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# Transactions

of the

## Baptist Historical Society.

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### Dutch Dissenters and English General Baptists.

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IN Vol. II, No. 4, of the *Baptist Historical Transactions*, in an article entitled "Memorials of the Treacher Family," I drew attention to a relationship between the English General Baptists, who, according to Masson, were at the early part of the seventeenth century the depository for all England of the absolute principle of Liberty of Conscience, as expressed in the Amsterdam Confession, and certain groups of Protestant Nonconformists which arose in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century. I said "these English Baptists found an *affinité de cœur* with the followers of Menno Simons, or Mennonites, who were settled at Amsterdam, and during the eighteenth century there was much community of interest between the Arminians of Holland and the liberal group of Nonconformists at home. The Collegiants of Rijnsberg, who in 1660 welcomed the 'rejected' Spinoza to their meetings, by their remonstrance

against Calvinism, the breadth of their views, and the simplicity of their faith owned a natural kinship with the General Baptists of England who so heroically maintained the strife on behalf of the same liberal ideas at home. A relationship between the General Baptists and those holding Socinian or Unitarian views was thus early traceable, and while in organisation they had some affinity with the Presbyterians and Friends, they departed farther and farther from the Brownists, on the one hand, and from the Calvinistic Baptists, on the other."

Having recently spent a good deal of time at the Hague, as British delegate at a series of International Conferences on the Opium question, I took occasion to glean, on the spot, what information I could in regard to these groups of liberal Nonconformists in the Netherlands, both as regards their influence on, and relations with, the General Baptists in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and also as to the present-day position of the representatives, in the Netherlands, of those early defenders of liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment in spiritual matters.

It might perhaps be claimed that, at no time in the history of man's progress since the dawn of Christianity, and at no place on the earth's surface, were greater or more fruitful quickenings of the Spirit at work than in the Netherlands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Dutch Renaissance, as it has been termed, witnessed not only an amazing development and diffusion of the secular arts and natural sciences, but also a wider recognition of civil and religious liberty, a fuller regard for the sanctity of private judgment in matters of conscience, a purer passion for things of the Spirit than ever Luther contemplated or Calvin conceived. This revolt against formalism and ritualism, against conformity to the letter

in favour of freedom and inwardness of the spiritual life, took various forms and inspired a variety of religious movements. It is not easy to trace or to define the relationship of these movements to one another; the *Zeitgeist* was blowing where it listed, but the good seed which it scattered appeared to have found some specially congenial environment around "the oozy rim" of the *Zuyder Zee* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of our era.

Claims have indeed been made that this reversion to primitive Christianity was, in fact, no reversion at all, but a direct succession from apostolic times, boasting an origin older than, and apart from, either the Greek or Roman Churches. Efforts have been made to trace in the Danubian provinces, the Mediterranean littoral, in Alpine valleys, and along the banks of the Rhine, vestigial remains of the teaching and practice of those who drew their inspiration directly from the apostles themselves. The early history of the Cathari and of the Waldenses is by some linked up with legends of a similar character. In England the Wickliffites represent the same contemporary trend.<sup>1</sup>

However this may be, there can be no doubt that

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<sup>1</sup> For such a way of regarding the facts, see the references to Petrobrusians and Henricians of the twelfth century in Mosheim, III, pp. 130, 139; or B. Evans, "Early English Baptists," 1862, Introduction; or Robert Barclay, "Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth," 1876, p. 12. Rufus Jones, in his "Studies in Mystical Religion," 1909, gives evidence of the continuity of mystical Christianity from the earliest times, noting specially the "Shepherd" of Hermas and the Phrygian Montanists in the second century, Plotinus in the third, Gregory of Nyssa in the fourth, "Dionysius the Areopagite" about the fifth, John Scot Erigena, in Paris, 847; also Manicheists, Paulicians, Cathari, Waldenses, Amaurians, Ortliebians, Friends of God, and Brethren of the Common Life. See, however, H. Wheeler Robinson on Baptist Principles before Baptist Churches, in the "Baptists of Yorkshire," 1912; and W. T. Whitley, "Witness of History to Baptist Principles," 1914, both repudiating external connection.

during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, if not earlier, many movements on the Continent in the direction of a simpler form of Christianity than that of Rome, of Wittenberg, or of Geneva, were influencing religious thought in England. Barclay says: "Considerable light may, we feel sure, be yet thrown upon the early history of the churches of the Commonwealth by a minute and accurate study of the state of religion in Holland during the half-century prior to the struggle between the King and Parliament."<sup>2</sup> I make no claim to any such attempt, indeed I merely offer a contribution of some fragmentary notes, gleaned at odd moments in the Netherlands, or culled from desultory reading during scanty leisure at home.

It will perhaps be well to give, from an authoritative Dutch source, a résumé of the chief dissenting groups which arose in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century. At Leeuwarden, the capital of Friesland, through the courtesy of Mr. Prillewitz, the British Vice-Consul, I had the good fortune to meet a Mennonite minister, Mr. Zondervan, who, on learning of my interest in the Dissenting Churches of the Netherlands, was so good as to hand me a lecture recently delivered by Dr. W. J. Kühler at the University of Amsterdam. It is entitled "The significance of the Dissenters in the Church History of the Netherlands,"<sup>3</sup> and it traces, in a most interesting fashion, the history of some of the Nonconformist communities of the Netherlands. The lecture was delivered in Dutch at the inauguration of a Professorship of Theology (February 10, 1913) in the University, in connection with the General Baptist (Doopsgezinde) Society of Holland, and I am much indebted to Mr. Prillewitz for

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<sup>2</sup> Barclay, p. 76.

<sup>3</sup> De Beteekenis van de Dissenters in de Kerkgeschiedenis von Nederland door Dr. W. J. Kühler. Leiden, 1913.

kindly translating it for me. Dr. Kühler deals with the Remonstrants, the Mennonites, the Rijnsbergers; and also refers to the Socinians, Mystics, and Labadists. He recalls that on June 24, 1796, during the proceedings of the National Assembly, "the representative of the people, Kantelaar, formerly a Reformed minister, amid great applause, praised the Remonstrant brotherhood, as having contributed most to preserve among the people of the Netherlands, the idea of freedom, during a period in which violence and tyranny endeavoured to suppress it entirely." The Remonstrants were, he says, "Dissenters in spite of themselves," thanks to the Calvinistic decision of the Synod of Dort against the Arminians (1619); but "for practical work, especially, their community has been a great blessing. Among them there could never arise that terrible dogmatism which bore such bitter fruit in the Reformed Church. With them there was no chasing after heretics, no parading of orthodoxy, in which piety and morality were so often jostled and crushed. . . . The Remonstrants did not want a hard-and-fast rule, reasoned out from all sides; in dogmatic differences they only wished to follow that opinion which appeared to them to agree most with the tenets of the Bible. Remonstrantism they did not consider a doctrine but a principle. One of their leaders, Episcopius, has stated most emphatically that theology is not a metaphysical but a practical science, not partly metaphysical and partly practical but *pura practica est*. For that reason he always spoke especially of the small value he attached to dogma; and van Limborch after him argued that the dogma of predestination, important as it may be, belonged to the *non necessaria*. These ideas naturally went hand in hand with a sense of tolerance and earnestness . . . . In the year 1630 the Remonstrants were again accused of Socinian heresy, and although it was of the greatest importance for them

to clear themselves of this serious accusation, Witenbogaert could not find it in his heart to gratify Frederick Henry by formally condemning the Socinian doctrine. He stuck to his principle, saying, 'I condemn nobody in whom dwells something of Christ.' This tolerance won its way. Calvinism, condemned by "the gentle Kamphuysen,"<sup>4</sup> was in its strict implication rejected by Herman Venema, the Reformed Professor, at Franeker (1724-74), and the spirit of Remonstrantism leavened even the orthodox.

Dr. Kühler next proceeds to analyse the spirit of the Mennonites. They were dissenters by choice; animated by the dissidence of dissent; separatists by nature. Menno Simons (1492-1561), their founder, wrote: "We see with our eyes and feel with our hands the Papists, Lutherans, Zwinglians, Davidians, Libertines, etc., all alike walk in the wide road of sin and lead an idle sensual life"; and again: "If you want to be saved you must have reformed your worldly, sensual, godless life, for the whole Scripture with all its exhortations, menaces, punishments, miracles, examples, ceremonies, and sacraments, is nothing but penitence and reform; and if you are not penitent, no heaven or earth can help you, for without true penitence nothing avails." Persecuted by Romanist and Reformed alike, out of the mouths of their opponents are they nevertheless justified for their saintliness of life and practical piety. Dr. Kühler says their great significance was the "contrast they exhibited to the harmful consequences to practical life of the preaching of nothing but grace and belief. They have kept alive the consciousness that there is an inevitable connection between religion and morality; and we must not forget that they were humble and

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<sup>4</sup> Theodor Raphaël Kamphuysen (1586-1626), Painter and Poet, Arminian and Collegiant.

mEEK. The majority of them went their own way quietly, and did not wish it otherwise—only when quarrels and differences arose among them were they heard of. Then the world saw them certainly not from their best side. But the quiet intercourse with God, the daily devotion to duty, in everything supported by calm submission to the all-knowing Father, their charity and love of their neighbour—of all such characteristics which constitute their true history, a good deal is apt to fall into the background.” Dr. Kühler thinks it is desirable that the history of the Mennonites should be better known, and purposes to devote himself largely to studying their history and thereby complete the labours of Blaupot ten Cate and de Hoop Scheffer. He next proceeds to deal with a group of “individual” religionists, designated by Dr. Hylkema “Reformers.” That name, however, is not applicable to all the groups: “the boundaries between them being indefinite; some of them were decidedly rationalistic, others were inclined to mysticism, though all strove to confess a Christianity, as they had conceived it in their own minds, in contrast with the traditional faith of the Churches.”

“The most prominent among them,” says the lecturer, “are the Rijnsberger Collegiants. From the middle of the sixteenth century their movement, which at first attracted little attention, had spread over a great portion of our country. The watchword of these Liberals was: No Church, no priest, no creed. They indeed professed an authority of the Spirit, but no man must assume authority over his brethren.” Their meetings were open to all Christians, and all were free to speak after prayer had been offered and a portion of the Bible read. Twice a year they met at Rijnsberg, to celebrate the Lord’s Supper as a token of mutual Christian communion, and baptism was administered to those who desired it as indication of



entrance into general Christian fellowship. "The Rijnsbergers had no intention of setting up a new church in addition to those already existing; they strove, on the contrary, to overthrow as much as possible the partition walls which so hopelessly divided Christians. One of them wrote 'we do not want to be called a sect, but if we are considered one for all that, we wish to be one having as our object the union of all sects.'" Many of unorthodox views, like Spinoza, were attracted to the Collegiants, and Socinianism, introduced from Poland, despite the hostile edict of 1653, found a suitable soil in this community. "Not that the Rijnsbergers accepted the teaching of the Racovian Catechism in its entirety as a binding confession—then indeed they would have repudiated their own principle—but they merely took over from Socinianism whatever appeared to them as good and true, without any sacrifice of their own free personal conviction." Indeed, "among the Collegiants we repeatedly encounter emphatic denials of the positive tenets of Socinian theology. Doctrine, with all its mysteries, had lost its significance for them; but, on the other hand, this word came from the bottom of their soul, 'that at the final day of judgment it will not be asked what one believed but what one had done.'"

Lastly Dr. Kühler makes brief reference to the Quakers, to the visit of Ames and Crisp to the Netherlands, and to the fact that it was among the Baptists that the Friends found, as they had done in England, most of their adherents. Related to the Friends by their mystical characteristics were the followers of John of Labadie and of the learned lady who added lustre to his community, Anna Maria van Schurman.

While in Friesland, I made a visit to Franeker and to Wieuwerd, both of which places are linked by many interesting associations with the Labadist

mystics. Whittier has commemorated John of Labadie, in his beautiful lines, entitled, "Andrew Rijkman's prayer."<sup>5</sup> and Miss Una Birch, in her charming book on Anna van Schurman, has told the story of that "learned maid's" devotion to the much persecuted Labadie.<sup>6</sup> It was in 1650 that Anna's brother, Jan Godschalck, introduced Labadie, then the cynosure of Geneva by reason of his oratory and asceticism, to the "learned maid of Utrecht," famed throughout Europe for her artistic, scientific, and literary culture, no less than for her intense and practical piety. Labadie, who was born at Bourg in 1610 and educated as a Jesuit, had been suspect, as regards his orthodoxy, by the Catholics of Amiens and the Calvinists of Geneva. He was called to the Walloon church at Middelburg in 1660 to succeed Jean the Long, to the grief of his devotees in the city of Calvin but to the infinite relief of the faithful, who impeached his morals as well as his orthodoxy. At Middelburg Teelinck had previously inculcated a mystical piety; but Labadie carried his "Separatism" from the Reformed Church to greater length, and had to flee, with his flock, to Veere, and thence to Amsterdam. He and they were denounced as Quakers, Socinians, Atheists, and Anabaptists, and thundered against by Rector Voëtius, that pillar of orthodoxy in the newly-founded University of Utrecht. Here Anna van Schurman joined the community, which also claimed recruits from the wealthy families of Sommelsdyk, Huyghens, Schluter, van Buytendijk, van Benningen, and van der Haar. At one time they were

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<sup>5</sup> So we read the prayer of him,  
Who with John of Labadie  
Trode of old the oozy rim  
Of the Zuyder Zee.

<sup>6</sup> "Anna van Schurman, Artist, Scholar, Saint." By Una Birch. Longmans, 1909.

said to have had a following of 60,000. When even Amsterdam became too hot for the "pilgrims," a further move was made to Herford, (Westphalia) at the invitation of the Abbess Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, the friend of Descartes and aunt of George I. In 1671 the community was driven from this asylum by the Elector Palatine, and a move was made for Altona by Hamburg. Antoinette de Bourignon, who had conducted a somewhat similar mystical community at Amsterdam, and had attracted the support of Poiret and Swammerdam, offered the Labadists a refuge in Nord Strand, one of the Frisian Islands off Holstein, whither she and her followers had recently migrated. But the invitation was declined, and Labadie, worn out with wanderings and persecutions, died at Altona, ministered unto by Anna to the last. He, despite his detractors, protesting his orthodoxy and integrity, and she attesting that in Labadie she found the truest and most vivid expression of the spirit and manner of life of the primitive church. They extolled their community as a "Garden of souls planted at Amsterdam, watered at Herford, and fruiting at Altona."

It was, however, in Friesland that the final chapter of the Labadists and Anna van Schurman was written; and I made my pilgrimage—albeit by motor-car—to the remote and pleasant little village of Wieuwerd, in whose churchyard the "learned maid" was buried, and where the crumbling corpses of some of the last of the Labadists are—literally—to be *seen* to this day. In 1673, the noble Cornelius van Sommelsdyk, whose three sisters had joined the Labadists, having been appointed Governor of Surinam, presented his Castle of Thetinga, or Waltha, adjacent to Wieuwerd, to the community who settled there to the number of three or four hundred—"brethren" and "sisters." Anna was the centre and soul of the fraternity, which lived its

own self-contained life, "with joy and simplicity of heart," farming, weaving cloth, baking, brewing, and printing books in "spiritual fellowship" and "refined independency," as testified by the Quakers Fox and Penn, who visited the "collegium" in 1676.

It is indeed a sweet and pleasant country in which this sequestered little community dwelt. It lies between Leeuwarden, the capital of Friesland, and the eastern shore of the Zuyder Zee—now, as then, a land of rich pasturage, with teeming herds of black and white cattle and big sheep. Sparsely scattered over the plain are villages, clustering round lofty-towered churches. Gardens, well stocked with vegetables and profuse with flowers, richly repay the husbandry of this home-keeping, liberty-loving, never-conquered, Frisian peasantry. The arrival of our motor was an event on a late September afternoon, as the sun was casting its "first long evening yellow" over the grey stone of Wieuwerd Church. The old sexton led us into the plain interior and down some steps into the crypt, where we beheld in glass-lid coffins, still above ground, the crumbling but undecomposed corpses of some five or six of the Labadist brothers and sisters. The story goes that the pure dry air preserves, without decay, the flesh of man or beast; in witness whereof some carcasses of gulls and other birds were hung in weird display within this gruesome charnel-house. An engraving of Labadie, and a few bony and other relics, were the only embellishments of the austere interior. In the grassy yard outside we were shown the spot to the north-east of the church, beneath which repose the remains of Anna van Schurman—interred, as it is related,<sup>7</sup> by her own direction—with the head within and the body without the church wall. Some two hundred yards

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<sup>7</sup> According to the testimony of Anna's great-nephew, Mr. A. F. Schurman, who died in 1783.

off in a north-easterly direction, amid some trees and across the meadows, the crumbling foundations of the old castle of Thetinga, the last asylum of the Labadists, can, with difficulty, be traced. The life of the community waned when Anna van Schurman died in 1678, and flickered out with the death of the last of the van Sommelsdyks in 1725. No Labadists now remain in or around Wieuwerd, though some are still scattered about Friesland and annually make a commemorative pilgrimage to this sequestered spot.<sup>8</sup> At Franeker, a pleasant little town lying between Harlingen and Leeuwarden, there are safely and reverently preserved, in the Oudheidkamer of its picturesque Town-hall, many portraits, books, and artistic productions of Anna van Schurman, which the obliging Burgomaster, Mr. Lolle Okma, permitted me to examine and handle.

Franeker, as one sees it to-day, speaks of a departed glory. Its university (founded in 1585, suppressed by Napoleon in 1811, and now a lunatic asylum), its botanical garden, its ancient church, its medieval Radhuis, its grain Porters' Guild-house, its orphanages, and—last but not least—its wondrous Planetarium, made by Eise Eisinga (1744-1828), all tell of the culture and affluence that aforetime dwelt in this quaint little Frisian town.

The country all around in this north-west corner of Friesland was the scene of the ministry of Menno Simons, whose liberal theological teaching in the sixteenth century watered a ground readily receptive to religious freedom. Simons was born close by, at Witmarsum, a little south of Franeker—the date being variously given as 1492, 1496, and 1505—was ordained a Catholic priest but, rejecting transubstantiation, joined the Reformers. He allied himself

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<sup>8</sup> See "De Oudheidkamer op het Stadhuis te Franeker," by Jan Dirks and B. J. Veenhoven, p. 7.

with the Anabaptists at Leeuwarden, and was made Bishop of Gröningen.<sup>9</sup> He denounced the deplorable excesses and militarism which had disgraced the Münster Baptists, and taught a pure and primitive Christianity, based on Bible study and tintured with a mystic element. He visited the maritime towns as far east as Dantzic; and spread widely a spiritual brotherhood, characterised by practical piety purged of all fanaticism and sacerdotalism. He nevertheless did not escape persecution, and had to flee to Wismar, and later to Oldestoke in Holstein, where he died in 1561. His followers were proscribed by Charles V, but found freedom under William the Silent in 1581.

Two subdivisions of the Mennonites soon became recognised: the one rigid and strict in their observances, especially of rebaptism for those who joined their community from other persuasions, known as the Flemings or Flandrians; the other more liberal and Socinian in tendency, like Dr. Galenus Abrahams (de Haen)<sup>10</sup> known as Waterlanders or Frieslanders. For the most part the Waterlander Mennonites eschewed creeds and formularies; but in or about 1580 John de Ries and Lubbert Gerrits, two of their ministers, drew up in forty articles a Confession of

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<sup>9</sup> A doubt having been raised as to the correctness of describing Simons Menno as "Bishop" of Gröningen, I may say that I recently found in the Royal Library at the Hague, with the assistance of Mr. Bijvanck, a work entitled "Geschiedenis der Doopsgezinden in Gröningen, Overijssel en Oost Friesland door S. Blaupot ten Cate," 1842. From page 49 I extracted the following:

"Het zal wel niemand bevreemden, dat ik hier Menno Simons en Dirk Philips in de eerste plaats noem, die zich niet tot Friesland allen bepaalde, maar over het geheele ligehaam der Doopsgezinden zich uit strekle, in zoon der heid ook in Gröningen en Oost Friesland gezien werd. In dit laatste gewest hebben zij zich beide eentijd lang opgehouden en vooral te Embden. En wat Gröningen betreft, hunne benoeming tot Bischoppen, de eerste van Gröningen de andere van Appingadam."

<sup>10</sup> Who discussed with George Fox and William Penn in 1677.

Faith for some English Baptists who sought to know their tenets, with a view to joining their community.<sup>11</sup> They claimed to derive their doctrine strictly from the Bible; practical piety and holy living distinguished them. They were averse to war, to oaths, to capital and other severe punishments, and to the intervention of the magistrate in matters of conscience. They cultivated austerity of life, dress, and conduct. They practised adult (believers') baptism, but they allowed difference of opinion as to doctrinal beliefs. In Friesland, during the latter half of the eighteenth century, they became influential and opulent, and their college in Amsterdam was famed for its philosophy and culture.<sup>12</sup> There were also flourishing communities of Waterlander Mennonites at Haarlem, Leiden, Rotterdam, and Dordrecht. Since that time, while their liberal aspirations have permeated other sects, the professing Mennonites have tended to decline. I had recently a long conversation at the Hague with Dr. F. C. Fleischer of Winterswijk (Gelderland), a leading minister of the community, and he gave me an interesting report recently prepared by him on "the Baptists in the Netherlands."<sup>13</sup> From this it appears that the Dutch Mennonites now number some 60,000, against 160,000 at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Even in West Friesland, where the memorial to Simons Menno overlooks Witmarsum, the numbers are falling off; though "everyone in this region strives to maintain the memory of Menno, and to preserve their inheritance from their forefathers un-

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<sup>11</sup> See "Baptist Confessions of Faith." McGlothlin 1911, p. 24, et seq. Also "John Smith," by W. H. Burgess, 1911, p. 271. Also Evans "Early English Baptists," 1862, vol. i. pp. 201-24.

<sup>12</sup> Anti-Trinitarian Biography. Wallace. Vol. iii, p. 316.

<sup>13</sup> Die Taufgesinnten in den Niederlanden, von F. C. Fleischer, Makkum, Holland.

dimmed." There is, Dr. Fleischer reminds me, among the Mennonite archives of Amsterdam a Latin letter from John Smyth (the Se-baptist and father of English General Baptists) and thirty-one co-signatories, regretting that they had not accepted baptism at the hands of the Mennonites, together with some thirty-three other documents (nos. 1346-1378) relating to the English Baptists and the Mennonites between 1606 and 1611.

Closely akin to the Waterlander Mennonites were the Collegiants, who originated with the Kodde family at Rijnsberg, near Leiden, soon after the Synod of Dort had, in 1619, condemned the Arminians unheard. Without church, creed, or priest, these Rijnbergers studied the Bible in the vernacular<sup>14</sup> at first hand in Kodde's apple orchard, or in his flax barn, and practised baptism in the Old Rhine. One of the brothers professed Hebrew at Leiden's new university and added some culture to their study; while Jan Evertssoon Geesteran from Alkmaar, a pupil of Faustus Socinus and exile from Rakow, added lustre to the village community. René Descartes in his hermitage at Endegeest, hard by, deigned to attend the *collegia*, and listened to the disputations of unlettered laymen on Holy Writ. The cult spread to Haarlem, Amsterdam, and Leeuwarden, as well as into Germany; in short, according to Mosheim,<sup>15</sup> "by the Collegiants we are to understand a very large society of persons of every sect and rank, who assume the name of Christians, but entertain different views of Christ, and which is kept together neither by rules and teachers,

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<sup>14</sup> The Bible had been available in the vernacular in Holland before the reign of Henry VIII. In Germany, it was in print by 1466, but not in England till 1538. Coverdale's print (1551-53), was begun in the Netherlands. Dideric Coornhert (1522-98) translated the New Testament into Dutch, and thus gave an impulse to a national literature.



nor by ecclesiastical laws, nor by a formula of faith, nor by any set of rites, but solely by a desire for improvement in Scriptural knowledge and piety." During the seventeenth century many men of light and leading in the Netherlands allied themselves with this liberal movement of humble origin. Among them were Jan Rieuwertsz the publisher of Amsterdam, Dirk Rafaelszoon, Kamphuysen the painter-poet of Rotterdam, John Bredenburg, Jarrig Jellis, Pieter Balling, Adrian and Johannes Koerbagh, and Dr. Herman Homan of Oude Kerk and later of Rijnsberg. The last named offered Christian shelter to Spinoza when he was expelled from the Synagogue at Amsterdam in 1656; and it was in Homan's house at Rijnsberg—whither they moved in 1660—still standing and now felicitously converted into a Spinoza museum, that the "God-intoxicated man" composed his famous "Short treatise." Indeed Spinoza's views found kinship amongst the Collegiants, and in turn appeared to have in some respect reciprocally influenced their future developments.<sup>16</sup> Thus in 1680 Verschoor of Flushing taught a faith compounded of the philosophies of Cocceius and Spinoza, while Pontianus van Hattem, a minister of Philippsland in Zeeland, evolved a "strange interfusion of Spinozism with evangelical doctrine which, by its fervour and freedom, attracted a considerable following" towards the close of the seventeenth century.<sup>17</sup>

It is significant that much light on Spinoza's life-history has been found among the archives of the Collegiant Orphanage at Amsterdam, which is the

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<sup>16</sup> "Spinoza, His Life and Treatise on God and Man." A. Wolf, pp. xxxvi., xli., and lxii.

<sup>17</sup> Martineau, "Study of Spinoza," p. 327; and Mosheim, "Ecclesiastical History," vol. iii., p. 390.

only remnant of the Rijnsbergers left and is administered by the Mennonites.

It was the disruption, occasioned by the Synod of Dort in 1619, which had evolved the movement that crystallised locally into the Collegiant sect; but while that strong reaction against Calvinism finally dwindled and merged its residuum into the earlier Mennonistic movement in its more liberal (or Waterlander) development, a less heterodox influence was spread abroad by the Arminians or Remonstrants. Arminius (1560-1609) had studied at Geneva and Padua, and had visited Rome before he came to Leiden and took the first doctorate of the new university, where he became professor of theology. His endeavour to refute Coornhert<sup>18</sup> ended in his rejection of predestination and original sin, in favour of free will and universal atonement. Vorstius (who succeeded him in the professoriate to the dismay of James I) and Episcopius added lustre to the Remonstrants after the too early death of their eponymous founder, although they, in turn, were accused of Arian or Socinian heresy. Politics and theology were alike infected by the same emancipating spirit, as the martyrdom of John Oldenbarneveldt and the imprisonment of Hugo Grotius testify. The persecuted fled to Antwerp, and to Frederickstadt in Holstein, where a flourishing community was established. Even the Church of England under Laud felt the influence of this leavening movement; and though the cultus, as such, fell off in the eighteenth century, nevertheless, as Mosheim truly observes, "the principles adopted by their founders have spread with wonderful rapidity over

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<sup>18</sup> Dideric Coornhert, born at Amsterdam 1522, died at Gouda 1590. An Engraver then Secretary to the Burgomasters of Haarlem. Learnt Latin at thirty, translated New Testament, Cicero, Seneca, and Boethius into Dutch. Advocate of national independence and religious liberty. Wrote national song of William of Nassau.

many nations and gained the appreciation of vast numbers."<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Whitley, in his admirable and luminous introduction to the "Minutes of the general assembly of the General Baptists" (volume I, 1909), justly remarks that "the General Baptists are an English outgrowth of the Continental Anabaptists, acting upon the Lollards."<sup>20</sup> The church of John Smyth and Helwys, which started the General Baptist movement in this country, was instinct with the liberal pietism of the Mennonites. The exiled English Separatists found among these Netherlands Dissenters a pre-established harmony with their own aspirations, but in the case of the latter there was already an organised community, refined and consolidated by the genius and example of Simons Menno. As Dr. Whitley truly insists:<sup>21</sup> "the Continental Anabaptists had from the first included some who never adopted the Greek theology of Nicæa and Chalcedon, but preferred to quote Scripture without explanation. Some of these were perhaps heirs of the Paulician Christology transplanted from Armenia to Bulgaria, and thence making its way up the Danube, down the Po, the Rhine, and the Rhone. The Italian and the Polish Anabaptists were well known as Unitarian; the tenets of Servetus on this head were one great cause of his execution at Geneva; and the publications of Socinus gave a temporary title to the doctrine. Now the Dutch Anabaptists, often called against their will, Mennonites, imbibed some of this teaching, and although the full outworking of the leaven was not at first evident, yet the influence which has made them to-day practically Unitarian was already manifest when Smyth and

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<sup>19</sup> Mosheim, "Ecclesiastical History," vol. iii, p. 432.

<sup>20</sup> p. ix.

<sup>21</sup> Op. cit., p. xxi.

Helwys were in touch with them. And it is not to be forgotten that these men were breathing the same atmosphere which supported Arminius and his opposition to Calvinism." Nevertheless Dr. Whitley thinks that there is nothing to prove direct filiation from the Dutch Anabaptists to the English General Baptists; and he holds that "quite a different origin is more probable."<sup>22</sup> I confess that the brief study I have been able to give to the matter, both here and in Holland, confirms me in the view that the Separatist movement in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially in the Eastern and Southern Counties, was powerfully fomented, and to some extent shaped and defined, by contact with the Dutch dissenters, and that many of the characteristics of the Mennonites and the Arminians, and some also of the Collegiants and the Labadists, may be clearly traced in the English General Baptists of seventeenth-century England, as well as among the Friends, who were recruited so largely from the "tender folk" of that community.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. xxii.

### John Smyth's Works.

The whole of the works of this pioneer Baptist are now being printed by the Cambridge University Press for this Society. Introduction and notes are being furnished by the editor. There will be two volumes, in the style of the edition of George Fox's Journal from the same press. We had hoped to issue one volume this year, but continental disturbances have severely checked the rate of printing. Unless Cambridge shares the experiences of Louvain, subscribers in class A may expect to receive the two volumes next year, representing their subscriptions for 1914 and 1915.