

Dear Friend

Greetings in the precious Name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Thank you very much for your gracious letter 24/1 concerning our article on the *Anabaptists*.

As a Reformed Baptist myself, I most certainly appreciate your point. I have read much concerning the Anabaptists and yes, of course there is much truth in their teachings and much of the Grace of Christ in the testimonies of especially the later Anabaptists.

What motivated this article was the persistent and unbalanced condemnation of the Reformers by those who claimed that Reformers, such Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, murdered peaceful, pacifist Anabaptists, etc.

Therefore, the aim of this article was to point out that the Reformers themselves persecuted no one, and those Anabaptists who were dealt with by the secular authorities, were in many cases violent revolutionaries, guilty of sedition and abominable atrocities and abuses.

Of course, I recognise that the majority of Anabaptists were not involved in the revolution in Munster. And of course, as the article points out, that Anabaptists have changed dramatically since that volatile time in the early 16th century. That is why it so unfair to portray the Reformers as persecuting poor, innocent, pacifist Anabaptists, as the ones who seized Munster, for example, were anything but pacifist or peaceful. There was no intention to paint all Anabaptists with the same brush, nor to reject the courage and integrity of so many within the Anabaptist movement, but merely to defend the Reformers against a most unjust slander.

It must also be noted that the Reformers in the 16 th century were fighting for their lives against the Holy Roman Empire, the Roman Catholic Church and The Inquisition. Obviously we would have preferred them to be a whole lot more tolerant and accommodating of the Anabaptist dissenters within their communities, in accordance with the freedom of religion and liberty of conscience which was championed, and ultimately established, through the Reformation. However, we do need to remind our readers of the geo-strategic realities, the overwhelming threat to the Protestants, for example in the fierce fight for the freedom of The Netherlands from Spain. The Spanish Inquisition literally condemned the entire nation of Holland, man, woman and child – 3 million people in all – to death as heretics! The Protestants in the 16 th century were literally fighting for their lives, and it is understandable that they would have looked at the violent revolutionaries who seized Munster as an internal threat that needed to be eradicated. Although it is unfortunate that they saw the pacifist Anabaptists who would not join them in fighting for survival from Catholic aggression, as also a threat.

There is so much we can learn from history.

I praise God that the principles of religious freedom were ultimately entrenched through the Reformation, and that the Amish, Mennonites and Anabaptists now enjoy the freedoms that they never had before the Reformation.

May the Lord continue to be your joy and strength.

Yours for the fulfillment of the Great Commission

Dr Peter Hammond

Director