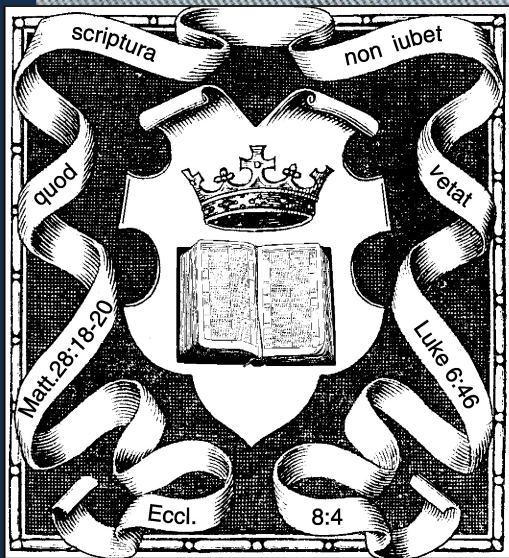


The Baptist Distinctives Series  
Number 36



# A Reply to Mr. Brown's Vindication

Alexander Carson



## *Quod scriptura, non iubet velat*

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.

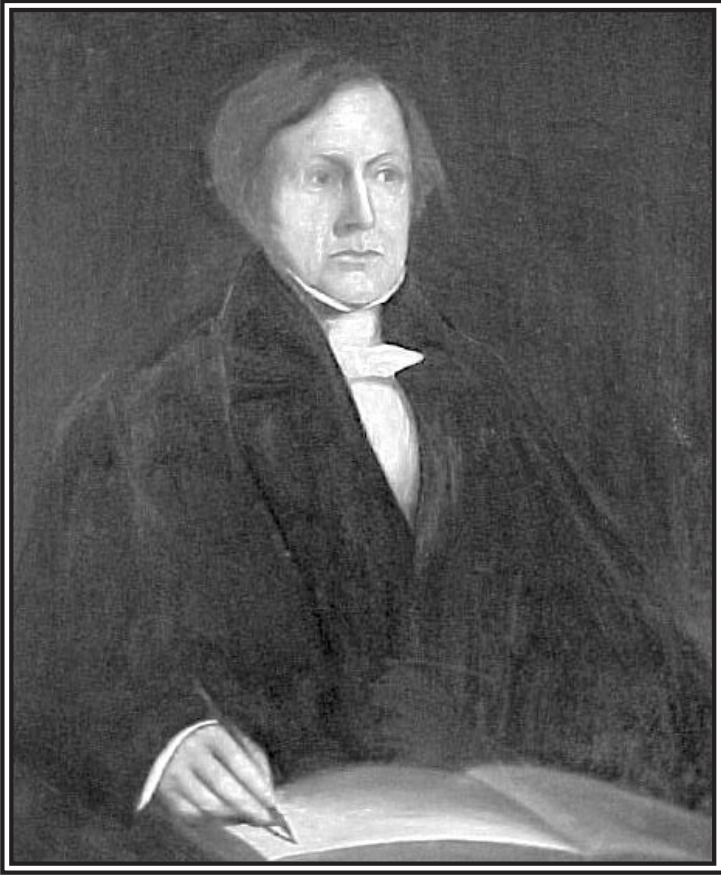
Many among today’s professing Baptists have an agenda to revise the Baptist distinctives and redefine what it means to be a Baptist. Others don’t understand why it even matters. The books being reproduced in the *Baptist Distinctives Series* are republished in order that Baptists from the past may state, 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. Jans 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*.



**A REPLY**  
TO  
**MR. BROWN'S VINDICATION**  
OF THE  
**PRESBYTERIAN FORM**  
OF  
**CHURCH GOVERNMENT,**  
IN WHICH  
**THE ORDER OF THE APOSTOLOCAL CHURCHES IS DEFENDED.**



**ALEXANDER CARSON, LL. D.**  
**1776-1844**

A REPLY  
TO  
MR. BROWN'S VINDICATION  
OF THE  
PRESBYTERIAN FORM  
OF  
CHURCH GOVERNMENT,  
IN WHICH  
THE ORDER OF THE APOSTOLOCAL CHURCHES IS DEFENDED.

---

BY  
ALEXANDER CARSON, LL.D.,  
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

---

*With a Biographical Sketch of the Author by John Franklin Jones*

EDINBURGH: J. RICHIE  
1807



**The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc.**

NUMBER ONE IRON OAKS DRIVE • PARIS, ARKANSAS 72855

Thou hast given a *standard* to them that fear thee;  
that it may be displayed because of the truth.  
— *Psalms 60:4*

*Reprinted 2006*

*by*

**THE BAPTIST STANDARD BEARER, INC.**

No. 1 Iron Oaks Drive  
Paris, Arkansas 72855  
(479) 963-3831



**THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM**

*lux lucet in tenebris*

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

ISBN# 1579788459



## PREFACE.

---

WHATEVER may be the judgment of the reader about the question, whether I “fully overthrow,” I think all must allow that I “fairly meet the arguments” of my antagonist. I have not fastened on accidental oversights, nor filled my sheets with the refutation of his errors that were either not at all, or at least but remotely connected with the subject. I have not endeavoured to entangle the main principles in debate, nor have made up my book with tedious animadversions upon the weakest parts of his work. Every man must see that I have assailed him in the very places in which he thinks himself strongest, and have either not at all, or very slightly noticed whatever was not of vital importance in the question under discussion. His arguments I have not evaded, but have stated them in their strongest point of view; because I was convinced, that in their utmost force I could answer them. I was therefore under no temptation to misrepresent him, nor to answer one difficulty by proposing another. Before I relinquished my situation as a Presbyterian minister, I had so fully considered the question, that I was convinced as long as the New Testament was considered as the standard, the system of Presbytery could never be successfully vindicated; but had my antagonist produced a single particle of previously undiscovered truth, I was prepared to receive it. I will ever hold myself ready to add to, or subtract from my system, according to scriptural evidence. The moment that my views of church-order, or any part of them, cannot be supported by Scripture, I will not only be happy to see them rejected by the world, but whether the world will reject or receive them, I will reject them. In receiving the truths of God, and giving up errors, we are not to wait on the changing of the world.

The author of the work upon which I animadvert must be allowed to discover an uncommon, an almost unlimited acquaintance with the writers of all ages on both sides of the question. He has raked together the sentiments of almost every one who has written on the subject, and discovers a minute knowledge of the works of Independent writers, of whose very names I was ignorant. Yet with all this, I do not look upon him to be thoroughly acquainted with the subject, as founded in the Word of God. He treats it like a question to be decided by the authority of names. He seems to think that much can be said on the one side, and as much, or perhaps a little more, on the other; and that Presbytery has either a preponderance of evidence, or at least has equal pretensions with its rival to divine authority. Now, if the New Testament contains a divine model of church government, there cannot be one legitimate argument for another system. Owing to our remaining ignorance, and imperfect acquaintance with the Word of God, there may be difficulties opposed to the model which the Word of God contains, but to suppose anything like a comparison of well founded contrary evidence for two opposite systems, is an insult upon the Spirit of truth.

I have not made my antagonist responsible for any sentiments but his own, nor at any time have lost sight of *him*, in following the arguments of others who have written on his side of the question. Authorities I have not produced on my side, nor regarded them on his. As the Scriptures must decide the matter, to the Scriptures alone I have appealed. I have used the word *independent*, rather than *apostolical church*, that nothing like an unfair advantage might seem to be taken by the use of words. In writings not controversial, I do not like to see this word at all, as applied to characterise the churches of Christ, as it is both unscriptural and inadequate. So far from fully conveying a complete view of the distinguishing features of a church of Christ, it generally conveys a very false notion. On other occasions then, I would either use the word *church* alone, or *apostolical church*, to distinguish a church of Christ from other societies called

churches; but in controversy, it might be thought to take for granted the thing to be proved, for these societies think themselves *churches* and *apostolical churches*. It is in this view only I ever acknowledge the word *Independent*, as applied to a church of Christ. Those who follow the Lord fully, ought to set themselves to reclaim the word *church* from the corrupt use of it in the world. Had it not been for the inventions of men, it would have needed no additional epithet to make it intelligible and distinctive.

Much of this work consists of critical analysis. The chief talent displayed in the work upon which I animadvert, is a certain evasive subtilty, and a dexterity in imposing the most arbitrary interpretations with an air of plausibility and confidence. As the question must be decided by the testimony of the passages which we interpret in an opposite sense, it became altogether necessary to examine the principles of interpretation employed by my antagonist, and fully ascertain their fallacy. I have therefore not only shown that his interpretations are not the obvious sense of the words, but have attempted to show that his principles of interpretation are utterly inadmissible upon every subject. For the justness and propriety of my interpretation of every text involved in the discussion, I appeal to the common sense of mankind, and to the common principles of language. I interpret the Word of God upon the same principles I would do any other book. There is not one principle of language held inviolable by my antagonist. Were his mode of interpretation admitted in courts of law, the true intent of every covenant might not only be evaded, but might be made to imply directly the reverse of its obvious meaning. Should the author then, upon whose work I animadvert, think proper to reply to my animadversions, this is the hinge upon which victory must turn. He explains one way, I explain another; the criterion of judgment between us then is, who explains most naturally? which of us explains agreeably to the usual principles of language? It were injurious to the character of revelation to suppose, that each of our opposite interpretations has any just foundation in sound criticism.

What I have written, I have written as under the eye of the Searcher of hearts. For every line I must render an account; and had I not more confidence from the review of the day of the Lord, than from the approbation of the world, I would never send my sheets to the public. I do not even wish that the world, in its present state, should approve of my performance. I have nothing to hope, I have nothing to fear. It is but a small matter to be judged of men, but I would not for a thousand worlds be found by the Judge of the world to have perverted his laws and ordinances, misrepresented his words, and taught his people to forsake his institutions. It may seem a light matter to many to give a turn to a passage of Scripture; to make it say something agreeable to our system, or evade a disagreeable consequence. To me it appears to manifest a most corrupt and base mind, and a most daring presumption against the Spirit of truth. Shall God deign to instruct us, and shall we dare to make him speak what we please? I have no notion that whoever of us is wrong, is innocently wrong. The book of God is intelligible, if we misunderstand it, we are inexcusable. With upright and unprejudiced minds, I cannot see how systems so opposite should be taken from the Word of God, after a thorough examination of the subject.

If for every idle word we shall give an account, how much more awful is the account we must render of our handling the Word of God! Let us then continue this correspondence, under the impression that we both shall soon appear before the tribunal of the eternal Judge.

“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.*”

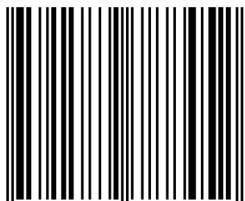
J. M. PENDLETON

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

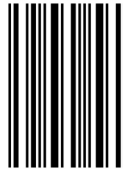
---

The Baptist Standard Bearer, Incorporated is a republication society organized in 1984, and is recognized as a nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable organization. It was founded for the primary purpose of republication and preservation of materials reflecting the Baptist heritage.

ISBN 1-57978-845-9



90000>



9 781579 788452