The persistence of Anabaptism as vision

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Anabaptist movements and their chroniclers have frequently used metaphors associated with vision to account for Anabaptist beginnings. Such an emphasis on sight and light is one way Anabaptist historians have sought to explain the spiritual dimension of Anabaptist social nonconformity. The rise of polygenesis historiography in the 1970's challenged the spiritual unity of Anabaptism, seeking instead to stress the varied local conditions of Anabaptist emergence, as well as the diversity of convictions associated with Anabaptism. In recent years, however, numerous scholars have sought to exceed polygenesis paradigms by identifying common convictions held by different Anabaptist groups, highlighting differences and commonalities with Catholic and Protestant theology, critiquing the ideological assumptions of polygenesis historians and analyzing the rhetorical conventions that shaped Anabaptist argument. The essay concludes that Anabaptist movements were shaped by spiritually guided practices of persuasion and that those who seek to understand Anabaptism should give attention to the visions seen and articulated in such practices.

ANABAPTISM AS NEW LIGHT

From the very beginning Anabaptism was experienced as an invasion of perception, whether as a shadow that provoked fear or a light that brought freedom. An event that reordered the known world, both the visible and the invisible, for those who embraced it Anabaptism burst onto the social landscape of early sixteenth-century continental Europe as the dawning of a new day, the rising of "the morning star" and a leaving of "the shadows of this world." (1)

"Children of the light" they called themselves, when they gathered at Schleitheim to forge a "Brotherly Union" that witnessed to the unity of the Spirit these Swiss brothers and sisters had discovered among themselves. "The almighty eternal and merciful God," they affirmed, "has made His wonderful light break forth into this world ... in this dangerous time ... whereby we have been called into his fellowship." (2)

What exactly Anabaptist communities did see, in the breaking forth of the light, remains the question for us, whether we are historians seeking understanding of the past, or spiritual descendants seeking renewal by that same light, or both. The earliest accounts of the Christendom-shattering believers baptisms on January 21, 1525, establish the landscape of early Anabaptist sight. The account in the Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren maintains that "because God wanted one united people, separated from all other peoples, he brought forth the Morning Star, the light of his truth, to shine with all of its radiance in the present age of this world so that his holy work could be recognized by everyone." (3) Among those who recognized this work, according to that account, were a small circle of seekers that included Huldrych Zwingli, Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz and George Blaurock. In a process of discussion and disagreement, which included estrangement between Zwingli and other members of the circle, this gathering of inquirers "came to unity" about questions of faith. Specifically, "they agreed that from God's Word one must first learn true faith, expressed in deeds of love, and on confession of faith receive true Christian..."
Anabaptism is a Christian movement which traces its origins to the Radical Reformation. The movement is seen by outsiders as another offshoot of Protestantism, although this view is not shared by Anabaptists, who view themselves as a separate branch of Christianity. Over four million Anabaptists live in the world today with adherents scattered across all inhabited continents. In addition to a number of minor Anabaptist groups, the most numerous include the Mennonites at 2.1 million, the German Baptist. If the Anabaptist vision just is radical discipleship, radical community, and radical love (exemplified by nonresistance or nonviolence), then one need not be an Anabaptist in order to be a neo-Anabaptist! After a couple generations of neo-Anabaptism as a renewal movement within Anabaptism, then, neo-Anabaptism took on a distinct life of its own outside of Anabaptism. The irony is that neo-Anabaptism as such is the vision of white men (Bender, Yoder) that continues to be propagated in large part by white men (Hauerwas, McKnight, Fitch, Boyd, Claiborne). As a white man myself, I say that not as critique but as a simple acknowledgment of reality. Anabaptist, (from Greek ana, "again") member of a fringe, or radical, movement of the Protestant Reformation and spiritual ancestor of modern Baptists, Mennonites, and Quakers.

The movement's most distinctive tenet was adult baptism. In its first generation, converts submitted to a second baptism. Encyclopaedia Britannica's editors oversee subject areas in which they have extensive knowledge, whether from years of experience gained by working on that content or via study for an advanced degree. See Article History. Alternative Title: Rebaptizer. Anabaptist, (from Greek ana, "again") member of a fringe, or radical, movement of the Protestant Reformation and spiritual ancestor of modern Baptists, Mennonites, and Quakers.

The Heart of Anabaptism - Read online for free. The Heart of Anabaptism. As we reflect on this, we are committed to learning from the experience and perspectives of movements such as Anabaptism that rejected standard Christendom assumptions and pursued alternative ways of thinking and behaving.’ Andrew Suderman, although born in Canada, has spent many years living outside Canada. The Anabaptist Vision book. Read 8 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. H. S. Bender defines the spirit and purposes of the original A... McClendon argu Bender describes the Anabaptist vision as having three aspects: (1) the call to discipleship, (2) the call to community, and (3) the call to non-violent love. You can actually find the original lecture that this book is based on here: http://www.mcusa-archives.org/library... While it is extremely light on the history of Anabaptism, it does an adequate (barely) job of setting its context in the midst of the Reformation and its radical adjunct. More thorough is the author's presentation of what he terms the Anabaptist vision which includes three major points of emphasis.