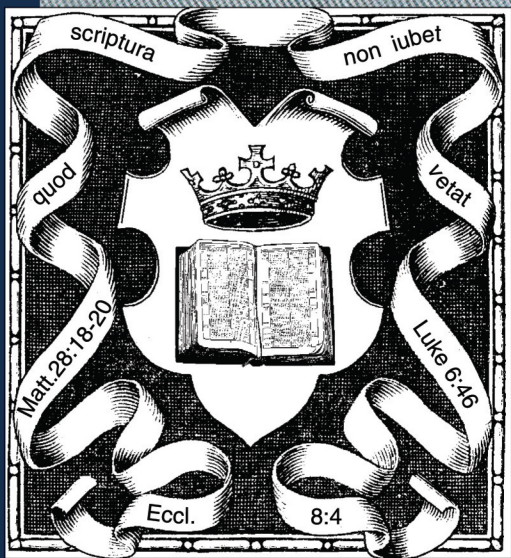


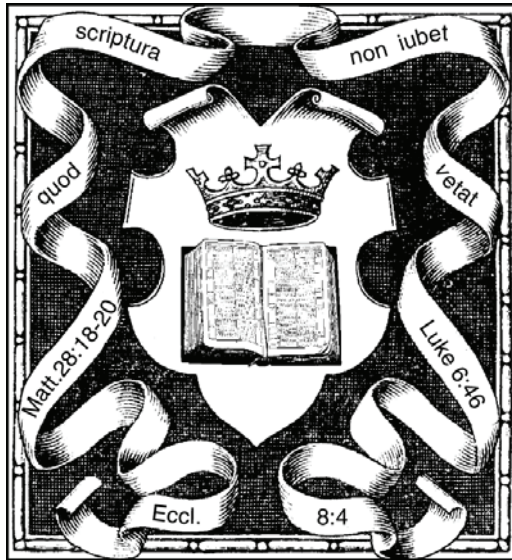
The Baptist Distinctives Series

Number 52



# Baptists, The Only Thorough Religious Reformers

John Quincy Adams



## *Quod scriptura, non iubet vetat*

The Latin translates, “What is not commanded in scripture, is forbidden.”

**On the Cover:** Baptists rejoice to hold in common with other evangelicals the main principles of the orthodox Christian faith. However, there are points of difference and these differences are significant. In fact, because these differences arise out of God’s revealed will, they are of vital importance. Hence, the barriers of separation between Baptists and others can hardly be considered a trifling matter. To suppose that Baptists are kept apart solely by their views on Baptism or the Lord’s Supper is a regrettable misunderstanding. Baptists hold views which distinguish them from Catholics, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Pentecostals, and Presbyterians, and the differences are so great as not only to justify, but to demand, the separate denominational existence of Baptists. Some people think Baptists ought not teach and emphasize their differences but as E.J. Forrester stated in 1893, “Any denomination that has views which justify its separate existence, is bound to promulgate those views. If those views are of sufficient importance to justify a separate existence, they are important enough to create a duty for their promulgation ... the very same reasons which justify the separate existence of any denomination make it the duty of that denomination to teach the distinctive doctrines upon which its separate existence rests.” If Baptists have a right to a separate denominational life, it is their duty to propagate their distinctive principles, without which their separate life cannot be justified or maintained.

Many among today’s professing Baptists have an agenda to revise the Baptist distinctives and redefine what it means to be a Baptist. Others don’t understand why it even matters. The books being reproduced in the *Baptist*

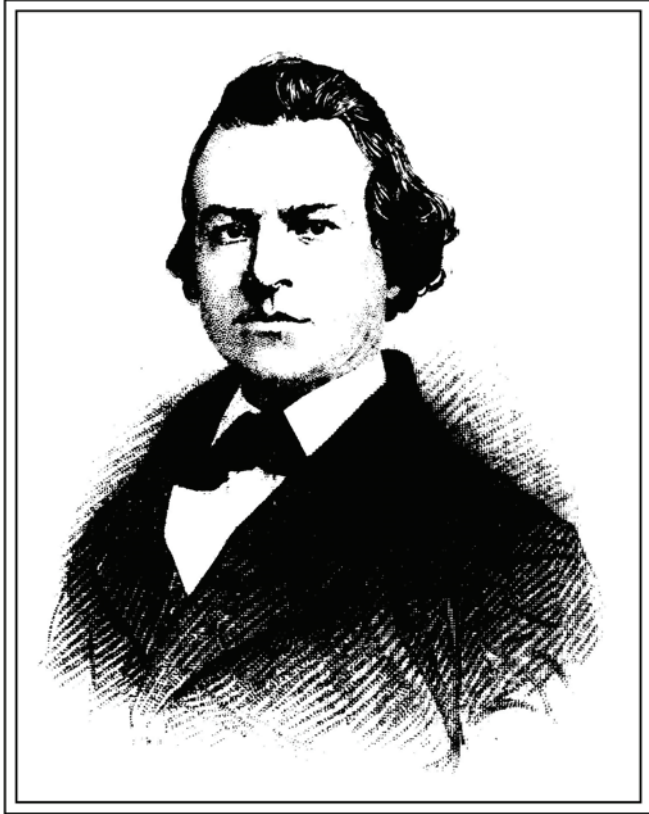
*Distinctives Series* are republished in order that Baptists from the past may state, explain and defend the primary Baptist distinctives as they understood them. It is hoped that this Series will provide a more thorough historical perspective on what it means to be distinctively Baptist.

The Lord Jesus Christ asked, “*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*” (Luke 6:46). The immediate context surrounding this question explains what it means to be a true disciple of Christ. Addressing the same issue, Christ’s question is meant to show that a confession of discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ is inconsistent and untrue if it is not accompanied with a corresponding submission to His authoritative commands. Christ’s question teaches us that a true recognition of His authority as Lord inevitably includes a submission to the authority of His Word. Hence, with this question Christ has made it forever impossible to separate His authority as King from the authority of His Word. These two principles—the authority of Christ as King and the authority of His Word—are the two most fundamental Baptist distinctives. The first gives rise to the second and out of these two all the other Baptist distinctives emanate. As F.M. Lams wrote in 1894, “Loyalty to Christ as King, manifesting itself in a constant and unswerving obedience to His will as revealed in His written Word, is the real source of all the Baptist distinctives:” In the search for the *primary* Baptist distinctive many have settled on the Lordship of Christ as the most basic distinctive. Strangely, in doing this, some have attempted to separate Christ’s Lordship from the authority of Scripture, as if you could embrace Christ’s authority without submitting to what He commanded. However, while Christ’s Lordship and Kingly authority can be isolated and considered essentially for discussion’s sake, we see from Christ’s own words in Luke 6:46 that His Lordship is really inseparable from His Word and, with regard to real Christian discipleship, there can be no practical submission to the one without a practical submission to the other.

In the symbol above the Kingly Crown and the Open Bible represent the inseparable truths of Christ’s Kingly and Biblical authority. The Crown and Bible graphics are supplemented by three Bible verses (Ecclesiastes 8:4, Matthew 28:18-20, and Luke 6:46) that reiterate and reinforce the inextricable connection between the authority of Christ as King and the authority of His Word. The truths symbolized by these components are further emphasized by the Latin quotation - *quod scriptura, non iubet vetat*— i.e., “What is not commanded in scripture, is forbidden.” This Latin quote has been considered historically as a summary statement of the regulative principle of Scripture. Together these various symbolic components converge to exhibit the two most foundational Baptist Distinctives out of which all the other Baptist Distinctives arise. Consequently, we have chosen this composite symbol as a logo to represent the primary truths set forth in the *Baptist Distinctives Series*.



**BAPTISTS,**  
**THE ONLY**  
**THOROUGH RELIGIOUS REFORMERS**



**JOHN QUINCY ADAMS**  
**1825-1881**

# BAPTISTS,

THE ONLY

THOROUGH RELIGIOUS REFORMERS;

BY

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, A.M.,

AUTHOR OF “Heroes of the American Revolution,”  
“Baptism and Holiness,” “Vessel unto Honor,”  
“Sanctification,” and “Reasons Why I Became a  
Baptist”

CENTENNIAL EDITION,

REVISED AND ENLARGED.



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Thou hast given a *standard* to them that fear thee;  
that it may be displayed because of the truth.

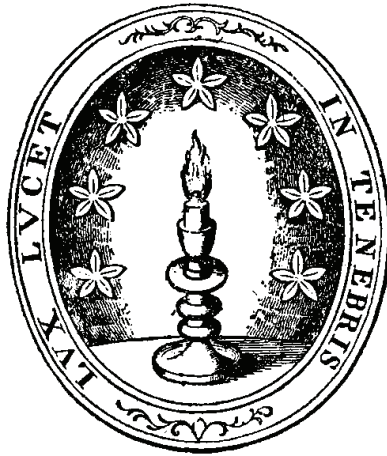
— *Psalm 60:4*

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*by*

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**THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM**

*lux lucet in tenebris*

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

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## Preface to the 1982 Edition

Solomon has warned us all: "The writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotions to books is wearying to the body."<sup>†</sup> None knows this better than the pastor whose shelves are full of unread books or books which, though often read, seem to be but mere duplications in theological thought and pursuit. To complicate matters, the current book lists that are available from various book clubs and publishers constantly tantalize the bookworm by dangling the latest press releases before his eyes. One might say again with the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities . . . all is vanity!"<sup>‡</sup>

In light of all this it is refreshing to have in print an old book which, though originally dating back to 1853, is still current and practical. One might ask, "Why is this so unusual? Do we not have many old works reprinted which are of great value to the church?" True enough, but few

ii.

books, if any of the reprints, have come from the pens of Baptists who wrote *for* Baptists and who were totally committed *to* Baptist theology and church polity. Indeed, Baptists themselves have all but forgotten their historical roots and have opted instead to rely upon the Puritans and the Pedobaptist Reformers for their understanding of theology and local church structure. This has produced a “strange animal” which, though adhering to *believer’s* baptism by immersion, has practically adopted in total the strong covenant emphasis and ecclesiastical rule so characteristic of the Pedobaptists. It is as though men have assumed that the Reformation began and ended with the Pedobaptist Reformers.

John Quincy Adams (1825-1881) in this little book *Baptists Thorough Reformers*, ably demonstrates that it was (and by principle ever will be) the Baptists who carried the work of reformation to its fullest and purest extent—*from* the corruptions of Roman Catholicism *back to* the New Testament Scriptures. This does not mean that reform is finished, for by the very nature of things the Church is constantly being corrupted by heresy, tradition, prejudice, etc., which must be exposed by all God-fearing men.

Even though the cry of the Reformation was *Sola Scriptura* (the Scriptures alone for faith and practice), Adams shows that the Pedobaptist

*iii.*

brethren had adopted that principle only insofar as it did not disturb and challenge their traditional practice of infant baptism. Nowhere in Scripture can it be shown that infants were the objects of Christian baptism or that any but converted, born-again believers were made a part of the New Testament Church. The Baptists were bold enough not only to teach believer's baptism by immersion but to refuse to comply with the hold-over Romanist doctrine of pedobaptism practiced by other Protestants. That courage to stand on the Bible alone cost some of them their lives. They were slaughtered not only by the sword of Rome but also by the sword of Pedobaptist Protestants.

All of the above-mentioned is said not to incite anger against Pedobaptists but to point out that believer's baptism by immersion is not the insignificant matter most assume it to be. The author points out that the corruption of this one doctrine has been responsible for unbiblical and erroneous doctrines of church membership, wrong definition and practice of religious liberty, corrupt church order and government, and even deliberate mistranslation of the Scriptures. Something as far-reaching as this cannot be dismissed as being an "insignificant matter."

Yet for many Baptists the significance of their doctrinal position *has* eluded them. Baptist

*iv.*

churches *are* being ruled by a religious hierarchy of pastors, elders, or deacons every bit as stifling to self-rule as that hierarchy found in Pedobaptist churches. True, the Baptist church at large permits local churches to call their own ministers or to dismiss them. Congregations may also vote “yes” or “no” in the discipline of their own members. But beyond these areas they often have little to say regarding their own government. Adams’ point is well-taken: “Man thirsts for power. He loves to be elevated above his fellows, and to occupy a position of acknowledged superiority. He delights to be clothed with a little brief authority, which will enable him to look on all around him as inferiors. It is the working of this spirit of arrogance and assumption that has created so many grades among men, both in the world and in the church.”

Also, more than a few Baptists are enamored, though at a loss as to how to achieve it, with the idea of establishing a state religion, a society in which the government becomes “Christian” and thus the protector and defender of the Church. They have forgotten the past persecution from government-backed Protestant brethren who did not share the same doctrinal views as the Baptists. They have not distinguished between religious toleration and true religious freedom. Adams remarks: “Toleration is the allowance of that which

is not wholly approved. As applied to religion, the term is objectionable; because it presupposes the existence of some mere human authority, which has power to grant to, or withhold from man the exercise of freedom in matters of religion—and this is Popery.” The Baptists have always sought for religious liberty for *all* men, including their enemies.

The author points out that it was the Baptists who were responsible for the First Amendment to the United States Constitution which guaranteed that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for a redress of grievances.” This is most relevant for today. Can we not see in our country, not only the intrusion of the government into the affairs of the Church, but a denial and even a reversal by Baptists (and other believers) of this principle of religious freedom and separation of Church and state?

Much more could be said about this little book, but I shall conclude by encouraging you to read it for yourself and to read it to the end. (The last chapter is invaluable.) It is my personal view that the original title is the best: *Baptists, the Only Thorough Religious Reformers*. If this title sug-

vi.

gests too narrow a view to some, I invite you to taste and see.

When I studied at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Dr. Edward Young would say to us as his students, "Save all your superlatives for God." This is wise counsel. So although I cannot call this book the greatest treatise written on Baptist principles (the greatest is God's Word), yet it deserves to be ranked among the best. You will find the material easy to read, simple to comprehend, and characterized by irrefutable logic; but most important, you will find it Biblical. And all this comes from the pen of a Baptist, John Quincy Adams.

Fred R. Leuck, Pastor  
Thornville Baptist Church  
Metamora, Michigan

† Eccl. 12:12

‡ Eccl. 12:8

## PREFACE TO THE CENTENNIAL EDITION.

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THE following Lectures have a peculiar history. They were originally delivered to the Baptist Church in Caldwell, N. J., in the ordinary course of pastoral labors in that place, and were not then intended for the press. At the urgent request of those who heard them, the author was induced to give them to the public. They were delivered from meager notes, and from these, as his "copy," the author, himself a practical printer, set up the types of the first edition, which was published in 1853. As much of the matter was thus extemporized at the "case," the entire book *was never written*. The late excellent Spencer H. Cone, D. D., then pastor of the First Baptist Church of New York city, read the

proofs, and so well pleased was he with the work, that he ordered the first fifty copies for his own church, recommending it from his pulpit as well as by the notice which appears among the “Recommendations.”

Several editions were printed during the few following years, and the work was widely circulated through the country, and seems to have given a new phase to the baptismal controversy, by directing attention to the GREAT PRINCIPLES which underlie the action of the Baptist denomination. It shows that these principles, though based on God’s Word, are constantly violated by Protestant pedobaptists, though they profess to be governed by that Word. Not a few of these have been led, by the perusal of previous editions, to see the utter inconsistency of pedobaptism with the principles of the New Testament, and have renounced it, and united with the Baptist denomination. Among these, several highly honored and useful brethren, now in the ministry of the denomination, might be named,



The occurrence of our National Centennial seemed to the author an appropriate time to issue a revised and enlarged edition, especially as some years have elapsed since the plates of the first editions were destroyed, and during all that time applications have been made for the work, which could not be supplied.

To the advocacy and propagation of the principles here presented, our country owes all it possesses of true greatness. American principles are, essentially, Baptist principles, and this is owing to the fact that Baptist principles have impressed themselves upon the nation, as the only principles consistent with a government divorced from ecclesiastical control, and recognizing the universal right to civil and religious liberty.

And to the recognition and prevalence of these principles, the evangelical pedobaptist churches of our land owe their spirituality and moral power, in spite of the inconsistency of infant baptism, the legitimate and baneful fruits of

which are nipped in the bud by the influence of Baptist churches.

With the earnest prayer that the present edition may be as useful, at least, as previous ones, in leading Christians of every name to the knowledge and practice of Bible truth, the work is commended to the blessing of God, and the candid consideration of the reader.

J. Q. A.

NEWBURGH, N. Y., 1876.

## RECOMMENDATIONS.

FROM THE FIFTH EDITION, PUBLISHED IN OCTOBER,  
1856.

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*From* REV. SPENCER H. CONE, D. D.

“ We have read this little book with more than ordinary gratification. It treats an important subject in a Scriptural and logical manner. There is no attempt to conceal or modify our denominational principles; they are stated kindly and persuasively, yet with a manliness and earnestness worthy of all praise. We suggest the expediency of stereotyping the work, printing it in a cheap form and circulating it by thousands. ‘ *Christian baptism is immersion only; if it is right to preach it, it is right to print it:* ’—that is my creed; and without either violating it or covering it up, I can heartily commend this plain, straightforward production of our young ministering brother to all who wish to ‘ buy the truth and sell it not.’ ”

---

*From* REV. ARCHIBALD MACLAY, D. D.

“ With the work of Brother ADAMS, entitled “ BAPTISTS THOROUGH REFORMERS,” I am decidedly well pleased. I have perused it with great satisfaction, and consider the reasoning contained in it the most conclusive I have ever read. It is just the book for the times. I can cheerfully recommend it.”

*From the N. Y. RECORDER.*

*“Baptists Thorough Religious Reformers : BY JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.—Mr. Adams illustrates in himself several things : that practical printers make clear, straightforward writers—that Pedobaptists who sacrifice something for their convictions, make thorough Baptists—and that he is the strongest Baptist of all, who, passing far down beneath philological questions, in which some shallow opponents think they see all there is of Baptist doctrines, sees and comprehends the principles which are embodied in the denomination, as in the primitive church. All these characteristics, illustrated in Mr. Adams personally, are transferred to his book. It is clear and straightforward—it is thoroughly Baptist—and it is so, not on grounds of philology merely, but of those foundation principles which belong to the kingdom of Christ. The volume is suggestive and valuable and will be read with interest and advantage.”*

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*From the MICHIGAN CHRISTIAN HERALD, Detroit.*

“The Baptists have not hitherto performed their share of book-work. They are, however, retrieving their character. This work, from the pen of REV. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, is the result of a course of lectures. It is written in a plain, clear, straightforward style, and is an earnest and honest exposition of the great principles of Baptists. The author was formerly a Pedobaptist, and in changing his church relation, he has been led to look more intelligently into the principles of the Baptists, than many who have not had the same reasons to study them. The book should be in the hands of every Baptist family.”

*From the GOSPEL BANNER, St. Louis, Mo.*

“The author, JOHN Q. ADAMS, is a man of clear perceptive powers. He looks *into* a subject, not *at* one. He digs down beneath the surface, and has something to do with principles, which, like roots interlaced, form the strong support of the Christian tree. His subject has been for years a central thought, around which other thoughts have gathered. It grows naturally; he treats it with a master-hand. It is a book you all need. Buy it.”

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*From the TENNESSEE BAPTIST, Nashville, Tenn.*

“We read this book with much interest and satisfaction. The arrangement of the themes is admirable, the discussion of the various topics is bold, clear, earnest, and satisfactory. It presents Baptist principles in an imposing and interesting light, and in this is well calculated to do good. *This book should be circulated by tens of thousands.* It should be scattered broadcast over the whole land. We shall be glad to see it introduced into the South and West, and we hope our booksellers will order large supplies. Instead of pursuing a time-serving policy, Mr. ADAMS speaks right out, and proclaims our principles to the world, though surrounded by the most adverse circumstances. We honor him for his fidelity and fearlessness. May such men be multiplied.”

---

*From the N. Y. CHRONICLE.*

“This work presents the distinctive features of the Baptist denomination in a new light, and should be read by every Protestant.”

*From the CHRISTIAN (QUARTERLY) REVIEW.*

“ We are here presented with a small volume containing great and weighty principles, which cannot fail of commending themselves to the judgment of the judicious reader. Had the Reformation been carried forward on these principles, the opposing obstacles to the union of God’s people, and, consequently, to the prevalence of the Gospel, had been taken out of the way. The volume is valuable and will repay a careful perusal.”



[In addition to the above notices many others of subsequent editions have been received.

When the author was in London, in August, 1868, Rev. C. H. Spurgeon informed him that he had used “ Baptists Thorough Reformers ” as a text book in his Pastor’s College, regarding it as the best Manual of Baptist principles he had met.]

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**“REASONS WHY BAPTISTS OUGHT TO TEACH THEIR DISTINCTIVE VIEWS . . .** First, *it is a duty we owe to ourselves.* We must teach these views in order to be consistent in holding them. Because of these we stand apart from other Christians, in separate organizations. . . We have no right thus to stand apart unless the matters of difference have real importance; and if they are really important, we certainly ought to teach them.”

**JOHN A. BROADUS**

*The Duty of Baptists To Teach Their Distinctive Views.*  
(Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1881).

**“No religious denomination has a moral right to a separate existence unless it differs essentially from others. Ecclesiastical differences ought always to spring from profound doctrinal differences. *To divide Christians, except for reasons of gravest import, is criminal schism.* Separate religious denominations are justifiable only for matters of conscience growing out of clear scriptural precept.”**

**J. L. M. CURRY**

*A Baptist Church Radically Different From Paedobaptist Churches.*  
(Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1889).

**“There is something distinctive in the principles of Baptists. They differ from all other denominations; and the difference is so great as not only to justify, but to demand, their separate existence as a people . . . What distinctive mission have the Baptists, if this is not their mission? - to present the truth in love on the matters wherein they differ from Pedobaptists. What is there but this that justifies their separate denominational existence and saves them from the reproach of being schismatics? *If they have a right to denominational life, it is their duty to propagate their distinctive principles, without which that life cannot be justified or maintained.*”**

**J. M. PENDLETON**

*Distinctive Principles of Baptists.*  
(Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1882).

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