

Andrew Fuller
CENTER *for* BAPTIST STUDIES
at THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Thomas Delaune

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF IRELAND'S FIRST BAPTIST MARTYR

ANDY COMPTON

Occasional Publications edited by Michael A.G. Haykin

2018

No. 6

Thomas Delaune:
The Life and Times of Ireland's
First Baptist Martyr

Andy Compton

Andrew Fuller
CENTER *for* BAPTIST STUDIES
at THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Andrew Fuller
CENTER *for* BAPTIST STUDIES
at THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Thomas Delaune: The Life and Times of Ireland's First Baptist Martyr
Andy Compton

Design and Layout by Dustin W. Bengé

© 2018

The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
Louisville, Kentucky

CONTENTS

Foreword by Ian Hugh Clary	7
Thomas Delaune: The Life and Times of Ireland's First Baptist Martyr by Andy Compton	11
Afterword by Michael A.G. Haykin	29

FOREWORD

Ian Hugh Clary

The irony of Irish Baptist history is that those to whom we look as the first Irish Baptists, such as Thomas Patient or Christopher Blackwood, were actually English! While leaders in Oliver Cromwell's army were stationed throughout Ireland, they brought ministers with them to establish churches in places like Waterford, Cork, and Clonmel. Those ministers stayed in Ireland for a good length of time, had fruitful ministries, and wrote important works. For instance, Thomas Patient, the minister at the church in Swift's Alley, Dublin, wrote *The Doctrine of Baptism and the Distinction of Covenants* in 1654, arguing for believer's baptism. Patient was from London and had been a minister in the Church of England before converting to the Baptist cause while living in New England.

It is this irony of history that makes Thomas Delaune so important, as he stands as the earliest known convert to the Baptists from Roman Catholicism and as a native-born Irishman from Cork. Again, the influence of the Cromwellian regime is important, as Delaune attended Cork Baptist Church that was planted by Major Riggs; a church that is thriving to this day. And while many such as Patient came to Ireland from London, Delaune's journey took him to England's capital where he joined with London Baptists like Benjamin Keach to further the cause there. Delaune is best remembered, if he is to be remembered at all, as a defender of religious toleration for Dissenters. After publishing a response to a prominent Anglican cleric who had criticized Dissent, he was imprisoned for sedition in Newgate Prison, his family with him, where he died for his Nonconformity. Delaune thus has much to teach us, not only about the early Irish and

London Baptists, but also about what principled belief in the free exercise of religion should look like.

I am thrilled to be able to write the foreword to this short work on Delaune by my friend Andy Compton, pastor in Midleton, Ireland, and chairman of Munster Bible College. Both of us have shared many good conversations about our mutual love for Delaune, and Andy has done excellent research to help us understand more of Delaune's life in Cork and the general tenor of his thought. Andy's work as a pastor and leading Munster Bible College has brought him into association with Cork Baptist Church, the very congregation of which Delaune was a part! This work of Andy is a worthwhile contribution to Irish church history, and I hope it will encourage others to read Delaune's own writings and to take up the cause of religious toleration, something that is direly needed in our day!

C O M P U L S I O N

O F

Conscience

C O N D E M N E D.

WHEREIN,

Is plainly Demonstrated how In-
consistent it is with Scripture, the Funda-
mental Laws of *England*, and
Common Equity, &c.

Matth. 7. 12. *Whatsoever ye would, that Men should
do to you, do ye even so to them: For this is the
Law and the Prophets.*

Quid Tibi non vis, alteri ne Feceris.

By *Tho. De-Laune*, Gent.

L O N D O N,

Printed, for John How next Door to the Blew-Bore without
Bishopsgate, and Tho. Knowles at the Corner of *Great and
Little Tower-Street.* 1683,

The title page of Thomas Delaune,
Compulsion of Conscience Condemned (1683).

THOMAS DELAUNE: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF IRELAND'S FIRST BAPTIST MARTYR

Andy Compton

The execution of Charles I in 1649 was a huge shock to the western world with repercussions still felt today. At the time, the regicide created immediate divisions throughout England, Scotland and Wales, but it did unite the divergent groups in southern Ireland for a short time. Most Protestants and Roman Catholics favoured royalism and rejected Oliver Cromwell's English Republicanism. Taking the initiative, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the Marquis of Ormonde, forged an alliance of Irish Protestants and Catholics against England's new parliamentary rule. This, together with the news that Charles II was planning to land in Ireland from exile in Holland, increased the case for a Cromwellian invasion of the country. Cromwell arrived in Dublin on August 15, 1649, committing more than 30,000 soldiers to the island for the next decade. Drogheda, Wexford and Waterford fell and even with the bloody set-back of 2,500 dead English soldiers in Clonmel, Ireland was quickly subjected to the new English Republican rule.¹

During these "troublesome times" some of the English soldiers and New Model Army chaplains started independent churches in southern Ireland.² This was part of a Cromwellian policy to establish Gospel churches in Irish society by Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Independents and Baptists of the New Model Army and the English administration. In 1653 there were Baptist churches in Dublin (where there were two churches and Rev. Thomas Patient is recorded as being paid from Irish revenue), Cork, Waterford, Galway, Limerick, Kilkenny, Clonmel, Kerry and Carrickfergus.³

¹ Crawford Gribben, *The Irish Puritans: James Ussher and the reformation of the church* (Darlington, Co. Durham: Evangelical Press, 2003), 100–101.

² Joseph Fowke *et al.*, "The Cork Church Book, 1653–1875" (Cork Baptist Church, Cork).

³ Fowke *et al.*, "Cork Church Book."

Cork Baptist Church: its roots

Cork Baptist church was started by Major Edward Riggs who settled in Cork in 1651 as Commissioner of the Peace and Member of Parliament for Bandon. Riggs was a fervent Baptist and as there was no local Baptist church he commenced Sunday worship meetings on his Riggsdale estate. These Baptist services became well attended with Riggs concerned for the preaching of the Gospel and the protection of those who converted from Roman Catholicism to biblical Christianity and a baptistic ecclesiology.⁴

There is one example of Riggs' protection of those leaving Catholic Orders. A certain Mrs. Woods, a long-standing original member of the church, was formerly a nun "under vows of chastity."⁵ She ran away from her convent because of the shock of being propositioned by the priest who was hearing her confession. Riggs provided her with shelter and protection which led to her conversion and eventual marriage to Riggs' schoolmaster, a Mr Woods. Mrs. Woods was a member of Cork Baptist Church for around sixty years.⁶

After the Restoration of the monarchy in the person of Charles II in 1660 many of the leading Irish dissenters conformed. For example, Edward Worth who founded the Cork Association (which facilitated the ordination of Presbyterian ministers) abandoned his Presbyterianism, becoming the Church of Ireland Bishop of Killaloe in 1661. He took a good number of his Presbyterian flock with him.⁷ But Riggs held fast to his Baptist identity even in those troublesome times resulting in troubles of his own. In 1684 he was indicted for high treason along with thirty-four other Protestants by an "inveterate ... furious and inhumane" Major Lawless.⁸ Lawless gave no other reason for his case against Riggs except "he had a good estate in England and that if he could not live quietly in Ireland he would go thither." The jury, with a Catholic foreman Col. John Barret, acquitted Riggs and the

⁴ Fowke *et al.*, "Cork Church Book."

⁵ Fowke *et al.*, "Cork Church Book."

⁶ Fowke *et al.*, "Cork Church Book."

⁷ Gribben, *Irish Puritans*, 112–114.

⁸ Charles Smith, *The Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Cork* (Dublin, 1750), 2:191.

other thirty-four. A deeply embittered Lawless died a week later.⁹ Riggs' acceptance by the Cork establishment was formalised in 1691, the same year of King William III's victory in Ireland over the Jacobite forces of the deposed James II. Riggs was declared a freeman of Cork city at the age of seventy-four. He died in his ninetieth year in 1707.

Riggs' third wife, Ann, whom he married in 1677, was forty years younger than him. She bore seven children. She was faithful to the Baptist cause in Cork throughout her life. When her husband died in 1707, he bequeathed Ann an income of twelve-hundred pounds per annum together with the two townlands she owned in Co. Tipperary.¹⁰ This enabled her to fund the building of a Baptist Meeting house on Mill Street (now Liberty Street), a manse and fifty pounds per annum stipend for a pastor "for-ever." Ann died in 1740 and was buried with her husband Edward in the family vault situated in the Ballinhassig Church of Ireland which is now derelict.¹¹

Delaune's early years

This was the context of Thomas Delaune's formative years. He was probably born between 1635 and 1645. His childhood home was on a farm at Brinny, a townland north-east of Bandon and adjacent to the Riggsdale estate. The Delaune family were "very poor" Catholic tenant farmers of Edward Riggs.¹² Thomas's parents had plans for their son to become a priest and so they sent him to Kilcrea Friary run by the Franciscan Order for his education. The Friary can be seen today and is about nine miles west of Cork City.

Now, the English Baptist historian Thomas Crosby stated that Riggs had supported and paid for Delaune's education at Kilcrea.¹³ According to Ann Riggs, though, this was not the case. Despite Crosby receiving a letter recounting Delaune's education from Ebenezer Gibbons, the pastor of the

⁹ Smith, *Cork*, 2:191.

¹⁰ "The Down Survey of Ireland: Mapping a century of change" (downsurvey.tcd.ie).

¹¹ Ann Riggs Bible (Cork Baptist Church, Cork).

¹² Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists* (London, 1739), 2:366.

¹³ Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, 2:367.

Cork Baptist church, Crosby had recorded that Riggs had supported Delaune's Franciscan education. Ann Riggs held that her husband's aversion to Roman Catholic doctrine would not have countenanced this. Countering Crosby, Ann put on record that Riggs had persuaded Delaune's parents to take him out of the Friary so that he would receive a classical education by Riggs' schoolmaster, Mr. Woods.¹⁴

Through the patronage of Riggs, the care and influence of Mrs. Woods and Francis Bampfield (a fellow Baptist, and the business partner and friend of Riggs), Delaune came to saving faith in Christ. He was baptised in one of the Riggsdale fish ponds at the front of Riggs' main house. Around the age of sixteen Delaune was employed as the clerk of a pilchard fishery in Kinsale which Riggs owned in partnership with Bampfield.¹⁵

Delaune's move to England

After a few years Delaune moved to London because he suffered abuse amongst his neighbours due to his conversion and baptistic convictions. We cannot be certain when Delaune actually made this move, but it was, as he described it, in the "perilous and menacing times" that came after the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658 when huge political and ecclesiastical changes came into effect.¹⁶

1660 marked the Restoration of the monarchy with Charles II crowned as king. A new "Cavalier" parliament was convened with a strong royalist and Anglican bent. Its resolve was to restore the dominance of the Church of England in Great Britain and Ireland and to destroy Puritanism. It sought to realise these goals through the Clarendon Code, a set of legislative acts passed when Charles II's closest adviser was Edward Hyde, the Earl of Clarendon.

The 1661 Corporation Act, for instance, declared all civil servants had to swear allegiance to the parliament, king and Church of England. The 1662 Act of Uniformity made the Church of England Book of Common Prayer compulsory for public worship. The screw tightened further in 1664 with

¹⁴ Fowke *et al.*, "Cork Church Book."

¹⁵ Fowke *et al.*, "Cork Church Book."

¹⁶ Thomas Delaune, *The Present State of London* (London: Enoch Prosser / John How, 1681), "Preface."

the Conventicle Act, stopping religious assemblies of more than five people except if organised by a Church of England minister. The 1665 Five Mile Act prohibited nonconforming or Dissenting ministers (about 2,000 had been expelled from the Church of England in 1662) from coming within five miles of the parish from which they had been ejected.¹⁷

Within this political maelstrom it was becoming extremely difficult to live as a Dissenter, that is, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, or Baptist, in Britain and Ireland. According to Daniel Defoe up to 8,000 Dissenters were executed or died in prison during Charles II's reign.¹⁸ Yet, in 1672, as Charles II assumed more and more power, he gave more than thirty-five hundred licences for nonconformist preachers.¹⁹

On his arrival in England Delaune befriended the Baptist pastor Edward Hutchinson and married his daughter, Hanna. Hutchinson had pastored the Clough-Keating Baptist Church in Ormonde, Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary, which was established after 1653.²⁰ During his time in London, and thanks to the fact that he "was bred a scholar,"²¹ Delaune served as a schoolmaster, running a small grammar school as well as doing some printing. His convictions were those of the Particular, or Calvinistic, Baptists in London, among whom he befriended such London Baptist pastors as Hanserd Knollys, William Kiffen, and Benjamin Keach.

Delaune soon established himself as a biblical scholar, translator, author and occasional preacher. His writings dealt with the subjects of baptism, covenant theology, church government and the case for dissent from the state church of Anglicanism. Delaune's most famous publication was *A Plea for the Non-conformists* (1683), but there were other notable works. The Irish Baptist especially argued the case for believer's baptism amongst learned peers who were Presbyterians, Congregationalists (or Indepen-

¹⁷ Nick Needham, *2000 years of Christ's Power* (Glasgow: Christian Focus, 2016), 4:303.

¹⁸ Daniel Defoe, 'The Preface to the Reader' to Thomas Delaune, *A Plea for the Non-Conformists* (London, 1712), 2.

¹⁹ Needham, *2000 years of Christ's Power*, 4:315.

²⁰ Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, 2:366.

²¹ Thomas Delaune, *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune* (1683 London ed. repr. 1704), 62.

dents, as they were often known in this era), and Episcopalians.

Delaune's preface to Hutchinson's *Treatise Concerning the Covenant and Baptism*

In 1676 Delaune wrote the preface to Edward Hutchinson's *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant and Baptism, Dialogue-wise, between a Baptist & a Poedo-Baptist*, a response to Richard Baxter's case for the baptism of infants. Baxter, who was a leading English Presbyterian minister, had pioneered a fresh approach to Reformed pastoral care through his time at Kidderminster Parish Church in Worcestershire during the 1640s and 1650s. He also ministered in the New Model Army in Ireland as a chaplain. Baxter's "massive independence of thought" exposed a rather loose approach to Reformed orthodoxy which was highlighted by his peers.²²

Regarding Baxter, Delaune suggests:

...only the great Creator is unerring. A man may preach and write of the most seraphic verities, and yet know but in part. Mr Baxter is to be honoured as far as he has laid himself out to preach the Gospel, and improve his talent for the conversion of souls in this evil day. But when he forgets himself, and instead of promoting practical holiness, fills the nation with notions as uncertain as they are numberless, puzzling such as arrive not to the subtlety of his distinction, creating more doubts then ever he'll be able to resolve, making Christianity a mere riddle which no man understands but he, and liable to as many forms and interpretations as his wavering mind. Then I humbly conceive he may be very safely left.²³

Two early works: *Truth Defended* and *Tropologia*

The following year Delaune authored his own defence of believers' baptism in *Truth Defended*. In this publication Delaune argued that the covenant of grace is unchanging and eternal but is administered differently in the

²² Needham, *2000 years of Christ's Power*, 4:267–269.

²³ T[homas] D[elaune], "To the Reader" in *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant and Baptism, Dialogue-wise, between a Baptist & a Poedo-Baptist* (London: Francis Smith, 1676), * recto.

Old and New Testaments. The covenant of works (as exemplified in Old Testament Law) served the covenant of grace in types and shadows, with circumcision, a type of conversion, being the lead ordinance of the old covenant. Delaune concluded that the covenant of grace is now under the new covenant church dispensation with its purity and spirituality shown in the Law of the Old Testament.

In 1682 Delaune's fellow Baptist, the pastor Benjamin Keach, published his *magnum opus*, his massive *Tropologia: A Key to Open Scripture Metaphors*. Central to his motivation for writing this massive work was to help Christians deepen their confidence in the truth and authority of God's Word. In his 'Preface' Keach gave the reader some idea of how he compiled the work:

The Scripture is a large field for spiritual employment, and it is obvious to every one's observation, that it abounds with metaphors, allegories, and other tropes and figures of speech. ... And having many brief heads of my notes by me, it was judged worthy my time and pains to compile the work before thee; and to render the utility of the work as valuable as I could, I applied for the assistance of men most eminent in piety and literature, and was so happy as to succeed in the application.²⁴

One of these most eminent men was Thomas Delaune. In fact, he co-authored the book, signing off on the preface in some editions and translating Salomon Glassius' *Philologia Sacra* from Latin to English to make up Book 1 of the tome. Delaune also translated texts out of Hebrew and Greek in this work. Delaune's translation work clearly demonstrated a familiarity with classical authors like Virgil and Pliny the Younger, a number of the Church Fathers including Tertullian and Gregory of Nazianzus, and various Reformed writers.²⁵

²⁴ Benjamin Keach and Thomas Delaune, *Tropologia: A key to Open Scripture Metaphors* (Ireland: The Bonmahon Industrial Printing School/London: William Hill Collingridge, 1858), vi.

²⁵ Michael A. G. Haykin, 'Delaune, Thomas (d.1685)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), s.v.

The Present State of London

Delaune was not only very knowledgeable in matters of Christian doctrine and dissenting polemic. One of his publications revealed his ambition to increase his income by establishing himself as a commentator of seventeenth-century London. *The Present State of London* was first published in 1681. It was republished in 1690, five years after Delaune's death as *Angliae Metropolis: or, The Present State of London*. The 1681 edition was gushingly dedicated to the Mayor, Sir Patience Ward. In the preface Delaune purposely distanced himself from the Cromwellian revolution. He called the Parliamentary rebels of the 1640s 'those execrable mediums of assassinating the sacred person of His Royal Majesty and everting his government'.²⁶ Delaune informed the reader that if they like the book he has enough material to publish another volume on London.²⁷ Ominously there is a description of Newgate prison where Delaune would die only four years later. He noted that the prison had been rebuilt since the Great Fire of 1666 as a 'public gaol or prison for criminals, and also for court actions, for the county of Middlesex, and has been so for many ages, as appears by records in King John's time'.²⁸

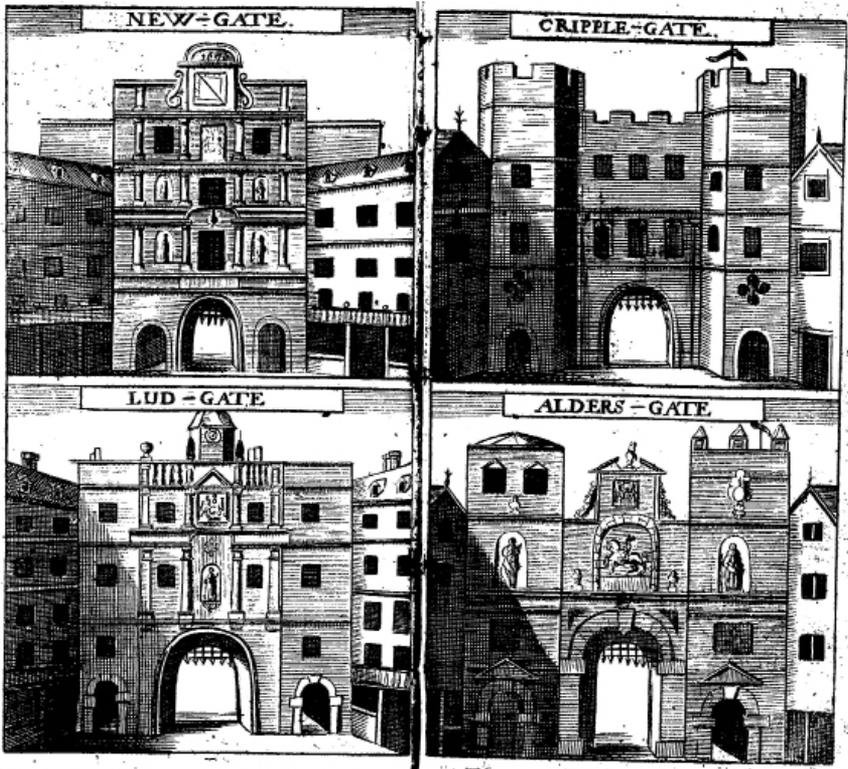
There is a fascinating addition to the 1690 edition of the book under section dealing the London churches. In the table of contents it is entitled 'A modest and curious digression concerning Dissenters from the ecclesiastical government; evincing the reasonableness of their having liberty of conscience'.²⁹ It is assumed to be Delaune's though it appears to be written in a different style. If it is his work it must have been withheld from the 1681 edition because of the political and religious pressures of that time. Alternatively, with the popularity of Delaune's *A Plea for the Non-Conformists* that led to his death in 1685 it is possible that the 1690 addition was marking Delaune's martyrdom with a campaign for the dissenting cause.

²⁶ Thomas Delaune, "The Epistle Dedicatory" to *The Present State of London*, A3 recto.

²⁷ Delaune, "To the Reader" in *The Present State of London*, A4 verso.

²⁸ Delaune, *The Present State of London*, 10.

²⁹ Thomas Delaune, *Angliae Metropolis: or, The Present State of London* (London: John Harris/Thomas Howkins, 1690), A5 recto. The pages covered by this addition can be found at *Angliae Metropolis*, 204–207.



The addition appeals to reason in the face of such persecution:

A thing may be clear to one man, that would fain impose it, but it may be doubtful to him on whom it is imposed, which no man can help; must he therefore be persecuted? If the point be clear in Scripture, what needs any article of faith to impose it? ... Certainly, that man is defective in charity, that thinks all Dissenters are either maliciously or wilfully blind.³⁰

Delaune or his supporter comments on the use of force by the Church of England and state concerning religious conscience:

No man can be forced to believe; he may be compelled to say this

³⁰ Delaune, *Angliae Metropolis*, 205.

or that, but not to believe it. ... A man may as easily make a man stark blind to read Greek, or distinguish colours, as an unbeliever to believe, for that is God's gift. Arguments are good inducements, but force has no countenance in the Gospel ... Force may make one blind, but never to see clearer; it may make a hypocrite, but no true convert.³¹

The digression concludes with an affirmation of the separation of church and state:

We ought to have no religious communion with atheists, infidels, papists, or idolaters, profane or ill livers, or heretics, who err in fundamentals; yet not to persecute any of them merely for their principles, but where they transgress the temporal laws, let them, as others ought, suffer accordingly ...³²

Compulsion of Conscience Condemned

In 1683 Delaune authored *Compulsion of Conscience Condemned*. He presented the Dissenters as model citizens, and loyal to king and country, and drew the reader's attention to Charles II's own opinion of the Dissenters:

To evidence (further) the lenity of his Majesty, I shall quote a memorable passage in his Declaration from Breda, dated April 14, 1660. 'We do declare a liberty to tender consciences; and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion, which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom; and that we shall be ready to consent to such an Act of Parliament, as upon mature deliberation shall be offered to us for the full granting that indulgence.'³³

³¹ Delaune, *Angliae Metropolis*, 205–206.

³² Delaune, *Angliae Metropolis*, 207.

³³ Thomas Delaune, *Compulsion of Conscience Condemned* (London: John How/Thomas Knowles, 1683), 3.

Delaune's main reason for writing *Compulsion of Conscience Condemned* was to encourage Charles II and his court to follow through on this statement that Charles had made at Breda before his coronation. Thus, the Clarendon Code and other legislative acts that were now criminalising the dissenters would be rescinded. As Delaune noted in the conclusion to the work, persecution of the Dissenters was wreaking havoc in the kingdom:

[The] sad consequences of prosecuting quiet and peaceable Dissenters upon the penal laws, as having a direct tendency to weaken the Protestant interest, for whose ruin that common enemy greedily gapes. ... How much it destroys trade, and ruins thousands of families. ... What a Scandal it is to the Protestant Reformation, when we quarrel and persecute each other.³⁴

The debate with Benjamin Calamy and Delaune's *A Plea for the Non-Conformists*

The great strength of Delaune's Dissenting polemic is its combination of respect for authority and a self-deprecating manner that are fused with his reasoned rebuke of those hostile to any law-abiding Dissenting opinion. Delaune's Dissenting polemic was probably best expressed in his most famous writing, *A Plea for the Non-Conformists*. It was written in response to a sermon on Luke 11:41 by Benjamin Calamy entitled *A Discourse about a Scrupulous Conscience*, which was first published in 1683. A man or woman with a 'scrupulous conscience,' according to Calamy, was a person who 'boggles, where there is no real evil or mischief'.³⁵ The Dissenters were disturbed, for example, by 'a minister's officiating in a white garment' or the use of a prayer book, but neither of these things were expressly forbidden by the Word of God.³⁶ Calamy likened scrupulous persons to 'fearful women, that wander in the dark, who seeing nothing to affright them, yet

³⁴ Delaune, *Compulsion of Conscience Condemned*, 45.

³⁵ Benjamin Calamy, *A Discourse about a Scrupulous Conscience* (London: Rowland Reynolds, 1683), 6.

³⁶ Calamy, *A Discourse about a Scrupulous Conscience*, 11 and 27.

fancy many things which make them tremble every step they take.³⁷ Their 'wayward skittish consciences' needed to be 'well bridled and restrained'.³⁸

Calamy, whose father Edmund Calamy was a leading Puritan, was a graduate of Cambridge University and was granted the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1680. He was part of the royalist establishment and he had friends in high places.³⁹ One such friend was his patron and parishioner, the so-called 'hanging judge' and Chief Justice of the King's Bench, George Jeffreys, to whom Calamy dedicated *A Discourse about a Scrupulous Conscience*. Jeffreys' role, as a judge, was to enforce royal policy. He had a reputation for harshness against rebellion and Dissent, which was epitomised in his bloody justice for Dissenters involved in the 1685 Monmouth rebellion. Unhappily for Delaune, the judge at his trial was to be the same Judge Jeffreys.

Calamy was confident that, with Jefferys as his ally, no Dissenter would dare to challenge him. Delaune, though, responded with *A Plea for the Non-Conformists* (1683), which powerfully argued the case for Dissent.⁴⁰ But Calamy had challenged those 'who scruple at conformity' to listen to the ministers of the Church of England and consider their views on worship and the idea of a lawful church.⁴¹ Delaune accepted this challenge and responded almost point by point to Calamy's sermon. He attacked the Church of England by accusing it of altering the Lord's Prayer, forcing people to use a liturgy that contradicted Christ's teachings and making congregants sing the Lord's Prayer which had no basis in Scripture.

Calamy stated that dissenters had no good reason for not worshipping at the Church of England since the things that offended them (such as kneeling at communion, the sign of the cross during baptism, keeping holy days and using liturgy) were not prohibited in the Bible. But Delaune

³⁷ Calamy, *A Discourse about a Scrupulous Conscience*, 7.

³⁸ Calamy, 'The Epistle Dedicatory' to *A Discourse about a Scrupulous Conscience*, A2 verso.

³⁹ On Calamy, see Jim Spivey, 'Calamy, Benjamin (bap. 1646, d. 1685/6)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), s.v.

⁴⁰ Spivey, 'Calamy, Benjamin'.

⁴¹ Thomas Delaune, *A Plea for the Non-Conformists* (London, 1684), 2, citing Calamy, *A Discourse about a Scrupulous Conscience*, 25.

referred to these practices as unbiblical Roman Catholic traditions that were a valid reason for not conforming to Anglican worship practice.⁴² Delaune proceeded to accuse the Anglican church of hypocrisy. How can they accuse the Roman Catholic Church of ‘superstitions and abominations’ whilst they require bowing at the name of Jesus in worship and kneeling to receive the consecrated elements in the Lord’s Supper?⁴³

To Calamy, the Dissenters were separating wrongly over ‘little things’, which to his mind revealed them to be Pharisaical and legalistic, obsessed with being careful to avoid and abstain, with consciences starting where there is no need. He had accused dissenters of running out of churches at ‘the sight of a surplice as if they had been feared by the apparition of a ghost’!⁴⁴ Delaune, on the other hand, noted that such ‘little things’ as the surplice, the sign of the cross and kneeling, are considered necessary to Church of England worship and thus were they not enforced? They were enforced ‘with all severity imaginable, by excommunication of Dissenters, thereby knocking the fly on the neighbour’s head with a hatchett’.⁴⁵

Calamy also maintained that there was no need to separate from the Church of England over its rites and ceremonies since these Anglican ‘little things’ were in the Early Church before the establishment of Roman Catholicism. But Delaune countered that Early Church practice without Scriptural authority was no reason to accept the present rites and ceremonies of the Church of England. The Early Church had also had ‘gross errors and heresies’ that always ought to be rejected.⁴⁶

There was also a stern element to Calamy’s *A Discourse about a Scrupulous Conscience*. Calamy essentially implied that the Dissenters were not only schismatics but also seditious. It would be this charge that Delaune would face for authoring *A Plea for the Non-Conformists*.

⁴² Delaune, *A Plea for the Non-Conformists*, 6.

⁴³ Delaune, *A Plea for the Non-Conformists*, 8.

⁴⁴ Calamy, *A Discourse about a Scrupulous Conscience*, 6–7.

⁴⁵ Delaune, *A Plea for the Non-Conformists*, 11.

⁴⁶ Delaune, *A Plea for the Non-Conformists*, 14–30.

The prison writings

On November 29, 1683, just before *A Plea for the Non-Conformists* was published, Delaune was arrested and put into gaol. During his imprisonment, Delaune penned *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune*, in which he described his imprisonment, trial and futile attempts to persuade Calamy to help him gain his freedom. Before being sent to Newgate Delaune recorded his first night in gaol 'where a hard bench was my bed and two bricks my pillows'.⁴⁷ In December, Delaune was charged before Judge Jeffreys with undermining the peace of England, putting 'the king into the greatest hate and contempt of his subjects', planning 'sedition and rebellion' and criticising the Book of Common Prayer. 'By force and arms', it was also charged, Delaune 'unlawfully, seditiously, and maliciously did write, print and publish ... a certain false, seditious and scandalous libel of and concerning... the king and the Book of Common Prayer'.⁴⁸

On January 17, 1684, Delaune pled not guilty, saying that he was only responding to the public challenge made by Calamy in *Scrupulous Conscience* to make a case against the sermon's call for all Dissenters to enter the Church of England. Delaune stated 'since public challenges are made to be answered, to punish me for obeying a guide of the church is hard, very hard'.⁴⁹ The following day a common jury found Delaune guilty. He was fined one hundred marks, his books were to be burnt at the Royal Exchange, and he would remain in prison until the fine was paid. He was 'to find good security for his good behaviour for one whole year afterwards'.⁵⁰ The court stated that, as a scholar, Delaune would not be pilloried, even though it was felt he deserved it.⁵¹

By the end of January 1684, when it was clear that Delaune could not pay the fine, he was sent to Newgate prison with his wife Hanna and two small children. Delaune expressed frustration with Calamy and accused

⁴⁷ Thomas Delaune, *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune* ([London,] 1684), 2.

⁴⁸ Delaune, *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune*, 12.

⁴⁹ Delaune, *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune*, 14–15.

⁵⁰ Delaune, *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune*, 15–16.

⁵¹ Delaune, *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune*, 16.

him of cowardice, hiding in the shadow of his Anglican patron, Judge Jeffreys. As Delaune noted, the apostle Paul would not have shielded ‘his writings, or preachings, under the terrible patronage of’ state power.⁵² He pleaded with Calamy that he had not used ‘force and arms against’ him, ‘but pen, ink and a few papers.’⁵³

Suffering and martyrdom

And so, like thousands of other Dissenters, Delaune remained in prison with his family simply for publishing his case for the Dissenting cause. With no means of income, poor prison conditions (at one point he described his time in Newgate as a ‘lodge amongst a rabble of wretches, whose society seemed to me to be a hell upon earth’⁵⁴) and lack of food, Delaune witnessed the death of his wife and two small children before he passed away, all within fifteen months in 1685. His normal health and well-being, ‘the constitution of which at the best is very tender,’⁵⁵ implies he may have survived in prison longer otherwise.

Charles II would die in the same year, while Benjamin Calamy died in 1686. Calamy died apparently due to the strain of seeing a friend Henry Cornish suffer the same fate as Delaune under the same ‘hanging judge’ Jeffreys. The latter discovered the horror of an incarcerated demise in 1689 in the Tower of London.

Remembering Delaune in the eighteenth century

By the 1750s twenty editions of *A Plea for the Non-Conformists* had been published. The well-known writer and fellow Dissenter Daniel Defoe wrote a moving preface to the 1712 edition. He recommended Delaune’s work with these words: ‘If any man ask what we can say, why the Dissenters differ from the Church of England and what they can plead for it; I can

⁵² Delaune, *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune*, 16–17.

⁵³ Delaune, *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune*, 17.

⁵⁴ Delaune, *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune*, 16.

⁵⁵ Delaune, *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune*, 2–3.

recommend no better reply than this'.⁵⁶ Defoe further noted:

The treatment the reverend and learned brother of this book met with, will forever stand as a monument of the cruelty of those times ... I cannot refrain saying, such a champion of such a cause deserved better usage; and it was very, very hard, such a man, such a Christian, such a scholar, and on such an occasion, should starve in a dungeon; and the whole body of Dissenters in England, whose cause he dy'd for defending, should not raise him £66l.13s.4d. to save his life.⁵⁷

Defoe's lament is certainly an embarrassment to the Dissenting community of Britain and Ireland. But, according to Delaune himself, there had been early attempts to pay for his release by Dissenting freemen of London which appear to have been blocked by the authorities.⁵⁸

Conclusion and three questions from Delaune's life

The story of Thomas Delaune raises some key questions to Irish Baptists and the wider Church in the circumstances of today:

1. Are we fully supportive of those in the work and suffering of Gospel ministry?

Daniel Defoe's 'The Preface to the Reader' to the 1712 edition of *A Plea for the Non-Conformists* is indeed salutary reading. He does ask a painful question. Why wasn't Delaune rescued by the London Particular Baptists? There may be a valid reason for their apparent abandonment of the Delaunes. But, whilst Defoe's question remains unanswered it reminds us that we should make every effort to love our labourers well, assisting especially if we know they are in isolation and need.

2. In evangelism and mission are we restricting the Gospel to our own cultural model?

⁵⁶ Defoe, 'The Preface to the Reader' to Delaune, *A Plea for the Non-Conformists*, 15–16.

⁵⁷ Defoe, 'The Preface to the Reader' to Delaune, *A Plea for the Non-Conformists*, 2 and 15.

⁵⁸ Delaune, *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas Delaune*, 3.

It is very natural for us to relate well to those we are most comfortable with in terms of class, race and tradition. Major Riggs reminds us in his reaching out to young Thomas Delaune that we ought to be reaching outside of our cultural boxes, at least from time to time.

3. Is the mess of our times crushing our vision for the growth of God's Kingdom?

As we see the mass confusion across the Church and the world coupled with the unbelievers' incredulity towards Christian ethics and theology today, we are inclined to want to take cover. Yet, Delaune and Mrs. Woods and many more found Christ in the maelstrom of seventeenth-century Ireland. English and Irish believers communicated the Gospel regardless of the surrounding political machinations. Perhaps we need a fresh confidence in Christ and His Gospel, to speak up, regardless of the judgemental hubris surrounding us today? As Christians who may experience relatively mild pressures from the state today we should read Delaune's *A Plea for the Non-Conformists*, remembering his courage in obscurity, and ask God for the same courage and resolve he and many others were given.



The ruins of Kilcrea Friary, where Thomas Delaune was educated.

AFTERWORD

Michael A.G. Haykin

It is a privilege for The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies to publish this booklet on the life and significance of Thomas Delaune by Pastor Andy Compton. One of the key goals of the Fuller Center is to encourage *ressourcement* (retrieval) of the theological and spiritual riches of our Baptist history. The life and writings of Delaune, standing as he does at the fountainhead of Irish Baptist history, are an ideal source for such retrieval. Again, not without reason has Munster Bible College, in whose genesis and development Pastor Compton has played a key role, established a series of annual open lectures which it has named after this remarkable and fascinating Irish Baptist Christian, namely, the Delaune Lectures.

Andy Compton is the Pastor of Midleton Evangelical Church, Co. Cork, Ireland, and Chair of the Board of Munster Bible College.

Ian Hugh Clary is Assistant Professor of Historical Theology, Colorado Christian University, Lakewood, CO, and a lecturer, Munster Bible College, Cork, Ireland.

Michael A. G. Haykin is Professor of Church History & Biblical Spirituality at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, as well as a lecturer at Munster Bible College, Cork, Ireland.

Andrew Fuller
CENTER *for* BAPTIST STUDIES
at THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY