


A HISTORY OF FOREIGN BAPTISTS

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The Baptists have often been represented as unknown before the sixteenth century, and some are still so disingenuous as to ascribe their origin to the "Anabaptists of Munster." The term "Anabaptist" or rebaptist, has been applied to all who baptize such as others believe baptized already, but more especially, to those who deny the validity of infant baptism. Some of the enthusiasts of Munster did so, and they have on that account been called "Anabaptists." But this peculiarity has existed in connection with almost every shade of religious faith and practice, and sometimes, as in the case of the Anabaptists of Munster, with fanaticism and wickedness.

The great peculiarity of the Baptists is, that they immerse such, and such only, as, professing faith in Christ, give evidence of conversion from all ungodliness. It does not appear that in any thing but the rejection of infant baptism the Anabaptists of Munster bore any resemblance to the present Baptists, and their agreement with them in this is but an accidental coincidence. Long before that time, and from the very first ages of Christianity, there have existed vast numbers with whom the Baptists really agree in their distinguishing practice.

The historian Mosheim, a pedobaptist, says, that the "true origin of that sect which acquired the denomination of Anabaptist is hidden in the depths of antiquity."

Cardinal Hosius, chairman at the Council of Trent, 1555, said, "If the truth of religion were to be judged of by the readiness and cheerfulness which a man of any sect shows in suffering, then the opinions and persuasions of no sect can be truer or surer than those of the Anabaptists; since there have been none, for these twelve hundred years past, that have been more grievously punished."

The Baptists ascribe their origin to John the Baptist, Christ, and His apostles (John 1:33; Matt 21:25; Acts 2:41-42; Gal. 4:26). The New Testament neither records the existence of, nor countenances, any other churches than those constituted of believers voluntarily immersed (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4-5; I Peter 3:21); and all credible historians affirm that the same practice continued through the first three centuries. During that period, all Christian communities consisted of Baptists, united together by love to God and one another. They admitted and dismissed members by suffrage, and supported their churches by voluntary offerings.

Persons of aspiring dispositions soon originated new distinctions of office in these churches, and the love of preeminence occasioned divisions among the brethren. Those who adhered to the spirit and model of the gospel seceded from the degenerated bodies, and, by raising new societies, aimed at restoring Christianity to its native simplicity. So general were secessions of this kind, that in the

third century the ancient church were exceedingly enfeebled by them; the eastern provinces were at that time full of dissenters. In Greece this kind of nonconformity can be traced at a very early date.

BAPTISTS IN THE EAST

The first dissenters in Greece distinguished by name, were the Euchites, i.e., a praying people. This was the root from which sprang all nonconformity throughout the east and west. They can be traced through provinces and kingdoms in succeeding ages by the disallowance of human inventions in the affairs of religion, by administering immersion on a profession of faith, by dispensing with all orders of clergy, and by rejecting

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ing the Old Testament as a rule of discipline in the church. They were in after times, and in different places, variously named.

In the eastern empire they disagreed with one another on speculative points, but they all immersed penitents on a profession of faith, and reimmersed proselytes; and were, on that account, called Anabaptists. The Novatian Baptists (A.D. 251) of Italy became very numerous in the east, particularly in Phrygia.

These puritan churches, after some ages, were revived by the Paulican brethren (A.D. 654), who derived their name from studying and pleading Paul's epistles. "In their practice they confined the words of the gospel and the sacraments to the faithful" (Gibbon). Their communities maintained their standing for ages. Their importance awakened the emperor's displeasure (A.D. 850), and one hundred thousand suffered death in every form. Many were driven into Italy, France, and other kingdoms of Europe; and notwithstanding the bitterness of the persecutions they endured, a succession of them continued to the Reformation (A.D. 1520).

BAPTISTS IN AFRICA

The northern part of this continent was at an early period covered with professors bearing the Christian name. The Manicheans very early occupied a considerable portion of the soil (A.D. 250). Whatever doctrinal sentiments these people embraced, one thing is certain, they, with all denominations of Christians in Africa, immersed their converts, and reimmersed those who came to them from other professing bodies.

These dissenters were succeeded by the Donatist Baptists; who maintained, says Du Pin, "that the church ought to be made up of just and holy men." After enduring for ages, every opposition, and having planted churches in almost every town in Africa (Jones), they were by severe measures, dispersed, destroyed, (Continued on page 6, column 1)

OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

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Elder B. H. Carroll was a widely known evangelist, preacher, and teacher in Texas. He was one of the founders and early presidents of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

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or driven into obscurity (A.D. 750).

BAPTISTS IN ITALY

General departure from the institutions of the gospel in the old Italian churches occasioned so many to withdraw from them, that in A.D. 250 Italy was full of dissenters. However multifarious the errors of these people in opinion and practice, no infant baptism was known among them for the first three centuries.

In 251, Novatian arose to restore Christianity to its original simplicity and purity. "The Novatianists considered the church of Christ," says Mosheim, "as a society where virtue resigned universally." They admitted none to their communion without immersion on a profession of faith in Christ. They never readmitted delinquents, yet their severity of discipline was approved by many, and they became very numerous (Lardner), so much so, that churches (A.D. 300) maintaining their order were planted all over the Roman Empire (Jones).

They were at first caressed by Constantine, but afterwards bore a noble testimony to the truth under his bloody edicts. These puritan communities continued to flourish (A.D. 320) until the fifth century, when they were driven into obscurity.

The patience manifested under cruel measures gave rise to the gognomen Paterines (A.D. 455), i.e., patient sufferers, in which name they gloried (Acts 5:41). These afflicted people were greatly encouraged by the Paulician Baptists, who very early came into Italy. The Paterines and Paulicians agreed in religious duties, and their united exertion increased their churches greatly (A.D. 1030).

They were additionally strengthened and enlarged by Gundulph, whose followers were very numerous in several provinces; and by Arnold of Brescia, a bold reformer, who appeared publicly against popery (A.D. 1110), and was followed and admired by many disciples.

The Italian Baptist churches, during the tenth and eleventh centuries, sent out so many of their teachers into other kingdoms, as almost to inundate the European provinces (Mosheim). The body of these Paterines continued in Italy till the Reformation (A.D. 1520), under the name of Waldenses.

BAPTISTS IN FRANCE AND SPAIN

At an early period these kingdoms were blessed with the gospel. "In the third century, divers holy men (Novatianists) planted churches at Toulouse, Tours, Paris, Clermont, and in other cities and towns (A.D. 254). In the fifth century (A.D. 430), these apostolic churches were encouraged and enlarged by emigrants from Germany: Goths, Goodmen, or Vandals, who settled at Lyons and Vienne, and originated the Vaudois.

The Vaudois were a people who sought freedom (A.D. 500), and the Pyrenean Mountains afforded them a refuge. Here dissenters lived in thousands and tens of thousands, all free. "The churches in Spain in early times," says Mr. Allix, "always united with those of south of France." Dissenters went under various names in Spain, and here they were innumerable (Robinson). All religious parties baptized penitents by immersion; they also immersed proselytes. The Vaudois of Spain resembled closely the Donatists of Africa.

In A.D. 729, many thousands of these Baptists emigrated over the Pyrenees, from the Spanish to the French foot of the mountains, and

became known by the name of Albigenes. In 1003, the Paulician Baptists appeared in France, and thirteen of these suffered death at Orleans (A.D. 1083). These churches were resuscitated by flocking emigrants of the same stamp from Bulgaria. "These Albigenian churches admitted persons to baptism after an exact instruction" (Allix).

In 1091, Berenger, head of the Anabaptists, advocated gospel truths, and became the leader of a vast party. He was succeeded by Peter De Bruijs, and Henry of Toulouse, "two Anabaptist doctors, whose preaching and efforts infected a thousand cities" (Gilles). Peter taught "that persons baptized in infancy are to be baptized after they believe, which is right baptism."

The Baptists were computed, in round numbers, to have been eight hundred thousand in 1160 (Clark). "They formed by degrees such a powerful party," says Mosheim, "as rendered them formidable to the Roman pontiffs, and menaced the papal jurisdiction with a fatal overthrow" (A.D. 1206). To prevent this overthrow, the popes engaged the crusading armies, and the Albigenian churches were drowned in blood about A.D. 1230 (Sismondi).

BAPTISTS IN PIEDMONT

We have no early records of these people. They were at first, as religionists, called Credenti, believers. They differed from the old Vaudois of Spain, in the admission of penitents after apostasy, in having elders, in having a creed, and in being all trinitarians; but in every other respect they were substantially the same in religious sentiments as the Puritans of Italy, the Paulicians, the Paterines, and the Albigenes. They administered immersion to believers only, and for rebaptizing were called Anabaptists; they resembled closely the modern Dutch Baptists.

The Waldenses or Lyonists in these valleys were but few, compared with the Baptists in other kingdoms. After holding the truth consistently for ages against Rome, they were comprehended at the Reformation in Calvin's and Luther's churches.

BAPTISTS IN GERMANY

The pious people of this empire were, at an early period, called Begherds, i.e., earnest in prayer. They were the same class of persons, who in other countries were named Waldenses. In Bohemia and Moravia they had extensive establishments of a religious character, which maintained a high reputation for ages. The same sort of people abounded in Poland (A.D. 1150). The Begherds had no separate order of priests; they required all candidates to profess their faith before baptism, and proselytes they immersed anew in water (Wall).

In 1315, Walter Lollard, a learned and eloquent man, was raised up and became chief of the Begherds on the Rhine. He agreed with the Waldenses in religious views and practice; and from him they were called Lollards. His labors on the continent and in England were remarkably blessed.

In Bohemia, his brethren were 80,000, and in Germany 24,000. Many with Lollard suffered death for denying the sacraments of the church. People holding tenaciously the sentiments of the Baptists were found in almost every country of Europe (Mosheim). Luther's appearing, brought them into view in furthering the Reformation.

In Luther's absence, Carlstadt, one of the reformers, began the reform church by rebaptizing. The princes of the empire disapproving of this proceeding, Luther wrote against anabaptism, and disputed with Baptists all over the empire.

The deficiency of argument was amply made up by the edge of the sword (A.D. 1535). Dreadful slaughter ensued both of men and

women, who paid the price of life for preaching that the servants of Christ are free, as to religion, from the dominion of men. "This is true, indeed," says Mosheim, "that many Anabaptists suffered death, not on account of their being considered rebellious subjects, but merely because they were judged to be incurable heretics; for, in this century, the error of limiting the administration of baptism to adult persons only, and the practice of rebaptizing, were looked upon as most flagitious and intolerable heresies." The number of Baptists who suffered death at this period has been computed at 150,000 (A.D. 1536).

Admidst this carnival of death Menno appeared. On renouncing the errors of popery, he united with the Baptists (A.D. 1537). After one year's study he was called to the dangerous post of a minister of the gospel among them. His itinerating efforts called forth the thousands who had, from previous severities, concealed their opinions, and added a prodigious number of proselytes to the Baptist community. Under his prudent guidance, their churches were formed into scriptural order before any other body of Protestants

became distinguished as a society.

"The Mennonites formed their creed in the words given by the Holy Spirit, and their confessions will admit comparison with any" (A.D. 1540). "The constitution of this sect," says Mosheim, "was founded on this principle — that practical piety is the essence of religion; and that the surest mark of the true church is the sanctity of its members. This principle was always universally adopted by the Anabaptists. The kingdom which Christ established upon earth is a visible church, into which the holy are alone to be admitted; and it is consequently exempt from all those institutions and rules of discipline invented by human wisdom. They admit, therefore, none to the sacrament of baptism, but persons that are of the age of reason, because infants are incapable of binding themselves, and it is altogether uncertain whether, in future years, they will be saints or sinners."

These societies were greatly augmented by emigrants. From Spain, Germany, and other provinces, Baptist flocked into Holland to enjoy the privileges of Christian communion. The views, however, of a body composed of

materials so various, were too discordant to permit its members to be long united; the subject of discipline occasioned a separation, and the Mennonites were divided into two classes distinguished by the terms "moderate" and "rigid." Among those who became conspicuous was David George; after his decease, his followers were formed (A.D. 1544) into the Family of Love by a person of the name of Nichols, whose zeal disturbed the continent and England.

Menno, after twenty-five years of incessant and harassing labor, in travelling with his family from kingdom to kingdom, was received to his rest and reward in 1561, and was succeeded by Theodoric. The Mennonite brethren received the commendations of Comenius Scultetus, Beza, Copenhagen, Cassander, Erasmus, Heyden, Cocceius, Hosius, and others.

A few years after Menno's death, the strict discipline of some of these churches declined, and their sentiments changed (A.D. 1572). Faustus Socinus, the founder of Socinianism, succeeded, in Poland, in becoming a member of a Baptist church without baptism, and the pernicious example (A.D. 1577) of this church was followed by others. In 1619, Socinian views so prevailed, as to raise the extensive community of the Collegiants.

"All were admitted to the communion of this sect who acknowledged the divinity of the Holy Scriptures, without regard to the nature of Christ and the truths of Christianity" (Mosheim). Baptism was administered agreeable to the candidate's views, and the society comprehended persons of all sentiments, who professed themselves Christians.

The long debates between the Mennonite brethren were brought to a close in 1630 by mutual association. In 1637, the Uckewallists endeavored to restore the Baptists to Menno's order and discipline. By the preaching of Haan, the Waterlandians were led to embrace the wide views of Arminius, and to deny justification by faith alone (A.D. 1670). The number of persons who at this time passed under the name of Anabaptists on the continent is beyond calculation (Brandt). The Mennonites, as a whole, were now scarcely better than state professors; but the Uckewallists and Apostoolists still maintained a primitive simplicity.

During the seventeenth century the Mennonites were very greatly diminished; and during the eighteenth were almost swallowed up by worldly or heretical societies. Efforts on the part of the English brethren to revive the Mennonite churches have proved of no spiritual service. They appeared indifferent to all missionary efforts, though they abound in wealth, learning, and talent (A.D. 1820). They amounted in 1820, to 30,000, but are every year lessening in number.

Other Baptist churches, sound in faith, and strict in discipline, have recently been planted in various parts of the continent, and, though they have had to meet with much opposition, prove, by their patience, continuance in well-doing, and the success which attends them, that God is with them of a truth.

(Taken from a tract put out by the Baptist Tract Society in 1842).

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