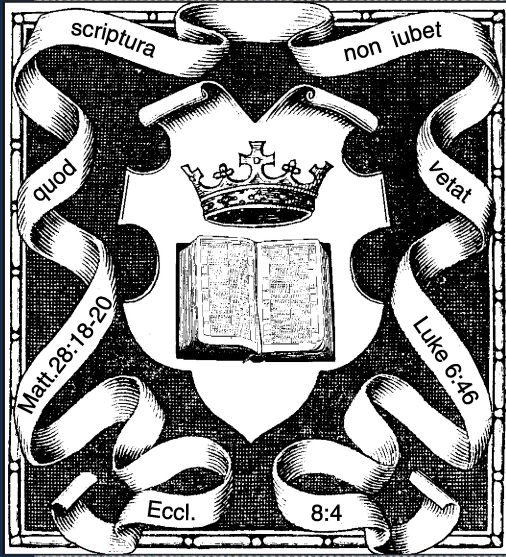


The Baptist Distinctives Series Number 47



Tracts on Liberty of Conscience and Persecution

Edward B. Underhill



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. 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*.

T R A C T S
ON
LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE
AND
PERSECUTION

T R A C T S
ON
LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE
AND
PERSECUTION.

1614 — 1661.

EDITED FOR

The Hanserd Knollys Society,

WITH AN HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION,

BY

EDWARD BEAN UNDERHILL.

With a Biographical Sketch of the Author by John Franklin Jones

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

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lux lucet in tenebris

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

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It has been a matter of regret with many, that the writings of the early members and ministers of the Baptist churches of this country should be comparatively so little known. From various causes the present appears to be a favourable time to reprint such of them as may be deemed worthy of perpetuation, from their historical or theological importance.

These writings are confined to no peculiarity of sentiment, but embrace every topic of divine truth, which the word of God presents for the salvation of the believer, as well as for the regulation of the church of Christ.

To the Baptists, it will be seen, belongs the honour of first asserting in this land, and of establishing on the immutable basis of just argument and scripture rule, the right of every man to worship God as conscience dictates, in submission only to divine command. Through evil and through good report—"in cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover in bonds and imprisonments,"-they held fast to the liberty of Christ.

Rejecting the authority of men in matters of faith, they wrote with great simplicity and directness of purpose. Scripture alone was their authority, and excepting some of their polemical works, their productions are remarkably free from that parade of learning which was the fault of their age.

They were not however destitute of learning. Most of the early Baptists had had a university education: and if this privilege was not enjoyed by their successors, it was because the national seats of learning denied it to them. The names of Bampfield, Canne, Cornwell, Danvers, Delaune, Du Veil, Denne, Grantham, Jessey, Knollys, Smyth, and Tombes, not to mention others, afford sufficient proof that the Baptist churches were not destitute of able and learned expounders of their sentiments, eminent for their attainments both in classical and divine knowledge.

The historical value of the works it is proposed to reproduce is very great. Their authors exercised no mean influence on the course of national affairs during the period of Cromwell's protectorate, and they became in subsequent reigns, as they had been in times preceding the Commonwealth, the especial objects of ecclesiastical and political persecution. These productions form therefore an important element in the study of that eventful and stirring time. But especially interesting do these works appear as the documents from which may be learnt the opinions and the bitter trials of those men to whom the Baptist body owes its existence in this country:—in whose stripes, and bonds, and death, was laid the foundation of that liberty we now enjoy.

As theological writers they are characterized by fervour of spirit; deep study of the word of God; great facility of application of divine truths to passing events; a holy attachment to "the truth as it is in Jesus;" clear and pungent exhibitions of the word of life; an uncompromising adherence to the scriptures as the rule of doctrine, practice, and ecclesiastical organization and discipline; and finally, a fearless following of their convictions, derived from the divine oracles.

There are also wanting for our congregational and family libraries works of this kind. It is to be feared that as a body we are too ignorant of our own history, and of the great and good men who lost all in the maintenance of our principles. Our young people especially need information on these points. Moreover they are needed for the libraries of our ministers. Even our collegiate institutions possess but very few, and such as still exist are daily becoming more scarce and inaccessible. The collection proposed would furnish at a very small cost a series of works peculiarly adapted to their use.

It is proposed therefore to reprint by an annual subscription of ten shillings and sixpence, all or such of the works of the early English, or other Baptists, as the Council shall decide.

The series will include the works of both General and Particular Baptists; Records and Manuscripts relating to the rise and formation of the Baptist churches; Translations of such works as may illustrate the sufferings of the Baptists and the extension of their principles, together with such Documents as are to be found only in large historical collections, or may not yet have appeared in an accessible form. On the baptismal controversy only those treatises will be given which are of acknowledged worth or historic value. The whole will be accompanied with biographical notices of the authors, and with such notes and illustrations as may be essential to their completeness. The publications will consist of works produced before the close of the seventeenth century.

It is hoped that the cheapness of the works, combined with their intrinsic value, will ensure for them a wide circulation among every class of readers. With a body of three thousand subscribers, the Council will be enabled to issue *three* octavo volumes annually. It is obvious that the larger the number of members, the more frequent will be the publication of the works.

The following list comprises the names of some whose works are intended to form part of the series;—Bampffield, Blackwood, Bunyan, Canne, Collier, Collins, Cornwall, Danvers, Delaune, Denne, Du Veil, Drapes, Grantham, Griffith, Helwys, How, Jeffrey, Jessey, Keach, Kiffin, King, Knollys, Lawrence, Palmer, Powell, Pendarves, Smyth, Stennett, Tombes, Roger Williams, &c., &c.

The first volume of the Society's publications, containing "Tracts on Liberty of Conscience," edited by Mr. EDWARD BEAN UNDERHILL, is now in the hands of the subscribers. The second volume, consisting of the Unpublished Records of the Broadmead Church, Bristol, from 1640—1686, will be immediately sent to press, to complete the first year's subscription.

As considerable delay has unavoidably occurred in discovering and acquiring the exceedingly rare tracts it is proposed to reprint, the first subscription will be carried on to the end of the present year, by which time the volumes for the years 1845—6, will have been published.

On the 1st of January, 1847, the second subscription will be regarded as due. The immediate transmission of subscriptions, and the names of additional subscribers, are requested, that no disappointment may be experienced in obtaining the volumes, since only a limited number are printed beyond what are actually subscribed for.

Terms of Subscription.

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4. Books will be delivered, free of expense, in London, Edinburgh, and Dublin, from which places they will be sent at the cost of the subscriber by any channel he may appoint.

Subscriptions will be received by the Treasurer, at Vassall Road, Kennington, by the Honorary Secretaries, DR. DAVIES, at Stepney College, and MR. UNDERHILL, of Avening House, near Stroud, or by any member of the Council; also by Mr. G. OFFOR, jun., Secretary, Baptist Mission House, Moorgate Street, London, to whom all communications for the Society should be addressed.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IN the prospectus of the Hanserd Knollys Society it was stated, that “to the baptists belongs the honour of first asserting in this land, and of establishing on the immutable basis of just argument and scripture rule, the right of every man to worship God as conscience dictates, in submission only to divine command.”

The Council have now the pleasure of laying before the Subscribers the earliest writings extant in our language, on this deeply important subject.

They were the first articulations of infant liberty. The voice of truth and Christianity was heard in the mild and gentle entreaties of their despised and calumniated authors: unfortunately it was unheeded, and soon spake in the whirlwind and the storm of contending armies and national convulsion.

Happier times have succeeded, and it is permitted us to reap the fruits of the humble, but noble and self-denying labours of these pioneers of the soul's freedom. They fell martyrs “for conscience' sake;” it were

ingratitude to withhold a coronal of deserved commendation, wreathed from the bright leaves and blossoms of the tree they planted in sorrow, and watered with their blood ; but under whose shadow it is our happiness to live.

It is scarcely necessary to add, that the Council must not be held responsible for the sentiments contained in these pieces ; their duty is accomplished by laying before their brethren these memorials of our forefathers without alteration or abridgment.

The Editor is alone responsible for the notes and illustrations, which are uniformly placed in brackets. He has to regret that in one instance he was unable to discover a copy of the original edition.

The Historical Introduction closes with the reign of Mary, as the accession of much new and original matter relating to the baptists of Elizabeth's reign, would, if added, have unduly enlarged the size of the volume : it will however form a most appropriate introduction to the next.

EDWARD BEAN UNDERHILL.

Oxford, April 13, 1846.

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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).

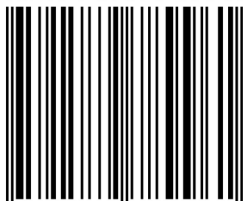
“There is something distinctive in the principles of Baptists. They differ from all other denominations; and the difference is so great as not only to justify, but to demand, their separate existence as a people . . . What distinctive mission have the Baptists, if this is not their mission? - to present 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

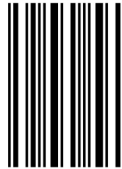
Distinctive Principles of Baptists.
(Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1882).

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