

## Mennonite-Orthodox Dialogue – 10.22.15

### Anabaptist Understandings of Salvation

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#### Summary statement

We believe that, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God offers salvation from sin and a new way of life for all people. We receive God's salvation when we repent of sin and accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

#### Biblical framework

- God so loved the world, that in the fullness of time, God sent Jesus, whose faithfulness has provided the way of salvation for all people (John 3:16; Gal 4:4; Heb 1:1-2).
- Through Christ's blood shed on the cross, he inaugurated the new covenant (Matt 26:18; 1 Cor 11:25).
- Christ heals us, forgives our sins, and delivers us from the bondage of evil and from those who do evil against us (Rom 5:1-5; Luke 19:8-10).
- By his death and resurrection, Christ breaks the powers of sin and death (Rom 8:2), cancels the debt of sin (Rom 3:24-25; Col 2:13-14; Mark 10:45), and opens the way to new life (Rom 6:4). *See more on this below.*
- We are saved by God's grace, not by our own merits (Eph 2:8-9).

#### Person and Work of Christ: Breaks, Cancels, Opens

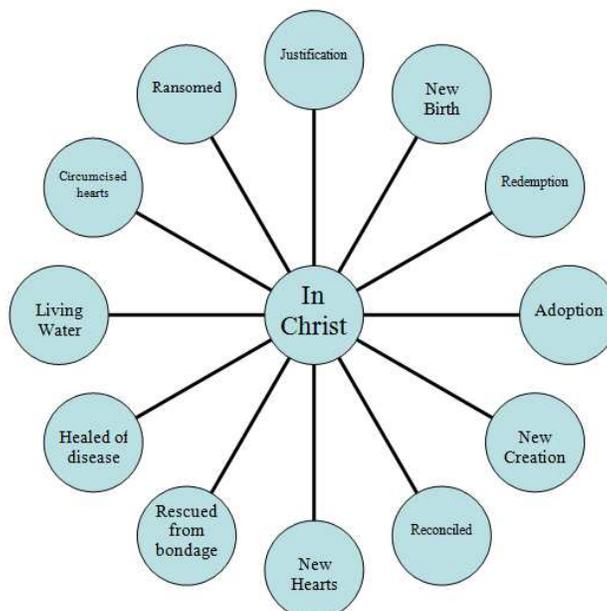
Mennonites affirm the three major views of the atonement found in Protestant thought. Each has a basis in Scripture and contributes to our understanding of salvation.

+ By *breaking* the power of sin and death, Christ is conqueror over evil (Christ-the-victor view).

+ By *canceling* our debt of sin, Christ is a sacrifice and pays the ransom of our behalf (substitutionary atonement view).

+ By *opening* the way to new life, Christ shows God's love, inspiring us to receive that love and love God & love others in return (moral-influence view).

#### Many biblical pictures, one ultimate reality



## Responding to the Gospel

When we hear the good news of the love of God, the Holy Spirit moves us to accept the gift of salvation.

Our response to this Good News includes:

1. Yielding to God's grace (*Gelassenheit*)
2. Placing full trust in God alone
3. Repenting of sin
4. Turning from evil (*Frommigkeit* - piety)
5. Following Christ (*Nachfolge*)
6. Joining the fellowship of the redeemed
7. Showing obedience of faith in word and deed

## Unique emphases in Anabaptist understandings

It may seem odd to include these topics in this discussion, but for Mennonites we can't fully understand salvation without talking about peace, community, and discipleship.

### Peace

The NT frequently connects our salvation with peace (John 16:33; Rom 5:1; Rom 10:15). In doing so, it builds on the OT concept of *shalom*. Through Christ's death on the cross, we have both peace with God and reconciliation within the church and between groups which had been enemies (Eph 2:14-17).

Christ's suffering without revenge gives us an example; we can – and indeed are called to – follow in his steps and live for righteousness (1 Pet 2:19-24; Luke 6:35-36; Mark 8:34). Peace is at the heart of the Gospel. The same Spirit that empowered Jesus also empowers us to love enemies, to forgive rather than seek revenge, to practice right relationships, to rely on the community of faith to settle disputes, and to resist evil without violence.

*As Anabaptists, we can't fully understand salvation without talking about peace.*

### Community

God saves us as individuals in community. The Lord's saving activity embraced an entire people in bondage (Exod 15). Jesus called a company of disciples. The church is the context of the message of salvation (Eph 2:11-22; 1 Pet 2:1-10). In the context of community, covenants are made in the presence of witnesses and members are held accountable. God's covenant and gift of salvation brings about right relationship with the people of God, in which former hostilities are reconciled.

*As Anabaptists, we can't fully understand salvation without talking about community.*

### Discipleship

While some Protestant traditions make a clear distinction between justification and sanctification, for Mennonites salvation is inseparable from discipleship. Conformity to Christ necessarily includes nonconformity to the world.

Saving faith in Christ means:

- willingness to do the will of God, rather than willful pursuit of individual happiness.
- seeking first the reign of God in simplicity, rather than pursuing materialism.
- acting in peace and justice, rather than with violent or military means.
- giving first loyalty to God's kingdom, rather than to any nation-state or ethnic group that claims our allegiance.
- honest affirmation of the truth, rather than reliance on oaths to guarantee our truth telling.
- chastity and loving faithfulness to marriage vows, rather than the distortion of sexual relationships, contrary to God's intentions.
- treating our bodies as God's temples, rather than allowing addictive behaviors to take hold.
- performing deeds of compassion and reconciliation, in holiness of life, rather than letting sin rule over us.

*As Anabaptists, we can't fully understand salvation without talking about discipleship.*