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Since the emergence of the Baptists in the early seventeenth century amid the tumult of the late English Reformation, confusion about the relationship between Baptists and Anabaptists has abounded. The term "Anabaptist"—or *Wiedertäufer* in German—was originally intended as a derogatory label, created in the sixteenth century by enemies of the movement to link those who "rebaptized" with an Imperial crime punishable by death. Leaders of the movement resisted the label, insisting that they were not "re-baptizing," but rather baptizing correctly for the first time. If they were going to be identified by the practice of baptism, then they should be called *Täufer* (Baptizers or Baptists), rather than *Wiedertäufer*. And, indeed, even though the term "Anabaptist" has no negative connotations in English, most historians writing in German today refer to the group as *Täufer*.

With the emergence of the British "Baptists" the distinctions between the two groups have frequently blurred. To be sure, the Baptists share many affinities with the sixteenth-century Anabaptist movement—including a strong commitment to voluntary baptism. Yet the two groups are not the same.

In the early nineteenth century, William Henry Angas, an itinerant missionary representing the Baptist Missionary Society in London, embarked on a series of trips to the continent with the intention of connecting with descendants of the sixteenth-century *Täufer* who he was convinced were actually Baptists. Angas was determined to help his long-lost spiritual cousins recover a new sense of missionary zeal. His efforts met with limited success among Mennonites in the Netherlands, North Germany, and Switzerland. But he was warmly received by progressive Mennonites in the Palatinate. In the decade that followed, Angas became a catalyst for a modernizing process among a group of South German Mennonites that led to the introduction of new forms of church polity, new understandings of salvation, and more aggressive efforts in mission. His visit also exacerbated existing tensions within the Mennonite community that eventually led to a church division. In the essay, I argue that the Baptist ideas Angas helped to introduce marked a fundamental shift in Mennonite identity, enabling Palatine Mennonites—who had long lived under the shadow of their sectarian past—to adopt new denominational forms of church life that were recognizably Protestant.

In the essay that follows, **Charles Scriven** highlights the creative work of a twentieth-century Baptist theologian—James C. McClendon—who sought renewal within his own tradition by returning to insights from the sixteenth-century Radical Reformation. Best known for his three-volume

Systematic Theology, McClendon challenged the relativism and utilitarian impulses of modern theology by articulating what he called a "small-b baptist vision"—a vision that appealed to the logic of story, community, conversation, and nonviolent practices. Drawing on insights from Nancey Murphy, Scriven's summary and defense of McClendon's work underscores McClendon's ongoing relevance for contemporary Christians of all traditions.

Although Baptists today reflect a diverse range of traditions, many have adopted a biblical hermeneutic, rooted in the Reformed theology of Ulrich Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger, that emphasizes a strong continuity between the "people of God" of the Old Testament and the covenant community established by Christ in the New Testament. When read through the lens of this hermeneutic, Christ's teachings on enemy love, for example, can easily be overshadowed by arguments from the Old Testament that seem to justify participation in war. In a lengthy essay on the hermeneutics of Caspar Schwenckfeld and Pilgram Marpeck, **C. Arnold Snyder** elucidates a crucial development in what became a standard Anabaptist approach to biblical hermeneutics. Drawing heavily on Schwenckfeld, Marpeck and others around him affirmed the Old Testament as an essential part of scripture; but they insisted that it should be read progressively, through the spiritual lens of Jesus Christ, who was the fullest revelation of God to humanity. This reading posited a fundamental discontinuity between the covenant of Abraham in the Old Testament and the spiritual rebirth made possible by Christ that inaugurated a new community of people who had been spiritually reborn. Over time, Schwenckfeld's theology would become increasingly spiritualistic—emphasizing an absolute distinction between the Spirit and all external forms. This led to sharp differences with Marpeck over understandings of the church, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. But Snyder suggests that a deeper agreement on biblical hermeneutics meant that later Anabaptists and Schwenckfeldians continued to have much in common. By the end of the sixteenth century, he argues, the similarities between the two groups were greater than the differences.

Finally, we conclude the issue with a helpful review of recent research on Amish beginnings by the well-known Swiss Mennonite historian **Hanspeter Jecker**. Jecker contextualizes the emergence of Jacob Amman and his followers within the political, economic, and religious milieu of the day. Although the essay does not introduce significant new findings, it provides *MQR* readers with a nuanced summary of the current state of historiography regarding the origins of the Amish.

– John D. Roth, editor