Twitter Thread by Malcolm Yarnell



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As a scholar who has researched and written quite a bit about the Anabaptists, can we set a few things straight?

1. Baptists are not Anabaptists. Their history is theirs; ours is ours. We have similarities, but we are not them. We honor them by not using them for our purposes.

2. Not all Anabaptists were in Münster, and many if not most Anabaptists at the time were just as appalled as we are by the Münsterites. So please drop the tropes equating all Anabaptists with Münster. Informed and honest scholars are known by their right retelling of history.

3. The same truth applies to the other types of Reformation Radicals. There is a great difference between those who have become known as Evangelical Anabaptists on the one hand and Spiritualists, Rationalists, etc. on the other hand. Respect them as you also wish to be respected.

4. Yes, there were Anabaptists who toyed with various heresies, including Arianism, Socinianism, and Celestial Flesh Christology. But there were also many Anabaptists who affirmed, commented upon, and used the traditional Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, and Athanasian Creed.

And if you want to do the honest research, you can also find a few heretical Roman Catholic Popes and more than a few heretical Anglicans, Presbyterians, Lutherans. and whomever else you want to talk about. Good historical theology doesn't play favorites; it speaks the truth.

And if you want to be even more honest, contemporary Evangelicals, from Episcopalians to Baptists, have had their own dicey examples of theologians who dipped their toes into Arianism and all sorts of Christ-dishonoring theologies. So, let's all just try to remain kind and true.

5. Every Christian will have to face the Lord and give an account for their own beliefs and actions. I will not give an account for Luther or Calvin or Cranmer or Hubmaier, although I learned much from each. I will account for what I believed, taught, acted; and you, for you.

6. These statements should not be taken as either a defense of Anabaptists or a condemnation of Anabaptists. Neither should they be taken as a defense or condemnation of Baptists, Catholics, Lutherans, the Reformed, Anglicans, etc. Honor your heroes, but admit their errors, too.

7. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ and a scholar, never try to use history to make yourself appear better than you really are, and stop trying to make others appear worse than they are. We are justified by his grace alone, and we should use our words for his glory alone.