

The Simpler the Better
Mennonites and Amish
Donald E. Knebel
April 24, 2016

Slide 1

1. Last week we talked about Eastern Orthodox Christians, whose elaborate worship services in beautiful buildings are intended to give people a foretaste of heaven and allow them to experience God.
2. Today, we will talk about the Mennonites and Amish, two closely-related groups of Christians that are best known for their humble living and separation from society.
3. To understand the views and practices of the Mennonites and Amish, including their differences, it is necessary to go back to the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland in the sixteenth century from which both groups came.

Slide 2

1. In 1518, Ulrich Zwingli became priest of the Great Minster Church in Zurich, a large Roman Catholic church claimed to have been founded by Charlemagne.
2. While a student, he became convinced of the excesses of the Catholic Church.
3. Soon after arriving in Zurich, Zwingli began preaching the absolute authority of the Scriptures and rejected Catholic teachings that could not find support in the Bible.
4. Like Martin Luther in Germany, Zwingli rejected the authority of the Pope, indulgences and fasting at Lent.

Slide 3

1. Some of Zwingli's younger followers, led by Conrad Grebel, argued that Zwingli had not gone far enough in establishing a church based entirely on the Bible.
2. They were specifically opposed to his continuation of infant baptism, which the Roman Catholic Church had practiced since the fourth century and for which they could find no support in the Bible.
3. For these dissenters, “[b]aptism – the sign of church membership and commitment – was only for those old enough to choose the path of discipleship.” Holt, *A History of the Amish* at 9.

4. In support of their argument, they cited Jesus' Great Commission: **“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”** *Matthew 28:19.*
5. From these words, **“the sequence seem[ed] clear: belief comes first, then baptism.”** Roth, *Beliefs* at 66.

Slide 4

1. As one author writes: **“Zwingli, like Luther, often relied on the government to implement religious change.”** Nolt, *A History of the Amish* at 7.
2. In 1523, Zwingli asked the Zurich city council to adopt his views, including those requiring infant baptism, into law.
3. The Zurich dissenters argued against this idea, saying that God's views superseded the council's authority and advocating **“the complete separation of church and state.”** Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* at 449.
4. The Zurich city council rejected the arguments of the dissenters and enacted into law the beliefs and practices of Zwingli, including infant baptism.
5. **“In June and July 1524, by order of the council, gangs of workers forcibly removed pictures, statues, and relics from the seven city churches and walled up the organ in the Great Minster.”** Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* at 444.

Slide 5

1. For the dissenters, the action of the city council was a threat to their beliefs that only adults should be baptized.
2. **“In their judgment, if the scriptural teaching was clear, the changes should be made immediately, no matter how radical and regardless of the broader political or social consequences.”** Roth, *Beliefs* at 59.
3. On January 21, 1525, the dissenters baptized each other, **“signaling their own conscious decision to follow Christ and form a church apart from the state.”** *Id.*
4. Their opponents called them “Anabaptists” or re-baptizers, a name that has stuck despite its inaccuracy — they advocated only the baptism of adults who were able to make their own decision about their beliefs and refused to baptize their infants.
5. **“By separating church and state the Anabaptists became the first Christians in modern times to preach a thoroughgoing religious liberty: the right to join in**

worship with others of like faith without state support and without state persecution.” Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* at 254.

Slide 6

1. Zwingli and the Zurich city council could not tolerate this challenge to their authority to regulate religious beliefs.
2. Zwingli **“accepted that the city council could impose the death sentence on the unorthodox.”** Moynahan, *The Faith* at 373.
3. So, on March 7, 1526, the Zurich city council ordered the drowning of Anabaptists and four Anabaptists were drowned in Zurich’s Lammat River.
4. Like later drownings of Anabaptists, these were accompanied by sarcastic comments about their desire of being dunked in water.

Slide 7

1. The drownings effectively ended the Anabaptist movement in Zurich, but the persecutions had the effect of spreading the Anabaptist idea.
2. Congregations of Anabaptists were quickly established in Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.
3. Anabaptists met in people’s homes and soon began to see themselves as a movement, needing to articulate the beliefs that would separate them from what they considered a corrupt society.
4. In 1527, Swiss Anabaptists under the leadership of Michael Sattler, a former priest, met in Schleithem, Switzerland, near the German border.
5. They agreed on seven articles that became known as the “Schleitheim Confession.” <http://www.anabaptists.org/history/the-schleitheim-confession.html>
6. The Schleithem Confession was not a complete statement of all Anabaptist beliefs, but instead a statement of beliefs that differed from those of other churches.
7. The first and most important article was the rejection of infant baptism, **“the highest and chief abomination of the Pope.”**

Slide 8

1. Article IV of the Schleithem Confession set out the basic idea that Anabaptists needed to separate themselves from what they saw as the evil world: **“A separation shall be made from the evil and from the wickedness which the devil planted in the**

world; in this manner, simply that we shall not have fellowship with them (the wicked) and not run with them in the multitude of their abominations.”

2. The “wicked” included anyone who was not an Anabaptist.
3. The Anabaptists based their idea of separation from a sinful world on *James* 1:27: **“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”**
4. The Anabaptists rejected the reforms being practiced by both Luther in Germany and Zwingli in Switzerland because they **“had committed the fatal error of confusing the Church with the world.”** MacCulloch, *The Reformation* at 168.
5. As a result, Anabaptists were specifically to avoid **“all Catholic and Protestant works and church services, meetings and church attendance, drinking houses, civic affairs, the oaths sworn in unbelief and other things of that kind, which are highly regarded by the world and yet are carried on in flat contradiction to the command of God.”**
6. Other articles established that **“[t]rue Christians must not indulge in lawsuits in the world’s courts, serve in the world’s armies or swear the oaths which formed the sinews of everyday life in the outside world.”** MacCulloch, *The Reformation* at 168.

Slide 9

1. Because Anabaptists had been subjected to physical punishment and death for their views, they rejected the idea that belief could be coerced by such means.
2. But they were concerned with how to deal with people who were baptized as adults but later **“stopped following the way of Jesus.”** Holt, *History of the Amish* at 14.
3. The authors of the Schleithem Confession came up with a solution.
4. Any baptized adults who **“fall into error and sin, being inadvertently overtaken”** were to be banned from participation in communion **“so that we may break and eat one bread, with one mind and in one love, and may drink of one cup.”**
5. This banning had to be accomplished publicly, **“before the breaking of bread,”** following two unsuccessful secret warnings.
6. Shortly after the announcement of the Schleithem Confession, Michael Sattler, the organizer of the conference, was tortured and burned alive as a heretic.

7. His wife and most of the other participants in the conference were then drowned.
8. As a result, the meeting in Schleithem is sometimes called the “Martyrs’ Synod.”

Slide 10

1. After the Schleithem Confession, some Anabaptists began to see their persecution as a sign that Jesus was about to return.
2. Some taught that the New Jerusalem, where Jesus would establish his earthly kingdom, was Münster, Germany, and large numbers of Anabaptists converged on Münster to prepare for Jesus’ arrival.
3. In January 1534, the Anabaptists took control of Münster, evicted the Roman Catholic bishop and imprisoned Catholic officials.
4. A charismatic young tailor named Jan van Leiden declared himself “king of the world” and began a reign of terror in Münster.
5. Seeing an opportunity to turn the tables on their persecutors, Leiden and his followers began killing anyone who would not be baptized as an adult.
6. **“Polygamy was established, community of goods was enforced, opponents were slaughtered.”** Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* at 459.
7. Every two weeks, Leiden hosted a grand party on the Münster town square, which sometimes ended with the beheading of an imprisoned Catholic.
8. Leiden decreed that all young women should marry, on pain of death.
9. **“There was resistance to this edict, but the rebels were defeated and fifty were put to death.”** Moynahan, *The Faith* at 383.

Slide 11

1. In 1535, after a siege that reduced the Anabaptists to eating mice, Catholic and Lutheran forces recaptured Münster and killed hundreds of Anabaptists in the city.
2. They tortured and executed Leidens and two other Anabaptist leaders, displaying their bodies in cages that still hang from the church steeple in Münster.

Slide 12

1. **“[T]he example of Münster left many people convinced that Anabaptists were dangerous lunatics.”** Placher, *A History of Christian Theology* at 191.

2. Consequently, the excesses and violence of the Anabaptists in what is called the “Münster Rebellion” probably would have destroyed the movement had it not been for Menno Simons, a peace-loving Dutch country priest who had become a secret Anabaptist admirer in about 1531.
3. Simons could find no basis in the Bible for infant baptism and the Catholic teaching that the communion bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus.
4. He **“was horrified by the terrible fate of the crowds who had travelled to Münster.”** MacCulloch, *The Reformation* at 210.
5. In 1536, Simons publicly declared his support of Anabaptist principles but rejected what had happened in Münster as a repudiation of the teachings of the Schleithem Confession.
6. Menno Simons wrote that he considered the **“king, sword, rebellion, retaliation, revenge, polygamy and the temporal kingdom of Christ [in Münster] as a new Judaism, and a misleading error, doctrine and abomination which is not at all in keeping with the Spirit, word and example of Christ.”**
<http://www.mennosimons.net/ft115-justification.html>
7. Believing that Anabaptists were “sheep that had no shepherd,” Simons set out to return Anabaptists to what he considered the essential principles of non-violence and separation from the world articulated by the Schleithem Confession.
8. He was ordained as an Anabaptist minister in 1537.

Slide 13

1. In 1539 Simons published *Foundation of Christian Doctrine*, which many consider as important a statement of religious principles as John Calvin’s *Institutes*.
2. In his book, Menno Simons set out the Mennonite rejection of the Catholic teaching that the bread and wine of the communion meal become the body and blood of Jesus: **“In the first place, we must take heed that we do not, as some, who make the visible, perishable bread and wine, the Lord’s real flesh and blood. To believe this, is contrary to nature, reason and Scripture; yea, it is open blasphemy of the Son of God, abomination and idolatry.”** <http://www.mennosimons.net/ft115-justification.html>
3. Simons believed that the behavior of Anabaptists in Münster demonstrated that simply banning people from receiving communion if they deviated from Anabaptist principles was not sufficient.
4. After all, nothing had stopped the Anabaptists who converged on Münster from rejecting the non-violence principles of the Schleithem Confession.

5. Simons taught that “[u]nrepentant Anabaptists who espoused violence had to be avoided in social and personal relationships.” Holt, *A History of the Amish* at 16.
6. To avoid being tainted by those whose beliefs deviated from Anabaptist teachings, “**Christians needed to avoid, or ‘shun,’ the unrepentant.**” *Id.*
7. The teachings of Menno Simons soon became the model for Anabaptists who wanted to separate themselves from the sinful world to await the return of Jesus in peace.
8. By 1545, Anabaptists who advocated non-violence and shunning the unrepentant began being called “Mennonites” and their numbers grew.
9. Despite persecution, “[b]y around 1550 approximately one quarter of the population of the Northern Netherlands were considered to be Mennonites.” Woodbridge, *Great Leaders of the Christian Church* at 246.
10. Menno Simons was hunted during his life, but died in 1561 of natural causes.

Slide 14

1. During the remainder of the sixteenth century, the most important issue among Mennonites involved the requirement to shun baptized members who strayed from the teachings of Menno Simons and the Schleitheim Confession.
2. Some congregations taught that a shunned spouse could have no contact with a spouse who remained in the church, while others were more lenient.
3. On April 21, 1632, Dutch Mennonites meeting in Dordrecht, Holland, adopted eighteen articles dealing with basic Mennonite beliefs, from creation to the resurrection of Jesus.
4. Articles 16 and 17 of what became known as the “Dordrecht Confession” dealt specifically with shunning.
5. Article 16 reaffirmed the teachings of Menno Simons that Mennonites should cease all dealings with anyone who broke their vows after being baptized.
6. But Article 17 tempered the harshness of shunning by requiring that church members assist those shunned who might be “**needy, hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, or in any other distress.**”
[http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Dordrecht Confession of Faith \(Mennonite, 1632\)](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Dordrecht%20Confession%20of%20Faith%20(Mennonite,%201632))
7. The Dordrecht Confession also set out other important Mennonite beliefs.
8. Article 11 taught believers to wash each other’s feet, as Jesus had done.

- 9 Article 12 prohibited marriage with outsiders.
10. Article 15 prohibited swearing oaths.
11. Article 18 set out Mennonite beliefs **“that in the last day all men who shall have died, and fallen asleep, shall be awaked and quickened, and shall rise again, through the incomprehensible power of God”** and then be judged. *Id.*
12. The Dordrecht Confession remains an important statement of belief for many Mennonites around the world.

Slide 15

1. Simons did not provide any instructions on how often communion services should occur, but many Mennonite congregations celebrated what they called “The Lord’s Supper” **“once a year because the first Lord’s Supper, instituted by Jesus, had been a part of an annual Jewish Passover meal.”** Holt, *A History of the Amish* at 31.
2. Because the Schleithem Confession required that anyone who fell away from the teachings of the church be banned from communion, many Mennonite congregations reserved the Sunday before the annual communion service to determine if anyone in the congregation needed to be banned from receiving communion.

Slide 16

1. Jacob Ammann was born in Switzerland in 1644, the son of a tailor.
2. In about 1680, Ammann was re-baptized and soon became a Mennonite elder, with authority to baptize and offer communion.
3. Ammann became a firm believer in the teachings of the Dordrecht Confession, requiring believers to wash each other’s feet and shun baptized believers who had fallen away from strict Mennonite teachings.
4. In 1690, to avoid persecution in Switzerland, Ammann joined a number of other Mennonites, also called “Swiss Brethren,” and moved north to Alsace, a French region along the Rhine River that included a number of Mennonites.
5. What Amman found in Alsace disappointed him and other Swiss Mennonites.
6. Although the Mennonites in Alsace had adopted the Dordrecht Confession in 1660, they did not engage in the foot washing that Confession required.
7. Because of the more tolerant attitude toward Mennonites in Alsace, the Mennonites there were much more a part of civil society than they were in Switzerland.

8. As one author writes: **“The new Swiss refugees . . . were chagrined by how an atmosphere of toleration had eroded the Alsatian’s sense of separation from the worldly society.”** Holt, *A History of the Amish* at 31.
9. In fact, some Alsace Mennonites believed that people they called “True Hearts” because of their kindness toward Mennonites might be saved even though they had not been baptized as adults.
10. Jacob Ammann found this idea heretical – as he understood Mennonite teachings, anyone who had not been baptized as an adult had no hope of salvation.
11. Ammann was even more appalled when he learned that Hans Reist, the local Mennonite elder, did not shun those who left the church or deviated from their baptism vows, something Ammann believed was at the heart of the Dordrecht Confession and the teachings of Menno Simons.
12. Instead, Reist **“thought it was enough to exclude them from the once-a-year communion service.”** *Id.*

Slide 17

1. Based on what he saw in Alsace, Ammann began a campaign to restore shunning to the Mennonite churches of Alsace and nearby areas up and down the Rhine River.
2. He went from church to church, explaining that **“shunning was a clear corollary to Anabaptist beliefs: if church membership had social implications, so did severing one’s ties with the church through disobedience or persistent sin.”** Holt, *A History of the Amish* at 35.
3. For Ammann, shunning was not only required by the teachings of Menno Simons and the Dordrecht Confession, but was required by Jesus.
4. Amman pointed to *Matthew* 18:15, in which Jesus says that people who refuse to listen to the church are to be treated **“as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”**
5. Hans Reist, the Alsace elder, rejected the idea that Jesus required shunning.
6. He pointed out that Jesus did not shun Zacchaeus, the tax collector, but instead went to his house. *Luke* 19:5-6.
7. In 1693, during a heated meeting of Mennonites about the importance of shunning, to which Reist refused to appear, Ammann publicly excommunicated Reist and anyone present who rejected shunning.

8. A number of churches agreed with Ammann and by 1696 he was recognized as the leader of a new Mennonite sect.
9. Ammann had split the Mennonites, including those in Alsace, into two segments – a larger “Mennonite” community that repudiated shunning, and a new “Ammann-ish Mennonite” or simply “Amish” community that found shunning essential.
10. Although there were later efforts to heal this breach, it remained and the Amish and Mennonites today are the products of that split.
11. It is ironic that the group now called “Mennonites” generally rejects shunning, an idea supported by Menno Simons, after whom they are named.

Slide 18

1. Jacob Ammann introduced other ideas into the churches that followed him that today also distinguish the Amish from the Mennonites from which they split.
2. Ammann did not think the once-a-year communion services of the Mennonites were sufficiently frequent to allow the church to keep from the communion services those who might have strayed from the teachings of the church.
3. After all, during a year, people could forget who had sinned.
4. So, Ammann instituted twice-a-year communion services that would force the churches to address more frequently claims that members had fallen away from church teaching.
5. So, today, while most Mennonite congregations serve communion once a year, Amish congregations serve communion twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall.
6. The service is preceded by a meal.

Slide 19

1. Ammann also changed the way his followers dressed so that they would be seen as separate from what he regarded as the sinful world.
2. The Mennonites of Alsace, like the Roman Catholics, fastened their clothes with buttons, which could be used to show wealth and individual identity.
3. So Ammann, the tailor, instructed his followers to use hooks and eyes that would not be visible.

4. He instructed his male followers to grow long beards and told both men and women to make their clothes from linen so that they could be distinguished from those around them.
5. Based on the leadership of Ammann, the Amish were not only to see themselves as different from the outside world but to enable the outside world to see them as different.
6. In 1712, French King Louis XIV ordered all the Anabaptists, Mennonites and Amish alike, to be driven from Alsace.
7. Jacob Ammann presumably left, but what happened to him is unknown.

Slide 20

1. “[A]s many as 5,000 Anabaptists were legally executed between 1525 and 1618 by burning, decapitation, and drowning.” Ozment, *The Age of Reform: 1250-1550* at 332.
2. This persecution has had a lasting effect on both Mennonites and the Amish.

Slide 21

1. In 1660, a Dutch Mennonite minister published a 1478-page book entitled *The Martyrs Mirror* that included horrific tales of Anabaptists killed for their beliefs.
2. Even today, *Martyrs Mirror* is a traditional Mennonite and Amish wedding gift and for many Mennonite and Amish families *Martyrs Mirror* is their most important book besides the Bible.
3. It reminds them why they have to stick together to confront what they see as the corruption of the remainder of society.

Slide 22

1. William Penn, who established Pennsylvania in 1681 as a haven for persecuted religious minorities, advertised for immigrants in the Rhine Valley, which included a large number of Mennonites and Amish continuing to face persecution.
2. In the early eighteenth century, a large number of German-speaking immigrants, including Mennonites and Amish, settled in Pennsylvania, where they became known as the “Pennsylvania Deutsch,” which soon became “Pennsylvania Dutch.”
3. Eventually, the dialects of these largely-rural settlers merged into a new German dialect called “Pennsylvania Dutch” that was spoken by settlers no matter their religion.

4. At one time, about one third of everyone in Pennsylvania, not only Mennonites and Amish, spoke Pennsylvania Dutch.

Slide 23

1. Many of the Amish and Mennonites settling in Pennsylvania became farmers.
2. But unlike other farmers, they refused to use slaves.

Slide 24

1. As one author writes: **“Among a people who shied away from ostentatious clothing and home furnishings, the ownership of human ornaments of wealth was naturally taboo.”** Holt, *A History of the Amish* at 83.
2. In 1688, Germantown, Pennsylvania, Mennonites and Quakers **“drew up the first protest against slavery.”** Rosten, *Religions of America* at 616.

Slide 25

1. One of the consistent hallmarks of both the Mennonites and Amish is their rejection of violence, even when attacked.
2. Article 14 of the Dordrecht Confession states: **“As regards revenge, that is, to oppose an enemy with the sword, we believe and confess that the Lord Christ has forbidden and set aside to His disciples and followers all revenge and retaliation, and commanded them to render to no one evil for evil, or cursing for cursing, but to put the sword into the sheath, or, as the prophets have predicted, to beat the swords into ploughshares.”**
[http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Dordrecht Confession of Faith \(Mennonite, 1632\)](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Dordrecht_Confession_of_Faith_(Mennonite,_1632))
3. During the American Revolution, the Mennonites and Amish joined the Quakers in refusing to take up arms for either side.
4. Today, most Mennonites and Amish are conscientious objectors.

Slide 26

1. After the Revolution, Amish and Mennonites began moving west from Pennsylvania to obtain new lands for their farms.
2. Many settled in Ohio and Indiana, with others going as far west as Missouri.
3. As groups of believers moved away from others, they began adopting different beliefs and practices.

4. Because Amish and Mennonites both rejected any form of central control, these different beliefs led to repeated splintering.
5. For example, in the nineteenth century, Mennonites split over the use of four part singing and the use of English in church services.
6. Mennonites today share a common belief in adult baptism and non-violence, but otherwise have a variety of beliefs and practices.
7. Some Mennonite groups accept gay weddings while others refuse to own automobiles.
8. Today, there are 25 or more different Mennonite groups in the United States, with some towns having more than one Mennonite church because of their different beliefs.

Slide 27

1. Nineteenth century Amish in the United States also faced a number of issues that divided congregations and areas from each other.
2. Beginning in about 1850, some congregations built meetinghouses for baptisms and worship services.
3. Before then, all services had been held in members' homes.
4. Other congregations, following the lead of other religious traditions, began forming Sunday schools, where children could be taught using mass-produced materials.
5. Those advocating changes saw them as promoting efficiency and consistency.
6. Opponents saw them as adopting methods of the surrounding culture and depriving Amish of their traditional separation from the rest of society.
7. As one author writes: **“Biblical teachings on humility, simplicity, and submission to the wisdom of elders did not fit easily with the assertive American notion that bigger was better and new meant improved.”** Holt, *A History of the Amish* at 149.

Slide 28

1. Conferences were held to seek agreement between conservative and progressive Amish congregations, without success.
2. In 1865, a group of 34 conservative Amish leaders presented a manifesto to a conference in Ohio that they believed set out what it meant to be Amish, including

avoiding “**speckled, striped, flowered clothing**” and “**pompous carriages.**” Holt, *A History of the Amish* at 177.

3. The manifesto demanded that all Amish congregations return to the idea of complete separation from the rest of society.
4. When the conference rejected these ideas, those wanting to maintain separation from society split from the rest and came to be called the “Old Order Amish.”
5. We recognize them by their refusal to own automobiles and their plain clothing.
6. Some conservative Mennonite congregations have adopted practices that make them largely indistinguishable from Old Order Amish and are sometimes called “Old Order Mennonites.”

Slide 29

1. The more progressive Amish began calling themselves “Amish Mennonites” to reflect their history.
2. Eventually the progressive Amish Mennonite merged with Mennonite congregations and are now usually simply called “Mennonites.”
3. Historically, Mennonites could be distinguished from the rest of society by their dress, but today “[t]he **majority of Mennonites look like other Americans and consume their share of energy like the rest of us.**” Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* at 247.
4. Although their worship services are more informal than those of many Christians, most Mennonites today worship in churches that resemble those of other Christians.

Slide 30

1. Like their ancestors, Old Order Amish speak Pennsylvania Dutch among themselves, seeing themselves separate from those they call “the English.”
2. They hold their church services every other Sunday in members’ homes.
3. The services are conducted in High German, using a German Bible.
4. Men and women sit in different rooms on benches brought in for the service.
5. The service is led by one or more men who have been selected by lot to lead the congregation or district for as long as they live.

6. A district, which usually includes about 30 families, is typically headed by a bishop, two or three ministers, and a deacon, each having a distinct role in the church.
7. These leaders, seen as selected by God, are responsible for developing and maintaining the rules of the district.
8. The rules of the district are called “Ordnung,” a word meaning “order,” and govern such things as dress, the required degree of separation from the world, education, use of insurance, and the use of technology.

Slide 31

1. The objective of rules involving technology is not to avoid all modern conveniences, but to avoid those which would interfere with their goal of remaining separate from what Old Order Amish consider the corrupting tendencies of society.
2. Sometimes, the decisions may seem a little arbitrary.
3. For example, in some districts, tractors are allowed so long as they don't have rubber tires.
4. In other districts, members can use gasoline powered lawn mowers so long as they are not self-propelled.
5. Some families use electricity in their barns but not their homes.

Slide 32

1. But some items of modern life are generally not acceptable because they would allow too much influence from the outside world.
2. Televisions, radios and the Internet are in this category.
3. Telephones in the home are usually prohibited, but a common phone for a group of farms, for use in emergencies, is not uncommon.

Slide 33

1. For Old Order Amish, individuality is discouraged.
2. That is, of course, obvious in buggies that all look the same.
3. But the same idea is carried over to such things as studying the Bible.
4. To avoid individual interpretations that might conflict with community interpretations, individual study is discouraged in favor of group study.

5. Married men are expected to wear Biblical beards, but mustaches are usually prohibited because of their association with the military.
6. Old Order Amish women never cut their hair and wrap it around their heads.

Slide 34

1. Based on the teachings of Jacob Ammann, Amish hold communion services twice each year.
2. Two Sundays before, the entire congregation meets to decide if the members are ready for the communion service by declaring if they are at peace with God and their fellow congregants.
3. If there are problems in obtaining unity within the congregation, the communion service can be postponed.
4. Communion is an eight-hour service, which usually ends with members of the congregation washing each other's feet.
5. Offerings are taken only during the twice-yearly communion services.

Slide 35

1. Following the lead of Jacob Ammann, most Old Order Amish congregations continue to practice "shunning" of baptized members who ignore the church's teachings.
2. Shunned members are barred from any contact with the community and even family ties are severed.

Slide 36

1. Many Amish children go to Amish schools, where they are taught English, reading, writing, arithmetic and history.
2. Old Order Amish believe that their children do not need more than an eighth grade education to be able to read the Bible and earn a living in the Amish community.
3. They also believe that American high schools teach values of competition and independence that are inconsistent with Amish ideals.
4. As a result, Old Order Amish families have resist sending their children to high school and Amish parents went to prison for violating laws requiring school attendance.

5. In the 1970s, Old Order Amish parents claimed that state laws requiring that their children attend school after eighth grade would **“endanger their own salvation and that of their children.”** *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205 (1972).
6. In 1972, the United States Supreme Court held that laws requiring the Amish to send their children to high school violated the religious freedom rights of the parents and their children, exempting the Amish from mandatory attendance laws.
7. Most Old Order Amish also resist any requirement that they purchase health insurance or participate in Social Security, believing it is the responsibility of the Amish community to provide both medical care and old age assistance.
8. As a result, the Amish are exempt from paying Social Security taxes or purchasing health insurance.
9. Because of their refusal to take oaths and sit in judgment, the Amish are usually excused from jury duty.

Slide 37

1. So far, we have talked almost entirely about the practices of Mennonites and Amish and have said almost nothing about their theology.
2. That is not an accident – for most Mennonites and Amish, abstract beliefs are much less important than actions.
3. As one Mennonite author states: **“[Mennonites] are skeptical about a faith that consists mostly of words, feelings, or ceremonies.”** Roth, *Beliefs* at 87.
4. But both groups hold beliefs that they inherited from their Anabaptist ancestors.
5. Both Mennonites and Amish reject the doctrine of “original sin” that has been used since Augustine to justify infant baptism.
6. Under that doctrine, every human being is born sinful because of the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden.
7. Under the most extreme formulation of the doctrine of original sin, babies who die unbaptized are doomed to spend eternity in hell.
8. For Mennonites and Amish, the fall of Adam made people susceptible to sin but does not make them automatically sinful.
9. As Article VI of the Dordrecht Confession states: **“[T]he imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, and, therefore, prone to all unrighteousness, sin, and wickedness.”**

10. Mennonites and Amish believe sin is a matter of choice and people cannot be sinful until “[t]hey start to make conscious choices against God’s desire for them,” which they call the “**age of accountability.**” Roth, *Beliefs* at 75.

11. It is at that age, around 16, that young people are expected to make their choice about following Jesus and being baptized.

Slide 38

1. Since shunning is applicable only to baptized members, young people, called “*rumspringa*,” are free to experiment with activities inconsistent with the Ordnung until they are baptized.

2. Once experiencing life outside the Amish community, most young people decide to be baptized and continue the simple life.

3. Because the commitment to stay with the community is reached after a period of thinking about the choice, most people stay with their commitments and shunning is rare.

Slide 39

1. Mennonites and Amish also tend to reject the idea, originating with Martin Luther, that grace alone is sufficient for salvation, which they believe can lead to “**the trap of ‘cheap grace’ that seems so prevalent in much of American Christianity.**” Roth, *Beliefs* at 120.

2. For most Mennonites and Amish, “**faith is an empty abstraction until it is embodied in daily life.**” *Id.* at 121.

3. “**True faith, they believe, will inevitably find concrete expression in a changed, transformed way of life.**” *Id.* at 89.

4. Said another way, for Mennonites and Amish, salvation is not something you have, but something you live.

5. As a result, most Mennonites and Amish believe God decides their eternal destiny by weighing their lifelong obedience to the rules of the church against their disobedience.

6. For Mennonites and Amish, the life of Jesus, during which he outlined rules for living, is at least as important as his death on the cross.

7. As a result, “**some Mennonites have expressed reservations about the Apostle’s Creed: it moves directly to Christ’s birth to his death, without any mention of his life.**” *Id.* at 72.

8. Because of the idea that God expects his followers to follow the precepts of the Beatitudes, Mennonites especially have been very active in disaster relief efforts around the world.

Slide 40

1. Because most beliefs of Mennonites and Amish can be traced back to the sixteenth century, when Anabaptists were preparing for the return of Jesus and the literal resurrection of the dead, they do not have well-developed or consistent views of what happens to people between when they die and when Jesus returns.

2. Although Mennonites and Amish sometimes speak about heaven and hell, there is no clear consensus about what these terms mean.

3. Instead, Mennonites and Amish continue to live every day with the expectation of the imminent return of Jesus, with whom they and their resurrected predecessors will live for eternity.

4. They are too busy preparing for that day to worry about what will happen if they die before Jesus returns.

Slide 41

1. In two weeks we will consider two groups that arose in the United States during the nineteenth century.

2. Although they have some different beliefs, the Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses are united in their expectation that Jesus will soon return.

3. They are also united in rejecting the belief that souls of the dead go to heaven or hell.

Resources:

McCulloch, Diarmaid, *The Reformation* (Penguin Books 2003)

Moynahan, Brian, *The Faith: A History of Christianity* (Doubleday 2002)

Nolt, Steven, *A History of the Amish* (Good Books 2015)

Ozment, Steven, *The Age of Reform: 1250-1550* (Yale University Press 1980)

Placher, *A History of Christian Theology* (Westminster Press 1983)

Rosen, Leo, *Religions of America* (Simon & Schuster 1975)

Roth, John, *Beliefs: Mennonite Faith and Practice* (Herald Press 2005)

Shelley, Bruce, *Church History in Plain Language* (Thomas Nelson 2008)

Walker, Williston, *A History of the Christian Church* (Scribner 1985)

Woodbridge, John, *Great Leaders of the Christian Church* (Moody Press 1988)