

IAN M. RANDALL

Communities of Conviction

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Conviction*

Baptist Beginnings in Europe

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NEUFELD VERLAG

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FOREWORD

As we approach the 400th anniversary celebration of the first Baptist congregation in the world, formed in 1609 in Amsterdam, Dr Ian Randall has placed us all in his debt with this inspiring book of Baptist 'beginnings' in Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. He writes out of his own deep commitment over many years to make known the story of Baptist origins, but always in a way which informs our present life and future hopes.

The title of the book owes something to the writings of the late Baptist scholar James William McClendon Jr., who speaks of theology as 'the discovery, understanding, and transformation of the convictions of a convictional community'. This book is indeed the story of Baptist 'communities of conviction', beginning with the convictions which those English Separatists formed in Amsterdam on which Ian Randall, rightly in my view, sees Anabaptist ideas as a formative influence. These include a church made up of believers who had consciously put their trust in Christ; faith as free faith which cannot be coerced by the state; and the importance of discipleship and holiness of life.

These were the convictions which took root in the hearts of those subsequent Baptist pioneers whom Ian Randall so vividly brings to life in this book. They were willing to undergo all kinds of harassment and persecution by Church and State to establish those first Baptist communities. It is something of an irony that Baptists who were among the first to argue for religious freedom for all, should have experienced so much opposition and persecution themselves. Today, in the life of the European Baptist Federation we maintain the commitment made by the early Baptists to religious freedom and human rights for people of all faiths.

We add to these convictions one other, a commitment to evangelism and mission. 2009 is also the 175th Anniversary of the first baptisms in Hamburg in 1834, including that of the 'father' of

European Baptists, J. G. Oncken. Quite rightly the central section of this story of beginnings tells of the burning passion for Gospel mission of Oncken and his co-workers. This, combined with his formidable organisational skills, saw the Baptist movement spread rapidly to many parts of Central and Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century. Oncken's slogan 'Every Baptist a Missionary!' is one which we need to hear again and respond to in our present European context.

Ian Randall also draws our attention to the crucial role played by mission agencies and the Bible Societies, especially from Britain and the USA. Then as now, this relationship is not without its challenges over issues of control and creating dependency, but nevertheless these agencies have been crucial in the establishment of indigenous Baptist churches in our region. Several of them continue to identify with and support strongly the work of the European Baptist Federation today.

Finally what impresses me above all with these 'stories of beginnings' is that, with some notable exceptions, Baptists have not been found in the wealthy and influential parts of their societies, but they have nevertheless influenced those societies significantly in faithful witness as salt and light. They have exemplified those words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian church. 'Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong...'

We are enormously grateful to Ian Randall for weaving together these stories of beginnings in such a coherent, interesting and concise way. Taken together, these stories form 'our story' – the story of the European Baptist Federation. The European Baptist Federation continues to embrace a diversity of languages, cultures and ways of being Baptist, but finds its unity in Christ, and in an identity forged from those same convictions which have been there since that small, seemingly insignificant beginning in Amsterdam in 1609.

May they continue to encourage, inspire, and motivate us as we live out God's calling to be 'communities of conviction' today.

Tony Peck
General Secretary
European Baptist Federation
Advent 2008

PREFACE

IN 2007 Tony Peck, the General Secretary of the European Baptist Federation (EBF), asked me to consider writing a book on Baptist beginnings in Europe as part of the celebration in 2009 in Amsterdam of 400 years of Baptist life in Europe. I was very happy to agree. It has been inspiring to trace the stories that have contributed to the Baptist communities which we have today across Europe and the Middle East. The last book of this kind to be written was in 1923 when J. H. Rushbrooke, a British Baptist who became the Baptist Commissioner for Europe and then President of the Baptist World Alliance, wrote *The Baptist Movement in the Continent of Europe*. Rushbrooke was someone who had a strong commitment to the connectedness of the Baptist community across Europe. At times during the twentieth century it was difficult to sustain that sense of inter-connection. Deep divisions were evident at times, as wars ravaged Europe and as the Iron Curtain divided the continent.

In recent years, however, we have had the opportunity, in a new way, to deepen our understanding of the way in which Baptists across the continent have emerged and how they belong together. This belonging is powerfully expressed in the work of the European Baptist Federation and in the studies undertaken at the International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS) in Prague, which is the seminary of the fifty Baptist Unions in the EBF. In writing this book I have drawn on published material that has been written over the years, books and articles, and also on a range of unpublished essays and dissertations written by students undertaking Master's and Doctoral degrees within the Institute of Baptist and Anabaptist Studies at IBTS. It is only since the end of the Soviet Union that there has been freedom to gain access to archives with material about Baptist history in Eastern

Europe. Rich resources are now at our disposal and are being very well used.

As we celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Baptist congregation developed out of the English separatist congregation of John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, meeting in rooms in a bakery owned by a member of the Dutch Mennonite community in Amsterdam, it is appropriate to give something of an overview of how Baptist congregations have emerged in different parts of Europe and also of the Middle East – which is part of the EBF – since then. This helps those of us within the Baptist community in this region, as well as those Baptists who live in other parts of the world or those who do not hold Baptist beliefs, to have a better understanding of the movements, the convictions and the individuals who have contributed to Baptist life across this region.

This book is deliberately not written as a scholarly volume. I have avoided my usual footnotes! It draws on academic work but tries to make the sources accessible to a broad readership. Neither is this primarily a factual book, full of statistical data, although it does contain a good deal of detailed information. For a factual overview Albert W. Wardin's *Baptists Around the World* is still very useful (Albert Wardin kindly read my manuscript), and I have included details of that book and other helpful sources in a short bibliography. My purpose as I have written this particular book has been to tell stories, and in this way try to show the dynamics of Baptist beginnings. It does not seek to cover the whole Baptist movement in the region from 1609 to the present day, nor does it cover all the Baptist groupings that now exist in Europe, but instead is intended to show what shaped the early stages of Baptist witness in the different parts of the region. When a 'beginning' becomes a 'continuation' is open to debate, and I have had to make my own judgment. What can be termed the 'emerging period' varies from country to country.

More attention is given here to the Baptist movement across the mainland of Europe than to the movement in the British Isles. This is intentional. A great deal has been written on the British

Baptist experience and on the figures who contributed to Baptist growth in the Isles, but much less has been written – certainly much less in English – on the many other people who are covered in this book. I hope, therefore, that some of the 'imbalance' that is undoubtedly here will help to bring to light aspects of Baptist development that have been somewhat neglected. My own enriching experience over the last two decades, working as a church historian in the British Baptist world, primarily at Spurgeon's College, London, and also in the wider European Baptist world, at IBTS, has challenged me to seek to present a wider picture of Baptist life and mission.

I am very grateful to all those who have contributed to the writing and production of this book. My wife, Janice, has read my chapters as I have written them. The draft of the whole manuscript has been read by a number of people across the European Baptist Federation (EBF) and beyond and I wish to thank them for their valuable comments. The EBF staff involved in the project – Tony Peck, Helle Liht and Alex Alexander – have been of enormous help. Thank you to each of them. Alec Gilmore has worked very hard indeed to collect the splendid array of photographs, Nancy Lively has been a careful proof-reader and Bill Lively has produced the valuable index. I am grateful to each. I am also greatly indebted to the support of Dr Keith Jones, Rector of IBTS, and my colleagues in what is a remarkable pan-European institution. My hope is that this book about beginnings, often imaginative beginnings, will play a part in encouraging similarly imaginative discipleship today.

Ian Randall
IBTS, Prague
Advent 2008

CHAPTER 1 | THE TRUE CHRISTIAN BAPTISM: ANABAPTIST BEGINNINGS

ON 21 January 1525 dramatic events took place in Zürich, Switzerland, which were described by someone who was probably an eye-witness. A group of people had gathered in the home of Felix Mantz, and they united in prayer for God's guidance. The account reads:

After the prayer, George of the House of Jacob stood up and besought Conrad Grebel for God's sake to baptize him with the true Christian baptism upon his faith and knowledge. And when he knelt down with such a request and desire, Conrad Grebel baptized him, since at that time there was no ordained minister to perform such a work.

This event has commonly been taken to mark the beginning of the Anabaptist movement. 'Anabaptist' is a Greek word meaning 'rebaptiser'. It was a word used in Latin from the fourth century onwards, and came to be used in English from the 1530s. This aspect of the sixteenth-century Reformation is also often known as the Radical Reformation. The Anabaptists themselves never used the term, since they repudiated infant baptism and therefore did not see what they were doing as 're-baptism'. However, the term has come into common usage.

A number of influences helped to produce the Radical Reformation. Some of the views of the Zürich reformer, Huldrych Zwingli, were very significant for the formation of the Anabaptist group in Zürich, which became known as the Swiss Brethren. Zwingli stressed the need to engage in study of the Bible, and a group gathered with him for what became known as 'prophecy meetings'. Conrad Grebel, who had been educated at Basle, Wien (Vienna) and Paris and whose father was a member of the City Council in Zürich, and Felix Manz, were among those in this

Bible study circle. Georg Blaurock, another member of the group, was a former Catholic priest.

These friends of Zwingli began to diverge from him, however, especially over issues to do with the state and with infant baptism. At one stage Zwingli was open to the idea that only those who had genuine faith should be baptised, but he subsequently affirmed the baptism of infants. By contrast, Grebel, Manz, Blaurock and others came to believe, by 1524, that the church should be separate from the state, should be a church of committed believers (not a church composed of everyone in the parish) and should not baptise infants, only believers. They came to this radical viewpoint after serious study. When a number of infants in the city were not baptised by their parents, a disputation was arranged in January 1525 and the City Council decided in favour of the views of Zwingli – that infant baptism was true baptism and that anyone being baptised as a believer was guilty of ‘re-baptism’.

Outside the Zürich circle, there were others who promoted radical reform. Andreas Karlstadt, who was initially a colleague of Martin Luther’s, hoped to reform aspects of worship in Wittenberg more rapidly than Luther, who led the reformation there, would have wished. A number of early Anabaptists were influenced by the thinking of Erasmus of Rotterdam, particularly Erasmus’ stress on going back to the original languages of the Bible, on imitating Christ (Christocentrism) and on the ‘Great Commission’ to teach and baptise disciples. There were also mystical influences, with desires evident among some Anabaptists for deeper inward spiritual experiences. All Anabaptists emphasised the role of the Holy Spirit, but those who have been termed inspirationists or ‘spiritualists’, such as Caspar Schwenckfeld, emphasised the authority of the Holy Spirit directly, sometimes above scripture. The stress on following Jesus was also very important in Anabaptism, and may be linked with medieval patterns of devotion – especially the movement called the Brethren of the Common Life. Some Anabaptists gave great attention to apocalyptic matters, imagining that they were in the ‘Last Times’.

Thomas Müntzer, a political radical of this period, was a leader in the Peasants’ Revolt in Germany, and although most Anabaptists became pacifist, Müntzer’s influence was significant in the early 1520s. A minority of Anabaptists continued to use force to seek to achieve their aims – most notably in Münster in the 1530s.

What became typical of the mainstream of Anabaptist life, however, was a strong commitment to being biblical people. In particular Anabaptists focused on the New Testament, especially the teaching of Jesus, and on the kind of church found in the New Testament. The common position for Anabaptists was the baptism of believers and, usually, rejection of a state church. For them the church was a community of believers. Entry was by conscious decision. Anabaptists generally believed in ordaining ministers within their communities, but there was a significant strain of anti-clericalism in early Anabaptism. The ideal was that the whole community should engage together in Bible study. The basis for church life was seen as the Bible, not tradition or the decisions of church councils. At a debate in Zürich in 1523, when Zwingli announced that the city’s civic leaders would ‘discern how the mass should henceforth be properly observed’, Simon Stumpf, a radical pastor outside Zürich, jumped up and said: ‘Master Huldrych! You have no authority to place the decision in my lords’ hands, for the decision is already made: the Spirit of God decided. If therefore my lords were to discern and decide anything that is contrary to God’s decision, I will ask Christ for his Spirit and will teach and act against it.’

Apart from the Anabaptist circle in Zürich led by Grebel, Mantz and Blaurock, there were other leaders within Anabaptism connected with this area of Switzerland. Balthasar Hubmaier was born about 1480 near Augsburg. He was a Catholic priest, who became an influential teacher and preacher at Regensburg Cathedral. Hubmaier was a creative theologian, who for a short time was the leading theological thinker among the Anabaptists. By 1525, although still a Catholic parish priest, Hubmaier was an Anabaptist by conviction, and on Easter Sunday 1525 he baptised 300 adult members of his Waldshut parish out of a milk

pail. He was drawn into theological dispute with Zwingli and after the City Council declared Zwingli the victor, Hubmaier was tortured. He recanted, but on his release he continued effective preaching. He and others moved to Moravia, where there was considerable religious freedom. There Hubmaier became the leader of a large Anabaptist community centred in Nicolsburg (today Mikulov, in the Czech Republic), and in his brief ministry he probably baptised at least 2,000 people. He set out an alternative to mainstream Reformation theology, for example in his defence of human freedom to choose Christ. He wrote that 'the image or inbreathing of God is still in all of us, although captive and as a live spark covered with cold ashes is still alive and will steam if heavenly water is poured upon it'. In 1528, on charges of heresy, he was burned in Vienna and his wife, Elisabeth, was executed by drowning in the Danube.

The first Anabaptist leaders almost all died in 1527–29. Many were drowned – as an expression of the hostility of the authorities to the baptism of believers. Mantz was drowned on 5 January 1527; Grebel, weakened by imprisonment, had died in 1526; and Blaurock was burned in 1529. An imperial mandate of 1528 against the Anabaptists stated that 'in both ecclesiastical and civil law Anabaptism is forbidden under severe penalties', and emphasised that 'the imperial code decrees and orders, on pain of the highest penalty of death, that no one shall have himself baptized a second time or baptize another'. We have records of the trials of many Anabaptists by the authorities. For example, on 17 May 1527, in Rottenburg in Germany, Michael Sattler and thirteen other alleged Anabaptists were tried and sentenced. They were charged, among other things, with teaching that infant baptism did not contribute to salvation, that Christians should not swear before a magistrate, and that if the Turks invaded the country, Christians ought not to resist them. Sattler insisted that baptism was for believers, not for infants, as the Scriptures clearly showed. On oaths, he said that the swearing of oaths was forbidden by Christ himself. Regarding the

Turks, he insisted that 'we will not fight', for 'You shall not kill.' Michael Sattler was burned and his wife was drowned a few days later.

The Martyrs' Mirror, first published in 1660 and later to become the most widely read book after the Bible among those in the Anabaptist tradition, contains many moving accounts of martyrdoms. Although the names of the men who were martyred are on the whole better known, many Anabaptist women suffered and died for their faith. Within Anabaptism women exercised 'informal' leadership in teaching, preaching and hymn writing. Helen of Freyberg, for example, who was an aristocrat from the Tyrol, was a lay leader of the Anabaptist movement and gave important support to Pilgram Marpeck, who was the most influential theologian among South German Anabaptists. Because of her Anabaptist beliefs, she lost her property and was forced into exile in Augsburg. Out of 455 Anabaptist members who appeared in the court records of the Tyrol between 1527 and 1529, almost half were women. In 1535 Helen was imprisoned in Augsburg and was expelled from the city for a time. However, she was able to return and became involved in the theological disputes that took place between Marpeck and Caspar Schwenckfeld. It is clear that she was counted as an Anabaptist teacher. As with many other Anabaptist women, she suffered greatly. She was never able to return to her family in the Tyrol.

A confession produced at a Swiss Brethren Conference on 24 February 1527, the Schleithem Articles, is generally reckoned to be mainly the work of Michael Sattler, who had been a Prior in a Benedictine monastery. The first of the seven articles spoke of baptism as 'given to all those who have learned repentance and amendment of life, and who believe truly that their sins are taken away by Christ, and to all those who walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and wish to be buried with Him in death, so that they may be resurrected with Him and to all those who with this significance request it [baptism] of us and demand it for themselves. This excludes all infant baptism.' The second article spoke about the 'ban'. If any brothers or sisters fell into 'error and

sin' they were to be 'admonished twice in secret and the third time openly disciplined or banned according to the command of Christ. Matt. 18.' There were articles on 'the breaking of bread', separation from evil, the duties and the support of pastors, 'the sword' and oaths. The sword was 'ordained of God outside the perfection of Christ. It punishes and puts to death the wicked, and guards and protects the good' and is 'ordained to be used by the worldly magistrates'. It was 'not appropriate for a Christian to serve as a magistrate'. Finally, swearing an oath in court was forbidden.

As well as stating their faith, the Anabaptists also sang their faith. The Anabaptist hymnal was entitled the *Ausbund* (Selection of the Best). The first edition of the *Ausbund* was composed of fifty-one songs written by a group of Anabaptists imprisoned between 1535 and 1540. This collection was printed in 1564 and in 1583 there was a second edition with eighty more songs. The themes in the oldest songs are the suffering church and the possibility of dying for one's faith, but also God's presence and the need to give thanks to him are central. The songs collected together represented a variety of authors, including those from the more spiritualist part of Anabaptism, such as Sebastian Franck and Hans Hut, and also several from the Swiss Brethren – Felix Manz, Michael Sattler and Georg Blaurock. One major intention of the *Ausbund* was that it should be a teaching aid for the churches, expressing Anabaptist convictions about believer's baptism, the Lord's Supper and above all the life lived in devotion to Christ.

The region of Moravia became for a time a 'promised land' for Anabaptists, but the Anabaptist groups there did not all agree with each other. Hubmaier believed that Christians could bear the sword and be magistrates to protect civic society. Others disagreed. A major group in Moravia and later in Slovakia was the Hutterites, followers of Jakob Hutter. Thousands of Anabaptists settled in Moravia, Slovakia, Hungary and Transylvania. They became known for their many products and skills – their restoration of agricultural life, fine pottery, water systems, mills and

the practice of medicine. The Hutterites practised economic sharing – community of goods. Jacob Hutter became an Anabaptist preacher in 1529 and by 1564 there were thirty-eight Hutterite communities. They believed that the example of the early Church had to be followed – to 'hold all things in common'. They also used communion as an example of the way in which many grains of corn become one loaf. This was a symbol of community. Another group in Moravia was comprised of the followers of Pilgram Marpeck, who was the most influential theologian among South German Anabaptists. From 1545 to 1556, when he died, Marpeck was city engineer in Augsburg, and as an Anabaptist his influence spread much further.

The Austrian and south German part of the Anabaptist movement was more mystical in character, but we must not draw a rigid distinction in the area of spirituality as some leaders were difficult to categorise. Of the leaders in this region, Hans Denck was an accomplished scholar, was baptised as a believer in 1525 and founded an Anabaptist church in Augsburg. A famous statement of Hans Denck's was: 'No one can know Christ unless he follows after him in life.' Hans Hut was baptised by Denck in 1526 and was later called the 'apostle of Austria'. He was a bookseller. Thousands came to Christ under his ministry. Hut was arrested and died of suffocation in 1527. Another important area of Anabaptist presence was the Netherlands. Melchior Hoffmann was the major leader here. He had been a Lutheran and a powerful preacher in the period 1523–27. He then became an Anabaptist. His theology was regarded as erratic. This included his Christology – his view was that Christ did not take human flesh from Mary but had 'celestial flesh' – and his ideas about the return of Jesus.

Part of the Anabaptist movement in Poland went even further in the direction of unorthodox teaching, taking an anti-trinitarian position later in the sixteenth century. Mainstream Anabaptists were present in Poland from the 1530s, however, when Dutch, Silesian and Moravian Anabaptists settled there. The first recorded 're-baptisms' took place in 1566, in a church

pastored by Marcin Czechowicz, who was one of the pioneers of the Anabaptist movement in Poland. Adam Pastor, who was ordained as an elder by Menno Simons, was an Anabaptist leader who gradually adopted anti-trinitarian views and became the best-known leader of this movement in Western Europe. George Biandrata was something of a parallel figure in Central Europe. Poland in this period was a region that offered remarkable religious freedom – ‘a state without stakes’, as one description has it.

The events in the city of Münster in Germany cannot be ignored in any consideration of Anabaptist development. In 1533 a group of Anabaptists gained control of the Münster city council. They gained particular influence in religious terms because of the sympathy of the Lutheran pastor, Bernard Rothmann, who himself accepted re-baptism. The Anabaptist leaders were Jan Matthys, a baker, and Jan Bockelson, a tailor from Leiden. Matthys was a follower of Melchoir Hoffman. Münster was proclaimed in prophetic language as a ‘New Jerusalem’. In 1534, after the baptism of adult believers was introduced, about 1,000 people were baptised. The town was being besieged by Catholic forces and in April 1534 Matthys was killed and his head severed and placed on a pole. Bockelson, also known as John of Leiden, was then made ‘king’ – ‘king over the New Israel and over the whole world’. John proceeded to legalise polygamy and enforce community of goods. The town was taken by attacking forces in June 1535 and in January 1536 the leading Anabaptists were executed and their bodies exhibited in cages. This violent episode and its tragic outcome do not represent the outworking of the thinking of more than a small minority of Anabaptists but these events gave the Anabaptist movement as a whole a reputation for dangerous fanaticism. They meant that later Baptists groups were reluctant to identify themselves with the name Anabaptist.

Dutch Anabaptism survived because of patient rebuilding by two people, Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. Menno Simons, whose name was used to designate the Mennonites, was born about 1496 in Witmarsum, in the Netherlands. He came from

a Frisian peasant family and so his education was limited compared to those from a higher social class. He was ordained a priest in 1524. In his *Reply to Gellius Faber*, Menno said that he did not know the Bible at that time and started to read it only when he had doubts about the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation – the issue of the nature of the bread and wine in the mass. In that period, Menno read some of Martin Luther’s writings. The news about the executions of the Anabaptists for rebaptism forced Menno Simons to study the Bible more deeply. He wrote that after some serious study of the issue of baptism he ‘could find no report of infant baptism’. However, his conversion to Anabaptism was a slow process. In 1531 he was invited to be the priest at his home Catholic parish in Witmarsum and was there for five years.

In 1534 some of Menno’s own flock joined an Anabaptist community. At the beginning of April 1535 Peter Simons, probably the brother of Menno, who had joined the Anabaptists, took part with a group in the occupation of the monastery of Oldeklooster. This Anabaptist group was over-run and his brother was among those who perished in a battle against the imperial soldiers. By this time Menno felt that he was unable to continue as a Catholic priest. In 1536 he gave up his local parish and was baptised. His baptism took place at about the same time as John of Leiden was being put to death. The two events have related significance. An unstable Anabaptist leader was to be replaced by one who brought long-term stability to the movement. Menno was baptised by the Anabaptist leader Obbe Philips, who also ordained him in 1537, although Obbe shortly afterwards left the movement. Menno’s most important writing was his *Foundation Book*. He was not a highly trained theologian but he was active in theological debate. In some ways he was an heir of Melchior Hoffman, as was another Dutch leader, David Joris. Menno followed the Melchiorite ‘celestial flesh’ tradition on the incarnation.

It is clear that Menno had a pastor’s heart and he wished to help the Anabaptists, including the ‘poor misguided sheep’ who had, as he saw it, been caught up in error through ignorance.

He became a highly effective wandering Anabaptist leader and overseer, concentrating his work on the Netherlands, North-West Germany and the Baltic coast. Menno's pastoral leadership was one of his major contributions to the Anabaptist movement of his time. He wrote numerous books and letters to the pastors and communities, preached, baptised hundreds of people, led communions, moderated the radicals, and argued against the mainstream Reformers. He saw six signs of true churches: pure biblical doctrine; baptism and the Lord's Supper; obedience to the scriptures; sincere Christian love; open confession of Christ; and suffering. The main emphasis found in Menno was not on academic theology but on the practice of following Christ. Menno especially stressed two themes in his writings: the practical holiness of genuine Christians and the pre-eminent place of the Church in the life of the believers. All the other important ideas of Menno – freedom of conscience, congregational church government, discipleship and Christian pacifism – flowed from his vision of the Christian life and of the church.

Menno, as well as the other leaders of early Anabaptism, were concerned for the purity of the congregations of those who had taken the way of 'true Christian baptism'. The starting-point for them, as they thought about how to deal with sin and weakness among the members, was Matthew 18:15–20. Excommunication of some sinners should help to lead people in the right direction – to work for a church 'without spot or wrinkle'. Menno called the ban 'a work of love', although someone else remarked that 'this light had its shadows'. As an example of a shadow, the conference of 1554 at which Menno presided, recommended (along with other points) to a spouse who was a church member to avoid all physical contact with an excommunicated partner. The Pauline expression 'not to eat with' (1 Corinthians 5:11) was also employed. After Menno's death, this was an issue that contributed to division within the Mennonite churches, which separated into several branches under different bishops. Menno's position on the question seemed to move from an early moderate view to a later severe position. Menno died in 1561. From this

date the Anabaptists tended to be called Mennonites or Waterlanders. Many stayed in the Netherlands and Germany but many more migrated, especially to the Ukraine, Russia and later North America.

In the late eighteenth century the *Baptist Annual Register*, compiled by John Rippon, a leading London Baptist minister, contained lists of 'Baptist' churches in Europe, but all these were in fact Mennonite congregations. This raises the question of what similarities were later perceived between Baptists and Anabaptists/Mennonites. Although some Anabaptist beliefs – the necessity of pacifism, the refusal to take an oath in court, the prohibition on Christians being magistrates – were later rejected by the majority of Baptists, the main ideas held by many Anabaptists were also ideas that in the sixteenth century were to characterise the early Baptists. The church was seen as a covenant community: people bound together in love and obedience, not just holding to the teaching of justification but having experienced new birth. Entry into the community was voluntary, with no compulsion. Hence believer's baptism, not infant baptism, was to be practised. Both movements believed that the existing church was compromised and corrupt, not least because of the way compulsion in religious matters was practised. Church and state should be separate. Anabaptists were opposed to the idea of domination of the churches by clergy, and in later Baptist life there was a stress on the priesthood of all believers. Both movements believed in spiritual church government, mutual concern for purity of life, and discipline when members sinned. Anabaptists and Baptists took up the idea of missionary activity within Europe. Rather than assuming that the countries of Europe were Christian, they were committed to preaching the evangel, calling people to turn to Christ, be baptised and become part of gatherings in which corporate discipleship was practised. Thus in a number of important respects Anabaptists were forerunners of the Baptist movement in Europe.