

The life and work of historian Joseph Ivimey deserves to be better known and appreciated by Baptists everywhere, and especially in his home country. This work by Christopher Osterbrock is a significant contribution to our knowledge of Ivimey as historian of the Baptist movement and preacher, especially the latter. Many will know Ivimey's *History of the English Baptists*, but Osterbrock has provided an extensively researched introduction to the man and his ministry, which is a fascinating overture to the main part of the book, which provides a selection of Ivimey's sermons taken from the *Baptist Magazine*. Ivimey's expositions of Scripture read with relevance and insight, and much profit for believers today.

Dr Ian Birch

Principal, Scottish Baptist College, University of the West of Scotland,  
Paisley

Joseph Ivimey, Baptist minister, historian, magazine editor, and supporter of missions and the abolition of slavery, is little known today apart from his chronicles of Baptist history. This book offers a rare glimpse of this intriguing man and his teachings.

Dr Joel R. Beeke

President, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids,  
Michigan

We can be grateful for Christopher Osterbrock's continued interest in recovering the life and ministry of Particular Baptist, Joseph Ivimey. These meditations not only capture the dynamic biblical message of Jesus Christ for the early church but challenge us as contemporary readers to be faithful in our calling to follow Jesus Christ today.

Dr Tom Schwanda

Associate Professor of Christian Formation and Ministry, emeritus,  
Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, and Scholar in Residence for  
Puritan Piety, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids,  
Michigan

Ivimey's addresses echo clearly the apostolic, missional ethos of the New Testament. Based in Scripture but focused on applying its theology personally and concretely, he skilfully connects the grace of God in Christ to the believer's spiritual life, the corporate life of the church, and its mission to the world far and near. Warm, theocentric, and ultimately oriented toward the life to come, Ivimey's addresses and counsels are both exemplary and edifying.

Dr Daniel C. Timmer

Professor of Biblical Studies, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Christopher Osterbrock brings to life a little-known Baptist hero of two-hundred years ago in his engaging portrait of Joseph Ivimey. Osterbrock has also done us great service by reprinting these forgotten Bible studies by Ivimey, a pastor whose pen wielded a mighty influence in the first half of the nineteenth century. Those who love church history, discovering fascinating stories of unfamiliar figures, and rich Bible teaching will enjoy this book.

Dr Donald S. Whitney

Professor of Biblical Spirituality and Associate Dean,  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

C.S. Lewis argued, "It is a good rule after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between." Sound advice, but to what "old books" should we turn? Let me encourage you to make this "old book made new" one of them. I was familiar with Joseph Ivimey as a historian but did not know him as a pastor and expositor until reading this collection. These chapters have warmed my soul; they will warm yours as well.

Dr Timothy K. Beougher

Billy Graham Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

# EDIFYING THE BODY OF CHRIST

*Studies on the Letters to the Seven  
Churches of Asia*

*Together with Selected Scripture Studies*

by

Rev. Joseph Ivimey D. D.

Edited by

Christopher Ellis Osterbrock



Ettrick Press

2024

# Contents

Foreword by Tom J. Nettles .....	9
Joseph Ivimey: A Pastor's Heart and Pen.....	13
 PART 1: Edifying the Body of Christ.....	 51
[1] The Church, the Candlestick .....	53
[2] Introduction to the Seven Churches .....	61
[3] The Church at Ephesus.....	67
[4] The Church at Smyrna .....	77
[5] The Church at Pergamos .....	85
[6] The Church at Thyatira.....	95
[7] The Church at Sardis.....	103
[8] Strengthening the Church.....	113
[9] The Church at Philadelphia .....	119
[10] The Church at Laodicea.....	131
[Appendix A] Pastoral Counsels.....	141
 PART 2: Selected Scripture Studies.....	 159
[1] The Evils of Wandering.....	161
[2] On the Necessity and Efficacy of Faith.....	167
[3] On the lack of Spiritual Conversation.....	173
[4] Sanctified in Suffering.....	179
[5] Distraction from Religion Produces Worldly Anxiety.....	185
[6] Giving No Place to the Devil.....	193
[7] Toward Christian Gratitude .....	199
[8] Religious Imposture .....	211
[Appendix B] Four Poems.....	219

## Joseph Ivimey: A Pastor's Heart and Pen

Joseph Ivimey (1773–1834) is known most often for one of four things: as the author of the four-volume *A History of the English Baptists*, his labours and treatise for the abolition of slaves,<sup>1</sup> and/or his work with the Baptist Missionary Society—and, however tangentially, his mentorship under and funeral sermon for Andrew Fuller (1754–1815).<sup>2</sup> These are four wonderful things to be known for, but there is certainly far more to this man. Most important to Ivimey himself, Ivimey was the pastor to the meeting house at Eagle Street for close to 30 years. Secondary to his shepherding, we see a man devoted to education, and to ministry *through* education (evidenced in his building of Sunday schools throughout England as well as Ireland). We see a theologian who desired to train churches to practice ordinances as confessionally understood—chiefly his devotion to strict communion. We see a minister zealous for religious liberty and the Protestant Dissenter cause. As well, we see a historian who worked diligently to record his work with the Baptist Missionary Society and the Baptist Irish Society as well as re-chronicling the history of his denomination. Ivimey was also editor of and a regular contributor to the *Baptist Magazine* for 22

---

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ivimey, *The Utter Extinction of Slavery an Object of Scripture Prophecy: A Lecture the Substance of which was Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Chelmsford Ladies' Anti-Slavery Association, in the Friend's Meeting-House, on Tuesday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of April, 1832* (London: G. Wightman, 1832).

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Ivimey, *The Perpetual Intercession of Christ for His Church a Source of Consolation Under the Loss of Useful Ministers: a Sermon Preached at Eagle-Street Meeting, London, May the 21<sup>st</sup> 1815, as a Tribute of Affectionate Respect to the Memory of the Late Rev. Andrew Fuller* (London: J. Barfield, 1815).

years, a point of chief concern to the present collection of Scripture studies.

Chance Faulkner and I previously sought to answer the question, “Who was Joseph Ivimey?” as a preface to our 2021 edition of Ivimey’s 1809 treatise, *A Brief History of Dissenters*. The present volume will seek to answer the same question in a different way, and with particular attention to Ivimey’s writing of periodicals. At the very least, this assortment of his writings provides the reader with a sample of the conversations, themes, and style of this Particular Baptist in London during the long 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The following introduction will not elaborate on all the above points, but will demonstrate the usefulness of Ivimey as pastor, administrator, and expositor. It includes a brief biography, a discussion of Ivimey’s authorship in general and as a magazine contributor more particularly, a summation of his articles, and a conclusion which will clarify the continued usefulness of Ivimey’s ministry. Both this biography and the collection as a whole are meant to look beyond the work of his *History of the English Baptists* and see Ivimey as a pastor and writer, not merely a static historian. Surely understanding Ivimey in this capacity can only substantiate the pilgrim behind the archivist.

### ***Biography***

Ivimey was raised in a nominal Arian family in Ringwood, Hampshire. His parents were of little means, and his father undisciplined with finances. However, they managed to send a young Joseph to work as an apprentice under his uncle, who was a tailor. By the time he was nearing adulthood, Ivimey and his friends had encountered an evangelist, Thomas Williams (1761–1844), who presented the gospel. This presentation was enough to bring the apprentice tailor to question his own life. The means by which he chose to learn more of this gospel was reading a hymnal of Isaac Watts, a writer who would be embedded in Ivimey’s spiritual and authorial labours for the remainder of his life. In reading a certain

hymn, Ivimey broke down and prayed he would receive Jesus Christ as Mediator. Following this episode of sovereign grace, Ivimey's friends—themselves members of the Baptist church in Winborn, Dorset—were made aware of his conversion and convinced him to meet their pastor. Shortly thereafter, Ivimey was baptized by another local minister, Rev. John Saffery (1763–1825), on September 16, 1790.<sup>3</sup> Saffery pastored Brown Street Chapel for 50 years.<sup>4</sup> He and Ivimey would continue to share in a thriving association as they worked together in the Baptist Union and the Baptist Missionary Society. However, at this time, though baptized by Saffery, Ivimey became a member at Winborn, choosing to walk over six hours each Lord's Day for worship, until he moved to Portsea in 1794.<sup>5</sup>

There in Portsea (in Portsmouth, Hampshire), Joseph began courting Sara Bramble (1771–1807). She was shortly thereafter baptized by immersion and the two married in 1795. The Ivimeys then joined together as members at Meeting-house-alley in 1795, under Joseph Horsey (1737–1802)—who happened to be John Saffery's father-in-law—and the associate pastor, Daniel Miall (1747–1833). Miall became pastor of this congregation following Horsey's death, and, in 1803, he would eventually lead one branch to move and establish the church in what is now Marylebone, Portsmouth.<sup>6</sup> Ivimey's devotion to gospel ministry continued to

---

<sup>3</sup> George Pritchard, *Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Joseph Ivimey, Late Pastor of the Church in Eagle Street, London* (London: George Wightman, 1835), 20.

<sup>4</sup> Saffery, continuing the work of his predecessor Henry Phillips (1720–1789), saw great evangelistic success for the Particular Baptist movement, requiring a larger chapel to be built in 1829, that would hold over 600 people. See "Salisbury: Protestant Nonconformity," in *A History of the County of Wiltshire*, vol. 6, ed. Elizabeth Crittall (London: 1962), 156–161.

<sup>5</sup> Chance Faulkner and Christopher Ellis Osterbrock, "Who was Joseph Ivimey?," in Joseph Ivimey, *A Brief History of Dissenters* (Peterborough, ON: H&E Publishing, 2021), xi.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists: Comprising the Principal Events of the History of the Protestant Dissenters, During the Reign of Geo.*

## The Church, the Candlestick

*A discourse delivered at the ordination of the Rev. Mr. B. over  
the Church in ★★★★★★ Street, London, Dec. 25, 1818*

---

*The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right  
hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are  
the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks  
which thou sawest are the seven churches. (Revelation 1:20)*

---

The Holy Spirit, by whose plenary inspiration the scriptures were written, has utilized some of the most significant figures in representing the church of Christ. Many of these are borrowed from the Jewish ritual, from the instituted worship of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and the temple at Jerusalem. The sublime and majestic scenery of this chapter is of that description in which the Lord Jesus Christ, more than fifty years after his resurrection from the dead, appears in his robes of office as the great High Priest over the house of God. He is observed dwelling in the most holy place and having the keys of hell and of death, which is emblematic of his having all power both in heaven and in earth. He does not walk as he had formerly, in the midst of the camp of Israel, but now in the midst of the seven churches of Asia, which are metaphorically represented by the seven golden candlesticks. This appearance denotes his constant presence with his churches. His being represented in the midst of the churches shows the intimate knowledge he has of all that is taking place among them and the deep interest he feels concerning their decay or their prosperity. He is still saying to his trembling servants, "Fear not, I am the first and the last," and so on (Revelation 1:17). He is still in the midst of the



churches. He still walks amidst the candlesticks, “Lo I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20. He is here!

The candlestick with seven branches, to which the allusion appears to be made, was prepared by Moses at the command of God. It consists of pure beaten gold for enlightening the sanctuary. I suppose it typically represented those sacred and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit which flow from the fulness of Christ for the comfort and salvation of the church. And our Lord mentions the candlestick with its seven lamps as signifying the gospel churches. This seems to indicate that the figure, properly understood, would be a description of every distinct assembly of Christ’s disciples, according to the primitive institution. We learn from these figures the divine constitution, beauty, design, and utility of Jesus Christ.

### ***Divine Constitution***

The candlestick, and so also the church of Christ, is of divine constitution (Exodus 25:31). After the most minute and circumstantial description, it is added, “And look that thou make them after the pattern that was showed thee in the mount” (Exodus 25:40). Great circumspection is necessary respecting everything we do in the church of Christ, that we most scrupulously regard the divine pattern given us in the New Testament. It is at our peril if we knowingly admit any persons or members of the church to participate in the ordinance of Christian baptism or the Lord’s Supper, who are not like the material of this candlestick, that is, of pure gold. Only gold, silver, and precious stones will stand the fiery test of Satan’s temptations, while “wood, hay, and stubble” (1 Corinthians 3:12) professors will be consumed in the day of trial—the persecutions to which we are liable. So also they who are called to office in the church, whether bishops or deacons, must be such men as the pattern represents. Better for a Christian assembly to be without a pastor, or without deacons, than to choose men who are not divinely qualified. Infinite mischiefs have resulted to the church