler, “*The Schleithem Articles: The Brotherly Agreement of some Children of God concerning Seven Articles*,” 173.
- ¹⁰⁰ Daniel Liechty, “Introduction,” in *Early Anabaptist Spirituality: Selected Writings*, trans. and ed. by Daniel Liechty, preface by Hans J. Hillerbrand (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 10-11.
- ¹⁰¹ Klassen, *The Economics of Anabaptism 1525-1560*, 36.
- ¹⁰² Robert Louis Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 118.
- ¹⁰³ Larry W. Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 54.
- ¹⁰⁴ Technically, the term Protestant was not a concept that existed until the Second Diet of Speyer when on April 19, 1529, fourteen imperial cities and six German princes issued a “Protestation” against the decisions of the Diet. The protesters wanted the right to choose their religion in their respective territories—namely the evangelical faith. They used the term *evangelical* to describe themselves and their faith, which meant they were defined by their reading and understanding of the Gospel. Eire, *Reformations*, 216.
- ¹⁰⁵ Franklin Hamlin Littell, *The Free Church: The Significance of the Left Wing of the Reformation for Modern American Protestantism* (Boston: Starr King Press, 1957), 12.
- ¹⁰⁶ Cornelius J. Dyck, “Anabaptism and the Social Order,” in *The Impact of the Church Upon Its Culture*, edited by Jerald C. Brauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 227. Also see Ross Thomas Bender, *The People of God: A Mennonite Interpretation of the Free Church Tradition* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971), 25-27.

- ¹⁰⁷ David Saxton, "Toward a Theological System of Michael Sattler," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 4, no. 1 (2011): 54; also see Donald F. Durnbaugh, *The Believers' Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1968), 72-73.
- ¹⁰⁸ Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 322; also see H. W. Meihuizen, "Who Were the 'False Brethren' Mentioned in the Schleithem Articles?" *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 41, no. 3 (July 1967): 214-215.
- ¹⁰⁹ For example, Philip Melancthon held that death for Anabaptists was both biblical and legal under Roman law. Leviticus 24:16 indicates that blasphemers should be put to death and in the Justinian law code those who practiced rebaptism should be put to death. Anabaptists were viewed as a reappearance of the Donatists from late antiquity who sought a pure church and engaged in re-baptism. This led to Anabaptists being mistakenly understood as those who sought to undermine church authority and civil authority. From Melancthon's view, the civil government was required to act "for the honor and glory of God." John S. Oyer, *Lutheran Reformers Against Anabaptists: Luther, Melancthon, and Menius and the Anabaptists of Central Germany* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 174.
- ¹¹⁰ Sattler's eschatology used the "apocalyptic ideas of IV Ezra and those of the Revelation of John, in order to assure them that very soon the division would be made between those who walked Christ's right path and way leading to Life, and those who ate from the fleshpots of Egypt and were fleshly-minded." Meihuizen, "Who Were the 'False Brethren' Mentioned in the Schleithem Articles?," 222. For Luther's eschatology as related to the Anabaptists see Carter Lindberg, "Eschatology and Fanaticism in the Reformation Era: Luther and the Anabaptists," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (October 2000): 259-278.
- ¹¹¹ Dyck, "Anabaptism and the Social Order," 227.
- ¹¹² Meic Pearse, *The Great Restoration: The Religious Radicals of the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), 62.
- ¹¹³ Brian Froese, "'The Anabaptist Vision': A Half-Century of Historical and Religious Debate in Twentieth-Century America," *Fides et Historia* 35, no. 2 (Summer/Fall 2003): 105.
- ¹¹⁴ Harold S. Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision," *Church History* 13, no. 1 (March 1944): 3-24; also see Walter Klaassen, "'There Were Giants on Earth in Those Days': Harold S. Bender and the Anabaptist Vision," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 12, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 233-237.
- ¹¹⁵ See footnote 40. Snyder, "The Influence of the Schleithem Articles on the Anabaptist Movement: An Historical Evaluation," 324.
- ¹¹⁶ Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision," 21.
- ¹¹⁷ Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision," 21.
- ¹¹⁸ Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision," 19.
- ¹¹⁹ Paul Toews, *Mennonites in American Society, 1930-1970: Modernity and the Persistence of Religious Community* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1996), 84.
- ¹²⁰ Froese, "'The Anabaptist Vision': A Half-Century of Historical and Religious Debate in Twentieth-Century America," 105.
- ¹²¹ For a critique of Bender see Abraham Friesen, *Erasmus, the Anabaptists, and the Great Commission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998)16-17.
- ¹²² Toews, *Mennonites in American Society, 1930-1970*, 37-38.
- ¹²³ Stephen F. Dintaman, "The Spiritual Poverty of the Anabaptist Vision," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 206-207.
- ¹²⁴ Dintaman, "The Spiritual Poverty of the Anabaptist Vision," 207.

- ¹²⁵ Stephen F. Dintaman, “Reading the Reactions to ‘The Spiritual Poverty of the Anabaptist Vision,’” *The Conrad Grebel Review* 13, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 7.
- ¹²⁶ Sattler, “*The Schleithem Articles: The Brotherly Agreement of some Children of God concerning Seven Articles*,” 175.
- ¹²⁷ Froese, “‘The Anabaptist Vision’: A Half-Century of Historical and Religious Debate in Twentieth-Century America,” 114-117. For a contemporary critic of Bender’s Anabaptist Vision see, Laura Schmidt Roberts, Paul Martens, and Myron A. Penner, *Recovering from the Anabaptist Vision: New Essays in Anabaptist Identity and Theological Method* (London: T & T Clark 2020).
- ¹²⁸ Spitz, “Impact of the Reformation on Church-State Issues,” 96-99. Also see Frederick W. Norris, *Christianity: A Short Global History* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002), 169; Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity, Volume II: The Reformation to the Present Day*, 2nd (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 70-71.
- ¹²⁹ Jürgen Moltmann and Steffen Lösel, “The Unfinished Reformation,” *Theology Today* 74, 1 (2017): 14.
- ¹³⁰ Moltmann and Lösel, “The Unfinished Reformation,” 14.
- ¹³¹ The Swiss Anabaptist’s rejection of “the Christian empire and the Christian state religion” started with the foundational element in creating “a Christian citizen,” baptism, and extended to include the rejection of oaths and Christians serving in government. Moltmann and Lösel, “The Unfinished Reformation,” 14.
- ¹³² H. W. Meihuizen, “Who Were the ‘False Brethren’ Mentioned in the Schleithem Articles?,” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 41, no. 3 (July 1967): 200-222; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation* (New York: Viking, 2003), 164.
- ¹³³ Sattler, “*The Schleithem Articles: The Brotherly Agreement of some Children of God concerning Seven Articles*,” 175.
- ¹³⁴ Winter, “Michael Sattler and the Schleithem Articles,” 60.
- ¹³⁵ C. Arnold Snyder, *Following in the Footsteps of Christ: The Anabaptist Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 2004), 24-28; Franklin Hamlin Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism: A Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church* (London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1964), 2.
- ¹³⁶ Dyck, “Anabaptism and the Social Order,” 210.
- ¹³⁷ James M. Stayer, “Swiss-South German Anabaptism, 1526-1540,” in *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521-1700*, edited by John D. Roth and James M. Stayer (Boston: Leiden, 2007), 89. Abraham Friesen also notes that “the 1527 *Schleithem Confession* implied, with its absence of any of the traditional dogmatic statements, that there was little *theological* disagreement between the Magisterial Reformers and the Swiss Brethren at the outset.” Abraham Friesen, *Menno Simons: Dutch Reformer Between Luther, Erasmus, and the Holy Spirit* (San Bernardino, CA: Xlibris, 2015), 142.
- ¹³⁸ Sattler, “*The Schleithem Articles: The Brotherly Agreement of some Children of God concerning Seven Articles*,” 172.
- ¹³⁹ Sattler, “*The Schleithem Articles: The Brotherly Agreement of some Children of God concerning Seven Articles*,” 174.
- ¹⁴⁰ Smith goes on to state that “Christians of earlier centuries would be shocked and appalled if they knew about some of the beliefs and practices of Christians today.” Smith, *Secular Faith*, ix.

- ¹⁴¹ For accounts of persecution see Frederick W. Norris, *Christianity: A Short Global History* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002).
- ¹⁴² Roland Bainton, "The Enduring Witness: The Mennonites," *Mennonite Life* IX, no. 2 (April 1954): 89.
- ¹⁴³ Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, 217.
- ¹⁴⁴ Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 293.
- ¹⁴⁵ Recently this division has been lessened by further reconciliation, see J. Nelson Kraybill, "'500-Year-Old Bible Study' Resumes: Mennonite, Reformed Leaders begin Dialogue as 'branches from same tree,'" *Mennonite World Review* 97, no. 13 (June 24, 2019): 1-2.
- ¹⁴⁶ Robert D. Linder, *The Reformation Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 83.
- ¹⁴⁷ Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 177-178.
- ¹⁴⁸ Chad Spellman, "I Wait Upon My God: Exploring the Life and Letters of Michael Sattler," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 56, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 193.
- ¹⁴⁹ Robert M. Kingdon observes that "Reformation studies have been distorted for a long time by excessive concentration on the movement's founders, Luther and Calvin. . . . We must consider the thousands of leaders, both lay and clerical, who passed the new message on to the laity. We must consider the millions whose ideas and behavior were influenced so profoundly by the sixteenth-century reforms of religion, whether contained within the traditional structure of the Roman Catholic Church or within the new structures of Evangelical, Reformed, and Radical churches." Robert M. Kingdon, "Foreword," in *Shapers of Religious Traditions in Germany, Switzerland, and Poland, 1560-1600*, edited and introduction by Jill Raitt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), vii.
- ¹⁵⁰ de Vries, "Anabaptist Sixteenth-Century Baptism as Exponent of Christian Spirituality in a Time of Cultural, Social, and Political Breaches," 124.