

C. H. Spurgeon on the Evangelical Anabaptists

I feel to-night as if I were rendering up the trust deeds to the proper proprietors, –acknowledging that this house belongs not to any man, but, first, to the God of the whole world, and next, to those who hold the pure primitive ancient Apostolic faith. We believe that the Baptists are the original Christians. We did not commence our existence at the reformation, we were reformers before Luther or Calvin were born; we never came from the Church of Rome, for we were never in it, but we have an unbroken line up to the apostles themselves. We have always existed from the very days of Christ, and our principles, sometimes veiled and forgotten, like a river which may travel under ground for a little season, have always had honest and holy adherents. Persecuted alike by Romanists and Protestants of almost every sect, yet there has never existed a Government holding Baptist principles which persecuted others; nor, I believe, any body of Baptists ever held it to be right to put the consciences of others under the control of man. We have ever been ready to suffer, as our martyrologies will prove, but we are not ready to accept any help from the State to prostitute the purity of the Bride of Christ to any alliance with Government, and we will never make the Church, although the Queen, the despot over the consciences of men.

– “Public Meeting of our London Baptist Brethren,” *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1861, p. 225.

And now, it seems to me, at this day, when any say to us, “You, as a denomination, what great names can you mention? what fathers can you speak of?” we may reply, “More than any other under heaven, for we are the old apostolic Church that have never bowed to the yoke of princes yet; we, known among men, in all ages, by various names, such as Donatists, Novatians, Paulicians, Petrobrussians, Cathari, Arnoldists, Hussites, Waldenses, Lollards, and Anabaptists, have always contended for the purity of the Church, and her distinctness and separation from human government. Our fathers were men inured to hardships, and unused to ease. They present to us, their children, an unbroken line which comes legitimately from the apostles, not through the filth of Rome, not by the manipulations of prelates, but by the Divine life, the Spirit’s anointing, the fellowship of the Son in suffering and of the Father in truth.” But whither shall I wander, I go upon a needless errand, for what are our fathers to us unless we prove ourselves their worthy sons? Let us forego our pedigree, and see if we have present grace by which to prove the succession of which we boast.

– “The True Apostolical Succession,” *ibid.*, p. 613.

History has hitherto been written by our enemies, who never would have kept a single fact about our record if they could have helped it, and yet it leaks out every now and then that certain poor people called Anabaptists were brought up for condemnation. From the days of Henry II to those of Elizabeth we hear of certain unhappy heretics who were hated of all men for the truth’s sake which was in them. We read of poor men and women with their garments cut short, turned out into the fields to perish in the cold, and anon of others who were burnt at Newington for the crime of Anabaptism. Long before your Protestants were known of, these horrible Anabaptists, as they were unjustly called, were protesting for the “one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.” No sooner did the visible church begin to depart from the gospel than these men arose to keep fast by the good old way. The priests and monks wished for peace and slumber, but there was always a Baptist or a Lollard tickling men’s ears with holy Scripture, and calling their attention to the errors of the times. They were a poor, persecuted tribe. The halter was thought to be too good for them. At times ill-written history would have us think that they died out, so well had the wolf done his work on the sheep. Yet here we are, blessed and multiplied; and Newington sees other scenes from Sabbath to Sabbath.

– “Hearken and Look; Or, Encouragement for Believers,” *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1881, p. 249.