

THE COLLEGIANTS OR RYNSBURGERS OF HOLLAND:  
 THROUGH WHOSE CO-OPERATION THE MEMBERS  
 OF THE FIRST IMMERSIONIST ENGLISH AN-  
 ABAPTIST CONGREGATION IN LONDON  
 PROCURED THEIR BAPTISM  
 IN 1641.

With Comments by

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More than thirty years have passed since Robert Barclay published the first edition of his illuminating work on "The Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth".<sup>1</sup> Among the suggestive statements made by him was one to the effect that the first English Anabaptist church to practice immersion, 'after sending in the first instance to the "Saints" in Silesia, commissioned Richard Blount, who understood Dutch, to act for them; and [that] John Batten, a well-known Collegiant, the teacher of a congregation of Collegiants at Leyden, baptized him by immersion'.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Barclay gained the slight information he seems to have had concerning the Collegiants from the late Professor Dr. J. G. de Hoop Scheffer of Amsterdam. Dr Henry M. Dexter,<sup>3</sup> who followed Barclay contented himself with Barclay's information. Among later writers President W. H. Whitsitt says in reference to the Collegiants,<sup>4</sup> "I have already shown in Chapter III that none of the Anabaptists of Holland were in the practice of immersion prior to the year 1620, at which time the rite was introduced again into that country by John Gees-teranus at Rhynsburg."

(1) First published in 1876.

(2) Third edition, 1879, p. 75.

(3) See *The True Story of John Smyth*, Boston, [Mass.] 1881, p. 54.

(4) "A Question in Baptist History, Louisville, Kentucky, 1896,

Dr. George A. Lofton in his work entitled "English Baptist Reformation (from 1609 to 1641 A.D.)", Louisville, Kentucky, 1899,<sup>5</sup> has the following statement with regard to the identification of John Batte, namely, that "Prof. Rauschenbusch in a book entitled *Geschiedenis der Rhynsburgische Vergadering*, also discovers *Jan Batte*, who was from the beginning a prominent teacher in the Rhynsburger congregation, and he has no doubt of his having baptized Blunt."

During the past ten years I do not remember having seen any further contribution published in England or America concerning the Collegiants. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the combined testimony of these various authors is not only exceedingly meager, but also rather confusing, for Barclay says that Batten was *the* "teacher" of the Collegiants at *Leyden*, while Dr. Lofton seems to suggest that he was only a prominent teacher of the congregation at *Rynsburg* (Rhynsburg). Dr. Whitsitt gives additional information with regard to the Rhynsburgers, to the effect that they were a society of Anabaptists who practiced immersion, and who at the beginning were under the leadership of John Geesteranus, a statement which lacks trustworthy historical support. Furthermore, the varying testimony of Barclay and Dr. Lofton with regard to John Batten requires further examination.

Accordingly, it has occurred to me that anyone interested in this subject in America would be glad to have a more ample and consistent account of the Rhynsburger movement. Fortunately such an impartial, comprehensive and detailed version in English of the rise of the Collegiants, though little known at present and becoming every year more difficult to purchase, is still to be had as translated in the early eighteenth century and expressed in such a quaint and delightful style that I feel certain the readers of "The Review and Expositor" will be glad to see it. I have, therefore, cited it *in extenso*, and at the end have drawn up a summary of the points of interest contained therein.

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(5) Page 100.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE SECT OF RYNSBURGERS, COLLEGIANTS OR PROPHETS."<sup>6</sup>

Whilst the [Dutch] *Remonstrants* found themselves in such distress [about 1619], and encompassed with so many difficulties and dangers on account of their holding forbidden meetings, through the snares and ambushes which were laid for them, and the surprises of Bailiffs and Scouts, some people, who had no less aversion to the doctrines and proceedings of the *Contraremonstrants*, were for introducing another method, by which they proposed more edification, and less danger to themselves and others. From hence there arose in a short time, a new Sect, which is still [1671?] subsisting, under the name of the *Prophets*, or *Rhynsburgers*; the origin and progress of which in *Holland* is now to be accounted for.

In giving a complete relation of this affair, I shall not be able to confine it within the limits of this year [1619], but must extend it a little further, making use, for the most part, of the *Memoirs of Paschier de Fyne*, a *Remonstrant* Minister of good credit. This gentleman was an eye and ear-witness of matters, and begins his *History* after the following manner. 'I shall treat so sincerely about the rise of this Sect, as to be able to call God to witness, That I write nothing but what I myself have seen or heard, or certainly know to be true. If I happen to err with respect to any of the circumstances, it shall not be with design.'

At *Warmond* near *Leyden*, upon the suspension and deprivation of the Minister *Christian Sopingius*, the *Remonstrants* had several times held their religious meeting in an orchard, both before and after the publication of the placard [issued against the *Remonstrants*], whither also the people of that persuasion in *Leyden* were wont to repair, as was shown above; but the disturbance that ensued, visibly cooled the zeal of many, being terrified with the penalties contained in the placard. Neither could such regulations be made at the beginning, whilst the exiled preachers were dispersed in several places, as that the

(6) Gerard Brandt's *The History of the Reformation in and about the Low-Countries*. . . ., London, 1723, Vol. IV, pp. 49-57.

churches which desired it should enjoy the benefit of divine service every *Sunday*. This made several of the members at *Warmond* uneasy, who thus found themselves deprived of the edifying labors of their Ministers. In this state of affairs it was proposed to some of the *Remonstrant* members of that place, 'whether it were not advisable to meet sometimes, in order to edify one another with the truth, which was according to godliness, without the help of a minister. 'Twas further proposed that one of their number should read a chapter or two out of the Bible and pray in the Assembly. Also, that if any person had anything to offer by way of exhortation, instruction or edification of others, he should be free to do it. To this, they who proposed it, offered to contribute according to their abilities. By this means they thought they should not only be able to edify each other and keep the people together, but likewise to secure the ministers from many dangers and deliver themselves from disturbances and from the penalties of the Placards.' This proposition was immediately approved by those of *Warmond*, as very useful in the ill posture of their affairs, and was as soon put in execution. The chief of those who advised this method and promoted it, were three brothers, *John, Adrian* and *Gilbert vander Kodde*, brothers to *Guilielmus Coddeus*, formerly Professor of the *Hebrew Tongue* at *Leyden*; all which brothers were good and honest men, very well versed in the Holy Scriptures and by consequence qualified to instruct and comfort their neighbors. They were also of the opinion of the *Remonstrants* in the business of *predestination*, and therefore the more agreeable to them. *Gilbert* was an elder of the *Remonstrant Church* at *Warmond*, and of a voluble tongue. At the first Reading-Assemblies this man proposed some things which tended to edification and the others did the like. One *Tonis Cornelison*, a fisherman, join'd himself to this company. Every one zealously endeavored to edify his neighbor after this manner and the hearers showed their satisfacion: They blessed God for having raised up such persons, who, upon the expulsion of their pastors were both able and willing to edify their brethren. None of the *Remonstrants* believed at this time that

the aforesaid three brothers had any other views than what they disclosed at the beginning; much less that (rejecting the method of preaching, as it had till then been practiced among Christians) they would endeavor to introduce this method as a necessary means of edification, or that they had formed any design among themselves to establish a new manner of celebrating the Sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism. Nay, *Paschier de Fyne* tells us in his Relation that he did not believe that two of these brothers, namely *John* and *Adrian*, ever imagined at first, that what they proposed would have been carried so far as it was afterwards, even in their life-time; and that he had heard *Adrain vander Kodde* himself say *that some, and even his own brother Gilbert, carried matters too far*. But thus it often happens, and things seldom stop at beginnings, but almost always exceed their intended bounds. Nor was it long before people began to suspect that there was more in the wind than was at first believed. That *Sopingius*, the pastor of the church at *Warmond*, he who had before so loudly professed *that he was ready to crowd in at the strait gate, though his flesh and blood were to be left at the threshold, and though he should lose his life for the truth*, that he, I say, should now out of human frailty sign the Act of Cessation and retire from thence to live in the *Betuw*, was what shocked and scandalized some of the members and gave opportunity to those who endeavored to form meetings without ministers, to push on their designs. Some think that this happened in *July*, soon after the promulgation of the Placard. But it is certain that *Sopingius* being cited, together with other ministers, to appear before the Committee of the States on the 10th of *September*, in order to sign the Act of Silence, did not attend them, and that thereupon he, and others who refused, were once more solemnly cited, and on slighting the citation, were banished, as is said above; so that his subscribing must have happened later. And consequently it ought not to be reckoned among the causes of the said assemblies without ministers, in case they begun presently after the first Placard, but only as something which gave an occasion of promoting them.

Afterwards came out that rigorous Placard (to be mentioned in its proper place) by which the exiled ministers were forbidden to return into these provinces, on pain of perpetual imprisonment; and a great sum of money was offered as a reward to such as could apprehend them and the like mulct or fine set upon those who should presume to harbor or conceal them. It was then believed that none of them would be so bold as to venture home again. But when they, nevertheless, without valuing the danger, came back privately to serve the churches, which desired it by their letters to the Directors of the Brotherhood at *Antwerp*, it soon appeared what was the design of some of those who held their meetings without ministers. It so happened that *Henry van Holten*, the late minister at *Waddinxvene* (who had revoked the promise of silence made by him the last *September*) was about this time sent by the Directors, in consequence of the power with which the body of the *Remonstrants* had invested them, to the village of *Warmond*, in order to instruct the people of that persuasion, who desired to have a minister among them. *Gilbert vander Kodde* hearing of his arrival, gave him indeed an outward welcome; but instead of advising and assisting him as an elder in what concerned the separate meeting, he told him 'that there was no occasion for his coming into the country with such manifest danger to his person; and that besides, he brought people, who received and concealed him, into the like dangers, without the least necessity. Nobody, *he said*, could hear him preach without incurring severe penalties; whereas there were other and safer methods of edifying the people.' Then he gave him an account of the method which had been already used at *Warmond*; and subjoined, *if you would take my advice, it should be to go and learn some good trade*. The minister hearing such language at the very first place to which he was sent to preach and from an elder too, who was formerly so zealous a defender of the cause of the *Remonstrants*, lost all courage immediately; and said to the master of the house who harbored him, 'I have never been a burden to any man, neither will I be so now in this place. My coming hither was by order of the

directors and out of love for this church, with design to preach the truth; otherwise I should not have been so rash as to have run the risque of a perpetual imprisonment. Since therefore *Gilbert vander Kodde* has given me such a strange and harsh reception, I will take my leave of you'. Accordingly he went his way *re infectâ* and without once preaching at *Warmond*. But in the meanwhile a rumor was spread among the people that one of the banished ministers 'was come to their town to minister to them and every one showed his eagerness to hear him. All asked who he was, and where? But when they were informed of his sudden departure and the reason of it, this occasioned much uneasiness. Some of the *Remonstrants* being masters of families, declared, 'That it did not belong to *Gilbert vander Kodde* to dismiss the minister; that having heard how ministers were returned to other places, they were desirous to have one at *Warmond* too; that they who durst not hear him for fear of the penalties might stay away; there were enough who did not value the danger and would run the hazard'. But *Gilbert*, upon this occasion, began to show himself and openly to maintain that it was both needless and dangerous for a minister to come among them at his own and others' peril in order to instruct the people; whereas the people could teach and instruct one another without apprehending any mischief. He labored to create an aversion in the people, not only to the hearing sermons, but also to the persons of the ministers themselves, who, as he would make them believe, endeavored to live in idleness by the sweat of the community.

Some time after this another minister named *Walter van Warder*, who had formerly officiated at *Newkope*, was likewise sent to *Warmond*. This man began to preach and the people showed an inclination to hear more from him; but *Gilbert vander Kodde* absented himself; and being asked why he did not come to the meeting, he answered, 'I do not approve of one man's standing to preach and prate what he pleases, when another, as well gifted as he, and who is present at the same time, cannot be allowed to put in a word.' His brother *John*, the above-mentioned *Tonis Cornelison* and others whom

Gilbert had brought over to his opinion, spoke the same language. The minister hearing of this, was inclined to gratify them, and (without consulting with any of the other brethren at Warmond) said, *'Is this the reason why they don't come to my sermons? Let them come freely and let them speak, if they have anything to say.'* This was presently communicated to Gilbert and his friends, who desired that Walter, at the conclusion of his sermon, should say to the congregation, *'If there be anybody in this assembly that has a mind to offer a word of exhortation to the people, let him speak. Walter consented and promised he would repeat those words as soon as he had done preaching. On the other hand the Koddens and all their party, promised to come to the meeting; but before that time came the minister was attacked by some of the chief of his congregation on account of the strange promise he had lately made, they alleging that he had gone too far, and he asserting that there was no inconvenience in the matter. Let them speak too, said he, we shall then know what they can say. But he was answered by them in the following manner: 'Dear sir, you do not yet know this Gilbert aright; neither are you so sensible as we are, what he and his party mean by speaking to the people. But though they should mean never so well by their speaking; nay, tho' what they have to say were never so good and edifying to the people, yet in our opinion, everything ought to be done with order and decency, especially at such a juncture as this. Should we here in Warmond only, endeavor to introduce such methods as are practiced in no other church among the Remonstrants? We do not think it proper, by any means, to set such a thing on foot here, without first consulting the Directors of our fraternity. If they are desirous for this once to say anything after divine service is ended, we will hear them patiently. But we cannot consent you should thus give an invitation to others to speak at the end of every sermon.'* The minister was much affected with this discourse; he easily perceived that he had too rashly engaged his word; and that as he had no power to preach there, but only because he had been desired by the people, he could not establish a new and uncommon method



among them, of his own head, and not only without but contrary to the will of the principal members. Wherefore judging it best to retract what he had said, he went himself to *Gilbert* and his friends before sermon-time to let them know that some of the brethren at *Warmond* had started objections against what he had promised, and begged that they would release him for that time from his engagement; which, had it been his own private concern, he should not have scrupled to perform; and that they would still be so kind as to come to the meeting. The *Koddens* were not well pleased at the retracting his promise, and coming near the place where he was to preach sent in word that in case he would keep his promise, they would likewise perform theirs, and come to the meeting. The minister answered them that the other members of the church did not think it advisable and therefore begged them to excuse his retracting his promise, which was occasioned by the counsel of the brethren, who were better apprised of the circumstances of the people in that place than he could be. Upon this they all of them abstained from coming into the assembly and went together into a meadow not far from the place of preaching, where they sate, and passed the time in discourse, till divine service was ended. *Walter Cornelison* departing soon after (for they did not suffer any one minister to stay long in the same place, for fear of being known and taken up), he was succeeded by *Paschier de Fyne*, the late minister of *Tarsfelt*. This gentleman was presently informed of the complaints of the *Koddens*, that *Walter Cornelison* had not kept his word with them and of their continuing to press for a liberty of speaking in the congregation. He was of opinion that there was too much probability that if it was not granted them they would be tempted to separate from the church and perhaps draw a great many more after them; and the rather, because they carefully laid hold of all opportunities of insinuating into the people's minds that frequenting the other *Remonstrant* Assemblies might expose them to the penalties of the *Placards*, whereas their meetings were free. This made him fear that the proceedings of these *Koddens*, and their separate assemblies,

might in time produce a new sect. He was therefore induced to consult with some of the chief of the members to propose to them the inconveniences he foresaw in this business and to suggest several expedients to be offered to the said *Koddens* for their satisfaction (they being the main promoters of these troubles) and for preventing the schism, which was otherwise like to happen. After several proposals had been considered, the following was judged the most proper: 'That the *Koddens*, and their associates should not be allowed to speak in the meetings in which divine service was performed by a minister; but that as soon as he had done, the people should be assembled anew, and then that manner of edification, which was so much extolled by the *Koddens*, might be put in practice. That both ways should be followed by turns; and in order to prevent a schism, the minister should go himself into the second meeting and exhort his hearers to do the same, when *Gilbert*, with his brothers, and the rest of them, had anything to propose for edification; by which condescension 'twas hoped they might remain united in Christian worship, as friends and brethren. *Paschier* went himself with the proposal to the *Koddens*, praying them to concur in this expedient till something better could be agreed on and to hold their meetings after this manner, for the preservation of unity. *John vander Kodde* spoke in the name of the rest and said: 'This proposal does not appear to be much amiss; but in case you should preach either a whole day or in the morning only, after your way, we should be forced to wait till the next day, or till the afternoon.' *That is true*, said *Paschier*, *but I see no difficulty in that, for if you will choose one day, I will choose another; or if you will prophesy in the morning after your way, I will preach in the afternoon according to mine.* 'But the inconvenience which I apprehend, *reply'd John* does not consist in that, but in this: It might so happen that while you spent either a whole day or a forenoon in preaching alone, I being present at your meeting might have something to offer for the people's edification, and yet should be obliged, according to your method, to wait till the next day, or at least till the afternoon before I could deliver it.'

This *Paschier* allowed might happen, but asked wherein the inconvenience lay? *Why*, says John, *what if I should die in the meanwhile? That is possible*, reply'd the other, *but what then?* John reply'd, 'If it should happen that I being in your meeting and having something to say for the edification of the people, should be obliged to keep silence till the afternoon and in the meantime happen to die, I should be afraid of being damn'd for not uttering what I had received for edification.' Thus it appears to have been his opinion, THAT IF HE HAPPENED TO BE IN AN ASSEMBLY OF CHRISTIANS, HE WAS BOUND TO UTTER, WITHOUT DELAY, WHATEVER THE SPIRIT SHOULD SUGGEST TO HIM. These people had a fancy, that not only *Paschier de Fyne*, but also the whole church at *Warmond* were obliged to conform to that way of edifying which they had begun to introduce. The consequence was that the *Koddens*, with others who followed them, separated themselves from the meetings of the *Remonstrants* and set up one of their own in a private house in the town. They met once a month upon a certain day, which was the first Sunday after the new-moon, to the end that those who lived in other towns, at a distance from them, might come without notice.

They observed the following method in their assembly: *First*, somebody among them read several chapters out of the New Testament; then the reader, or any other person pray'd; and after the prayer it was asked, according to the Text in I. Cor 14:26, *whether any man in the assembly had any prophecy or spiritual gift for the edification of the people? Or whether anyone had any doctrine, consolation, or exhortation, that so he might bring it forth.* Sometimes they made use of the very words of the aforesaid text of the apostle, upon which one or other of the company arose and read a text or sentence out of the Bible, which he had thoroughly meditated on beforehand and made a kind of sermon or discourse upon it, which lasted sometimes an hour or longer. This being ended, it was asked again whether anybody else had anything to offer for the edification of the assembly? And then up stood another, who read and spoke as before. This man having done, asked the

same question as the other had done; upon which a third man stood up: Nay, *Paschier* says, that he himself had seen four of them preaching, or, as they stiled it, *propheying* one after another and that it lasted from the evening till it was full day, the next morning; and that some sate and slept in the meanwhile so heartily that in the morning they knew as little of what had been said as the evening before. He further says that the speakers were commonly the same persons, though they invited and gave every man free leave to prophesy. These speakers were *Gilbert vander Kodde*, with his brothers, *John* and *Adrain*, *Antony Cornelison* and one *John Batten of Leyden*: And though some others might now and then put in a word, yet the above mentioned persons, or some of them, were always of the number of the monthly *holders-forth*. . . . .

In these meetings they talked indeed of matters tending to edification, but it was at the same time observed that *Gilbert vander Kodde*, his brother *John* and *Anthony Cornelison*, generally directed their prophesying or discourses to render the *Remonstrant* ministers odious to the people, insinuating that they were vagabonds, full of idleness and vanity and that like drones they only endeavored to live upon the labors of the industrious bees; applying for this purpose several Texts of Scripture out of the Epistles to the *Thessalonians*,<sup>7</sup> in which *St. Paul* says, *when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should they eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their bread.* And in another place,<sup>8</sup> *That they study to be quiet and do their own business and to work with their own hands.*—They talked very loudly of *St. Paul's* boasting, that he had not been burdensome to any of the *Corinthians*, but had earned his bread with his own hands; inferring from thence, that the *Remonstrant ministers*, who did not work, were idle fellows. Thus did they talk in most of their

(7) 2 Thess, 3:10, 11, 12.

(8) 1 Thess. 4:2.

assemblies, which were held under pretence of prophesying.—*Gilbert* especially exerted all his zeal this way and that with so much violence that his own brother *Adrain* was displeased at it.

This railing at the ministers lasted a good while, till at length *Jacobus Batelier*, formerly minister at *Kralingen*, but at that time an inhabitnat at *Leyden*, sufficiently known by his learning and writings, undertook to contradict them in their meetings and to show the unreasonableness of their proceedings. He went therefore, one *Sunday*, to the place of their assemblies, and reading the ninth chapter of the First Epistle to the *Corinthians*, from the fourth to the fourteenth verse inclusive, he came, after a short preamble, to the matter itself; and in the first place he spake 'against those who, possibly out of covetousness, were inclined to separate from the *Remonstrants*, and to come hither, where they were not obliged to contribute anything; exhorting them to take care that they were not intangled in the snares of the wicked one. *Secondly*, he spoke against those who pretended to be scandalized at the generosity of others to the ministers, as if it tended to enrich them too much, or at least to maintain some disorderly persons among them in idleness. He told them there was no danger of the former; and as to the latter, such disorderly ministers deserved indeed to be reprov'd as men not worthy to live of the Gospel; but in the meanwhile they ought, *he said*, to discharge their consciences to the others. *Thirdly*, For the instruction of the simple, whom they endeavored to persuade that a pastor ought not to take any recompence for his service, he showed from the afore-mentioned text itself what power *St. Paul* had in this matter, namely, not only to eat and drink, but also to lead about with him a sister or wife, at the charge of the churches; and not only he, but likewise the other Apostles and the brethren of the Lord, and *Cephas* or *Peter*; and he further showed how he had made use of that power in other churches, burthening them, in order to ease the *Corinthians*. Moreover, that the apostle plainly and strongly proves in this text that even Natural Reason as well as the Divine Law, requires that all who labor should be honorably rewarded, especially such who minister in spiritual things;

which the same apostle confirms in the text by Christ's express command. To this he added the practice both under the Old and New Testament, with relation to *Priests* and *Ministers*, who were not only held in great esteem, but supply'd with whatever they wanted. *Lastly*, He asked them whether they could produce any instance to the contrary and kindly advised them to weigh the matter seriously, according to the truth, without prejudging or condemning the innocent; and to discharge their consciences, rather inclining to the support of the oppressed, and promoting the preaching of the Gospel, than seeking to diminish the charity which was due to those who endeavored to serve the Lord sincerely.'

This discourse was not without success, even then; some of the congregation declaring that they had never seen this matter in so clear a light. *Adrain vander Kodde* frankly owned at the same time to *Paschier de Fyne*, that his brother *Gilbert* had carried things too far, insomuch that by this short paraphrase, the outcry against the ministers taking wages was somewhat abated.

In the meanwhile *Paschier de Fyne* remained at *Warmond*, and observing that the *Koddens* shunned his sermons, thought proper, for preventing a schism by reclaiming those people, if possible, to exhort his hearers to go sometimes to this new meeting, and even to go thither himself, not only to see and hear, but to speak among them; or, as they called it, to prophesy according to the measure of his gifts. The first time he went among them, he heard nothing new, save only that instead of one sermon, preached by one minister only, several persons held forth by turns. He observed that their discourses were well labored and committed to memory; not infused into them after an extraordinary manner, as some of the simple people endeavored to persuade each other. On a certain time, having heard some of their sermons, or *prophesyings*, he took his turn, and without naming any text, discoursed upon the subject of *prophesying*. He owned and proved to them, that Christians are frequently commanded, in the word of God, to instruct, exhort and comfort one another, to excite each other to charity

and good works, and to speak of God and his wonderful works; and that all this, both might, and ought to be practiced among Christians on different occasions. But as for the method in use among them, he thought it not very conducive to edification, it being hardly possible for a man to form right conceptions of three or four discourses on different subjects, each of them an hour long, as he had heard some, much less to retain or remember them. It was much more edifying, in his opinion, to hear a little good instruction at one time and to observe and practice it well than to be present at so many sermons in one day or one night upon different subjects and to stuff and confound their memories with too great variety of matters. By this means, *he said*, one thing was apt to drive out another; or people were lulled asleep; or at least so tired as to be tempted to wish that the prayer was ended and the auditory dismissed. At least he could nowhere find in Scripture that there was a necessity of practicing this particular way of edifying or prophesying; or that another of explaining or expounding the word of God might not be used with equal edification. He gave his reasons for what he said and show'd that, according to the best of his apprehension, the fourteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the *Corinthians*, upon which they founded their opinion, did not represent this method alone as of absolute necessity. But before *Paschier* could make an end of discoursing or prophesying, up stood *John vander Kodde*, and interrupting him, said, *Paschier will you please to hold your peace?* The other, being a little surprised, said, *I thought it was the custom here to permit every man first to make an end of prophesying before another was allowed to begin. That is true*, said *John*; *but you will find in I Cor. 14:30., If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. To this Paschier made answer; It is so exprest indeed in that place but what if something should be revealed to me, just as you are going to speak? If you will understand that text in such a sense, as to allow of interrupting each other in the most material part of the discourse, this prophesying will soon be changed into disputing and wrangling.* This was granted by *Adrian vander Kodde*,

who said, *My brother is mistaken there. I acknowledge that we ought to let every man finish his discourse, and then say what we think proper.* But Paschier, turning himself to John, said, *What revelation is that you have received, for the sake of which you require me to be silent?* He reply'd. 'It is revealed to me that you are out in your arguments; for you pretend to prove that this way of prophesying, which Paul prescribes to the *Corinthians*, in the afore-cited text, was not enjoined as necessary to be observed in all churches, in all times and places; but that the Apostle finding there some abuse [sic.] in the manner of prophesying and speaking of strange languages, endeavored to remove that abuse from among them. Whereas, on the contrary, I maintain that this way of prophesying, which the Apostle there proposes to the *Corinthians*, is equally prescribed to all Christians, at all times, and in all places; and this I prove by the first verse in this Epistle. For the Apostle, in that verse, addresses himself to *all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.* Consequently whatever he ordains in this Epistle concerns all Christians at all times, and in all places.' Paschier maintained on the contrary, *That it did not necessarily follow, when a salutation was address to any persons in the beginning of an Epistle, that all that was contained in the Epistle concerned every one of those who happened to be then named:* And this he proved by reasons and examples.

This dialogue being ended, *Antony Cornelison*, the fisherman, stood up, read a text out of the New Testament, and in the application fell upon the business of prophesying. This he recommended with great vehemence, and extolled with many encomiums. He said publicly, *That they made use of that way of prophesying pursuant to the Apostles command, and even the command of God himself.* Nay, his extravagant zeal made him burst out into the following words: *Whoever speaks against this prophesying will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his Saints.* Having finished his speech, Paschier rose again and addressed himself



to the assembly in these words: 'Men and brethren, I did not design to speak any more at present in this meeting, but I cannot forbear adding, that to pronounce such an unmerciful sentence of eternal damnation against those who disapprove of this, your way of prophesying, as you just now heard from the mouth of *Antony Cornelison*, savors of too great severity. Methinks nobody in this assembly, that hears such a hasty sentence, ought to sit still and say *amen* to it by his silence.' Upon this *Antony* stood up and said, *I don't mean you*. But *Paschier* reply'd, *You mean all that speak against your prophesying; and I don't believe that the Holy Scripture pronounces damnation against any such*. Then *Adrain vander Kodde*, the most moderate of them all, said, *That he durst not pronounce such a judgment against those who opposed prophesying; and that it could do no harm if people admonished one another in the spirit of love and meekness of the faults they committed, in speaking or otherwise: they might afterwards amend them*. And thus the assembly broke up.

When they met again, *Paschier*, with some of the *Remonstrant Church*, appeared again in the assembly, where he heard *Adrain* and the young *John vander Kodde* prophesying each in his turn. When they had done, he stood up and preached upon *I Cor. 14:1.*, on which occasion he fell again upon the subject of prophesying. He was succeeded by *Gilbert vander Kodde*, so that there were four sermons or discourses that evening. *Paschier* did not directly oppose *prophesying* in general, but only the method used by these people at *Warmond*; and he earnestly insisted that it was not necessary as they imagined. This sort of discourse soon became insupportable to them, so that they endeavored to exclude him from their meeting. This they neither could nor would do by force; neither could they, with any justice, forbid him, because they had maintained that it was free for every person, of what sect soever, to come and speak with equal liberty. They therefore took a round-about way and thought it advisable to change the time and place of their meeting, and to go to *Rynsburg*, but without appointing a set time at first, to the end that it might not be more known

than they desired. But *Paschier* finding they did not meet any longer at the usual time in *Warmond*, and being still desirous of attending their assembly and of holding communion with them as much as possible, in order to prevent a formal schism, writ a letter to the *Koddens*, by consent of the *Remonstrants* of that place, praying them to impart to him the time and place of meeting, since he was inclined to come and speak to them for their edification. But no answer was returned for several weeks together. He therefore sent for one by the same person who carried his letter to *Gilbert vander Kodde*: But *Gilbert*, instead of returning an answer in writing, said to the messenger, 'Ask *Paschier* whether he be disposed to come to our meeting as a brother or as an adversary? If as a brother, he shall know both the time and place of meeting; but if he come as an adversary, we do not think ourselves bound to let him know either.' This answer appeared very strange to *Paschier*, and the other *Remonstrants*, as not consistent with the unlimited freedom of speech, which they pretended to allow everybody. He therefore sent them word, 'That he would come as a Christian, who had likewise received some talents from his Lord, in order to make some advantage of them: That when he came into their assembly he would offer nothing but in the spirit of meekness; neither would he say anything but what he himself was convinced to be truth and such as should tend to edification.' To this there was no answer at all returned: and it was observed, that from this time forwards they separated entirely from the *Remonstrants* and endeavored to associate themselves to those only who adhered wholly to their opinions. Thus they continued to meet at *Rynsburg*, appointing the first *Sunday* of every month, instead of the first after the new-moon, for that purpose. From the place of their meeting they came to be called *Rynsburgers*; and from their way of holding forth, *prophets*. They were afterwards styled *Collegiants*, from the *Colleges* or Societies which they established in all places where they could make a party. Having fixed their separate meeting at *Rynsburg*, they likewise celebrated the Lord's Supper together and began to advance the notion of

dipping or plunging, as the manner was among the Primitive Christians in the hot countries of the *East*. Thus became the *plunging-baptism*, as they called it, in practice among them. They prevailed with some to suffer themselves to be thus dipped all over in the very tan-pits. They also used this kind of *plunging* with people, who, upon their own confession, had been before baptized by the *Anabaptists* in their old age. They rejected infant baptism, as well as the *Anabaptists*; and with them maintained that no Christian ought to bear the office of a Magistrate or to wage war. They used great liberty with respect to some mysterious, incomprehensible, and, as they thought, unnecessary disputes in religion; and would not be bound by confessions of faith, either of the ancient or modern churches. As for the doctrine of *predestination* and the points relating to it, they stuck to the opinions of the *Remonstrants*, which perhaps was the cause why they found their chief support among the members of that sect.

Among those who joyn'd them, and contributed very much to the increase of their numbers, as well as their credit, was *Richard Kamphusen*, late minister of *Fleuten*, who since then has deserved no small praise among the best Christians, by his ingenious poems and paraphrases on the *Psalms*. This man, though he was heard to say sometimes, *That he could not approve of their opinions and proceedings in all points*, yet endeavored all he could to promote their interest; declaring, nevertheless, 'That all his actions and endeavors tended to the putting a stop to the growth of sects and parties, to the end there might no longer be any distinction made between one Christian and another. I do not mean, *says he somewhere*, to separate from the *Remonstrants*; as indeed I separate from none, neither will list myself absolutely under any man's colors. *He likewise owned*, that the *Remonstrants* were the best, and most agreeable to him among all the sects of this country.' The other *Prophets* spoke the same language, *viz.*: *That they would not make a schism, nor join with any particular denomination of Christians*; but they added, *that those who would not join with them were the schismaticks*.

They likewise drew very early into their party the learned *John Geesteranus*, formerly minister of *Alkmaer*, whom we have had occasion to speak of in the foregoing books. He continued awhile among them, and endeavored to earn his bread by the trade of a Weaver. It is also said that he consented to be re-baptized by them. Yet it is not very probable that he ever spoke much among them; since being much taken notice of on account of his particular opinions and hunted after by the Government, he was obliged to keep himself very close at *Rynsburg*, creeping from the garret of one house into another, through a hole in the party-wall, which was covered with a corn-fan, as often as he wrought at his loom, to prevent a surprise from his persecutors. But 'tis certain that he very much approved of their way of *prophesying* and promoted it all he could. This appears by a certain letter he writ after he left *Holland*, to the elder *John vander Kodde*, who had been some time his host, in which we meet with these words: *The fourteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and the method we have begun to put in execution, is zealously recommended by me everywhere, though without naming you.* Some simple, well-meaning people had a very high opinion of the first founders of this sect, as thinking that God work'd in them after an extraordinary manner; to which opinion some of them gave no little occasion. *Paschier de Fyne* relates, that the younger *John vander Kodde* boasted to him and others, *That he had received the Holy Ghost in equal measure with the Apostles; insomuch, that when it descended on him, the very house shook again.* Their prayers were said to be sometimes very powerful. 'Tis reported that something miraculous happened to this *John*, at a time when he was traveling in a sledge over the frozen lake of *Harlem* to *Rynsburg*; for it seemed as if the horse ran his head against a wall three times together, at which the waggoner was extremely surprised. They tell us too of a voice of the Holy Ghost which was heard at *Rotterdam*, when some of the *Rynsburghians* happened to be there. But *Paschier* was of the opinion that *John vander Kodde's* brain was turned by too much fastings; and as to the

voice at *Rotterdam*, some spoke of it as of a premeditated cheat and contrivance. These are things which show how far men's passions may transport them, when they once let loose *the reins*; but which, however, are not to be imputed to the whole fraternity.

After the death of the three brothers so often mentioned, the *Rynsburg* Assembly was chiefly managed and promoted by one *Francis Joachimsom* [sic] *Oudan*, a banker of that place, son-in-law of the old *John vander Kodde*. This *Francis* was at first a zealous stickler for the *Remonstrants*, who laboured in the hottest times of their persecution to collect money for them, which was appropriated to the maintenance of the banished Ministers; but he forsook them afterwards.

Such was the rise and progress of the sect of *propheesyers*, and thus they separated from the *Remonstrants*; nor can it be denied by any impartial person.

From this instructive account the following points of interest may be gathered:

1. The Collegiants, or Rynsburgers, arose about 1619 as a result of the persecutions directed by the Dutch Government against the Remonstrants from association with whom they ultimately departed.

2. The earliest leaders of the Collegiants were three brothers—John, Adrian and Gilbert vander Kodde, and next after them—John Batten of Leyden.

3. The first meetings of the Collegiants were held at Warmond near Leyden, whence they soon removed to Rynsburg.

4. The Collegiants were quite distinct from the Dutch Anabaptists, or Mennonites, and originally were not of sectarian spirit.

5. The Collegiants were not called Rynsburgers until they had removed from Warmond to Rynsburg, and they were not styled Collegiants until they began to establish colleges or societies in other towns and cities.

6. The Collegiants were also sometimes called prophets, because whenever they addressed their meetings they did not

read what they had to say, as was the custom in Holland, but delivered carefully memorized discourses and thus gave the impression to the common people of being especially inspired.

7. The Collegiants were not Calvinists like the English Particular Anabaptists, but Arminians like English General Anabaptists, and like the Remonstrants with whom they had formerly been associated.

8. The Collegiants soon adopted the practice of immersion, i.e., "dipping or plunging", as their customary mode of administering baptism, and appear at first to have employed "the very Tan-Pits" for this purpose.

9. Some of the Dutch Anabaptists, or Mennonites, who had formerly been baptized by sprinkling or pouring, were thus immersed by the Rynsburgers.

10. The Collegiants, though distinct from the Mennonites, agreed with them in rejecting infant baptism and in their attitude of opposition on warfare and the holding of public office in the state. The early Rynsburgers also were averse to adopting any confession of faith.