

Review

- What three tendencies of the Radical Reformation did historian, ***George Huntston Williams*** identify that help us understand the main streams of thought among the Radicals?
 - **Anabaptist** – strong Biblicist who held to believer's baptism
 - **Spiritualist** – or inspirationist who believed that the Spirit took precedence over the Bible
 - **Rationalist** – put primary emphasis on the place of reason in interpreting the scriptures and were, for the most part, anti-Trinitarian

Review

- When the Zurich council did not *immediately* move to end the practice of the Roman Catholic Mass after hearing from Zwingli and his students that the practice was unscriptural, Zwingli was not upset. Why?
 - Zwingli believed his task was done when he had *proclaimed* the truth. It was not up to him, or to any private individual, to remove the icons or end the Mass; this must be done *legally* by the Christian magistrates.
 - He simply planned to go on preaching, and external reform would inevitably follow when enough people were won over.
- The students, on the other hand, were very upset. Why?
 - For them, Zwingli seemed to be divorcing *truth* from *action* and they felt they could no longer endure it. In their eyes of he had compromised revealed truth in deference to constituted political authority. The authority of the Word of God had been sacrificed on the altar of human expediency and they felt *betrayed*.

The Schleithem Confession



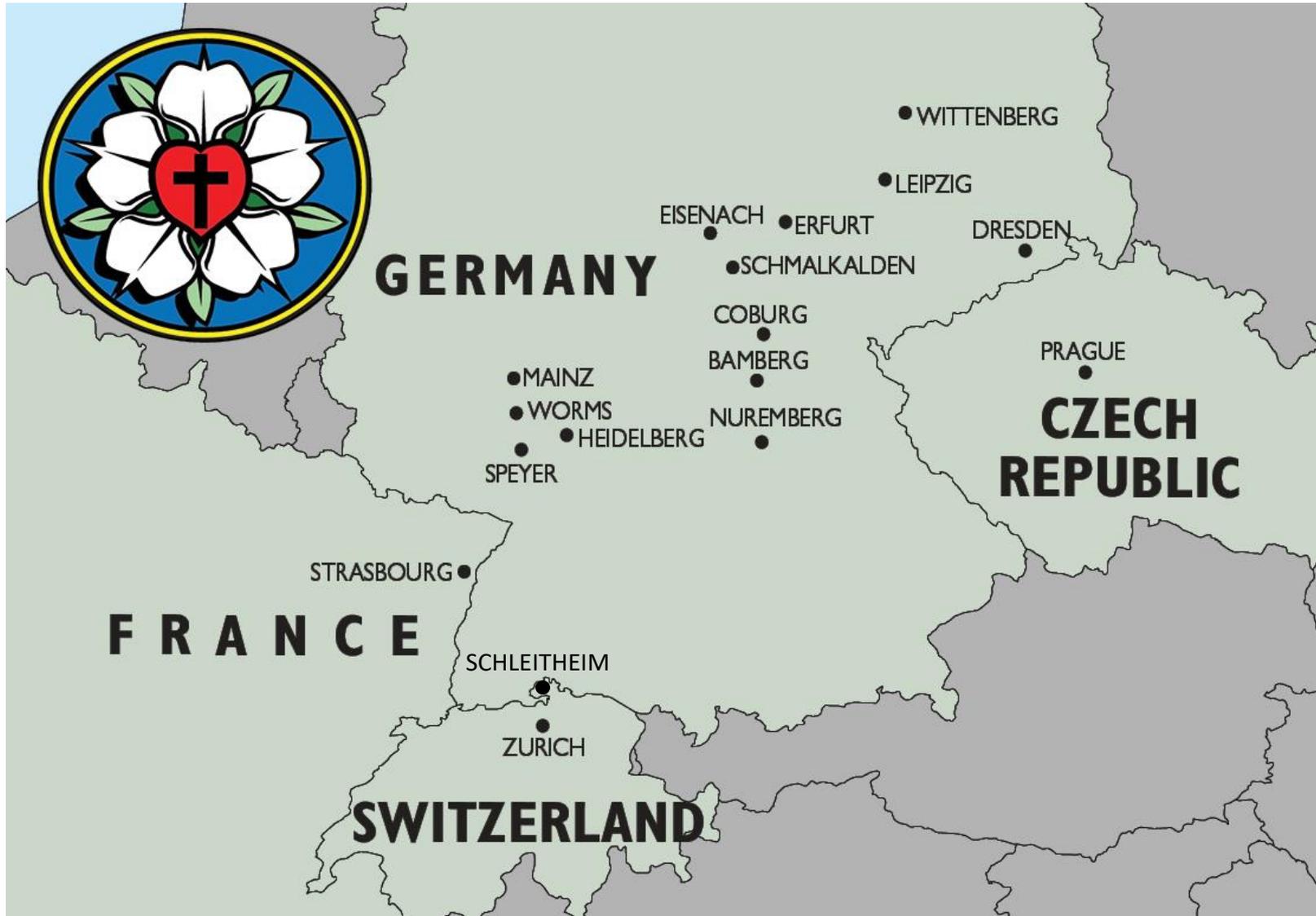
The Schleithem Confession

- It was in the immediate aftermath of Manz's martyrdom in February 1527 that one of the most historically significant Radical gatherings took place in ***Schleithem*** – a northern Swiss city on the German border.
- It was during this gathering that the assembled Radical Reformers produced a document known as the ***Schleithem Confession***.
- The most ***well known*** figure in that gathering was Wilhelm Roubli, one of Zwingli's former students.
- However, the person who exerted the ***most influence*** in the gathering was ***Michael Sattler***.
- Originally a Benedictine monk, Sattler abandoned his religious order in 1523 under the influence of Reformation teachings. Soon after that, he got married.

The Schleithem Confession

- Sattler ended up in Zurich where he threw in his lot with the Radicals, for which he was banished in November 1525.
- Sattler continued to promote the Anabaptist faith in other cities around southern Germany, including Strasbourg.
- In Strasbourg he interacted with the Magisterial Reformers Martin Bucer and Wolfgang Capito, who found Sattler much more orthodox than most of the other Radicals they had encountered, and treated him sympathetically.

Reformation Map



The Schleithem Confession

- Then in February 1527 Sattler journeyed back to Switzerland, where he effectively presided over the Radical synod which had assembled in Schleithem.
- The Schleithem Confession dealt almost ***exclusively*** with matters of ***morality*** and ***Church order***.
- In this respect, it served to highlight the crucial ***moral and ecclesiastical differences*** between the ***majority*** of ***Anabaptist Radicals*** and the ***Magisterial Reformation***.
- The Confession was soon adopted as a statement of fundamental beliefs by many Anabaptist Radicals, functioning much as the *Augsburg Confession* did among Lutherans.

The Schleithem Confession

- We can **summarize** the teachings of the Schleithem Confession under the following headings:
 - Believers' baptism
 - A rigorous approach to the excommunication of the sinful members – or the “ban”, as Anabaptists called it
 - The Lord's Supper as an ordinance that belongs **only** to those baptized as believers
 - The complete **separation** of true believers from unbelievers in **all** religious and political matters
 - The high importance of the pastoral office
 - **Total pacifism and non-violence**, and hence the rejection of Christians serving as magistrates, since magistrates have to use **force** to uphold the law
 - The total rejection of oaths.

The Schleithem Confession

- The Schleithem Confession does not say much regarding any *theological* issues; for example, we find *nothing* in its pages about the nature of God, Christ, or salvation.
- It has been argued that this glaring absence of theology was due to the specific circumstances which produced the Confession – the need felt by those at Schleithem to state their views on *controversial* points, rather than on points where there was general agreement.
- On this basis, one might maintain that the Confession does not deal with theology because there was a broad agreement among the Anabaptist Radicals on theological issues.
- But there is good reason to believe this was not the case.

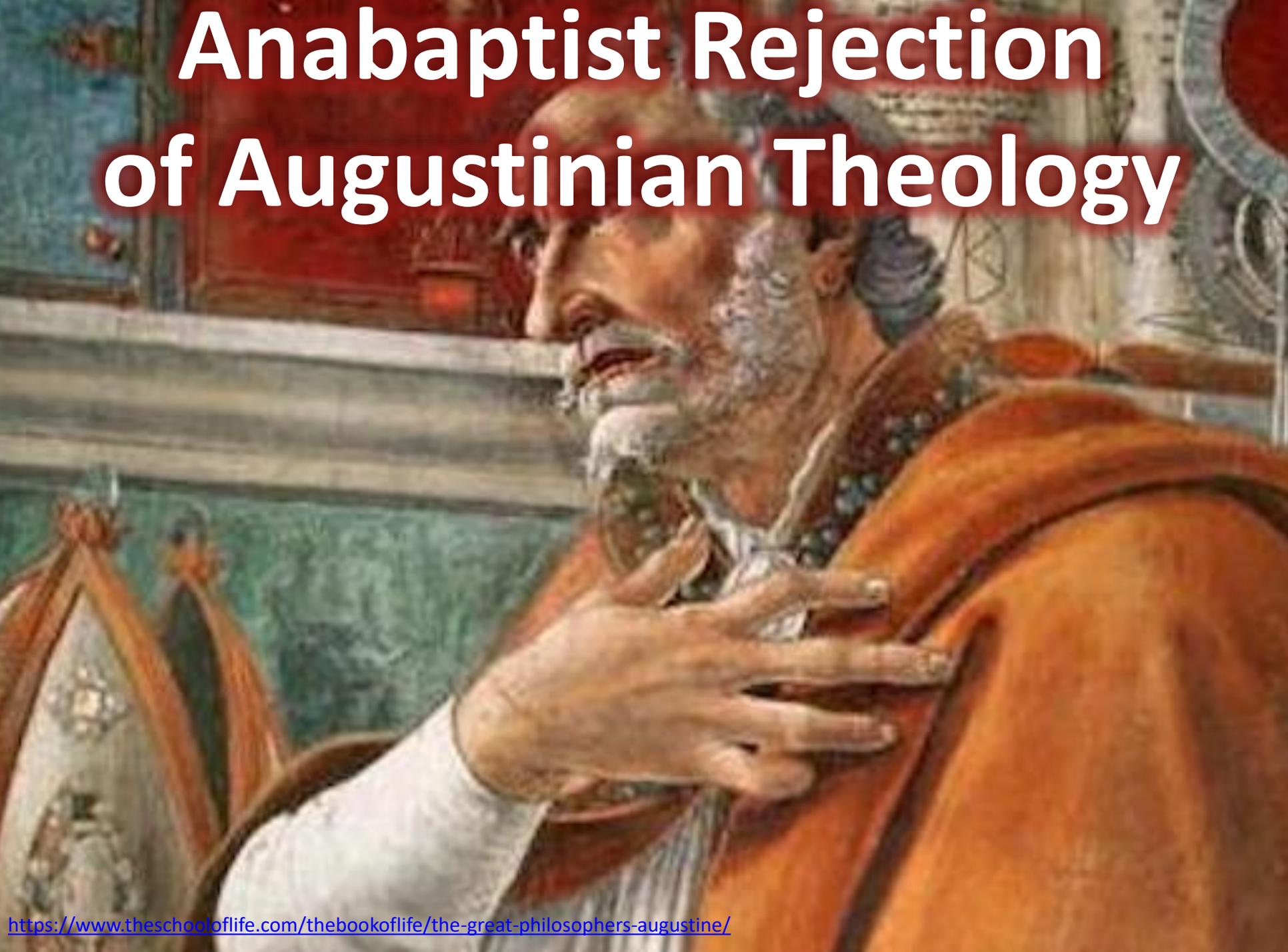
The Schleithem Confession

- There certainly were theological questions, very *serious* ones, that separated the Anabaptists from the Magisterial Reformers, *and* from other Radicals.
- Why were *these* not addressed in the Confession?
- It seems *more likely* that the Confession's silence on theology was itself a symptom of the prevailing mindset among the Anabaptist Radicals.

The Schleithem Confession

- The Anabaptist Radicals were not primarily interested in ***theology***, but in ***ethics*** in the Christian life, which they understood in terms of the importance of love and the imitation of Christ.
- This very attitude set them apart sharply from Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, who perceived Christianity primarily in terms of ***dogma***.
- For the ***Magisterial Reformers***, ***theology*** came ***first*** and determined everything else.
- For the Anabaptist Radicals, it was really ***lifestyle*** that came first, and much of their theologizing arose out of their ethical and communal concerns.

Anabaptist Rejection of Augustinian Theology



Anabaptist Rejection of Augustinian Theology

- What, then, ***was*** the distinctive theology of the Swiss Brethren (even if it is not found in the Schleitheim Confession)?
- Naturally we are tempted to rush first to their doctrine of ***believers' baptism***, which ***is*** in the Confession, but there were more ***significant*** differences between the Anabaptists and Zwingli.
- The most ***fundamental*** was that the Anabaptists did not share Zwingli's commitment to Augustinian views of salvation.
- One of the characteristics of the whole Radical Reformation was that it had a more optimistic stance on human nature than the Magisterial Reformers held.

Anabaptist Rejection of Augustinian Theology

- Radicals *rejected* the bondage of the will, modified or even rejected the doctrine of original sin, and affirmed the freedom of all human beings to respond savingly to God's grace.
- A constant element in their arguments against the Magisterial Reformation was that its Augustinian theology of human depravity and sovereign grace was nothing more than a license to sin.
- Here we see again the practical lifestyle thrust of the Radicals: theology must be supportive of the life of obedience.
- Their animus against Augustinianism stemmed from their conviction that its pessimism about human nature sapped the foundations of serious moral and spiritual efforts.

Anabaptist Rejection of Augustinian Theology

- In this respect, it has been argued that the Radicals were actually far *less radical* than the Magisterial Reformers: it was Luther and Zwingli who broke “radically” with the Semi-Pelagian theology of medieval Roman Catholicism, whereas the Radicals *preserved and maintained it*.
- In a similar vein, the Anabaptists rejected the Magisterial doctrine of *legal justification* by faith alone.
- Although we find clear statements from Anabaptist leaders that Christ and His salvation are *initially* received by *faith*, Anabaptists viewed legal justification as a threat to the life of obedience, a license to sin.

Anabaptist Rejection of Augustinian Theology

- In place of legal justification through the objective work of Christ, they located the controlling theme of Christian faith in the new birth, conversion, and holiness.
- For the ***Magisterial Reformers*** the essential question was, “What must I do to be saved?”; but for the ***Anabaptists***, it was, “How should a Christian ***live***?”
- Not surprisingly, this Anabaptist distaste for legal justification, and focusing on subjective holiness, prompted the Magisterial Reformers to see them as no better than Roman Catholics – Anabaptists were “the new monks”, as Luther put it.

Anabaptist Distinction Between Church and Society



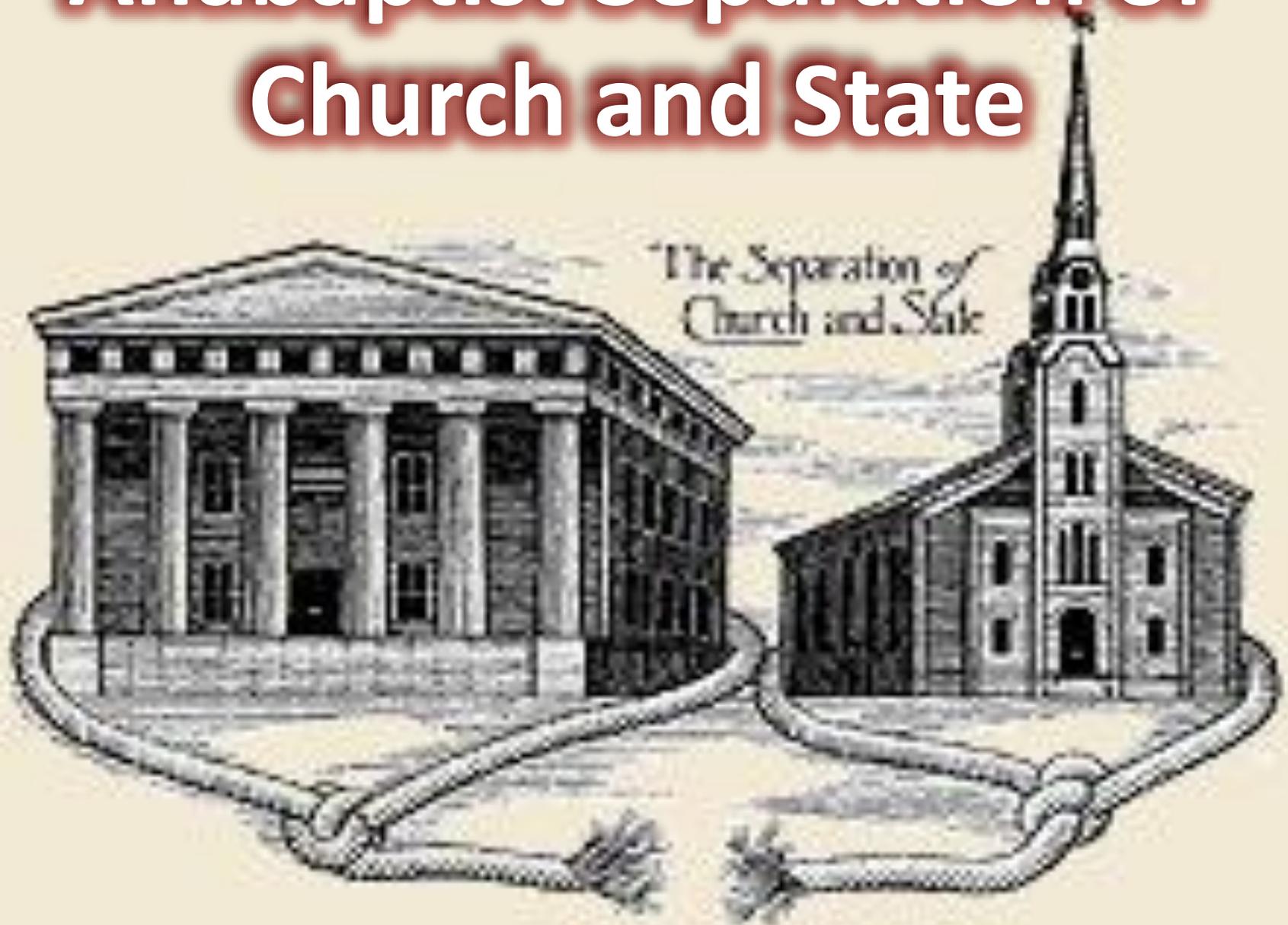
Distinction Between Church and Society

- Another pervasive theme which made agreement difficult between Zwingli and the Swiss Brethren was their conflicting theology of the Church and its relationship to ***civil society***.
- Zwingli was willing to accept as a Church member ***anyone*** who ***professed*** Christianity, which in the religious culture of his day meant ***all*** the citizens of Zurich.
- In practice, therefore, Church and civil society were simply two sides of the same coin.
- The Anabaptists, by contrast, saw the Church as a ***stark alternative*** to civil society, and ***restricted*** Church ***membership*** to those who ***gave evidence*** of their ***inward sincerity and commitment***.

Distinction Between Church and Society

- The Anabaptists completely **repudiated** the medieval concept of Christendom, in which **everyone** born into a “Christian society” soaked up Christianity from his culture and was **automatically** regarded as a Christian unless he opted out through heresy or unbelief.
- For the Anabaptists, the Church of Jesus Christ was a **radically separate** community which an individual had to **opt into** by a **personal act of faith**.
- The moral purity of this community was then to be preserved by a strict and unsentimental use of the ban.
- The Anabaptists may have advocated religious **toleration** in society at large, but they tended to be extremely **intolerant** of what they considered moral lapses among their own.
- Many of the most wounding internal divisions of the Anabaptists were over the extent and severity of the ban.

Anabaptist Separation of Church and State



Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- For the Magisterial Reformers, ***theology*** came ***first*** and determined everything else. For the Anabaptist Radicals, it was really ***lifestyle*** that came first, and much of their theologizing arose out of their ethical and communal concerns. Which one got it right and why?
- The Anabaptists viewed the Augustinian theology of human depravity, sovereign grace and legal justification as a threat to the life of obedience and a license to sin. Are they right about this? Why or why not?
- Zwingli was willing to accept as a Church member ***anyone*** who ***professed*** Christianity, whereas the Anabaptists ***restricted*** Church ***membership*** to those who ***gave evidence*** of their ***inward sincerity and commitment***. Which one got it right and why?
- Do ***you*** have a topic or question that ***you*** would like to see us to discuss?