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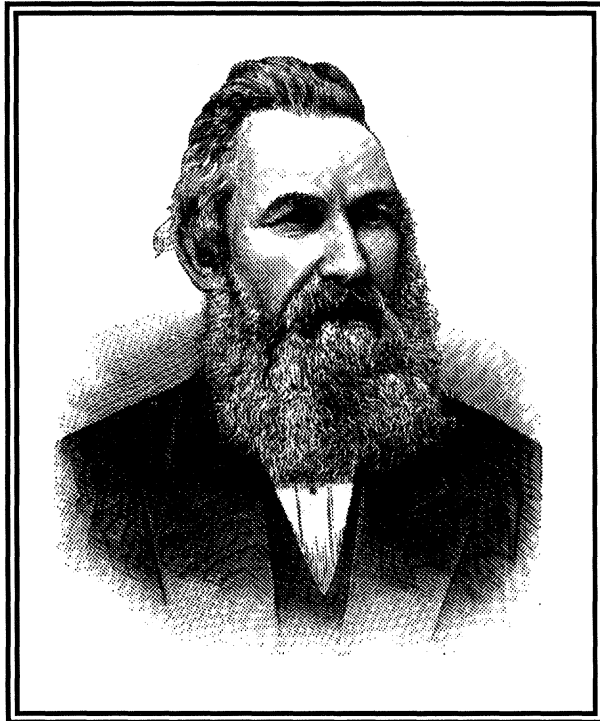
# The Early English Baptists

Volume 1 of 2

Benjamin Evans

THE

EARLY ENGLISH BAPTISTS



**BENJAMIN EVANS**  
1803-1871

THE  
EARLY ENGLISH BAPTISTS.

VOL. I.

BY  
B. EVANS, D.D.

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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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**THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM**

*lux lucet in tenebris*

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

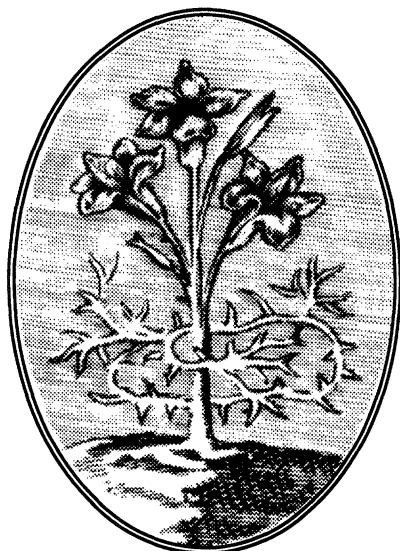
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TO MY  
MINISTERIAL BRETHREN,  
MEN OF SIMILAR DEVOTEDNESS AND OF KINDRED SPIRIT,  
AND OF EQUAL  
ATTACHMENT TO THE GREAT PRINCIPLES OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY,  
WITH THOSE WHOSE HISTORY IS HERE RECORDED,

THESE MEMORIALS  
OF THE  
“Early English Baptists”

ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY THEIR FRIEND AND  
FELLOW LABOURER,

B. EVANS.



*Sicut lilium inter spinas sic amica mea inter filias*

**On The Cover:** We use the symbol of the “lily among the thorns” from Song of Solomon 2:2 to represent the Baptist History Series. The Latin, *Sicut lilium inter spinas sic amica mea inter filias*, translates, “As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.”

## P R E F A C E .

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I DO not offer this volume as a history of the English Baptists. It aims at no such dignity. The time has not yet come for the production of such a work. Other materials have yet to be collected, and vast and varied stores of information have yet to be explored. From the national archives, the Bishops' courts, the writings of their opponents, and the productions of their own pens, much new and very valuable information will be gleaned. Hitherto, very little has been done in this department. Previous writers in our history, either from ignorance or other causes, have made no research. Ivimey is only the bare copyist of Crosby, and adds scarcely a grain of information to the stock the latter had accumulated. Facilities for investigation have now increased. The labours of the Record Commission are laying open to the public the rich stores of important historical materials which have lain unheeded for generations. It is matter of deep regret to the writer, that his distance from London, and pastoral and public duties, have rendered it all but impossible for him to avail himself of these to any great extent. The present work is simply, therefore, offered as a small contribution to the elucidation of the history of the Baptists.

A brief sketch of the labours of my predecessors may not be out of place here, and will not be uninteresting to many of my readers.

The first attempt at a history of the denomination was made by Thomas Crosby. He was a deacon of the church in Goat Street, over which the excellent Benjamin Stinton presided, and kept a school in Southwark. His work is in four volumes, and is now somewhat scarce. Materials for a similar work had been collected by his pastor. These he placed in the hands of the celebrated historian of the Puritans. The unfair use, scarcely, indeed, the use at all, of the information by Mr. Neal, induced the author to write and issue his work. There is much valuable information of men and events, of one of the darkest and most humiliating periods of our national history, contained in this work. Crosby was probably conversant with some of the sufferers. His intimacy with the leading ministers in the metropolis was close. Keach and others had ministered to the church with which he was officially connected. From men, competent to speak, he has told us much which, otherwise, would have been lost. To the future historian this writer's work will always be of value.

Next in this field of denominational literature appeared Mr. A. Taylor. His work is in two volumes, and was issued more than half a century ago. It is avowedly a History of the English General Baptists. It contains a mass of important information in reference to this increasing section of the body, especially of the New Connexion, formed principally by the late Dan Taylor. Many of Mr. Taylor's conclusions will be found more than vindicated, by the documents which will appear in this and the subsequent volume.

The History of the English Baptists, by the Rev. J. Ivimey, in four volumes, appeared in 1811—1830. The author was a laborious and useful minister, and for many years the successful pastor of the church in Eagle Street, London. The early part of his work supplies us with only a few fragments of additional information, beyond what the pages of Crosby had already given. It is far more copious in after periods, detailing public events in which Baptists took part with other bodies, and supplying us with sketches of biography and of the history of individual churches, which can be found nowhere else. The work is remarkably heavy, whilst its extent places it beyond the reach of the vast mass of the community. Its materials will be of great value to some future historian of the later periods of Baptist history.

In 1847, appeared a condensed History of the General Baptists of the New Connexion, by J. H. Wood, with a recommendatory preface by the late Rev. J. G. Pike. As its title indicates, the volume is devoted to one section of the body. There is a large mass of information, especially on the operations of the New Connexion since the close of Taylor's work. Mr. Wood designed his volume for popular use; and though it will not occupy the same position as its predecessor, yet it will be a good substitute, in the absence of this, to many readers.

Of the admirable sketches of Mr. Underhill, in the various volumes of the Hunsard Knollys Society's publications, it would be worse than idle to speak. In reading them, one only regrets that he has not laid his brethren under larger obligations. Beyond these we have no independent works. Rippon's Registers, the Magazines, Histories of Associations, Circular

Letters, &c., supply epitomes, &c. Other writers have not done us justice. The complaint has been uttered again and again. Crosby complained of Neal; Ivimey is equally loud against Messrs. Bogue and Bennett. Wales utters the same complaints still.\*

This practice cannot be too strongly censured. Truth should be more precious than party. By Christian men, at least, her supremacy should be acknowledged. If they mangle or distort her fair form, to whom can she look for protection? Only as she is honoured, will principle triumph; only as her sweet voice regulates our conduct, and her instruction moulds our character, will society be purified in its lowest depths, and the empire of light and love be extended. The age is one of loud and large professions of liberality; but it would be a more satisfactory sign of its genuineness, to see Christian men, on the points which divide them, contending for truth, and not for victory. Under the influence of such a spirit, discussion would be a blessing, and controversy would strengthen, rather than impair, the outworks of Christianity. Earnestly does the writer pray for the growth of this spirit; because, as its influence is felt, the spiritual life of Christ's true church will be vigorous and aggressive on the masses of depravity around it.

The period of our history which this volume covers is one of a transition state. Principles were working which have exerted a mighty influence on the Church

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\* "The Rev. Thomas Rees, of Beaufort, in his work, *The History of Nonconformity in Wales*, is guilty of doing the Welsh Baptists a flagrant injustice. His conduct is unfair, unjust, and unworthy of any historian, if that historian does not wish the English reader to believe that the Nonconformists of Wales are the *Independents*."—*The Welsh Baptists*, by the Rev. T. Price.

and on the State. The different standpoints from which writers have viewed it, and the great actors in the struggle, have influenced the estimate which they have formed of the results. Impartiality is difficult. Writers near to the events are frequently most wanting in this. Their sympathies with certain principles, their prejudices, and their ignorance, have often led to the omission of certain things, to the discolouring of others, and to conclusions which subsequent investigations have shown to be unfounded. No class of men have, probably, suffered more from this than those to whom this volume refers. I do not claim entire exemption from this imperfection. I have tried in every case to be impartial; but, perhaps, in some instances I may have failed. Still, I trust that, notwithstanding my attachment to the principles of these persecuted ones, and my intense admiration of their moral heroism, in no instance have I acted unfairly towards their bitter and malignant foes.

My aim in this work, has been to present to the minds of my readers as graphic a sketch of the illustrious founders of our body as possible. Their rise,—their principles and ecclesiastical polity,—their public and social life,—their sufferings,—and, finally, their triumphs,—will form prominent features in the picture. Only in part is this accomplished in the present volume.

In preparing it, I have had constantly in view the interests of a large and important class of the denomination. Thousands of young men and maidens are growing up around us. Many are anxious for information and mental culture. Their means are limited. Large historical works they cannot purchase, nor have they time to read them if they could. To



familiarize their minds with the moral heroism of our fathers,—to indoctrinate them with those deathless principles which they were the first to promulgate, and to which the true Church of Christ is now doing homage,—is a work of incalculable importance. Never was it more so. The conflicts of to-day clothe it with the deepest interest. Men of like principles and of kindred spirit are most fitted for the struggle. Their weapons are the keenest, and from their vantage ground can success only be secured. Only as the spirituality of Christ's Church is exhibited, and a living union with the Saviour urged, as essential to its members, will truth triumph. Finer models of the true, the noble, the holy, and morally great, cannot be set before them. They were men of whom the world was not worthy. Should any one, therefore, find fault with the details which I have supplied on collateral matters, I point to this class, and urge its wants as my chief apology.

The reader will see that I have used in the text, and equally so by a reference to the notes, a class of writers whose views on ecclesiastical polity are widely different from our own. No one more highly values the labours of my friends, Dr. Price and Mr. Underhill, and others who had preceded them, than I. I have read them again and again with profit; and, no doubt, for many a thought I am indebted to their lucid pages. But, after all, I preferred my own independent inquiry: the reading of a class of writers who had no sympathy with the Anabaptists, and from their pages to draw ample materials for the present work. I could present a long list of authors read, many of whom have repaid the toil with only a small grain of material. I will only add, that whilst this

course has involved more labour, I have no regret now it is done.

Upon some points I have ventured to differ from my predecessors, though sanctioned by Danvars, and a numerous class who have repeated from him, or from one another. I have not done so hastily. When I have calmly examined their opinions, and found evidence against them, I have not hesitated for a moment in entering my dissent. Some may blame me for this as weakening our defences. I am content to bear it. Only that which is true is really of any worth. The value of our principles is not dependent upon the practices of the Early British Christian—Wickliff, or any other of the illustrious saints, who shed the light of Christ's truth, and the beauty of a holy life, on the ages of the past. To a higher source we can go. Whatever will not bear the severest scrutiny, let it be rejected. History should deal only with fact, not with theory. With evidence, not with mere conjecture. Any other course will only be a source of weakness, and not of strength. Upon these convictions I have acted. It has been the rule to which I have sought to conform. About its results I am not careful. Consequences which necessarily follow great principles we should always welcome. The cherished opinions of some, and men for whose judgment I have great respect, may be disturbed by the facts and conclusions which I have recorded. All I ask is, that they will candidly examine, before they reject, the conclusions to which I have been led.

It was originally intended to complete this work in one volume. The plan of it was constructed in harmony with this design. But I soon found this impossible. The new and valuable documents placed

at my command, some of which are given in the present volume, and others reserved for the next, which throw much light on churches and proceedings in connexion with our body, in the early periods of the reign of the first Charles, demanded an alteration. In addition to a valuable series of letters, giving much new and very valuable information on one of the obscurest, and yet interesting, periods of our history, the proceedings of our brethren in Holland, the Confession of Faith published by the remainder of John Smith's company, and known only to us by the fragments given by Robinson in his reply to it, are given in the present volume. There is also an elaborate work by the same author, on the subject of Baptism, in reply to Clifton, still in MS. It is lengthy for publication in connexion with this undertaking; but the former are too precious to be withheld. The Publishers must be exonerated from all blame. They have done all they could to prevent it. The responsibility is mine. I unhesitatingly avow it. If after the volumes are published, my judgment in this matter is impeached, I will bow to the decision with as much dignity as I can.

To my friend Professor Muller, of Amsterdam, I am very, very deeply indebted. His profound scholarship and Christian courtesy excite my warmest admiration and command my esteem. The valuable documents, preserved under his care in the archives of the church at Amsterdam, by his ready kindness, were placed at my disposal; whilst with the deepest interest and untiring patience he has examined other records for me, and thus thrown a flood of light on many obscure points on the state of our brethren in Holland. Some of these documents, both in the text and appendix,

were in Latin, others in Dutch; and when I failed to find a Dutch scholar in this country able to translate the language of the sixteenth century, Dr. Müller kindly undertook and accomplished the task for me. His English I have not altered. If censure is uttered, I must calmly bear it. This simple statement will show the extent of my obligations; but no words can express the warmth of my gratitude.

I have only to add my deep regret, that with all my anxiety to present this volume as correct as possible, I find, when too late for alteration, several errors have crept into the text. The work, though laborious, has been a labour of love; and it would be to the writer a source of unmingled thankfulness if, whilst his name is associated with these memorials of the great and the good, he could emulate their faith and rival their devotedness.

B. EVANS.

SCARBOROUGH,  
*August 5th, 1862.*



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**“A HISTORY of the Baptists should be understood in its objects and aims; and cleared, in the beginning, of misapprehension and perversion. It is not the history of a nationality, a race, an organization, but of people, *traced by their vital principles and gospel practices*. The unity to be exhibited and demonstrated was not brought about by force, by coercion of pains and penalties, by repressive and punitive Acts of Conformity; but by the recognition and adoption of a common authoritative and completely divine standard... the WORD OF GOD.”**

**Dr. J. L. M. Curry** (1825-1903)

President of Howard College,

Professor of English & Philosophy at Richmond College,

Trustee of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and

United States Ambassador to Spain

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