

A History of the Baptists

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CHAPTER VII THE ORIGIN OF THE ANABAPTIST CHURCHES

THE beginnings of the Anabaptist movement are firmly rooted in the earlier centuries. The Baptists have a spiritual posterity of many ages of liberty-loving Christians. The movement was as old as Christianity; the Reformation gave an occasion for a new and varied history.

The statement of Mosheim who was a learned Lutheran historian, as to the origin of the Baptists, has never been successfully attacked. He says:

The origin of the sect, who from their repetition of baptism received in other communities, are called Anabaptists, but who are also denominated Mennonites, from the celebrated man to whom they owe a large share of their present prosperity, is involved in much obscurity [or, is hid in the remote depths of antiquity, as another translator has it]. For they suddenly started up, in various countries of Europe, under the influence of leaders of dissimilar character and views; and at a time when the first contests with the Catholics so engrossed the attention of all, that they scarcely noticed any other passing occurrences. The modern Mennonites affirm, that their predecessors were the descendants of those Waldenses, who were oppressed by the tyranny of the Papists; and that they were of a most pure offspring, and most averse from any inclinations toward sedition, as well as all fanatical views.

In the first place I believe the Mennonites are not altogether in the wrong, when they boast. of a descent from these Waldenses, Petrobrusians, and others, who are usually styled witnesses for the truth before Luther. Prior to the age of Luther, there lay concealed in almost every country of Europe but especially in Bohemia, Moravia, Switzerland and Germany, very many persons, in whose minds were deeply rooted that principle which the Waldenses, Wyclifites, and the Husites maintained, some more covertly and others more openly; namely, that the kingdom which Christ set up on the earth, or the visible church, is an assembly of holy persons; and ought therefore to be entirely free from not only ungodly persons and sinners, but from all institutions of human device against ungodliness. This

principle lay at the foundation which was the source of all that was new and singular in the religion of the Mennonites; and the greatest part of their singular opinions, as is well attested, were approved some centuries before Luther's time, by those who had such views of the Church of Christ (Mosheim, Institutes of Ecclesiastical History, III. 200).

This opinion of Mosheim, expressed in 1755, of the ancient origin of the Baptists and of their intimate connection with the Waldenses, and of other witnesses of the truth, meets with the approval of the most rigid scientific research of our own times.

Sir Isaac Newton, one of the greatest men who ever lived, declared it was "his conviction that the Baptists were the only Christians who had not symbolized with Rome" (Whiston, Memoirs of, written by himself, 201). William Whiston, who records this statement, was the successor of Newton in Cambridge University, and lectured on Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. He himself became a Baptist and wrote a book on infant baptism.

Alexander Campbell, in his debate with Mr. Macalla, says:

I would engage to show that baptism as viewed and practiced by the Baptists, had its advocates in every century up to the Christian era and independent of whose existence (the German Anabaptists), clouds of witnesses attest the fact, that before the Reformation from popery, and from the apostolic age, to the present time, the sentiments of Baptists, and the practice of baptism have had a continued chain of advocates, and public monuments of their existence in every century can be produced (Macalla and Campbell Debate on Baptism, 378, 379, Buffalo, 1824).

Again in his book on Christian Baptism (p.409. Bethany, 1851), he says:

There is nothing more congenial to civil liberty than to enjoy an unrestrained, unembargoed liberty of exercising the conscience freely upon all subjects respecting religion. Hence it is that the Baptist denomination, in all ages and in all countries, has been, as a body, the constant asserters of the rights of man and of liberty of conscience. They have often been persecuted by Pedobaptists; but they never politically persecuted, though they have had it in their power.

Robert Barclay, a Quaker^s who wrote largely upon this subject, though not always free from bias, says of the Baptists:

We shall afterwards show the rise of the Anabaptist took place prior to the Reformation of the Church of England, and there are also reasons for believing that on the Continent of Europe small hidden Christian societies, who have held many of the opinions of the Anabaptists, have existed from the times of the apostles. In the sense of the direct transmission of Divine Truth, and the true nature of spiritual religion, it seems probable that these churches have a lineage or succession more ancient than that of the Roman Church (Barclay, *The Inner Life of the Societies of the Commonwealth*, 11, 12. London, 1876).

These statements might be worked out in circumstantial detail. Roman Catholic historians and officials, in some instances eye-witnesses, testify that the Waldenses and other ancient communions were the same as the Anabaptists. The Augustinian, Bartholomaeus von Usingen, set forth in the year 1529, a learned polemical writing against the "Rebaptizers," in which he says that "Anabaptists, or Catabaptists, have gone forth from Picardism" (Usingen, *Contra Rebaptizantes*. Cologne, 1529). The Mandate of Speier, April 1529, declares that the Anabaptists were hundreds of years old and had been often condemned (Kelle; *Die Waldenser*, 135. Leipzig, I 886). Father Gretacher, who edited the works of Rainerio Sacchoni, after recounting the doctrines of the Waldenses, says: "This is a true picture of the heretics of our age, particularly of the Anabaptists;" Baronius, the most learned and laborious historian of the Roman Catholic Church says: "The Waldenses were Anabaptists" (D'Anvers, *Baptism*, 258). Baronius has a heavy and unreadable chronicle, but valuable for reference to original documents.

Cardinal Hosius, a member of the Council of Trent, A. D. 1560, in a statement often quoted, says:

If the truth of religion were to be judged by the readiness and boldness of which a man of any sect shows in suffering, then the opinion and persuasion of no sect can be truer and surer than that of the Anabaptist since there have been none for these twelve hundred years past, that have been more generally punished or that have more cheerfully and steadfastly undergone, and even offered themselves to the most cruel sorts of punishment than these people.

That Cardinal Hosius dated the history of the Baptists back twelve hundred years, i.e. 360, is manifest, for in yet another place the Cardinal says:

The Anabaptists are a pernicious sect of which kind the Waldensian brethren seem to have been although some of them lately, as they testify in their apology, declare that they will no longer re-baptize, as was their former custom; nevertheless, it is certain that many of them retain their custom, and have united with the Anabaptists (Hosius, Works of the Heresatics of our Times, Bk. I. 431. Ed. 1584).

From any standpoint that this Roman Catholic testimony is viewed it is of great importance. The Roman Catholics were in active opposition to the Baptists, through the Inquisition they had been dealing with them for some centuries, they had every avenue of information, they had spared no means to inform themselves, and, consequently, were accurately conversant with the facts. These powerful testimonies to the antiquity of the Baptists are peculiarly weighty. The Baptists were no novelty to the Roman Catholics of the Reformation period.

The testimony of Luther, Zwingli, and other Reformers, is conclusive. Luther was never partial to the Baptists. As early as 1522, he says: "The Anabaptists have been, for a long time spreading in Germany" (Michelet, Life of Luther, 99). The able and eloquent Baptist, the late Dr. E. T. Winkler, commenting on this statement says: "Nay, Luther even traces the Anabaptists back to the days of John Huss, and apologetically admits that the eminent Reformer was one of them.

Zwingli, the Swiss Reformer, is more specific than Luther. From the beginning of his work he was under the necessity of dealing with the Anabaptist movement. He says:

The institution of Anabaptism is no novelty, but for three hundred years has caused great disturbance in the church, and has acquired such strength that the attempt in this age to contend with it appears futile for a time.

No definite starting place can be ascribed to the Baptists of the Reformation. For they sprang up in many countries all at once. It is impossible to trace them first of all to any one place, for they appeared in many countries at the same time (J.C. Fusslin, Beitrage zur schweizerischen Reformationen geschichte, I. 190; II. 64, 65, 265, 328; III. 323. Zurich, 1754). And Fusslin adds: "The Anabaptists were not wrong, therefore, when they said that anabaptism was no new thing. The Waldensians had practiced it before them" (Ibid, II. 166). No one can certainly say whether they appeared first

in the Netherlands, Germany or Switzerland, and their leaders were not confined to any one country, and seem to have had no especial connection with each other.

No one leader impressed himself upon all of them. There was an independence and an individuality that made it impossible to express a complete system of their intellectual beliefs. There are three contemporary accounts which show the divergence of opinion among them—two from hostile and one from a sympathetic historian. Bullinger (*Der Wiedertaufers Ursprung, Furgang, Secten*. Zurich, 1650) attempts a classification of their different divisions, and mentions thirteen distinct sects within the Anabaptist circle; but they manifestly overlap in such a way as to suggest a very large amount of difference which cannot be distinctly tabulated. Sebastian Frank notes all the varieties of views which Bullinger mentions, but refrains from any classification. "There are," he says, "more sects and opinions, which I do not know and cannot describe, but it appears to me that there are not two to be found who agree with each other in all points." Kessler (*Sabbatta*, St. Gall, 1902), who recounts the story of the Anabaptists of St. Gall, records the same variety of opinions. The seed had been sown by earlier Christians, in many lands, and the Baptists were the fruitage. They did not spring from any individual, hence the great variety and independence exhibited by Baptist churches. Through persecution they had not been permitted to hold conferences to frame their plea, probably they did not know of each other's existence, hence there were dissimilarities in their views; but in the main there was unity in thought, since they had learned their heart lessons out of the same blessed Gospels, and had been taught by the same free Spirit.

The Anabaptist movement was the continuation of the old evangelical faith maintained by the Waldenses and other Mediaeval Christians. Limborch, the historian of the Inquisition, says:

To speak my mind freely, if their opinions and customs were to be examined without prejudice, it would appear that among all of the modern sects of Christians, they had the greatest resemblance to that of the Mennonites or Dutch Baptists (Limborch, *The History of the Inquisition*, 1.57. London, 1731).

Dr. Allen, Professor in Harvard University, says:

Side by side with the creed which has worked itself out into such shapes as these (referring to the Roman hierarchy) has come down the primitive, obstinate, heroic, anti-sacerdotal tradition, which has made the starting point of many a radical protest, from the Puritan Novatians of the third century down to the

English Independents of the seventeenth. That tradition in its most logical form is not only Protestant, but Baptist.

Dr. Ludwig Keller, a learned member of the Reformed Church, the Munster Archivist, and now in charge of the Archives in Berlin, says:

It is not to be doubted also that in the process of scientific investigation still further traces will be brought to light . . . Much rather can it be proved that in the lands mentioned Baptist churches existed for many decades and even centuries before the Reformation (*The Baptist Quarterly, Review*, VII. 28-31).

In his last work Keller says:

The "silent points of this mode of viewing history is that inside of the evangelical world an unbroken course of development and historical continuity reached far back beyond the sixteenth century is a matter of fact; and yet it equally repudiates the Catholic supposition that only since 1517 "an appalling apostasy from the true faith took place in the Western World," and that of Luther's followers that with him the light of the Gospel first (since the apostasy) came into the world (Keller, *Die Anfänge der Reformation*, iii, iv. Translated for *The Western Recorder* by Dr. Albert H. Newman).

The statement of Dr. William Moeller, late Professor of Church History, in Kiel, is to the same effect. He says:

The Baptists have often been called the most consistent and the most genuine sons of the Reformation, or it has been thought that they have been excellently characterized by the name of "Ultras" of the Reformation; but this view is supported only by the very extraneous circumstance that many of their numbers had previously been adherents of Zwingli or Luther. and that the Swiss Reformation prepared the way for their doctrine of the eucharist and the Biblical radicalism. Even the attempt of Cornelius to explain their rise to the effect of the Bible in the hand of the ordinary man is only sufficient to account for certain formalities and singular eccentricities. To judge from their collective view of the world, measured by their motives and aims, they belonged not to the Reformation, but to Mediaeval Christianity, a continuation of the opposition (which grew up in the second half of the Middle Ages on Catholic soil) to the

secularized Church (Moeller, History of the Christian Church, 90, 91).

Dr. Thomas M. Lindsay, Principal of the Free Church Collage, Glasgow, A. D., 1906, says:

To understand sympathetically the multiform movement which was called in the sixteenth century Anabaptism, it is necessary to remember it was not created by the Reformation, although it certainly received an impetus from the inspiration of the age. Its roots can be traced for some centuries, and its pedigree has at least two stems which are essentially distinct, and were only occasionally combined. The one stem is the succession of the Brethren, a Mediaeval anti-clerical body of Christians whose history is written only in the records of the Inquisition of the Mediaeval Church, where they appear under a variety of names, but are universally said to prize the Scriptures and to accept the Apostles' Creed. The other existed in the continuous uprising of the poor peasants in rural districts and the lower classes in the towns against the rich, which was a feature of the latter Middle Ages (Lindsay, A History of the Reformation, II 235. New York, 1908).

The statements of these writers have been dwelt upon since they exhibit the spirit of the new learning by experts who have applied the principles of investigation by the scientific method to the history of the Baptists.

In those places where the Waldenses flourished there the Baptists set deep root. This statement holds good from country to country, and from city to city. Innumerable examples might be given. For long periods there were Waldenses in Cologne. The Beghards were spread all over the Flemish Netherlands; and in Switzerland, along the Rhine, and in Germany, where afterwards we meet the Baptists (Heath,, The Anabaptists and Their English Descendants. In *Contemporary Review*, 403. March 1891). Metz was a place of refuge for the Waldenses (Michelet, Histoire de France, 11. bk. iii); they spread through Austria-Hungary, as far as Transylvania; the Cathari were found in the heights of the Alps, iii Switzerland; they came to Bern (Chron.. of Justinger, . Ochsenhein, op. cit. 95); and they came to Freiberg (Ochsenbein, Der Inquisitions prozesz wider die Waldenser. Bern. 1881). They were found in Strassburg. In all of these places were the Waldenses in mediaeval times; in all of them were the Baptists in Reformation times. The ground along the banks of the Rhine was so well prepared that a Waldensian in the fifteenth century could readily travel from Cologne to Milan without

spending the night with any but a fellow-believer. It was precisely in these places that the Baptists flourished in great numbers.

Many able preachers of the Waldenses became widely known as Baptist ministers. Such were the martyrs, Hans Koch, Leonard Meyster, Michael Sattler and Leonard Kaser, who were all renowned Baptist ministers (Mehning, *Baptisma Historia*, 748). Koch and Meyster were put to death in Augsburg, in 1594; Sattler in 1527, at Rothenburg, and Kaser was burnt August 18, the same year, at Siedersdorf. At Augsburg, in 1525, was a Baptist church of eleven hundred members. Hans Denck was the pastor, and he was of Waldensian origin. Ludwig Hatzler was expressly called by a contemporary a Picard; and Hans Hut was an adherent of the "old Waldensian brethren" (*Der Chronist Job. Salat. In Archiv. f. Schweiz. Ref. Gesch.*, I. 21). Leonard Scheimer and Hans Schaffer were Baptist preachers (Keller, *Die Anfänge der Reformation*, II. 38). There was also Thomas Hermann, who, in 1522, labored as a Waldensian minister but he was martyred, in 1527, as a minister of the congregation of the Baptists (Beck, *Die Geschichte Bucher der Wiedertäufer*, 13). Conrad Grebel, the distinguished Baptist leader of Switzerland, received his learning from the Waldenses. Many of the distinguished Baptist families of Hamburg, Altona and Emden were of Waldensian origin (Blaupot Ten Cate, *A Historical Inquiry*, in *Southern Baptist Review* October, 1857). Moreover, the trade unions and much of the weaving business which was originally in the hands of the Waldenses all became Baptist.

There are many external points between the Anabaptists and Waldenses, which force themselves upon us. The peculiar attitude which the Waldenses, as well as the Anabaptists, took toward the historical books of the Old Testament (Keller, *Johann von Staupitz*, 101, 162, 166, 342). Leipzig, 1888), can by no means be accidental. The Waldenses translated the Bible into the Romance and Teutonic languages early in the thirteenth century, the Baptists retained these versions of the Bible two hundred years after Luther's version. The oldest German Bible is of Baptist origin. In these versions alone the Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans appears. The attitude of the two bodies toward the question of grave yards, the use in the worship of certain forms of prayers, the singing of the same hymns, of observing the Supper, the principles in church, buildings, the gray dress of the apostles, the itinerant preachers, in the form of asking a blessing and many other details mark the Waldenses and the Baptists as of the same origin.

Professor S. Minocchi, in a valuable pamphlet on *The Bible in the History of Italy*, says:

Nevertheless, among the Waldenses and others, versions of its most noted and precious books, such as the Psalms, the book of those who suffer, pray and hope, or the Proverbs and ecclesiastes, which are full of such deep wisdom and profound melancholy, were largely circulated. The New Testament was sought after, and was spread about; and in its pages were found the condemnation of the Church of Rome and its faulty clergy, and at the same time the hope of a religious revival among the people. The book of Revelation, in the image of Babylon, gave them a picture of the horrors of the Church; in the New Jerusalem they viewed the Christian restoration, which they were longing for. The Epistles of St. Paul fascinated them by their deep religious feeling, their wisdom so profound, their thought so spiritually free, their description of customs so simple. The Acts of the Apostles gave them in the insuperable model of a poor, virtuous, and happy life, such as that of the primitive Christians with their simple rites and with their having all things in common. But it was the Gospel, above all, that showed them, in the poor and humble figure of Jesus, the perfect ideal of a true religious life, so different from that of the ostentatious pontiffs of Rome (Salvatore Minocchi, *a Bibbia nella Storia d'Italia Firenze, 1904*).

According to Professor Minocchi, the thirteenth century versions of the Italian Bible "Sprang, like many of the other old versions, anonymously, from the people who required a means of affirming the religious ideas born in them by the change that had taken place in their minds and conscience. But if we consider its intimate relationship with the contemporary heretical translations of France, Provence, and Savoy, we may safely believe that the first Italian version had its origin in some centers of the sect called the 'Poor of Italy,' and if we consider its phraseology, we may even more definitely bold that it was issued by the Tuscan Patarenec"

The Baptists of the Reformation claimed that they had an ancient origin and went so far as to suggest a "succession of churches". This claim was put forth by them at the very beginning of the Reformation A. D. 1521. An old letter is in existence founding. "Successio Ana-baptistica." The letter bears its own date as "that of the Swiss brethren, written to the Netherland Anabaptists, respecting their origin, a year before, Anno 1522" (Suptibus Bernardi Gaultheri. Coloniae, 1663 and 1612). The letter is particularly important since it shows that the Baptists as early as 1521 claimed a succession. Van Gent, a Roman Catholic, quotes the letter and calls the Anabaptists "locusts," "which last, as apes of the Catholics, boasted as

having an apostolic succession" (Van Gent, *Grundliche Historie*, 85. Moded, *Grondich bericht von de erste beghinselen der Wederdoopsche Sekten*).

The author of the "Successio Anahaptistica," says of the Anabaptists:

I am dealing with the Mennonites or Anabaptists, who pride themselves as having the apostolic succession, that is, the mission and the extraction from the apostles. Who claim that the true Church is found nowhere, except among themselves alone and their congregations, since with them alone remains the true understanding of the Scriptures. To that end they appeal to the letter of the S. S. and want to explain them with the S. S. And thus they sell to the simple folks glass rubies for precious stones. . . If one charges them with the newness of their sect, they claim that the "true Church" during the time of the dominion of the Catholic Church, was hidden in her (Cramer and Pyper, *Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*, VII. 510).

The point of this inquiry is that the Swiss Baptists wrote a letter, in 1522, on the apostolic origin of their churches in reply to one they had received the year before from the Baptists of the Netherlands, and that a Roman Catholic condemned them on that account.

We know also that at that date there were Baptists in the Netherlands. John Huibrechtsz was sheriff, in 1518, and he protected the Anabaptists (Wagenaar, *Description of Amsterdam*, III, 6, 66). Upon the origin of the Netherland Baptists the scholarly Van Oosterzee remarks:

They are peculiar to the Netherlands and are older than the Reformation, and must, therefore, by no means be confounded with the Protestantism of the sixteenth century, for it can be shown that the origin of the Baptists reaches further back and is more venerable (Herzog, *Real Eycyclopaedie*, IX. 846).

There is a like claim to the antiquity of the Swiss Baptists. At Zurich the Baptists, in 1525, had many discussions with Zwingli and others, in the presence of the City Council. On November 30, 1525, Zwingli secured a rigorous edict against them. The beginning of the edict contains the following words:

You know without doubt, and have heard from many. that for a long time, some peculiar men, who imagine that they are learned, have come forward astonishingly, and without any evidence of the Holy Scriptures, given as a pretext by simple and

pious men, have preached, and without the permission and consent of the church, have proclaimed that infant baptism did not proceed from God, but from the devil, and, therefore, ought not to be practiced (Blaupot Ten Cate, Historical Enquiry).

From this it appears that the Baptists of Zurich, and thereabouts, had already been known "a very long time." The former statement of Zwingli, already given, will be recalled. There is no doubt that Zwingli wrote this decree. Two or three years would not be "a very long time." The antiquity of the Baptists was claimed by themselves, and admitted in 1525 by their enemies.

A notable proof of the antiquity of the Baptists of Moravia is here recorded. Johanna Schlecta Costelacius wrote a letter from Bohemia, October 10, 1519, to Erasmus, affirming that for one hundred years the Picards had been dipping believers, and that they rebaptized and were therefore Anabaptists. His words are: "Such as come over to their sect must every one be dipped in mere water (in aqua *simplici repbaptizari*)" (Pauli Colimesii, Opera Theologica, Critica et Historica No. XXX. 534, 535, Hamburg, 1469).

These Picartis, Waldenses, were spread all over the Flemish Netherlands and in Germany. They were found in the places where the the Anabaptists flourished. Two of those persons about whom Costelacius wrote, waited on Erasmus, at Antwerp, and congratulated him on his bold stand for the truth. He declined their congratulations and reproached them with being Anabaptists (Robinson, Ecclesiastical researches, 506). They returned to tell their brethren: "They are averse to us because of our name, i. e. Anabaptists" (Camerarius, de Fccl. Fratrum, 125. Ivimey, history of the Baptists, I.70). Erasmus wrote of them:

The Husites renounce all rites and ceremonies of the Catholic Church; they ridicule our doctrine and practice in both sacraments; they deny orders and elect officers from among the laity; they receive no other rule than the Bible; they admit none into their communion until they are dipped in water, or baptized: and they reckon one another without distinction in rank to be called brothers and sisters.

Sebastian Frank, the father of modern German history, who wrote under the date of 1531, out of the chronicles of the Picards, of Bohemia, in 1394, says: "The Picards in Bohemia are divided into two, or some say three parties, the large, the small, the very small, who hold in all things with the Anabaptists, have all things common, and do not believe in the real presence" (Frank, Chronica, Zeitbuch und Geschichte, clxix. Strassburg, 1531). He tells many

additional things concerning these Baptists of 1394. He says the Roman Catholics reported very shameful things in regard to them, but that the Bohemian historians tell otherwise. Ziska, a Bohemian king, tried to exterminate them, but later they increased greatly until they numbered eighty thousand. They were a pious, child-like and sincere people; and many of them suffered on account of their faith. These Baptists are still living, writes Frank, in Bohemia. Their fathers had to live in the forests and caves. They supported each other mutually. The Lord's Supper they held in a house set apart for that purpose. They had no Articles of Faith other than the Bible. They accepted no interpretations of the fathers. They held the Scriptures to be the word of God.

These statements are from contemporary authors. The fact is established that the Baptists had existed in Bohemia since the year 1394; that they practiced immersion and close communion; in no wise received infant baptism; and were in all points like the Anabaptists.

The Dutch Baptist historians all claim apostolic origin for the Baptists. Such is the claim of Hermann Schyn (*Historia Christianorum* 134 A. D. 1723); of Galenus Abrahamzon (*Verdediging der Christenen*, 29); and J. H. Halbertsma affirms the Waldensian origin of the Baptists. "The Baptists," say, "existed several centuries before the Reformation" (Halbertsma, *De Doopsgczinde*). While Blaupot Ten Cate says:

I am fully satisfied that Baptist principles have in all ages. from the times of the apostles to the present. prevailed over a greater or smaller portion of Christendom (Cate, *Nederlandsche Doopgezinden in Friesland*, 5).

The claim of the Dutch Baptists to apostolic origin was made the object of a special investigation in the year 1819, by Dr. Ypeij, Professor of Theology in Gronigen, and the Rev. J. J. Dermout, Chaplain to the King of the Netherlands, both of whom were learned members of the Reformed Church. Many pages might be filled with the reports that they made to the King. In the opinion of these writers:

The Mennonites are descended from the tolerably pure evangelical Waldenses, who were driven by persecution into various countries; and who during the latter part of the twelfth century fled into Flanders; and into the provinces of Holland and Zealand, where they lived simple and exemplary lives, in the villages as farmers, in the towns by trades, free from the charge of any gross immoralities, and professing the most pure and simple principles, which they exemplified in a holy conversation.

They were, therefore, in existence long before the Reformed Church of the Netherlands.

We have now seen that the Baptists who were formerly called Anabaptist, and in later times Mennonites, were the original Waldenses. and who have long in the history of the church received the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered as the only Christian society which has stood since the days of the apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the Gospel through all ages. The perfectly correct external and internal economy of the Baptist denomination tends to confirm the truth, disputed by the Romish Church, that the Reformation brought about in the sixteenth century was in the highest degree necessary, and at the same time goes to refute the erroneous notion of the Catholics, that their denomination is the most ancient (Ypeij en Dermout, Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Hervornude Kerk. Breda, 1819).

This testimony from the highest authority of the Dutch Reformed Church, through a Commission appointed by the King of the Netherlands, is a rare instance of liberality and justice to another denomination. It concedes all that Baptists have ever claimed in regard to the continuity of their history. On this account State patronage was tendered to the Baptists, which they politely, but firmly declined.

The claims here considered in regard to the Baptists are of the highest consideration. The best historical study and scientific scholarship all lean toward the continuous history of the Baptists. In the last twenty years there has been much patient investigation of the history of the Baptists, especially in Germany and Switzerland. Likewise many of the sources have been published, and the trend of scholarship favors the idea of the continuity of Baptists from very early and some say from apostolic times.