

The Pacific Journal of Baptist Research

Vol.3, No. 1

April 2007

CONTENTS

<i>Phillip Larking</i>	3
A.H. Collins' Ministry at Ponsonby Baptist Church 1893-1902	
<i>Martin Sutherland</i>	23
'The N.Z. Baptist as an Agent of Denominational Identity 1874-1960	
Key Document	41
'I dwell among mine own people' – Allan Webb Calls for a Strong Sense of Baptist Identity, 1876	
Review Essay	53
Reviews	61

(ISSN 1177-0228)
(incorporating *The New Zealand Journal of Baptist Research*)

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The Pacific Journal of Baptist Research is sponsored by
the N.Z. Baptist Research and Historical Society and the
R.J. Thompson Centre for Theological Studies at Carey Baptist College.
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A.H. Collins' Ministry at Ponsonby Baptist Church 1893-1902

ABSTRACT

This essay examines the words and work of Rev Archibald Henry Collins during his years of ministry at Ponsonby Baptist Church, 1893-1902. It comprises two parts. A description of conditions in New Zealand in the 1890s is followed by an outline of the words and work of Rev Collins, providing a summary history and a synopsis of his theology and practice of ministry. Part Two undertakes a critical analysis of Collins, critiquing his theology and practice of ministry and identifying his emphases in this period. The essay calls into question interpretations of Collins which emphasise social concern over piety as his primary focus in this early part of his career.

Introduction

A.H. Collins (1853-1930) has been presented as an advocate and activist in regard to social justice; a notable and early proponent of such views in New Zealand Baptist history. Martin Sutherland suggests that as 'one of the group of social radicals in the denomination at the time, Collins made a strong stand on Baptist principles but also on the rights of labour.'¹ Ayson Clifford observes Collins' support of the new Liberal government: 'He arrived early in the Liberal reign and must have rejoiced in its reforms. He was a vigorous advocate of trade unions and did not hesitate to lambast capitalism and exploitation from the pulpit.'² Brian Smith adds that

¹ Martin Sutherland, *Baptists in Colonial New Zealand* (Auckland: New Zealand Baptist Research and Historical Society, 2002), 212.

² J. Ayson Clifford, *A Handful of Grain: The Centenary History of the Baptist Union of New Zealand* (Wellington: New Zealand Baptist Research and Historical Society, 1982), 109.

Collins was '[a] pungent preacher with an outspoken sympathy for the poor.'³ These views will be challenged in this essay, with the proposal that Collins discerned that the church needed to focus on a greater need than social action in the period 1893-1902. Personal piety, Collins believed, was the great need of the age.

Part One

The 1890s represented a new day in New Zealand culture and society. It was a decade of change in ways both obvious and concealed. With observable changes such as the new direction given to labour and land laws there came a rising tide of optimism and security. The political leaders of this time were the driving force of this change. The Liberals enjoyed a long and successful season in power, the longest term in office New Zealand has known.

The new Liberal party was elected with a mandate for change. "The Liberals were pledged to 'politics of development,'"⁴ and led the nation in a series of changes in property ownership and the rights of the working class.

W.P. Reeves was instrumental in New Zealand's philosophical and political development. As Minister of Labour he was the architect of legislation to improve conditions for workers, to encourage trade unions and for compulsory arbitration between employers and employees.⁵ The Department of Labour was established under Reeves' leadership. This government department had considerable significance for the labour force in New Zealand in the 1890s. J. Martin asserts that it

was among the early pioneers of such institutions internationally, and took on functions that made it perhaps the most powerful and all-embracing government body concerned with the 'labour problem'.... The department clearly made an essential contribution to the improvement of wages and working

³ Brian Smith, 'New Zealand Baptists and the 'Labour Question,' *The New Zealand Journal of Baptist Research* 4 (1999): 26.

⁴ L. Barber, *New Zealand: A Short History* (Wellington: Century Barber, 1989), 67.

⁵ Gordon McLauchlan, *A Short History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Penguin, 2004), 105.

conditions, gave protection to the wage-earner and promoted the position of the disadvantaged in the labour market....⁶

The Liberals were characterised by a considerable optimism. They saw the role of the state as integral to the life and hope of the nation and set forth in the expectation of opening the door to Utopia. Sinclair observes, 'For all of [the Liberals], the final object was the fullest possible consummation of the individual life. The state was to create a generalized sense of individual worth, in a word: equality.'⁷

Reeves personified this idealistic attitude. In the *Independent Review*, in 1903, he posed a question which the Liberals sought to answer in the affirmative:

Is it possible to have a civilization which is no mere lacquer on the surface of society? Can a community be civilized throughout, and trained to consist of educated, vigorous men and women; efficient workers, yet not lacking in the essentials of refinement?⁸

This is the environment A.H. Collins entered on his arrival in New Zealand in 1893.

Born in Worcester, England, in 1853, Collins was educated in his native town. He studied for the ministry and moved to London to complete his training at Spurgeon's College. He settled at Milton, Oxfordshire, where he ministered for three years (1876-1880). At the request of the C.H. Spurgeon he then ministered at Selly Park Baptist Church, Birmingham, a post he held for 12 years (1881-1893). During this ministry he took an active role in a campaign of radical civic reform, inaugurated by the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain. Due to failing health Collins decided to go to Melbourne, but while on his way there he accepted a call by cable to Ponsonby Baptist Church.⁹

⁶ John E. Martin, *Holding the Balance: A History of New Zealand's Department of Labour 1891-1995* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 1996), 11, 12.

⁷ Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand* 3rd Ed. (Middlesex: Penguin, 1969), 175.

⁸ Sinclair, 175.

⁹ Details are not available as to his reasons for accepting this call, or of what other options were open to him. *Evening Post* 22 October 1930, Newspaper cutting, Archive, Ayson Clifford Library, Carey Baptist College, Auckland n.p.; *Otago Daily Times* 24 October 1930, *New Zealand Obituaries* 16: 637; Sutherland, *Baptists in Colonial New Zealand*, 212.

During his ministry at Ponsonby he served for seven years as secretary to the Baptist Union (1894-1900), resigning to take up the position of Union President (1900/1). He also served as secretary on the Evangelical Christian Council and was chairman of the Conciliation Board for the northern industrial district for four years.¹⁰

At the conclusion of his ministry at Ponsonby Collins moved to Australia where he filled two pastorates in Victoria (Fitzroy and Kyneton 1902-1908), was for 12 years minister of Parkside Church, Adelaide (1908-1921), and served as president of the Baptist Union of South Australia (1914). He returned to New Zealand in 1921 as Pastor of New Plymouth Baptist Church, serving there for five and a half years (1921-1926). Collins was married in 1881 and had three daughters. He died in Lower Hutt, New Zealand, on 21 October 1930.¹¹

Theology

What of Collins' theology and practice of ministry? Collins published several sermons during the period covered in this essay. His later years in ministry saw the output of published material rise dramatically; some 500 sermons printed in a New Plymouth newspaper and preserved in scrapbooks are available;¹² unfortunately the pool of information from sermons and lectures from 1893-1902 is much smaller. From this period there are approximately 20 sermons, lectures or articles either referred to or published in various forms. This smaller resource does, however, leave us with many important clues to his theological convictions. Notable among these are three addresses given to the annual Baptist Conference. With opportunities such as these, how did Collins seek to influence the denomination to which he was so committed?

Collins was strongly evangelical in his theological convictions. David Bebbington defines four tenets of evangelicalism: conversion,

¹⁰ *Evening Post* 22 October 1930, Newspaper cutting, Archive, Ayson Clifford Library, Carey Baptist College, Auckland n.p.; *Otago Daily Times* 24 October 1930, *New Zealand Obituaries* 16: 637; Sutherland, *Baptists in Colonial New Zealand*, 212.

¹¹ *Otago Daily Times* 24 October, 1930, *New Zealand Obituaries* 16: 637; 'The Dominion' 22 October 1930, *New Zealand Obituaries* 16: 639; Sutherland, *Baptists in Colonial New Zealand*, 212.

¹² Archive, Ayson Clifford Library, Carey Baptist College, Auckland.

or 'the belief that lives need to be changed'; the Bible, or the 'belief that all spiritual truth is to be found in its pages'; activism, or the dedication of all believers to lives of service for God; and crucicentrism, or the conviction that Christ's death was the crucial matter in providing atonement for sin.¹³ These tenets are easily identifiable in Collins' sermons.

Conversion

A ministry that sought to bring personal faith to others was held in the highest regard by Collins. In 1894 Collins was called upon to give an address to Sunday School teachers, where he encouraged them in their work, stating, 'you... who make the salvation of the children your life's aim, I have no doubt when I say that your work is of the supremest importance.'¹⁴

Collins' sermons are frequently emotive, often coloured with appeal to the individual, particularly in the call to conversion.

Adopt the straight course, and forge straight ahead. Take the word of God as the guide of your life, and let the will of God be your final court of appeal. If as yet you have never definitely taken upon you the vows of God, if you have never received Jesus Christ as your example and Saviour, do so now, and believe me that the path of 'glory, honour, and immortality' is the path of personal devotion to Him who loved you and gave Himself for you.¹⁵

But what of ourselves? We touch men daily whom we know to be out of Christ, and our eyes are dry, our hearts cold. 'O Lamb of God, who takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us!' The cure for such guilty coldness? The only cure is in the Holy Spirit of pity and sacrifice. For this great blessing let us unitedly cry to God.¹⁶

¹³ D. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 1-17, quotations 3, 12, cited in Mark Noll *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 19.

¹⁴ *New Zealand Baptist [NZB]* May 1894, 66.

¹⁵ Archibald Henry Collins, *A Hero in Babylon: A Sermon, Preached In The Ponsonby Baptist Church, On Sunday Evening, October 20, 1895* (Auckland: Wright and Jaques, 1895), 8.

¹⁶ *NZB*, December 1901, 182.

An important role of the church, for Collins, was evangelism and mission. In an address to the Annual Meeting of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society he stated that 'Every Christian is a born evangelist. The Church which is not missionary in its spirit and sympathy, is to that extent unfaithful to its vocation.'¹⁷

Throughout the entire period under study personal holiness emerges as the major theme. (Holiness is a pervasive theme in Evangelical thought and practice and will be discussed here under the heading of Conversion.) Teaching on personal piety and depth of Christian character was an intention of Collins from his first arrival in New Zealand. In 'News of the Churches' in the *New Zealand Baptist* after his acceptance of the call to Ponsonby he stated his convictions. 'A man might ably recite the most perfect creed in Christendom, but it would be of no avail unless crystallised in his life and character.'¹⁸ His presidential address to the annual Baptist conference only weeks before his resignation as minister of Ponsonby Baptist (and subsequent departure from New Zealand) was dedicated to personal and corporate spirituality.

Personal holiness was of such concern for Collins that he dealt with this topic thoroughly and eagerly. In a sermon preached to young men the whole outline emerges from the theme of personal character: 'My first anchor I shall call, A steady, determined Industry; second – Honesty of Principle; third – Purity; fourth – True Godliness.'¹⁹

Collins advocated an unashamedly high standard in personal holiness.

The great and commanding truth of this story [of Daniel and his commitment to purity through dietary restrictions] is that definite, personal religion should regulate the smallest details of life; and that it is not overscrupulousness or pharisaism when a man puts his foot down about a small matter and says, 'No, I dare not do it, trifling as it may seem and pleasant as it may be, for in doing thus I should act against convictions, and sin against God.' Beware of yielding in apparently trivial matters where

¹⁷ NZB, March 1894, 34.

¹⁸ NZB, August 1893, 118.

¹⁹ NZB, November 1894, 171.

principle is involved. There is nothing trivial in the realm of morals.²⁰

The depth of importance of personal holiness to Collins can be seen in his understanding that piety was not simply an end in itself. He understood personal piety to be a means of redemption in both the lives of others and, indeed, the whole of society. In another opportunity to address the annual Baptist conference, Collins again turns to personal piety and spirituality for his theme. Using a favourite character, Daniel 'the Puritan of Babylon', Collins colourfully exhorts his audience, the leaders of the Baptist movement in New Zealand, to embrace personal spirituality in the pursuit of a godly society.

What then was it that saved the Puritan of Babylon from the deadening influences of a vast and obtrusive materialism; What kept his companions in the captivity from becoming mere airy bubbles drifting on the stream of godless pleasure? What was the power which not only saved them from being sucked under in the whirling maelstrom of a conquest-seeking people, but helped them so to use the hour of trial and adversity that when they came out of captivity into their own national possession, it found them, for the first time, rid of idolatry and devoted to a pure monotheistic faith? What, I say, effected this national regeneration? The answer is plain. It was the habit of daily prayer; it was the fond and faithful recollection of the City of Solemnities; it was this reverence for conscience, for truth, and for God.²¹

The Bible

Collins was definite in his commitment to the Bible as the living word of God, believing in the sole sufficiency of Scripture as the rule of faith and conduct.²² He was passionate about the Bible, stating that it 'is the most optimistic book in the world.'²³

His views on the Bible were a reflection of his times, where he could assume thorough Bible knowledge in most of his congregation. The following quotation comes from one of the seven sermons preached at Ponsonby Baptist now available, published in booklet

²⁰ Collins, *A Hero in Babylon*, 8-9.

²¹ NZB, January 1901, 3.

²² NZB, December 1901, 177.

²³ NZB, January 1895, 1.

form between 1893 and 1902. In this sermon one can detect a strong Bible culture amongst the laity and a belief in the Bible and its teachings as nothing less than the primary hope for the future of civilization.

If you touch upon one of [the Bible's] narratives, everyone knows what you mean. If you allude to one of its characters or scenes, the reader's memory supplies an instant picture to illuminate the point. And, so long as its words are studied by little children at their mother's knee, and recognised by high critics as the model of pure English, we may be sure that neither the jargon of science nor the slang of ignorance will be able to create a shibboleth to divide the people of our common race.²⁴

Activism

An overriding theme of Collins' life's work was social concern. In the terms of the 1890s this commitment to social action was described as 'Christian socialism', a 'full-gospel' or 'liberalism'. These terms are amorphous and are applied differently today. For the purposes of this essay, when Collins is spoken of as 'liberal' or 'a Christian socialist' this needs to be understood as a concern for the poor and underprivileged, with a commitment to social justice.

Before we look at the evidence of this theme in the 1890s it is important to note that these convictions were with Collins through all his years of ministry with notable examples in both his earlier and later years. As noted above, during his ministry at Birmingham (1881-1893), Collins was heavily involved in a 'campaign of radical civic reform' that was inaugurated by the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain.²⁵ In his last pastorate, at New Plymouth in the 1920s, his commitment to social concern had not abated.

The cross fastened to the gable of a poor man's hut is the essential spirit of Christianity. The Cross means salvation for social service. The Cross must be planted on the homes of men, planted on factory and shop, fastened on the tools of trade, on schools and universities, and legislative halls. We may not stamp the Cross on the cover of our Bibles and keep it off our ledger

²⁴ Archibald Henry Collins, *The Literary Merit of the Bible: A Sermon, Preached In The Ponsonby Baptist Church, on Sunday, June 10, 1894* (Auckland: Wright and Jaques, 1894), 6.

²⁵ *Evening Post*, 22 October 1930, Newspaper cutting, Archive, Ayson Clifford Library, Carey Baptist College, Auckland.

and day book, off our banking account and off our recreations. The Cross is crucial. The Cross is ethical. The Cross means redemption for social service.²⁶

R.W. Dale was a key influence on Collins in his ministry years in England. The following quotation comes from a sermon given at Ponsonby in memoriam of Dale; it is quoted here at length because of its insight into the influence of Dale, Collins' commitment to social action and the way in which this is prompted by a deep commitment to holiness in the way of Christ.

The Gospel requires us to carry the law of Christ into our civil, our social, and our political relationship. 'Behave as citizens.' [Philippians 1.27]... There are men who make it their boast that they never register their vote, never sit on School Board or City Council, never champion any great public cause, never appear on a public platform.... And these men, who reckon themselves very eminent saints, instead of blushing for their laziness, lay the flattering unction to their souls, that it was of such as they are that the Lord Christ thought when He offered His intercessory prayer. But when our Lord prayed that His followers may be kept from the evil of the world, He intended that they should be in the world, in the thick of the fight, but be preserved from the world's spirit, the world's lust, the world's sin. His prayer was that they should learn to walk white in black places.... Dr. Dale... said this in days when men had not learned to talk so freely about 'the Civic Church;' he expounded from his pulpit the duty and responsibility of citizenship....²⁷

Collins had a considerable personal involvement in the pursuit of social justice. One notable example of this is his involvement on the Auckland Conciliation Board. The Conciliation Boards were created in the 1890s as a means to implement the new Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration (ICA) Act (1894). 'The arbitration

²⁶ Archibald Henry Collins 'The Cross on the Gable' Newspaper cutting, Archive, Ayson Clifford Library, Carey Baptist College, Auckland, c.1920s, n.p.

²⁷ Archibald Henry Collins, *A Good Citizen: A Sermon, Preached in the Ponsonby Baptist Church, on Sunday Evening, March 24, 1895, by Rev. A.H. Collins, In Memoriam of the late R.W. Dale, of Birmingham* (Christchurch: T.E. Fraser, 1895), 9.

system was absolutely crucial in organising both employers and workers';²⁸ the ICA Act ushered in a new era of industrial relations.

Under the Act, any group of [five or more workers] could form a union and take a dispute to be dealt with under the ICA Act. Groups of employers could form equivalent associations. A dispute would first go before a Conciliation Board which would issue recommendations as a basis for a contract or 'industrial agreement' between the parties.... If not satisfied with the recommendation of a Conciliation Board either party could refer the dispute to the Arbitration Court for a binding judgment....²⁹

McLean notes that 'Reeves' greatest achievement was the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration... Act, which transformed New Zealand's industrial relations and trade unionism,³⁰ which was established in 1894, one year after Collins' arrival in New Zealand. J. Martin notes that Reeves' Department of Labour was 'among the early pioneers of such institutions internationally, and took on functions that made it perhaps the most powerful and all-embracing government body concerned with the 'labour problem'.³¹

Little is known about Collins' involvement on the Conciliation Board; Board minutes are, unfortunately, not available. The Department of Labour was responsible for appointing Conciliation Boards,³² and Collins' influence was such that he was appointed Board Chairman for Auckland. The Auckland Conciliation Board was involved in at least three disputes in the 1890s (Bakers, Painters and Seamen), one of these going before the Court of Arbitration.³³ The *New Zealand Baptist* notes '[in] his labours on the Conciliation Board, requiring judgement and tact in a high degree, we believe Mr Collins to have gained the respect of the various parties to the Trade disputes.'³⁴

²⁸ Martin, 13.

²⁹ Martin, 58.

³⁰ Gavin McLean, 'God's Own Country, 1878-1913,' in *Frontier of Dreams: The Story of New Zealand*, ed. Bronwyn Dally and Gavin McLean, (Auckland: Hodder Moa, 2005), 199.

³¹ Martin, 11.

³² Martin, 11.

³³ 'New Zealand Journal of the Department of Labour' 1898, 3, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, iii.

³⁴ NZB, January 1902, 11.

Crucicentrism

In Christ Collins saw all the elements of true Christian living. At the acceptance of his call to Ponsonby it was written in the Church News column in the *New Zealand Baptist*, '[Collins] would preach a full Gospel and the brotherhood of man, in the cause of Him... who loved little children, who denounced oppression, emancipated the slave, and elevated womanhood to its true dignity.'³⁵

Collins' conviction was that the crucifixion was the primary means of interpreting Christ, his example and mission. In the concluding months at his time in Ponsonby, Collins declared to the Baptist Conference,

'Back to Christ!' is the cry which in these modern days has often assailed our ears. Nor would we neglect the call, provided what is meant thereby does not end with the Christ of the Sermon on the Mount, but carries us to 'the place called Calvary,' where the bramble spikes ran red, and the Son of God 'put away sin, by the sacrifice of Himself.'³⁶

Collins served at Ponsonby Baptist Church in a time of political and cultural change. He was an avid supporter of the Liberal Government and its reforms. Collins' theology and practice of ministry may be described as thoroughly Evangelical.

Part II: Crisis and Social Concern

In this second part of the essay I will argue that Collins was overwhelmed by his adherence to the predominant values of growth and industry. Indeed, in his dedication to church and society, in his social concern and in his desire to fulfill the Liberal dream of consummation of the individual life, Collins was overworked, to the detriment of his health and ministry.

Although committed to social concern, Collins discerned that social action was not the predominant need in either his denomination or in New Zealand in the 1890s; of greater importance was the pursuit of personal faith and holiness. Collins was singularly focused in communicating this message to his denomination. This

³⁵ NZB, August 1893, 118.

³⁶ NZB, December 1901, 179.

conclusion brings into question a number of assertions made by historians of Collins in his period of ministry at Ponsonby.

Collins appears to have suffered from what in the 21st Century we now call 'burn-out'. The conclusion of Collins' ministry in Birmingham came about due to ill health. His Obituary in the *Evening Post* states, 'Owing to failing health... Mr Collins decided to go to Melbourne, but while on his way he received by cable a call to the Ponsonby Baptist Church.'³⁷ Collins also suffered from continuing ill health during his time at Ponsonby, sometimes having to rest for weeks at a time.³⁸

The late nineteenth century saw a significant rise of formal associations – boards, councils and unions. Although Collins questioned the wisdom of so many boards and committees he was a keen participator and a victim of church and community 'machinery'. Collins decried the rise and predominance of such organizations, lamenting, 'Oh, the sick hurry of these busy days, with committees, discussions, and conventions, ever multiplying!'³⁹

Collins had first-hand experience of how the rapid and demanding pace of life robbed people of joy and the presence of God. This was evident in both his own life and work and in the community and city in which he lived. Ponsonby looked over Auckland's ship yards and was itself the focus of much industrial and suburban development.

In our day, competition is fierce and cruel, the pace of life is fast, and the temptation is to throw the whole being into business. The din of the street, the roar and rattle of machinery, has drowned the still, small voice of God. Jaded, weary and disgusted, men run fussily about, sickened with life's excitement, yet seeking, and in vain, to find new pleasure.⁴⁰

Collins believed that piety was compromised in such a busy routine, confessing his own ministry was hindered in this way, 'I have no right to speak to you, save the right that comes of a shamed and humbled heart... I would nevertheless press the question, Do we pray as we should?... Do we not need to be alone with God more than we

³⁷ *Evening Post* 22 October 1930, newspaper cutting, Archive, Ayson Clifford Library, Carey Baptist College, Auckland.

³⁸ 'Ponsonby Baptist Church Minute Book and Church Roll 1892-1899' Archive, Ayson Clifford Library, Carey Baptist College, Auckland, n.p.

³⁹ NZB, January 1901, 3.

⁴⁰ NZB, January 1901, 3.

are?’⁴¹ ‘Our best work bears evidence of hurry and haste which all too plainly indicates a lack of inward serenity and sublime confidence.’⁴²

Collins took on a very demanding level of responsibility. He held prominent positions on many groups during the 1890s including: Ponsonby Baptist Choir (president) and Board (chairman), Conciliation Board (chairman), The Evangelical Christian Church Council (secretary), Mutual Improvement Society (president), Auckland Baptist Association (secretary), Baptist Union of New Zealand (secretary and president 1901) and served on the local school committee.

With his regular pastoral duties, together with his numerous responsibilities serving on a host of community boards, councils, committees and associations, and adding to these his history of ill health, we may conclude that a pace of life susceptible to burn-out was a weakness for Collins.

Collins was committed to the improvement of others. The Liberal dream was the fullest possible consummation – the fulfilment or perfection – of the individual life.⁴³ J. Coker observes that a commitment to self-improvement was a characteristic of nineteenth-century Baptists, stating that ‘[an] important force that contributed to the Baptists’ social conscience taking the form that it did was their commitment to the potential for human self-improvement.’⁴⁴ Collins was a Baptist and a Liberal supporter and advocated the ideal of self improvement in his life and ministry, giving much attention to the improvement of others. Collins sought the improvement of others in both spiritual and civil efforts. Individual perfection could thus be communicated in Christian/ spiritual terms. In a sermon delivered at Ponsonby Baptist he implored his listeners to ‘give your life to God. He only can make the best of you.... Let Him make the best of you.’⁴⁵

It is difficult to overstate the significance of Collins’ involvement on the Conciliation Board. This position demonstrates Collins’ social concern and was an excellent means for him to participate in the social development of his time. Collins arrived in New Zealand as the initiatives of the new Liberal government were

⁴¹ NZB, January 1901, 3.

⁴² Ibid. December 1901, 179.

⁴³ Sinclair, 175.

⁴⁴ Joe L. Coker, ‘Social Conscience and Political Power among Nineteenth-Century English Baptists,’ *The Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* 1:1 (2005): 32.

⁴⁵ Collins, *A Hero in Babylon*, 10-11.

starting to take effect. The Conciliation Boards were created to implement the ICA Act, and given that Collins was 'chairman of the Conciliation Board for the northern industrial district for four years,'⁴⁶ this placed him at the forefront of a world-leading social development initiative, an initiative which was successfully and strategically targeting one of the greatest needs facing Western society, the labour problem.

Although Collins gave his personal time and effort to matters of social concern this does not emerge as the major focus for Collins in his years at Ponsonby Baptist. Of approximately 20 different sermons, lectures and articles published or referred to during the period 1893-1902 only three take up the theme of social concern. If Collins was such a devotee to social action, and so involved himself, why was he so quiet on this subject in his public addresses? Of Collins' later ministries we know that he was often outspoken on social matters. K. Manly observes that Collins was described as "the one avowed socialist in the Australian Baptist Ministry" and preached and wrote regularly advocating Christian Socialism.⁴⁷ Collins addressed the annual Baptist conference three times, in 1894, 1900 and 1901 (1901 as Union President). These three addresses, recorded in the *New Zealand Baptist*, are particularly noteworthy. None of these conference addresses covers the theme of social action. Given these prime opportunities to address and influence the leaders of the Baptist denomination why did Collins not turn to the theme of social concern?

We may conclude that Collins did not discern that social action was the greatest need in either his denomination or in New Zealand in the 1890s. The biggest concern facing both church and society was personal faith and holiness. This focus on individual piety was focused at church leaders ('Perhaps one reason why we do not enjoy more success in influencing others for good is, that we ourselves are not alone with the Master as we should be');⁴⁸ and also focused toward church mission ('The great concern of the Church is not with the 'masses,' it is with individual men.')

⁴⁶ *Otago Daily Times* 24 October 1930, *New Zealand Obituaries* 16: 637.

⁴⁷ K.R. Manly, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 361.

⁴⁸ NZB, May 1894, 163.

⁴⁹ NZB, May 1894, 164.

This dedication to the need of personal piety is particularly evident in Collins' three conference addresses. Given the opportunity to address the leaders of the Baptist denomination Collins chose piety as his central theme every time. In 1894 he decried the 'liberty of thought' that 'is leading men perilously near to license'⁵⁰ and called his listeners to minister to the needs of the age with the words of Christ. He stated,

if our spiritual nature is not to be sacrificed at the shrine of worldly success; if we are to be saved from missing life's great mark, and losing its most glorious prize, we must cherish and cultivate the spirit of devotion. 'We must cultivate in the Church, and out of it, the power to be quiet – quiet thought, quiet feeling, quiet prayer, the rest of the soul in God.' We cannot give to others, unless we have something in ourselves to give. Our work will be weak and foolish, and lose its quickening influence, if we neglect our inner life.⁵¹

In 1900 he implored the conference to pursue a devotional life. This kind of life requires hard work like the runner training for a marathon.⁵² He remarked,

Why have I spoken in this strain? I have spoken so under a deep and solemn conviction that here lies our greatest need. Some of you are teachers in the Sunday-school, and the question that often presses is this: How can we best serve the cause of the children? Does not the answer lie in the deepening and freshening of our own inner life?⁵³

In 1901 as Union President he questioned the effectiveness of the churches endeavours stating, 'Are we not sensible of a dull ache at the heart, when we reckon up the net result of our labours... The services on which we spend so much thought and care seldom leave behind them a heritage of light and power.'⁵⁴ In this address he made a lengthy appeal to seek the Spirit of God and called the church to be devoted to prayer and to be in tune with God.

if... there be not the presence and energy of the Spirit of God, our Churches will be nothing better than social clubs... our

⁵⁰ NZB, January 1895, 1-2.

⁵¹ NZB, January 1895, 3.

⁵² NZB, January 1901, 2-3.

⁵³ NZB, January 1901, 3.

⁵⁴ NZB, December 1901, 178-179.

pulpits lifeless echoes of truths that once had meaning, and our sermons, however faultless in doctrine and in diction, only as the flowers that decorate a corpse.⁵⁵

Did Collins discern that personal piety was the 'greatest need' of the age by observing his own human limitations and struggles? The four quotes above could well attest to Collins' own personal frustrations as he considered the net results of his own labours, his busy life leaving him to feel an innate lack of 'inner life'.

One likely reason why Collins discerned piety to be a greater need than social action was the extent and significance of the Liberal Government's reforms. It is reasonable to conclude that Collins' Christian socialist values were being fulfilled in what was happening in the wider New Zealand context. Clifford was right in his observation: 'He arrived early in the Liberal reign and must have rejoiced in its reforms.'⁵⁶ Collins' convictions regarding social concern were being realised in his own life and by the nation's leaders: he arrived in New Zealand with world-leading social reforms coming to fruition; and by taking a position of leadership in the outworking of these reforms on the Conciliation Board he was committing himself to a position of significant and practical social action.

If so, this brings into question the assertions of other historians. Four historians comment on Collins' commitment to social concern during his period of ministry at Ponsonby Baptist. Davison, Clifford, Smith and Sutherland all use a single quote from Collins' ministry at Parkside Baptist Church (c.1908-1921) to make assertions of Collins in the 1890s. This popular reference from a sermon titled 'Capital and Labor' is quoted here, followed by comment on its use by these historians.

False political economy has made distinction between capital, the instrument of production, and labor, the hand which controls the instrument. The distinction is destined one day to disappear. In the days that are to be capital will become the friendly co-worker, if not, indeed, the willing servant of labor's hand and brain instead of being its hard task-master, to starve men's bodies and degrade men's souls. The time will come when the capitalist, as such, will cease out of the land. The skilled manager, the talented organiser will remain at the head of the industrial army; but the capitalist, who lives only on the fruits of other men's toil, will be

⁵⁵ NZB, December 1901, 179.

⁵⁶ Clifford, 109.

extinct as the dodo. Labor is the rent we owe for the right of living on the earth. Old Adam Smith got to the root of this matter when he said that 'the wages for labor are the fruits of labor.' St. Paul said the same thing better when he declared that he who would not work should not eat. At present the law is too often reversed and defied. They who work most have least to eat, and they who work not at all 'live wantonly on the earth' and 'speak loftily' about 'the improvidence of the working classes.'⁵⁷

Davison observes that Collins 'remained forceful and clearcut in condemning any exploitation of the poor... and challenged his congregation.' To support this claim Davison quotes from a later ministry, from 'Capital and Labor' (an extract from the above quotation, but cited in 'Ponsonby Baptist Church' without date or reference) stating 'This sermon extract typifies his thinking.'⁵⁸

Clifford affirms Collins' Christian socialism, asserting that Collins, in the 1890s, 'did not hesitate to lambast capitalism and exploitation from the pulpit.' To support this claim Clifford quotes from Davison's undated quotation of 'Capital and Labor', 'The time will come when the capitalist will cease out of the land....'⁵⁹

Smith observes the watershed nature of the 1890s in New Zealand's political and social history, and asserts that '[a] strong Baptist voice in this period was that of the Rev A.H. Collins... A pungent preacher with an outspoken sympathy for the poor.'⁶⁰ To support this claim Smith quotes Collins from 1911, '[The Bible] is the true Radical's guide, God's everlasting witness against oppression, cruelty and idleness,' and from 'Capital and Labor': 'The time will come when the capitalist, as such, will cease out of the land....'⁶¹ Again, these quotes fall outside of Collins' time at Ponsonby.

Finally, Sutherland discusses Free Church thinking in the late nineteenth century asserting that 'Free Church thinking might have led to a radical form of church, prepared to stand over and against both the state and the prevailing structures of society.' To support

⁵⁷ Archibald Henry Collins, 'Capital and Labor: The Golden Rule: Sermon Preached at Parkside Baptist Church', Newspaper Cutting, c.1908-1921, Archive, Ayson Clifford Library, Carey Baptist College, Auckland, n.p.

⁵⁸ M. Davison, 'Ponsonby Baptist Church' (Auckland: Ayson Clifford Library, 1980), 6.

⁵⁹ Clifford, 109.

⁶⁰ Smith, 'New Zealand Baptists and the 'Labour Question,' 26.

⁶¹ Smith, 27.

this claim Sutherland also cites Davison's undated quotation from 'Capital and Labor': 'Collins for instance looked for a time 'when the capitalist will cease out of the land.'"⁶² Sutherland asks the question, 'Why did... Free Church social radicalism... fail to flower in New Zealand?' He observes that

In 1893 Collins had just arrived from Britain... [Collins and others] found surprisingly little fertile ground for their radical visions and lost heart in their chances of propagating them among New Zealand Baptists.⁶³

There are problems with these interpretations. Not least, they rely on Collins' later pronouncements. Smith himself makes this clear, 'Unfortunately the records we have for his preaching come largely from his Adelaide ministry rather than his time at Ponsonby.'⁶⁴ Arguments from silence are difficult and one could assume that Collins addressed the issue of social concern in his eight years at Ponsonby more than the three records we have available. It remains significant, however, that Collins had three opportunities to address the Baptist leaders of New Zealand at the annual conference, each are published in full in the *New Zealand Baptist*, thus reaching a wide Baptist audience in his day, and yet he did not turn to social concern as his theme. If Collins was looking for 'fertile ground' to cast his 'radical visions' these conference addresses would be just that opportunity. Collins, however, chose personal piety as his theme every time. One cannot conclude from this evidence that Collins 'lost heart' with New Zealand Baptists' commitment to social concern. Nor is it reasonable to conclude of Collins in the 1890s that he was a 'pungent preacher with an outspoken sympathy for the poor,' but rather, from the evidence available, Collins was a pungent preacher with a largely unspoken sympathy for the poor.

Conclusion

A.H. Collins' 'Baptist voice' on social concern was not as strong as has been suggested during his period of ministry at Ponsonby. This aspect to his ministry grew later, in his pastorates in Australia. Rather, Collins discerned a greater need for the church and for New Zealand

⁶² Martin Sutherland, 'Free Church Ecclesiology and Public Policy in New Zealand 1890-1914,' *The Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* 1:1 (2005) 49.

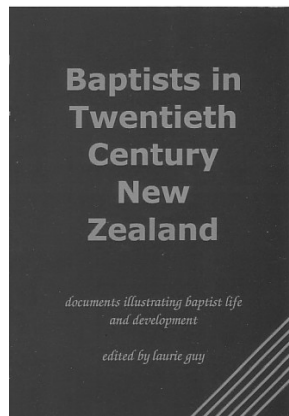
⁶³ Sutherland, 'Free Church Ecclesiology', 50.

⁶⁴ Smith, 29.

society. In an environment in which New Zealand was leading the world in social reform – in which Collins was playing a leading and significant role – he perceived that the greatest need in the Church in New Zealand and in wider society was a pietistic commitment to personal faith and holiness.

Phillip Larking

NZ Baptists - in their own words!

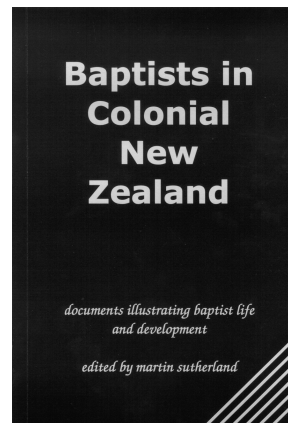


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The N.Z. Baptist as an agent of Denominational Identity 1874-1960

ABSTRACT

The *New Zealand Baptist* is the oldest continuously running religious periodical in New Zealand. Its place in the history and development of denominational life is profound. This article traces the impact and editorial policies of the newspaper from its beginnings in a scattered, sparsely populated colony to its role in an increasingly confident Baptist community following the second world war. In this time it established itself as a key arbiter of Baptist identity. By the end of the period this was changing, with the New Zealand Baptist becoming more a mirror to the denomination than a window into its world.

When the New Zealand Baptist Union was formed in 1882 it consisted of a mere 25 churches. Not only was the group small but it was scattered across a barely developing colony. Only seven churches exceeded 100 members and these were in five different towns. Roads were poor and the rail network was rudimentary. Most Baptists had in common their English heritage and most of their ministers had trained in English colleges. But New Zealand was not England. It was a new religious, economic and social environment which would require fresh approaches to building denominational identity and unity. This was one of the fledgling Union's ambitions. A key element in that mission was the decision to take responsibility for an existing Baptist paper.

This study examines the ways in which the *N.Z. Baptist* became a vehicle for Baptist identity. It was a long time before it truly began to serve this function. Successive editors took different approaches. It was not until the long (1915-1948) tenure of J.J. North that an overt, hard driving, partisan tone sealed New Zealand Baptists' view of themselves. At the same time, the paper and its editors reflected back what congregations were already thinking on a range of questions. The history of the periodical thus provides a unique record of the development of the denomination. By the middle of the 1950s

Baptists had a strong sense of themselves, much less defensive in nature than in earlier decades.

The present study concludes at the end 1950s. For an examination of the function of the *N.Z. Baptist* this may seem an arbitrary terminus. It was not the conclusion of an editor's tenure (N.R. Wood continued for six more years) neither was there a stark change in style, emphasis or frequency of publication. Yet, beyond mere questions of space, there are reasons for such a division which suggest the subsequent period requires separate treatment. The 1950s was a confident time for Baptists, epitomized by their enthusiastic involvement in the 1959 Billy Graham Crusade, rated a stunning success. It was indeed the decade of greatest growth in Baptist adherence and membership. The going would not be so easy thereafter. The beginnings of charismatic stirrings would have a marked impact on the internal shape of the denomination. Moreover, New Zealand itself began a major transition in the 1960s. In part this had to do with the very issues of identity studied here. Television arrived and the world became bigger, less British. In 1956 the country had little hesitation in joining someone else's conflict, supporting Britain in Malaya. A decade later the issues were not so clear. New Zealand Baptist discourse on the Vietnam war has recently been shown to reflect an ambivalence not found over earlier conflicts.¹ Other factors - ecclesiological, sociological and theological - would play their part in constructing a story of the later twentieth century very different from that which may be identified in the period studied here.

The *New Zealand Baptist* began as a regional effort, designed to support the work of the Canterbury Baptist Association, which had been formed in 1874. This group immediately appointed an evangelist to further what it took to be its principal purpose. Its second initiative was to publish a magazine which, in its various names over the next years would symbolize not only the motivations of the founders but also a gradual shift in focus.

The first issue of the *Canterbury Evangelist* appeared in August 1876. The editor (Robert Morton, pastor at the Hereford Street church in Christchurch) eschewed sectarian bias.

¹ A. Picard, 'A Conflict of Ideologies: New Zealand Baptist Public Discourse on the Vietnam War', *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* 1/1 (October 2005) 53-70.

Though issuing from a Baptist source, we do not wish to incur the idea that it will be a strictly denominational magazine....

It is the intention of the promoters of the Magazine to make it of some utility amongst all evangelical denominations, meeting the wants of both saint and sinner. We do not by any means propose to represent the Baptist denomination as a whole, and therefore we are not responsible for any outside the Association, whilst, at the same time, we will gladly work with all who will work with us.²

This apparent openness reflected the 'loose' Baptist ethos of key Canterbury leaders. Individuals like J.W. Sawle and William Pole may have been convinced Baptists but evangelical fervour was more significant to them than building a denomination.³ A change in the tone began, however, almost immediately. The second issue (November 1876) opened with the first of a two-part apology by J. Upton Davis on 'Believer's Baptism' which concluded unequivocally that 'the proper subjects [for baptism] can neither be infants nor unbelievers.'⁴ The magazine soon began a process by which it became a principal means of establishing identity amongst scattered Baptist groups and individuals. With the May 1877 issue the name underwent the first of series of changes, to *The Canterbury Baptist*. In explanation, the editorial talked of preserving truth 'sadly neglected by other denominations'.⁵ This was the voice of a new editor. Charles Dallaston (1852-1934) was now at the helm. Dallaston had just arrived as pastor of the Hereford Street Church, the only large congregation in the province. A young man, trained at Spurgeon's Pastors' College, he would soon show himself to prefer more classically Baptist approaches than those of earlier Canterbury leaders. The magazine henceforth increasingly displayed this 'tight' approach. This would be a Baptist magazine first, and it would increase its role by moving beyond its immediate region. An August 1878 editorial made 'no apology, either for declaring ourselves denominationalists,

² *The Canterbury Evangelist* (August 1876): 1-2.

³ For a fuller treatment of the nature of Baptist life in Canterbury see Martin Sutherland 'Baptist Expansion in Colonial New Zealand', *N.Z. Journal of Baptist Research* 9 (October 2004): 3-23.

⁴ J. Upton Davis 'Believers' Baptism', *The Canterbury Evangelist*, November 1876, 25-28 (see also February 1877, 49-51). Davis was Minister at the Dunedin Church and would chair the first Union Conference in 1880.

⁵ *The Canterbury Baptist* (May 1877), 1.

or for introducing the subject in our *Magazine*.⁶ In January 1880 'Canterbury' was dropped from the title and the major feature in the renamed journal was an 1876 sermon by Rev. A.W. Webb (featured elsewhere in this issue of *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research*) which argued that Baptist denominational existence was 'a necessity'.⁷ By July the title had reached its final state: *The New Zealand Baptist*. In September 1880 another new editor, William Spencer, was secretary to the conference which resolved to form a colony-wide Union.

The magazine came under the control of the Union in 1883. Charles Bright, one of a number of ministers who had careers in both Australia and New Zealand, served as editor for two years, followed by Alfred North (1884-1887) and Lewis Shackelford (1887-1889). With such a run of short term editors, it is not surprising that no consistent character attached itself to the publication. North, a keen Union supporter, used his editorial control to push for greater centralization and particularly for the formation of a N.Z. Baptist Missionary Society. He would play a significant role in both denominational and mission affairs until his death in 1924. Shackelford was, like North a graduate of Rawdon College. He was also a controversialist who led the charge against the perceived heresies of Rev. Charles Brown, who was eventually censured by the Baptist Union for his views on conditional immortality.⁸

These editors and their successors would struggle to build a sustainable subscriber base. As its initial focus had been local, the *NZ Baptist* had a lot of work to do to achieve a colony-wide readership. Limited distribution meant limited capacity to be an agent for building corporate identity. A desire to increase subscriptions, to get a copy in every Baptist household, was regularly expressed but a major sticking point seems to have been the cost. Low print runs meant high unit cost, creating consumer resistance. In December 1885, a correspondent from Thames wrote of frustration at the price of 4d per copy.

⁶ [Charles Dallaston] 'Denominationalism', *The Canterbury Baptist*, August 1878, 56-59, 56.

⁷ A. W. Webb, 'The Baptists: Their Denominational Existence a Necessity', *The Baptist*, January 1880, 3-12.

⁸ See M. Sutherland 'Downgrade Down Under: Conflict and Cohesion among New Zealand Baptists' *Baptist Quarterly* XXXVII No. 7 (July 1998), 351-363. Ironically, Shackelford himself had to resign a pastorate in Norwood, Adelaide, after attacking Spurgeon's theology. See

I think it is a *great mistake* not to have reduced the price long before this. I believe the paper would soon double its circulation and you would reach those who won't buy now, for the simple reason that you can get more for your money....Other papers of similar size are twopence and threepence, and why should not the BAPTIST be published at such a price, so that *every family* belonging to our churches would buy it?⁹

The price did not come down – and the circulation did not go up. This problem was noted by the supporters of the N.Z. Baptist Missionary Society which had been formed in 1885. They were in no doubt that widespread support for the new Society was crucial and that the *NZ Baptist* was at that point an inadequate vehicle for promoting this support. The solution was to commence a dedicated newsletter, the first number of which appeared in June 1886. Comprising of (generally) four pages of news from the pages of the *NZ Baptist* itself, *The Missionary Messenger* made no pretence about its *raison d'être*: to reach Society subscribers and to raise funds. Tellingly, it was distributed free. The hope was that it might (in the way that the *NZ Baptist* did not) 'enter every Baptist home in the land, and to awaken in every Baptist heart a response to our appeal for generous aid.'¹⁰

The *NZ Baptist* meanwhile continued to pursue its mission, however falteringly. From the outset the magazine included 'News of the Churches' - reports from individual congregations. These would become a feature of the publication. Though for many years only one page of sixteen was given to such accounts, their significance cannot be overestimated. In these are the names and activities of ordinary Baptists who otherwise would not be noticed and who certainly would have been unlikely ever to have left a published account of their lives. It is, moreover, in these short notices that the experience of 'being Baptist' in New Zealand is truly encountered. Social gatherings, controversies, deaths, births, baptisms, visiting speakers, these small moments add up to a rounded vision of Baptist life. News of them also, crucially, encouraged groups to identify with congregations in other parts of the colony.

⁹ M. Whitehead 'The Price of 'The Baptist': To the Editor', *NZB* (January 1886) 10 (emphasis original).

¹⁰ *The Missionary Messenger* (June 1886): 1

In May 1889 Lewis Shackleford left for Australia. His replacement was Arthur Dewdney. Dewdney had trained at Spurgeon's Pastors' College. Like his predecessor he was not averse to controversy. In an early editorial (critical of F.W. Walker, a Baptist minister at Nelson who had 'seceded to the Anglican Church') he protested 'surely truth and principle are of more value than ease and popularity.'¹¹ Dewdney was quite prepared to use the pages of the *NZ Baptist* for Christian activism, though his would be the activism of individual piety, typical of English Baptists at the end of the nineteenth century.

The race if not to uplifted *en masse* by any social schemes, however well devised and carefully guarded.

The new mission is the old: the old mission is the new. 'Into all the world and preach the gospel.' The regeneration of the individual man by the power of the Holy Spirit through the grace of God and the love of Christ.¹²

In these years the *NZ Baptist* typically consisted of 16 pages of foolscap. It carried advertisements, largely from Baptist businesses, and much of its content was reprinted material from overseas, especially English sources. The Union Annual Report for 1888 noted with satisfaction that the paper was showing a small surplus of income over expenditure.¹³ By 1890 however the publication was in slight deficit and it was suggested that 'another 60 subscribers would enable the paper to be published without loss.'¹⁴ A year later, a proposal that the paper move to weekly publication was seriously considered. Ultimately no change was deemed feasible.¹⁵ By now it was increasingly acknowledged that the publication 'constitutes a bond of union between the widely scattered churches' and in 1893 the Union was prepared to subsidise the paper by 10 pounds.¹⁶ In the Annual Report of 1896 it was noted with some satisfaction that 'the *Baptist* is now, as far as we can learn, the oldest religious periodical in the Colony.'¹⁷ In late 1897 it was signaled that new procedures and layout would be adopted to speed publication and appeal to a wider

¹¹ *NZB* (August 1889), 120.

¹² *NZB* (February 1892) 17. See also Dewdney's comment on 'Christians and Social Reform', *NZB* (November 1893), 168-9.

¹³ Supplement to the *New Zealand Baptist* (January 1889), 4.

¹⁴ *NZB* (December 1890), 183.

¹⁵ *NZB* (December 1891), 183. See also *NZB* (December 1892), 184.

¹⁶ Supplement to the *New Zealand Baptist* (January 1892) 4; (January 1894), 5.

¹⁷ Supplement to the *New Zealand Baptist* (January 1897), 5.

range of Baptists, particularly the young. However, little, if any, change to the format resulted.

In June 1889 Dewdney, on taking up a new ministry at Thames, concluded his ten years as editor of the *NZ Baptist*. Reflecting on his contribution he concluded

this much may be said: that our churches know more about each other, and are more deeply interested in each other's welfare than before, while the bonds that unite us have been drawn closer, and we are beginning, at any rate, to be aroused to the wider interests of our denominational life.¹⁸

Dewdney was succeeded by a very different personality. Frank W. Boreham was already well on his way to international recognition as a Christian writer. His most successful work appeared outside the pages of the *NZ Baptist*. However, a lighter tone entered the paper during his seven-year term. Editorial pages began to be appear with headlines such as 'Scribblings by the Seaside' and 'The Moral Significance of Cricket' and a regular feature of 'Bits for Preachers and Teachers' featured the often quaint anecdotes for which Boreham would be famous.¹⁹

In at least one case, Boreham's ironic style led to more serious debate than he might have anticipated. In the early years of the new century, denominational amalgamation on a number of levels was much debated. In May 1901 Boreham noted that the religious weekly *The Outlook*, which already represented both Presbyterians and Congregationalists, had recently added a Methodist connection. 'We congratulate our excellent contemporary upon its marvelous performance; but we counsel it, with friendly, and perhaps nervous, entreaty, not to try to swallow anything else.' Sparring further with his competing editor, Boreham suggested, a month later that, as Methodists now had only to subscribe to one periodical, they might feel compelled to expend the saved subscription on a monthly copy of the *NZ Baptist*.²⁰ Perhaps to Boreham's surprise, Harold Peters, a former business manager of the *N.Z. Baptist*, suggested that a merger of the papers was in fact worth considering. His central argument was one of scale, or the lack of it.

¹⁸ NZB (June 1899), 88.

¹⁹ NZB (March 1901), 33; (September 1901), 129.

²⁰ NZB (May 1901), 73; (June 1901), 89. On the *Outlook* see E.W. Hames *Out of the Common Way: The European Church in the Colonial Era 1840-1913* (Auckland: Wesley Historical Society, 1972), 134-5.

That we should lose some present advantages is certain. The question is whether we should not gain others of more value. One outstanding feature of the suggested arrangement that must commend itself is that our people would have a weekly instead of a monthly paper. It would be far better for us to have a journal of some thirty pages of reading come into our homes once a week than one of sixteen pages once a month.²¹

Over the next three issues the question was debated, with the correspondence overwhelmingly against Peters' proposal. Nevertheless a concern that did emerge in a number of letters concerned the price of the *NZ Baptist*, which, at 4s. 6d. per annum, posted (unchanged for two decades), was still seen to be a brake on subscription growth.²²

The expansion of *The Outlook* and the debate engendered by Peters caused a fresh look at the impact of the *NZ Baptist*. The annual report of the paper pointed out that the distribution had been slowly rising but that nonetheless only 630 copies were paid for each month. 'Does this not seem a very small number, when it is considered that there are 16,035 Baptists in the Colony, according to the latest census?'²³ The Conference agreed and a committee was set up, charged with identifying ways of increasing the paying readership. A year later the situation had worsened. Fully a third of subscriptions were in arrears and the printer was owed the substantial sum of 55 pounds. The enterprise was technically insolvent, as liabilities exceeded assets. The printer (T.E. Fraser of Christchurch) had in effect been carrying the paper for several years. Something had to be done and a series of bold steps were taken immediately. A tinted cover to carry advertisements was added and an advertising manager appointed. Most significantly the price was reduced to 2s. 6d. per annum, in the conviction that this would result in a significant lift in subscriptions.²⁴ The risk met with reward. By November 1905 subscriptions had doubled and in 1906 the size was increased to twenty pages.²⁵

Boreham, however, was by then about to move on. In June 1906 he departed to take up a new ministry in Hobart. R.S. Gray of

²¹ *NZB* (August 1901), 118.

²² *NZB* (September 1901), 131-32; (October 1901), 148-49; (November 1901), 164.

²³ Supplement to the *New Zealand Baptist* (January 1902), 8.

²⁴ Supplement to the *New Zealand Baptist* (January 1903), 7, 11, 13.

²⁵ *NZB* (November 1905) 171-2.

Christchurch took over as interim editor until, at the November Conference, H.H. Driver was appointed to the permanent role.

Driver, like Boreham, had studied at Pastors' College. He was, however, a very different personality, with a much less lively style. His own preaching ministry had been cut short by problems with his throat and he had begun a new career as a bookseller. He was thus a literate, well read figure, but he lacked Boreham's verve and spark. It is hard to argue with Ayson Clifford's assessment that 'his attempts at humour were seldom successful.'²⁶ Driver claimed 'no feigned humility' in taking up the post 'with no little self-distrust and anxiety'.²⁷ Nevertheless, he did manage and produce his paper efficiently. It continued to achieve its aim of adding to the cohesion of a still scattered Baptist community and better technology allowed the increasing use of photographs and other illustrations.

Like Dewdney, like Boreham, Driver was a conservative. He was critical of the unions in the Shipping strike of 1913.²⁸ In September 1914 (the first issue which responded to the outbreak of World War One) the editorial material unequivocally took the part of the British Empire. 'To Arms!' was Driver's first sub-heading and the willing response of potential combatants across the empire was celebrated. 'This spontaneous outburst of patriotism is of priceless worth....While Britain commands such universal and fervid patriotism her supremacy and perpetuity are assured.'²⁹ But running a monthly newspaper under wartime conditions was never going to be easy and the pressure seems to have told on Driver. He chose to retire from the editorship in 1915. A popular figure, he was given a warm and generous send-off at the 1915 conference.³⁰ His departure, however, had created a big problem for the denominational leadership. Finding a suitable replacement was in one sense easy - there was an outstanding potential candidate - but would he want the job?

J.J. North was by 1915, already the leading figure in the denomination. He was minister of the Oxford Terrace Church in Christchurch, one of the 'big four' central city churches along with Wellington (which North had already served as Pastor) the Auckland

²⁶ A Clifford, *A Handful of Grain: The Centenary History of The Baptist Union of N.Z.* Vol 2., 1882-1914. (Wellington: Baptist Union of NZ) 1982, 95.

²⁷ NZB (November 1906), 21.

²⁸ NZB (December 1913), 225-6.

²⁹ NZB (September 1914), 171-173.

³⁰ NZB (November 1915), 209-10.

Tabernacle and Hanover St in Dunedin. He had served on every major body of the Union and Missionary Society, had been a regular contributor to the *NZ Baptist* for twenty years and, never shy of controversy, was building a reputation as a public figure. In many ways a new task was the last thing he needed. 'I have undertaken, beginning with the next issue, the Editorship of the paper. I have added this to my many pressing engagements at the urgent request of the Executive.' Typically, however, he immediately announced measures to increase the number of contributions, including two book prizes per month for the best writing.³¹

Underlying these measures was the usual anxiety to generate an increase in subscriptions. Progress was not spectacular on this front. In 1917 the figure was 1800, a slight lift, but by 1920 it had dropped back to 1700. The business manager, W.H. Hinton, noted in frustration that, although prizes had been offered for the boy and girl who brought in the greatest number of new subscribers, only one child had even entered the competition!³² The publication was hamstrung by production difficulties. The war had led to a shortage of paper. Expected supplies did not always turn up.³³ This seems to have continued in the period after the war. In December 1920, the printers were changed and the format was altered from foolscap to the smaller quarto. At the same time pages were reduced from sixteen to just twelve. This was, however, just a temporary setback. As times improved so did the size of the newspaper. By 1923 issues were 20 pages long; 26 by the end of 1924; 28 by 1929 and 36 in 1930, before the economic depression of the 1930s forced a reduction back to 32. By now circulation had nudged above 2000, where it would plateau for a decade before gradually rising again during the 1940s.

In part this seems to have been the result of North's energetic editorship. He carried the editorial duties largely alone until October 1922, when, in anticipation of a year's travel, he stepped down temporarily from the post. North was succeeded for the year by W.S. Rollings who handled the 'editorial' material. He was assisted by Samuel Morris, who, in the new role of Sub-Editor, received with the 'news' items, such as reports from camps, meetings and churches. North picked up the reins again from Rollings in November 1923 but Morris continued in the Sub-Editing role until his death in October 1925. L.B.J. Smith filled in until April 1926. He was followed by Eric

³¹ NZB (November 1915), 210.

³² *Annual Report of the N.Z. Baptist Union, 1920*, 35.

³³ *Annual Report of the N.Z. Baptist Union, 1917*, 32-33.

Evans (1926-28), Stanley Jenkin (1928-32), H.R. Turner (1933—41), W.J. Gibbs for five months in 1941, then J.T. Crozier who, in November 1941, began a near thirty-year stint. All these men were based in Dunedin, where the *NZ Baptist* was printed from December 1921. With North first in Christchurch and then in Auckland, the major part of seeing the paper through production lay with the Sub-Editor.

The division in the editorship soon proved essential. In 1926 North began as founding Principal of the new Baptist College. For the next two decades he thus filled two crucial opinion-forming roles in the denomination.

Though a prodigious writer and commentator, North was no social radical. The *NZ Baptist* did not suddenly become an anti-war or pro-labour publication on his appointment. Yet in a manner unimaginable from Driver, North would think outside the square, often tackling the nuances of issues with gusto. An example is his position on conscientious objection. In 1916, though eschewing the very notion of neutrality, he nonetheless avowed

we are winning this war. We can win it without surrendering the precious gains of the past....Conscientious objectors can be given tasks more useful to the Nation than martyrdom. They can be retained at peaceful, yet essential tasks, and can be regarded as the prophets of the golden year which we earnestly hope is 'at the door'.³⁴

When the war ended he warned against vindictive demands on Germany.

We confess to great anxiety as to the terms that shall be imposed on the fallen Fatherland. The problems of victory are not going to be easy of solution. We know perfectly well that it is only too possible to impose such a peace as shall be an immediate incentive to the next war....We want to see peace terms that contain no seed of future wars.³⁵

North would be editor for over thirty years. Although he would regularly comment on public affairs, it was vigorous engagement with religious and denominational controversy which marked his editorship. He was a harsh critic of Roman Catholicism and Plymouth Brethrenism alike, finding in both a conscience-limiting

³⁴ *NZB* (August 1916), 150-52.

³⁵ *NZB* (December 1918), 177-8.

authoritarianism which he saw as inimical to Baptist principles. Increasingly the *NZ Baptist* became a vehicle for debate and argument in which correspondents would at times take umbrage at North's positions and would receive a riposte in similar tone.

At times this pugnacious approach could land North in hot water. In the early 1930s tensions arose in the Baptist church in Napier, a city on the east coast of the North Island. The economic impact of the 1931 earthquake raised the question as to whether the congregation could any longer sustain its minister. Rev. O. MacHattie, however, who had served in a number of short pastorates, was not about to concede to circumstances. Machattie launched an aggressive campaign to ensure his ministry was retained. After receiving a number of appeals for intervention the Union took the then unprecedented step of constituting a Commission of Enquiry. Machattie's name was eventually removed from the official list, though by questionable procedure.

Machattie was not going to bend meekly to such pressure. In July 1932 he drafted 24 notices of motion about the controversy for the consideration of the Annual Assembly, set for October that year. These were sent to every church in the country. In 1934 he filed for a Writ of Mandamus ordering his restoration to the ministerial list. After a hearing in which the judge indicated sympathy with Machattie's position, the Union was forced into a settlement in December 1934. Machattie was returned to the official list and copies of the 1932 Commission's report were to be destroyed.³⁶ By this the Union hoped to 'bury the whole matter'. However to the frustration of the Union and its Solicitors the matter was very nearly blown open again by the editorializing of J.J. North. It has been expected that the terms of the settlement would be printed without comment in the *N.Z. Baptist*. North, however, was not one for diplomatic silence. He added a lengthy preface to the official statement and thereby provoked further threats from Machattie. These, fortunately for the Union (and North), were not pursued.³⁷

A decade later North was forced into court. In 1942 the Baptist Union was taking its first practical steps in ecumenical

³⁶ Apparently at least one Executive member did not adhere to this part of the agreement, as a copy of the Commission's findings is in the files of correspondence associated with the Machattie case - NZBRHS N.2/14.

³⁷ These, fortunately for the Union, were not pursued. See *N.Z. Baptist* February 1935 and correspondence from the same month in NZBRHS N.2/14.

cooperation. As a member of the newly formed National Council of Churches (N.C.C.) Baptists joined the 'Campaign for Christian Order'. This was an ambitious venture aimed at Christian social reconstruction.³⁸ The name, it seems, was not covered by copyright. In the December *N.Z. Baptist*, North excoriated a group that had appropriated the name for very different ends.

In times like these prophets of the impudent type pop up....A brazen Auckland group, seizing piratically on the term 'Campaign for Christian Order,' advertised in the 'Herald' that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming to take up his kingdom on 17 July 1944,' – a little less than two years from now. They have offices in Exchange Lane and invite dupes to call or write to them. We say 'dupes' advisedly....What are all such dates but defiance of our Lord's word?³⁹

The strength of this denunciation was not unusual from North. However, the group concerned took severe umbrage and sued the Baptist Union for libel. The case was heard in May 1943 and was a public curiosity, not least for the unusual nature of the evidence for the plaintiffs, who represented themselves. In the midst of war news the case achieved some notoriety, with daily papers reporting the details of the 'strange libel action'. The action failed. For the Baptist Union this victory was crucial and not merely because of the 500 pounds damages sought. None of the other denominations in the N.C.C. felt the need to criticize the group in the public manner that North had.⁴⁰ Baptists, with a vigorous anti-modernist wing, were perhaps the most exposed to bizarre theological schemas.⁴¹ For

³⁸ On the campaign see A.K. Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa: A History of Church and Society in New Zealand* (Wellington: Education for Ministry, 1991), 121.

³⁹ *N.Z. Baptist* (December 1942): 321.

⁴⁰ The Associated Churches of Christ took the next most public action but this consisted merely of reprinting North's condemnation in its publication of February 1943. From the official campaign, Rev. J.D. Smith approached the group in person.

⁴¹ For instance, the excesses of 'Brethrenism' had been of concern on the edge of Baptist life since early days in the colony. J.J. North was particularly suspicious of Plymouth Brethren (see e.g. *N.Z. Baptist* (December 1942): 322). For the impact of the Brethren on Baptist life in Nelson, Canterbury and Wellington see P. Tonson *A Handful of Grain: The Centenary History of the Baptist Union of N.Z.*, Vol. 1 (Wellington: NZBRHS, 1982), 34-5, 47, 88; and G.H. Scholefield, (ed.), *The Richmond Atkinson Papers*, Vol. 2 (Wellington: Govt. Print, 1960), 31. See also Martin Sutherland, 'Cohesion and Conflict

North, the need to dissociate from such 'impudent prophets' was paramount. Baptists were not to be regarded as on the 'fringe', lunatic or otherwise. They had gained a place at the main table and they wanted to remain there. Reviewing the outcome of the case in the July 1943 *N.Z. Baptist*, North noted with satisfaction that 'the general view, voiced by Archbishop Averill, was that the N.Z.B. had done a notable service to Church and State. For that we are very glad. We want to be useful.'⁴²

The primary function of the newspaper, however, remained the building of cohesion within the denomination. Reports from churches and from missionaries continued as a principal feature of each issue. To this building and maintenance of identity North made a profound contribution. His commitment to a strong Baptist stance is evidenced in the evolution of the mastheads used during his editorship. In their position at the top of the first page of each issue they sent a powerful party signal. Where, under Driver, it was merely noted that the periodical was 'Published under the Auspices of the New Zealand Baptist Union' under North this was changed to a description of the paper as 'The Organ of the Baptist Union'. North went much further, however, than this closer association with the organisation. He introduced a doctrinal declaration which itself underwent a series of telling changes, each sharpening and strengthening the sectarian points of difference.

The first of these statements first appeared in North's fourth issue, March 1916, and read as follows:

The Baptist Church, which has an enrolled membership of upwards of 7,000,000 holds the Evangelical Faith. It believes that Infant Baptism is unscriptural and an impediment to the Gospel. It teaches that Baptism is 'the good confession' which follows Faith.

In 1923 North was overseas for some months. A highlight of his trip was his attendance at the July Baptist World Alliance Congress in Stockholm, Sweden, where he chaired a session. This appears to have been a very significant experience. In the first issue he edited on his return (December 1923) the masthead statement was shifted up a gear.

in 1880s Cambridge,' *N.Z. Journal of Baptist Research*, Vol. 4 (October 1999): 3-21.

⁴² *N.Z. Baptist* (July 1943): 150.

Churches which have no distinctive message have no right to exist. The Baptist Church separates from other churches on matters of the first moment. There are to-day 9,000,000 enrolled members in Baptist Churches in 30 different countries, and there is a total community of 20,000,000. They all say this one thing – salvation is by faith in Christ alone. No sacrament can save. Baptism is the confession of faith when faith is reached. Infant baptism has no place in the Gospel of Christ.

A month later, North was more pointed still.

SETTLE WHAT BAPTISM IS AND YOU SETTLE MOST
OF THE QUESTIONS VEXING CHRISTENDOM

Baptism is inseparably connected in the Testament with conversion and the second birth. What is the connection? Two explanations are offered. The Catholic, which declares that Baptism causes second birth; and the Baptist, which declares that Baptism proclaims it. No other theory has any connection with Scripture. The Catholic theory makes Salvation depend upon a ceremony and so is not ethical. The reflection it makes on the character of God is unbearable. The Baptist theory makes Baptism the most radiant thing in the world. It is the first act of a new convert.

This was the final form of the masthead that North would use for the next twenty years. It was not until January 1944 that it ceased to appear. By then, North's editorship was approaching its end. More importantly, the denominational leadership was moving in a new, ecumenical direction which made such provocative sectarian positions unattractive.

North retired from the editorship in failing health in 1948. The last few of the issues nominally under his care were in fact put together by J.T. Crozier. N.R. Wood became the next editor. Wood had trained as an early student of North at the Baptist College. He declared himself determined to carry forward the Baptist witness of the newspaper.

To the Church, in its various branches, the people called Baptists bear their witness to the true nature of the Church of Christ, to the competency of the individual soul in all matters of religion and to the true nature of baptism. The fact that the barriers separating the churches are being broken down does

not make any less urgent the obligation upon Baptists to bear their testimony.⁴³

For all this, Wood's would be a softer sectarianism than North's had been. In keeping with the spirit of post-war New Zealand, the tone was organizational and institutional, with major denominational initiatives often the natural focus of the content. Finances were difficult. In 1951-2 the issue size was reduced to 24 pages and the subscription rate increased from 6s to 7s 6d. The trend to make more of the covers (begun in 1944) continued, with large images on the front displacing advertising, which was soon eliminated from the body of the paper altogether, reducing available space to just three pages of the cover. Subscriptions hovered around 3300, never threatening the hoped-for 4000 which was the focus of a familiar sounding campaign to get "The Baptist' in every Baptist home'.

Yet there were other signs. The reports from churches grew in profile, at times taking up 40% of each number. The financial responsibility began a shift towards the denomination and away from subscription. By 1955 a substantial annual subsidy was embedded in the accounts. The 1950s was a decade of confidence and expansion for New Zealand Baptists and the paper reflected that mood. Wood had been an activist and self-identified moderate pacifist in earlier years. His stance seems to have shifted by the time he became editor.

After the first World War the Church rediscovered the social gospel. It was an attempt to help a bewildered society find a new foundation. Pacifism and socialism appeared to many as certain doors into the Kingdom of God. The events of the fourth decade have shattered these rosy dreams. The challenge to religion is now largely from the economic angle. The souls of men are being drugged by social security. Their outlook may not altogether unfairly be described as that of 'beer and bread; races and sex.'⁴⁴

A search of the pages of the first seven years of Wood's editorship reveals no significant editorial reflection on the Korean conflict or on pacifism. On the other hand there was much which signaled loyalty - that is: national loyalty. Queen Elizabeth II featured on three covers in less than two years. In April 1955 the cover was given over to the ship which would take the New Zealand delegates to the B.W.A. Congress in London. Three months later the British

⁴³ NZB (February 1949): 29.

⁴⁴ NZB (January 1950): 2.

Houses of Parliament were shown with the by-line 'The Heart of Empire: Home of the Baptist Congress'.⁴⁵

The magazine thus continued through its ninth decade as a key element in Baptist identity. An important shift had, however, begun. Under North's early editorship, its messages vigorously attempted to build, shape and strengthen Baptists' view of themselves. The impression one gets of the magazine in the 1950s is more that it reflected, rather than drove its community. This decade saw the largest percentage growth (45%) of Baptist members and an even bigger increase in the take-up of the *NZ Baptist* (66%).⁴⁶ There is a likely link between these factors. The newly confident denomination was more comfortable with its place in New Zealand church life. It had less need for a paper which aggressively staked out new ground. Rather, what it wanted was to see its image in the pages of a family album. By the end of the 1950s that was the principal role of the *NZ Baptist*. Rapid changes in Baptist life over subsequent decades would call that cosy function into question.

Conclusion

The very survival of the *N.Z. Baptist* is a testimony to its importance in the story of the denomination in New Zealand. Larger bodies were unable to maintain continuous publication of their periodical. Whatever the reasons for the demise of other titles (some of them positive, such as attempts at unity in the joint publication of the *Outlook*), for thinly spread Baptists the newspaper enabled communication and the gradual shaping of identity. In such a small group, the role of individuals is often crucial. This is certainly evident in the editorship of the *N.Z. Baptist*. J.J. North's strong advocacy of Baptist principles contributed to the emergence of a confident post-WWII denomination. Ironically, North may have overdone it. With confidence came greater introspection, a fascination with itself, also reflected in the 'family magazine', which arguably made New Zealand Baptists ill-prepared to face the challenges of the radical sixties.

Martin Sutherland

⁴⁵ See the covers of the *NZB* March 1952; June 1953; January 1954; April 1955; July 1955.

⁴⁶ Figures taken from the Baptist Union *Annual Reports*.

Key Documents: **‘I dwell among mine own people’: Allan Webb Calls for a Strong Sense of Baptist Identity**

INTRODUCTION

A measure of the growing move towards establishing a colony-wide Baptist Union in New Zealand is the publication of a seminal sermon by the Australian master-organiser, A.W. Webb (1839-1902). Webb had received his training in Adelaide under the early Baptist leader Silas Mead. From 1877-81 he was Pastor of the Auckland Baptist Church and he was present at the foundation of the New Zealand Baptist Union in 1880, before returning to Australia for a further series of pastorates.

Webb was a conservative Baptist who favoured the creedal approach of the Baptists in Victoria and was suspicious of the merging ‘higher criticism’. He thus shared Charles Spurgeon’s concerns over the ‘downgrade’ in British Baptist theology. This sermon, as the editorial note indicates, was preached twice in Sydney in 1876. In his history of Australian Baptist life, Ken Manley notes its popularity and analyses its fairly narrow definitions with a later, South Australian statement by John Paynter.¹

The significance of the sermon for New Zealand lies in its being reprinted four years after its first delivery, just as *The Baptist* magazine was advocating a more denominational line (see previous article) and when decisions about colony organisation were soon to be made. The sermon is addressed primarily to scattered Baptists worshipping in other denominations. There were many of these in New Zealand at a time when communication and travel was still difficult. The sermon thus demonstrates the challenges of colonial life for small denominations. It also exemplifies a strand of Baptist ecclesiology which came to dominate Baptist life in New Zealand and which overwhelmed the more regional focus, found particularly in Canterbury in the 1870s and 80s.

¹ K.R. Manley *From Woolloomooloo to ‘Eternity’: A History of Australian Baptists, Vol. 1: Growing an Australian Church (1831-1914)* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 225-7.

**The Baptists:
Their Denominational Existence
a Necessity.
A word to the Baptists scattered in
other denominations.***

A sermon by the Rev. A. W. WEBB, Pastor of the Baptist Church, Auckland.

* Note. Preached in the Baptist Church, Harris Street, Sydney, on Sunday evening, August 5th, 1876, and repeated Sunday evening, August, 19th, 1876, and now published by request.

‘And exhort you that ye should contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.’—Jude 3.

The particular occasion of this exhortation was the manifestation in the church of a desperate declension from the truth. Those fundamental doctrines of our holy faith, the Deity and Sovereignty of the Lord Jesus were being denied. The grace of the gospel was made an apology for renouncing its pure morality: ‘Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.’

But whilst this was the immediate occasion of this exhortation, the principle which it enjoins is one of world-wide and perpetual application.

There are distinctions in the relative importance of the various portions of revealed truth; some doctrines are of more moment than others, as in the bodily structure, the functions of some organs are vital as contrasted with others which are simply useful. Yet who will be disposed to neglect a crushed and sloughing finger on the plea that it is not the heart, or to treat with indifference a broken leg because the skull remains unfractured? True, the doctrines of the Deity of Christ, the atonement, the need of conversion, are of paramount importance, and yet no one who believes that every iota of revealed truth was given by God, and ‘is profitable,’ will say that we are warranted in regarding any part with indifference. If such part of

truth is not essential to salvation, it was deemed by the Author of Salvation as of sufficient importance to be recorded, that we may know the things which are essential to obedience, and which please Him. It is on this ground that we deem the question of Baptism of sufficient gravity to engage our attention, and to form the subject of religious controversy. I would here guard my hearers from being 'thrown off the scent' by a cry very often raised by those who regard our testimony and existence with disfavour; the cry I refer to is 'O, is all this fuss about a little water, a question of mere quantities, what can water do for us?' No, my friends, the fuss is not about water; there lie at the very basis of our witness these fundamental questions, 'Is Christ to be the legislator in His Church or not? Is the disciple of Jesus to choose or to obey?' It is not a question of water, little or much, but of simple obedience to the revealed will of our Master. It is the important question whether the religion of the New Testament is a personal matter or one of proxy - of whether ordinances are independent or not of the faith of those participating in them, for their beneficial effects.

There are many subjects about which I believe a wise latitude is observable in the scriptures; matters to be decided by circumstances, fitness, and even taste. Amongst questions resolvable by circumstances I should even place the method of governing the church; I think I could, without any sacrifice of principle, exercise my ministry in connexion with a Presbytery or even under a Bishop if he were wise and good. Amongst questions of preference I should place such as that of the propriety of wearing a peculiar garb, white or black, or even purple, so long as these dresses are not regarded as symbolic; for it is not what the man wears, but what he preaches, that is of importance. Or, again, that of having a liturgical service (a hymn-book is liturgical) or free prayer. Not that I am dissatisfied with the methods we have in vogue. Our order of government works very well, and I have no desire to don a gown, or use a prayer book, preferring things as they are. But these are matters about which but little is said of a positive character, and on account of which it is a pity that divisions should be occasioned. But Baptism is a positive institution of Christ; to treat that with indifference is an insult to our Master. And as nothing which is brought into His presence and determined by a reference to His will - nothing about which the conscience is exercised as in His sight - is trifling. We refuse to regard this as a matter about which we make too much noise, but believing it to be a part of the faith once delivered to the saints, we conceive it to be our solemn duty to contend with earnestness for it, and the more

particularly as we see how inevitably infant-sprinkling tends to foster the growing ritualism of the age, lying as it does at the very base of sacramentarian views. In pursuance of my object, which is to show the absolute necessity for our existence as a Christian body, for bearing witness on this subject, as a part of that religious system once delivered to the saints, I shall

1. Insist that there is a faith on this subject which was once for all ('hapax') delivered to the saints.

If 'once for all,' this religious system is incapable of alteration, of growth, of evolution. We do not believe in the evolution of dogma. The truth of revelation, lying as it does in the first instance, beyond the reach of human reason, is to be received as imparted, and of all other truths this is more emphatically true of the ordinances of Christ, resting as they do solely on the authority of Christ. If 'once for all delivered to the saints,' where is the truth to be found? In that record, we reply, which contains the faith of the apostolic age, the age of inspiration and infallibility. The moment we leave that region we become sensible of the fact that we are dealing with a totally different class of teaching. If we are tempted to reach down the musty tomes of patristic literature, or the writings of the schoolmen, or even the creeds and confessions of Christendom, we find ourselves enveloped in fog. The age immediately succeeding the apostolic (the age which some vaunt of as the purest) gives evidence of a tendency (unconscious to those living in it) to the development of those principles which have ripened into the huge apostacy of Rome, and simultaneously with, and as noiselessly as, the introduction of monachism, martyr-worship, and transubstantiation comes in infant-baptism. In seeking for the faith, 'once for all' delivered to the saints, we are never safe outside the limits of our Bibles. To the word and testimony for that faith. Our infallible guide is the Bible. 'Ah, then,' as said a Free-thinker to me not long ago, 'Ah, then, your Bible is your Pope.' 'Exactly so,' I replied, 'You have most accurately defined my position; for, with all the unwavering submissiveness which characterises the Papist when listening to the ex-cathedra utterances of the Pope, I listen to whatever the Bible teaches.' Yes, brethren, in defiance of those who would exalt either ecclesiastical authority or human reason to the position of unerring arbiter in matters of religious belief, we will abide by the Word of God, not 'one jot or tittle' of which can fail. It would be beside my purpose to enter into the baptismal controversy here, and I am only defining the limits of

appeal as being that book which, by direct command and by numberless incidental allusions, clearly lays down the two principles which we maintain, that Believers only are the subjects for both ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, and that the apostolic mode of administering baptism is by immersion. If we would know God's mind we must not refer to third century Fathers, who had no other light than we have, and who were, as just emerging from heathenism, and poisoned with gnosticism, in a position inferior to ours for judging the simple meaning of the inspired records.

2. My second point is that the faith, once for all delivered to the Saints, is discoverable by them now.

In this age of diversified religious opinion, when men, to all appearance equally learned, equally pious, and equally sincere, are teaching doctrines so diametrically opposed to each other, it is not surprising that the humble and perplexed Christian should cry out with Pilate, 'What is truth?' 'Is it possible for an unlettered man, an illiterate woman like me, to discover it?' And thereupon we are tempted to say (and it is a convenient way of disposing of the toil and responsibility of ascertaining personally what our Lord's will is), 'Well, I will go on as my fathers went before me. I will listen to the instructions of my good old Church and of my minister with implicit confidence, and hope that after all mine is the right way, or likely to be as good as my neighbour's.'

Now, a Saint's faith, enshrined in the written Word for his acceptance, ought to be discoverable to him as a Saint. Without the intervention of Doctors of Divinity - without even Greek or Hebrew - useful though such auxiliary knowledge is - he ought to be able from God's Word to determine what is God's will; and I believe that if men would only cast aside their prejudices, their prepossessions, their unwarrantable reverence for custom, and their superstitious deference to human teachers, who after all, should be subject to the same Word, if they would teach aright, they may, unlearned as they are, come to see the truth, and be perfectly assured of it, in this matter of Baptism.

I well remember how my mind was infected with prejudice when first I was drawn to investigate this matter. One thing I thought, it was that the Baptists were not the warm and energetic Christians I should like to associate with, imagining, perhaps, as some stupid people have done in this city, that the water exercised a

lowering influence on their zeal;* and another thing, I did not think but I knew, that identification with them meant the surrendering of many pleasant associations, and the forfeiture of many happy prospects; and so, for four months, with a variety of polemical works on either side of the controversy under perusal, I oscillated from one side to another, sometimes thinking I must be convinced, then hoping I might not be, and then anon imagining I had escaped from the Baptist snare altogether, until at length I determined to end this controversy. In the presence of God, and on my knees, with my Bible before me, I took a sheet of paper, on which I inscribed at the head of two columns respectively, 'for Believers' Baptism' 'for Infant Baptism.' I then wrote down every text in the New Testament bearing on the subject, and I need hardly tell you that I terminated that investigation in a different mood to that in which I commenced it—I found myself in the clear light of truth. The mists had been scattered, the dust of the contending combatants had been laid. I had learnt God's will from God's own Book; and I determined to be baptized, thereby repudiating the well-intentioned mistake of my excellent parents. The next morning I went to my respected minister, who had been a witness of the conflict, and said, 'I am going to be baptized,' which confession elicited no remonstrance, for he knew enough of me to know that it had been well and properly considered. I am persuaded that if men, learned and unlearned, would, without prejudice or reference to other authorities, consult the best book ever written on the 'Baptist Controversy,' which may be purchased at the Bible Hall for threepence—viz., the New Testament—they would be able to say with me, 'On this matter of baptism I am sure I hold the faith once for all delivered to the saints.' An assured conviction is possible to the patient, single-minded student of the Word of God; to him who is content to be as a little child in God's kingdom.

3. My third point is, that when discovered, it is our duty to contend earnestly for this point of the faith.

The zeal with which we contend for the various items of the faith should be, it is true, proportioned to their relative importance; and our feelings in contending for baptism with our Paedo-baptist brethren are necessarily less intense than they would be when

* This was an erroneous impression indeed. I have since noticed that in all such unsectarian work as involves no compromise of principles, there are no more ardent workers than the Baptists

contending with the Socinian, who, entering the Holy of Holies with ruthless and impious touch, lays his hand upon the ark of the Covenant, and denies the Godhead of our Lord; and yet *no* part of truth, when attacked or rejected, can fail to excite the concern of the loyal disciple of his Lord. And as a straw shows the course of a current as surely as a war frigate would, so our conduct in relation to the minor truths of revelation may with accuracy determine the true state of our wills and affections towards Christ. 'He that is faithful in that which is least is unfaithful² in that which is greater.' And further, as the whole faith is to be a subject of valorous defence on the part of those who hold it, we shall not mistake our vocation as Baptists in seeing ourselves set for the defence in particular of that part of it which has to do with the Scripture doctrine of the Sacraments, and particularly of baptism—its mode and subjects.

The original word, 'epagonizesthai,' has embedded in it an idea which, I fear, we all fail to realise contention for the truth. Our translators have fairly rendered it as being *earnest* contention—an agony, a fight, in which the stake is not merely victory, but some great issue;—the slavery, or enfranchisement of a race—as men fight for their liberties, their children, their homes. As men should contend, who feel that God's glory and the welfare of immortal spirits is the stake. 'We have, brethren, to bear, as Baptists, an immense amount of insult, of obloquy, of indifference, and what-not, for our persistent advocacy of our principles. We are esteemed the troublers of Israel, and we are the butt of the whole confederacy of the multiform and divergent opinions which are held by Paedobaptists upon this matter; for I need hardly say that Paedo-baptists differ almost as much amongst themselves as they all do with us. But I avow my conviction that, if we were half as much in earnest as we ought to be in this matter, we should make ourselves 'viler still.' And if the spirit that has animated our martyred Baptist forefathers—martyred by Papist and Protestant—in the past animated us, we should have to endure a moral pillory and roasting often or than we do. And if, in fulfilment of our convictions we must come into collision with others whose Christian principles on other points we admire, and bear their reproaches, remember it is for Christ's sake; and with Luther we must say, 'Here stand I must, and God help me.' Now, in these three propositions I find our apology, or justification I should say, for our continued and separate existence.

² 'Unfaithful' is what appears as printed in the *NZ Baptist*. The context suggests 'faithful' is what is intended.

If there is no definite and perfected faith in the Bible; or if that faith is in such a nebulous form that we cannot come to a conclusion upon it without the intervention of an infallible teacher, or if when discovered we may treat our conclusions as matters of no importance, and choose whether we will contend for them or not as suits our comfort and convenience, or the comfort and convenience of others, if either of these negative propositions be true, then I cannot justify our existence. We are schismatics from the larger bodies of Christendom, and no mere fancy or preference of our own can justify it. But if what I have advanced be true, then I affirm that we cannot but continue to exist and push our way with all the vigour which a devout conscientiousness demands, and for these reasons:

1. *First—Because in other denominations another faith is not only tolerated but enjoined.*

The Independents, who are our nearest of kin ecclesiastically, have taken care to embody in all their trust deeds (at all events in this colony) the dogma of infant baptism; they believe that baptism is effected by sprinkling, and that children are by it dedicated to God. The Presbyterian believes that the children of the believing parent 'are Christians, and federally holy, and therefore are they baptised,' that is sprinkled.

The Church of England, whilst making dipping the rule, makes sprinkling optional, and so it has become the rule, and they make baptism not only available for infants, but insist upon it as a pressing duty. Moreover, they assert unequivocally that after baptism the child, just before pronounced unregenerate, thereupon regenerate, and ever after he is taught to regard baptism as the occasion of his being 'made a *member of Christ*, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.'

The Wesleyans are authorized to use the liturgy of the Church of England in baptism, and if the Rev. Richard Watson may be allowed to speak as an authorized teacher of that body: — 'It conveys the present blessing of Christ, which blessing cannot be nominal, but must be substantial and efficacious. It secures also the gift of the Holy Spirit in those secret spiritual influences which are a seed of life.'

Now in each of these communions a definite belief is laid down, which all ministers are *obliged* to accept, and which private members are *supposed* to accept. Under any circumstances, identification with these bodies is a tacit admission that I accept their

teaching upon this particular item of Christian faith and practice. If I say I am Independent, Churchman, Wesleyan, or Presbyterian, I am understood to accept their views on baptism, and if occupying any post of usefulness as a teacher of others, I am expected to teach them. Where then, as affording consistent standing ground, can I assemble if there be not a Baptist Church?

2. In the second place, we must continue to exist because identification with these Churches is under compromise.

If I am identified with them I must be content to be silent upon a point of God's will, which I esteem to be clearly revealed. If you say 'No,' then why are ministers holding Baptist sentiments, in every other sense orthodox and efficient, excluded from these bodies, except as they are content to be silent on this matter.

If you say 'No,' then try what will result from your becoming thoroughly faithful to your convictions on this matter. Do not forget that if your convictions are true they are very valuable - that to you belongs the important work of restoring to the Church the primitive doctrine on baptism - a doctrine which will deal a deathblow to Romanism and Ritualism - a doctrine likely to be of growing value to the Church in her conflict with these misconceptions of the Christian system - a doctrine full of evangelical truth and divine beauty. Begin then, my Baptist brother (so long in silence, witnessing what you believe to be unscriptural without protest), begin to bear your testimony, contend earnestly, circulate some tracts upon the Baptist controversy amongst your fellow-believers; instruct them more perfectly in the way of God, and see how soon the door will be shown you, and unless you are content to abide in silence, you must find another spiritual home. You will assuredly be 'turned out of the synagogue.'

3. In the third place; I insist upon the necessity of our denominational existence because if we are all content to go away into other bodies, our testimony ceases upon this point. And shall it? Shall we be traitors to Christ's truth instead of valiant soldiers for it? No! brethren, no! I would exhort those of our brethren, scattered in various Paedo-baptist churches to rally. It is cowardly to leave us alone in the battle. You say, in apology, you are 'so useful' in your present position. And who is the best judge of usefulness? May you not, in judging before the time, be passing a wrong estimate on the result of your life-work. And granted that you

are useful, is there no need for your talents with your own people? I imagine no Baptist Church would fail to appreciate your usefulness as one of the elements they most need, but which you are giving to others. You say you are 'so comfortable in your present position.' And was it to comfort Christ called you, or to a cross? You are 'so comfortable' supporting a ministry, one of whose functions you utterly repudiate, whilst your ministers, who faithfully represent your convictions are toiling away with insufficient support, and the people taxed heavily to afford such sustenance as they do. You are 'so comfortable,' assisting in spreading error, whilst the Church you once aided is left to do her aggressive work as best she can. You are 'so comfortable,' and for all you seem to care, the body which most adequately represents, according to your own convictions, the truth of Christ, may be toiling with a cross on her shoulders heavy to be borne, which you will not touch with one of your fingers. Remember, my brother, so snugly ensconced in that larger and wealthier Church—basking in the smiles of influence and ease—remember, those who are ashamed of Christ and of His Word, of them will He be ashamed when He comes in His Glory. Remember that, 'Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same should be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.'

In a word, baptized Christian, if you believe that you can 'contend earnestly for the faith' where you are, remain and do so, but suffer no compromise to be the cost of your separation from your brethren. If to be where you are means guilty silence, then come out on such a platform as will admit of the freest expression of your conviction.

We affirm, in the existing state of affairs, our denominational existence is a *present* absolute necessity; let us hope not a *future* one. Let us hope that ere long the necessity for our existence will cease in the wise adoption by the Reformed Churches of the Scriptural doctrine of baptism. There does seem to be a widespread tendency in several bodies to allow the baptism of infants to fall into disuse as an unmeaning and, therefore, if on no other grounds, an unscriptural thing. And if this happy result is not so speedily attained, let us hope that, at least, the article of infant baptism will be removed from creeds and trust-deeds of all the Churches, leaving the fullest latitude to the individual Christian, whether minister or not, to teach, discuss, and practice, that which in God's sight, he believes to be true.

Meantime our duty as Baptists is clear. If we are conscientiously determined to bear without reserve or compromise our testimony, and to contend earnestly for that view of baptism which we conceive to be alone consistent with an evangelical faith, we must find our home among Baptists.

If our people are obliged in sparsely-populated districts to join other communions as a temporary expedient, it must be as Baptists; and if silence on the subject is the cost of such privilege, then better form a small Church, and in witnessing for the truth wait the time, when their principles having won adherents, they shall have the advantage which, whilst not essential to the existence of a Church, is a privilege a Church should desire—a pastor of their own—with the various agencies of a perfectly-organised Church.

Our existence is a necessity. Thrust out of other communions by tests obnoxious to us, prevented from bearing our testimony, or fulfilling our convictions therein, we naturally flock together, and form Churches of those who accord in principle. What otherwise should we do, turned out into the cold for our principles? If it were a matter of mere preference, or of something which could be talked of as of degrees - better or best - as in the question of government and administration, we might well afford to relegate such things to the region of questions debatable, but quite insufficient to divide the Church of Christ; but it is a matter with us of right or wrong - of loyalty or otherwise to our Master; and until the Church at large either accepts our principles as scriptural, or, at all events allows absolute personal freedom to ministers and people on the point, we have no choice but to remain as a distinct body, and realising whilst doing so that above all other Christian Churches, we have the most complete justification for our continued separation.

To every inducement to compromise—to absorption into other denominations, to identification with other churches, the utterance persistently and uniformly of the Baptist must be that of the Shunamite woman – ‘I dwell among mine own people.’

I should be very sorry that any unconverted person should leave this audience to-night, saying. ‘I went to the Baptist Church, but whilst a great deal was said about contending for believers' baptism, not a word was addressed to the unsaved.’ Let me then say, that whilst baptism is a matter which more immediately concerns the believer, there are many particulars of ‘the faith once for all delivered to the Saints’ which are of vital importance to you as a sinner. Amongst these I shall briefly insist on three. The first is the value of

the soul - *your* soul. Its capabilities are such as God alone can estimate. It can either love Him, and serve Him for ever, or it can endure the inconceivable woe connected with eternal exclusion from His immediate presence. The worth of the soul is not calculated in the currency of earth. Its redemption is, indeed, costly, being secured not by silver or gold, but by the precious blood of Jesus. Think of the priceless jewel you possess, and fear lest it be lost for ever.

The next fact I would insist upon is - that your soul is in instant peril of eternal ruin. Nothing stands between you and that ruin but the long-suffering of God. If that were to fail eternal justice might say, 'This night thy soul shall be required of thee.' 'The day of salvation is now. To-morrow you may have heard the gates of eternity close behind you, shutting out for ever a mercy now possible to you.

And last and best of all Jesus Christ, the only one by whom you can be saved, 'for there is no other name given under Heaven among men' to this end—is waiting to be gracious *to you*. He can 'save to the uttermost;' and He will 'in no wise cast you out.' Some have, ignorantly or wickedly, said that we esteem the water of baptism as possessing saving efficacy. But no; let it be known once and for ever, that we know of but one cleansing fount - the blood of Jesus - which washes away all sin from the defiled conscience. We know of but one sure ground of hope before God - the perfect work of the Lord Jesus. Nothing need be, nothing can be, added to that. Come then, unsaved sinner, to Christ first, and know His power to save; and then, as a happy believer, 'Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,' confess Him, in His own expressive ordinance of Believer's Baptism.

Review Essay

Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003)

I. Beyond the Impasse

A fundamental axiom emerging within contemporary theology is an understanding that the Holy Spirit is the agent of *all* revealed truth to humanity. If we accept this statement, (which we do), then all discovery, whether scientific, philosophical, or theological, is only revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. This forces upon us the issue of truth revealed in other religions. If we are courageous enough to consider whether there is truth found within other religions, then we are forced to acknowledge that such truth has been imparted by the Holy Spirit.

As our world becomes more global, and especially as east meets west, differing cultures, philosophies, and religions will inevitably confront each other. For the Christian community, what is the most effective way to engage with other religions? In *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions*, Amos Yong, Associate Professor of Theology at Bethel College, St Paul, Minnesota, USA, addresses this question theologically. But are his conclusions those we would want to share? And what is the impasse beyond which Yong wants us to traverse?

Yong builds on Paul Tillich's definition of religion as 'ultimate concern'¹ to define a theology of religions as 'the attempt to understand the human ultimate concern within a theistic framework' (p.17). Yong believes that the categories of 'exclusivism', 'inclusivism', and 'pluralism' are laden with Christian assumptions that are too bound up with christological and soteriological claims which result in an 'impasse' between Christian theology and a theology of religions.

¹ P. Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions* (1963; reprint Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 3. See Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 16. All further references to *Beyond the Impasse* will be in parenthesis in the main text.

As such, Christian theology takes a defensive stance against other religious claims to truth (pp.22-29). Yong therefore promotes a pneumatological approach to a theology of religions, believing this approach can move Christian theology 'beyond the impasse'.

Yong's thesis is founded upon three axioms: first, that God is universally present and active in the Holy Spirit; second, the Holy Spirit is the life breath of the *imago Dei* in every human being; and third, and more controversially that religions of the world, like everything else that exists, are providentially sustained by the Spirit of God for divine purposes (pp.44-46). Key for Yong's foundational theology is a rejection of the *filioque* and reclamation of Irenaeus' description of the economic activity of the Son and the Spirit as the 'two hands of God (the Father)' in the world (pp.86-91). Yong uses this analogy to good effect in attempting to eliminate the subordination of the Spirit to the Son which he sees in much contemporary theology.

In order to situate his own proposal within the contemporary scene Yong surveys and critiques the work of four theologians: Georg Khodr (Eastern Orthodox), Stanley Samartha (Protestant), Jacques Dupuis (Roman Catholic), and Clark Pinnock (Evangelical Protestant), who have proposed a pneumatological path towards a theology of religions. Yong's major criticism of each thinker is that they return to Christology prematurely (P.103). While acknowledging a need at some stage to confront the Christological questions, Yong's suggested methodology is to explore the role of the Holy Spirit for as long as possible because the Holy Spirit is 'the meeting point between Christian and non-Christian, and between both and God' (p100). If Christology is seen as the divisive issue for a theology of religions then pneumatology is considered the unitive bond. It is this thesis which Yong goes on to develop.

In order to suggest a pneumatology suitable for a theology of religions, Yong develops a systematic reassessment of the nature of spiritual discernment (p.129). The key question being how do we distinguish the Holy Spirit from other spirits in the religions of the world, including our own? (p.163). Yong provides three criteria for discernment: divine presence, divine absence, and divine activity. Divine presence shows the reality of God in truth, goodness, beauty, and holiness. Divine absence is characterized by the destructive, false, evil, ugly, profane, and demonic. Divine activity is the realisation that everything is constantly moving either towards or away from its God instituted purpose (p.165). The goal being that we can understand and

engage other religions from a position of truth (p.175) without allowing Christian normativeness to create a theological imperialism (p.125).

This work throws up many questions such as: are religions other than Christianity salvific? Can adherents of pagan religions have a right standing with God? What is the basis or content of Christian evangelisation? Yong has developed the ideas represented in the current work under review in several other publications including *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal–Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 20 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), and ‘The Spirit Bears Witness: Pneumatology, Truth and the Religions,’ *SJT* 57 no. 1 (2004), 14–38. In each of these works the basis thesis remains constant: ‘a pneumatological approach to the diversity of religions provides hitherto untapped resources for the theological understanding of both religious truth and the interreligious encounter.’² In this essay published after *Beyond the Impasse* Yong asks the specific question as to the finality of Christ in a pluralist world of religions. For Yong, a difference must be established between so-called objective truth, absolute truth, and religious truth. It is religious truth which is especially Spirit endowed in Yong’s argument at least. As Yong writes, ‘In this case, then, the intuition that religious others are also caught up in some way by the truth of Jesus as light of the world is given a pneumatological grounding.’³ From this Yong argues that the ‘other sheep’ Jesus speaks of in Jn 10.16 refers to those who have a religious grasp of the truth but indwell other religions than Christianity.

II. The Problem of Metaphysics

Yong’s work is stimulating, enlightening but at the same time challenging and disturbing. His appeal to the category of pneumatology as a way beyond the impasse created by absolute Christian truth claims is engaging but problematic as well. Several criticisms immediately come to the fore, a few of which we shall consider in this critical review.

2 A. Yong, ‘The Spirit Bears Witness: Pneumatology, Truth and the Religions,’ *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57 no. 1 (2004), 15.

3 Ibid., 34–35.

Yong spends some time interacting with metaphysical concepts in order to make a robust foundation for the application of his theology later in the work. He argues that metaphysically, 'all determinant things' have both the *logos*, what is concrete and objective; and *pneuma*, what is dynamic and subjective (pp.129-130). This requires some critique of Yong's metaphysical argument and from there an examination of whether or not his spiritual discernment criteria are too ambiguous to be effective in what he proposes.

In a generally positive review of his work, Dale Irvin levels two critical questions regarding Yong's work. His first question regards his seemingly preconceived commitment to Western Metaphysics.⁴ Irvin points to how Yong takes C. S. Peirce's phenomenological features of firstness, secondness, and thirdness (p.132-134) and by using the 'two hands of God' analogy, he concludes that the *logos* and *pneuma* are present in any historical form through its concreteness and dynamism.⁵ It is from this train of metaphysical thought that Yong provides his three criteria for spiritual discernment. Irvin's charge is that Yong 'perceives the substance of God as something to be abstracted or abstractable from the persons of the Trinity.'⁶ Irvin promotes the Eastern Orthodox position as one better suited to the project that Yong has undertaken. That position being 'where the divine substance is understood to be a function of the personhood of the Father communicated to the Son and Spirit and thus not capable of being talked about apart from the personhood of God.'⁷

Yong responds to Irvin's critique by asking 'what kind of metaphysical framework best accounts for the actuality of genuine faith interaction, of inter-confessional understanding, of inter-testimonial appreciation?'⁸ Yong admits that metaphysical assumptions are unavoidable and acknowledges his own. In a post-modern context where narratives, confessions, and testimonies are subjective, we are still able to communicate with each other despite culture language or religion which produces obvious barriers. Yong

4 D.T. Irvin, 'A Review of Amos Yong's *Beyond the Impasse*,' *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 12 no. 2 (2004), 279.

5 Dale T. Irvin, 'A Review of Amos Yong's *Beyond the Impasse*,' *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 279.

6 Ibid 279.

7 Ibid 279.

8 A. Yong, 'Beyond *Beyond the Impasse*? Responding to Dale Irvin,' *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 12 no. 2 (2004), 282.

suggests that we can't avoid metaphysics and must therefore answer what 'scheme best explains the facts as we experience them.'⁹ As we encounter inter-religious dialogue in a pluralist world our experiences need to be translated self-critically in a way that can support public discourse.¹⁰

III. The Issue of the Trinity

In relation to the Godhead, Yong rightly sees adopting the Eastern starting point of three triune persons over the Western view of one divine substance as exchanging 'one set of problems for another'.¹¹ Trying to avoid one stance on the Trinity over another (east vs west) is the very reason Yong has considered metaphysics in order to redefine the distinct and yet inseparable economies within the Godhead.¹²

While defining the Trinity is an incredibly complex matter, the trinitarian structure of reality and theology must be taken seriously when a pneumatological answer to anything, let alone a theology of religions, is proposed. While Yong is correct that the western Christian tradition has tended to subordinate the Spirit to the Son his adoption of Irenaeus' two hands of God theology does not convincingly support his case as it too tends to subordinate both Spirit and Son to the *monarchy* of the Father.¹³ Furthermore, Yong's focus on pneumatology to the relative neglect of Christology tends to create a religion of the Spirit. Although Yong claims that his pneumatology is theistic, even trinitarian, he is in danger of an implicit tri-theism. Timothy Tennent notes this predominance of pneumatology over Christology in Yong's work and notes that that from the council of Nicaea 'Christology provides the only truly objective basis for evaluating truth claims.'¹⁴ While a more trinitarian basis for truth claims may be more appropriate Tennent's criticism of Yong's approach is welcome.

⁹ Ibid., 282.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 283.

¹³ Irvin, 'A Review of *Beyond the Impasse*,' 281.

¹⁴ Book Review by T.C. Tennent, 'Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions' *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 27 no. 4 (2003), 181.

IV. The Problem of Ambiguity

Irvin's second question regarding Yong's work is that if Christology faced the danger of religious imperialism in inter-religious dialogue, then 'the danger that confronts foundational pneumatology is inherent religious vagueness.'¹⁵ Irvin alludes to Yong's criteria for spiritual discernment as inherently ambiguous categories.¹⁶ Yong realises this but claims that 'discerning the spirits will always be ambiguous' (p.160). Tennent agrees with Irvin that Yong's threefold criteria are 'in the end too ambiguous to provide the assurance that such an ambitious project demands.'¹⁷

Yong's response is that because metaphysics trades on generalities, then it 'cannot but be abstract'.¹⁸ He prefers to describe his spiritual discernment criteria as vague. Because inevitable comparisons will be made in inter-faith dialogue Yong believes that by using vague or the broadest categories for discernment, we can 'remain sensitive to the difficulties of comparing across linguistic, cultural and religious traditions...while attempting to honor the particularities, values and insights of what is being compared.'¹⁹ Yong gives an example of how two different religions may experience similar realities by comparing Buddhist enlightenment to the Pentecostal baptism in the Holy Spirit.²⁰ Only by comparison will we be able to see if there are any similarities, if so what are they and how identical are the two experiences? According to Yong, this type of inter-faith dialogue and comparison will become essential if we desire to communicate the gospel while being respected of other people heritage.²¹

V. Word and Spirit

Yong's argument that the broader that we can keep the criteria for spiritual discernment in engagement with other religions the more likely we are to go beyond the impasse created by traditional Christian theology is a convincing argument and one that is being made often

15 Yong, 'Beyond *Beyond the Impasse?* Responding to Dale Irvin,' 280.

16 Irvin, 'A Review of *Beyond the Impasse?*' 280.

17 Tennent, 'Beyond the Impasse,' 180.

18 Yong, 'Beyond *Beyond the Impasse?* Responding to Dale Irvin,' 282.

19 Ibid., 283.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

today.²² It is, however, a thesis fraught with dangers. How long can one keep Word and Spirit apart in such interfaith dialogue without distorting the truth of the Christian gospel? How can a pneumatological approach to the religions not also be, if it is indeed Christian, a trinitarian approach which must, by necessity, involve the constitutive role of Christ? And finally, how does the approach advocated by Yong seek to redress the problems encountered by such ill-fated attempts by the World Council of Churches to achieve the same ends? In the final analysis Yong's thesis risks separating the work of the Son and the Spirit in the economy rather than distinguishing their work as he intends.

The ambiguity touted by Yong as the panacea for interfaith dialogue by Christians in a postmodern context must be held in tension to allow for the realisation that if Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revelation, the christological question will need to be addressed sooner rather than later. While Yong is exploring an exciting pathway for a theology of religions, the Son provides us with certain boundaries that the quest for truth will be found within. We do need to search for areas in the world where the Spirit is at work while realizing that the Spirit points people towards Jesus Christ. However, there is a danger in focusing on the economic mission of the Spirit over that of the Son (or i.e.-versa for that matter). Rather in all areas of theology we must seek understanding from a trinitarian perspective.

Yong has provided a book to further a pneumatological theology of religions and is to be congratulated. While this concept is still in its infancy, Yong raises some thought-provoking concepts worthy of further thought and understanding. Yong goes out of his way to present a position on a theology of religions which is orthodox, and yet he is walking a short distance from disengaging the persons of the Godhead from each other thus threatening the unity of God.

While the argument of Yong is couched in academic theological terms and vocabulary it is one with which many today in

22 See for example the survey provided by V-M, Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), especially his review of Yong on 277-281). For Kärkkäinen's own constructive proposal see *Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology, and theology of Mission*, ed. A. Yong (New York: University Press of America, 2002), 193-239. See also C. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996), 185-214.

the church and the academy need to wrestle with as it has many practical consequences for ministry and mission. With Keith Warrington we agree that it would be a shame if these concepts are only read by scholars and therefore the work needs to be made more accessible to a broader readership through critical reviews such as this and by pastor-scholars interacting with such proposals and translating them for their congregations.²³ A positive challenge given to us from Yong is that as we meet and engage people of other cultures and religions in our own neighbourhoods, are we ready to engage with them from a position of similarity - as human persons created in the *imago Dei* - rather than from a position of imperial arrogance and conflict? As Kärkkäinen states: 'It is too early to give a definite assessment of Yong's very recent approach. Nevertheless, his attempt to construct a viable pneumatological theology of religions should be understood as an opener, a way to ask the right questions.'²⁴ While Yong may not provide the final answer on this issue he certainly raises many useful ideas which deserve further consideration.

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23 Book Review by K. Warrington, 'Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions,' *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 30 no. 3 (2006), 283.

24 Kärkkäinen, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology*, 237.

REVIEWS

Ken R. Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': a History of Australian Baptists*, 2 vols, Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006 (856 pp).

Australians are reputed to be tellers of good yarns. That may be no more than a popular myth, but Ken Manley's two-volume history supports that reputation. Denominational history can be a pedestrian shopping list of humdrum detail. Not so this one. Manley has given us big picture developments of Baptists in Australia with some remarkable vignettes of the outworking of the big picture in particular situations.

Manley's good yarn dimension begins on the opening page with a story of two women baptised in 1832 at Woolloomooloo Bay in Sydney before a mocking crowd, some of whom subsequently sought to spy on the now-baptised women when they went to change behind a large rock.

The yarn quickly moves to the conversion of an alcoholic and petty criminal, Arthur Stace, in a Baptist church in 1930. Stace, gripped by the word 'eternity', spent the next thirty-seven years chalking that word 'eternity' at least 500,000 times on the pavements of Sydney under cover of darkness. Stace's story inspired both a movie and an opera. As an old millennium closed in Sydney on the last day of 1999 fireworks marked its end. At midnight neon lights atop its harbour bridge marked the new millennium. Those lights spelt out one word: Stace's 'eternity'. Manley's book is largely a history of Australian Baptists between the Woolloomooloo baptisms and the neon-lit message of 'eternity' in 2000 (though the book formally concludes at the year 2005).

Manley has undertaken a difficult task in writing this book. In part this is because of the strong state-orientation of Australian Baptists. Thus while Baptists quickly organised into larger structures state-by-state in the mid-nineteenth century, it was not until 1926 that a Baptist Union of *Australia* emerged. Manley was therefore faced with the difficulty of showing coherence in the story of Baptists in quite different state contexts. Furthermore, Baptist approaches varied markedly from state to state. South Australia and Victoria, for example, developed in a more liberal evangelical direction while

Queensland and New South Wales were much more conservative. Thus in the 1970s Victoria supported the ordination of women while New South Wales rejected that view by four to one in an Assembly vote - altering that decision only in 1997. For its part Queensland still had a bar on ordaining women ministers into the twenty-first century.

Manley's first volume focuses on the formative years up to 1914 and the development of Baptist identity in that period. The second volume explores the development of the national church up to 1966, before looking at Australian Baptist missionary history throughout the period of Manley's study. Manley then completes his book by exploring Australian Baptist identity in the challenging and less ecclesiastically stable last four decades. Within that larger frame Manley, though largely following a chronological structure has sought to develop a theme for each chapter, to provide a greater sense of significance and meaning to the period. Chapter nine, for example, bears the caption, "Australia looks to America' (1939-1966)". The problem with such a caption, however, is that much of the material of the chapter does not fit the heading. In that sense Manley's chapter headings can be misleading. Nevertheless they do draw attention to major developments and themes..

Of particular interest to a New Zealand reviewer are the significant parallels between Australian and New Zealand Baptist history. Some of this may relate to overlaps of personnel. Many pastors crossed 'the ditch' to minister in the neighbouring country. One who was particularly significant in this regard was the quasi-Baptist bishop of South Australian Baptists for thirty years, Rev. Silas Mead. It was his visit to New Zealand in 1885 which was a significant catalyst in the formation of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society later that same year. The influence was not all one way. For example, Rev. Alfred North's *Primer on Baptism* had much usage in Australia (246).

One astonishing aspect of the Australian story to a New Zealand reviewer is the much greater level of anti-ecumenism in Australian Baptist history. This fueled a forced resignation from New South Wales' Morling College of its principal Edward Roberts-Thomson in 1964, soon after his successful principalship of the New Zealand Baptist Theological College (1955-1960). Furthermore, residual anti-Catholicism meant that Morling was unable to participate in the Sydney College of Divinity as late as the 1980s (573, 757).

Overall, Manley has produced a stimulating and colourful work of scholarship that is of great interest to a wide range of readership.

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**R.S. Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches*.
Downers Grove: IVP, 2006. (236pp.)**

To date I have kept away from anything to do with the emerging church movement. As a theologian I have an innate dis-ease of the trendy fads which come and go, and the emerging church movement has appeared to me to be one such fad. In addition, there has not appeared in print many works of theological substance from the emerging church movement. Rather, the published works have tended to be of a popular nature, aimed at a general readership or of a pragmatic nature. And it is this last point which has been the most problematic in terms of theological interaction – pragmatism has tended to eclipsed theology.

The landscape has changed recently with the publication of two works that interact with the emerging church in some theological depth. The first work is D.A. Carson's, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005). Carson's work exemplifies a fundamentalist orientation which those of us familiar with his work have come to expect. On almost every page Carson focuses his negatively critical lens on the movement and has little to say in its favour. While this work does have many useful questions with which the emerging church movement really does have to wrestle with, the style and negative positioning of the work has limited its effectiveness in communicating with the movement. The second work is that under review by Ray Anderson, senior professor of theology and ministry at Fuller Theological Seminary. Unlike Carson, Anderson undertakes a decidedly evangelical critique of the emerging church, one which judges but is not judgemental. Rather than negatively critiquing the emerging church, Anderson undertakes a spiritual critique with the aim of equipping the new movement with theological robustness so it may further the Gospel and the Kingdom in an ever-changing world.

Anderson begins with a programmatic and provocative preface entitled: 'What has Antioch to do with Jerusalem?'; an obvious play on Tertullian's famous question: 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?'. Anderson uses his question as a paradigm for discussing an emergent theology for emerging churches. Jerusalem is a symbol of the established church with its tradition, stagnation, and domination. Antioch is the church of the Gentiles; a place of new mission strategies, innovation, and change for the sake of the Gospel. When Anderson uses the term 'emerging church' he refers primarily to the first-century emerging church at Antioch, including the other churches established by Paul. When he refers to 'emerging churches' he means those contemporary Protestant and Roman Catholic communities intentionally seeking to live out the Gospel in ways that connect meaningfully with contemporary culture. Anderson's work thus sets out to present an *emergent* theology drawn out of the early Antioch *emerging* community in order to fill a perceived need for a creative and constructive theological paradigm for the emerging church movement (p.10).

After a brief foreword by Brian McLaren, the ten chapters are eloquently set out as follows: 1. It's about theology, not geography; 2. It's about Christ, not just Christology; 3. It's about the Spirit, not just spirituality; 4. It's about the right gospel, not just the right polity; 5. It's about kingdom living, not kingdom building; 6. It's about the work of God, not just the word of God; 7. It's about the law of love, not the letter of the law; 8. It's about the community of the Spirit, not just the gifts of the Spirit; 9. It's about mission, not just ministry; and 10. It's about the church ahead of us, not only the church behind us. Each chapter finishes with a 'Concluding Nontheological Postscript'. Here alone one has the outline for a ten-week sermon series!

I have to admit that Anderson is one of my favourite practical theologians and I deeply respect his theology. At the centre of his theological convictions is the Word incarnate - Jesus Christ - and the triune God of Christian revelation. With a decidedly evangelical commitment and a passion for resourcing the church, Anderson's work is serious theology. This is reflected in the final paragraph of the book:

The emerging church is about being the church, like a family. It is an everyday reality with occasional gatherings and some celebrations. Being the body of Christ is a domestic as well as public practice of kingdom living. Being the church is as much a transformation of the secular sphere into sacred service as it is filling

the sanctuary with ordinary saints. The Spirit of Christ has provided all the parts – some assembly is required’ (p.219).

Anderson’s work is stimulating and striking at the same time. On so many levels it has an intuitive ring of truth about it, and yet parts of it are deeply troubling. And that is, I believe, the point of Anderson’s prose. An emerging church sponsors an emergent theology, and this theology is disturbing at first as the established (Jerusalem) church and theology wrestles with new possibilities and readings of Scripture. If church and theology refuse to wrestle with the theology and praxis of the emerging church (Antioch) then they remain in the mire of Jerusalem with all its legalism and externalisation of Christianity. If it responds to the new movements then it becomes an emergent theology that is prepared to grow and mature. This thesis creates certain problems, of course. Who is to say what is more mature theology and practice? How may we discern truth from culture or distinguish truth from experience? At what points may Antioch in fact be wrong and Jerusalem have it right? These and many other questions remain unanswered in Anderson’s work. In place of an apologetic for the emerging church, Anderson is more concerned to inspire and advocate for an emergent theology.

Throughout the work Anderson makes significant contributions to hermeneutics and theology, especially focussing on the work of God in Christ and the Holy Spirit in an emergent theology. In the chapter on the work of Christ, Anderson summarises his case for a theology of emerging churches with the following points (pp.134-135): 1) the work of Christ becomes a narrative text that served the critical criterion for interpreting and applying the narrative of Scripture; 2) Christ’s work took place through the power of the Spirit of God; 3) following the resurrection Jesus breathed the Spirit upon his disciples with the promise that through the Spirit his own authority to minister the work of God on earth would continue; 4) the presence and power of the Spirit post-Pentecost was assumed by the emerging church to be equal to Jesus’ words; 5) the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the historical Jesus and the Spirit of the eschatological Christ. Thus: ‘...I assume that the resurrected and coming Christ enters now into the present time as our contemporary, creating new narratives of Christ’s work by the Spirit through which we are to read and interpret the textual narrative of holy Scripture...[these] serve as hermeneutical criteria in reading and applying the Scripture narratives as Word of God’ (p.135).

In his Spirit-focussed hermeneutic, Anderson provides a way beyond the 'What would Jesus do?' hermeneutic of much contemporary evangelicalism. This hermeneutic assumes the absence of Christ whereas Anderson assumes the presence of Christ by the Spirit. Instead we have to ask how it is that Jesus can continue to minister to us today as our Great High Priest. The answer, according to Anderson, is by the Spirit through the people of God gathered in the church. Thus new church movements may be new movements of Christ by his Spirit, and theology must be responsive to this if it is to be faithful to God in Christ. Theology must be emergent as it responds to emerging Churches in order to be faithful to God.

Anderson finishes this work with a reminder of 'four last things', namely: 1. Being in Christ, not just believing in Christ; 2. Living the sacramental life of grace, not only dispensing sacramental grace; 3. Being a truthful church, not just the true church; and 4. Being the church, not just going to church (pp.213-219). The 'four last things' provide both a synopsis of the current work and a fitting conclusion to the central argument which Anderson develops over these pages. In this work the heart and head of a master practical theologian is exposed and provides a wealth of material on which others may build. Many of the ideas in this book are developed throughout Anderson's other writings, especially, *The Shape of Practical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), and *The Soul of Ministry* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), however, it is helpful to have this crystallization of his views in this work and focussed on the specific context of the emerging church movement. The emerging church movement – 'Antioch' - has much to offer the established church - 'Jerusalem', but it also has much to learn. Anderson has provided the first lesson, may many more follow.

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Larry J. Kreitzer *Seditious Sectaries: The Baptist Conventicles of Oxford 1641-1691*. (Studies in Baptist History and Thought Vol. 30.1-2) Milton Keynes: Paternoster 2006 (1056 pp).

Larry Kreitzer is a New Testament scholar at Regent's Park College at Oxford. He has allied interests in the Bible and literature and, most pertinently for this review, the dissenting history of Oxford. These daunting volumes represent a massive, not to say exhaustive, examination of seventeenth century primary sources. The first volume is largely a prosopographical study focused on five individuals who are at some point or other identified with the Baptists of Oxford in that period. Volume Two is a documentary record comprising 500-odd pages of a 'Chronological Source Catalogue', reproducing such esoteric documents as apprenticeship contracts, antiquarian reports, council records, letters, wills, diocesan indictments, applications for meeting house licences, marriage records etc.

Of the thirty-six individuals whom Kreitzer concludes 'can confidently be described as Baptists living and worshipping in conventicles in Oxford between 1641-1691' (1:15) five are given extensive treatment. Not surprisingly, given the nature of the extant contemporary sources all are men and most were 'merchants, tradesmen and artisans'. So we read of the Tanner, Richard Tidmarsh, the Glover, Lawrence King, the Soldier, Roger Hatchman, the Gardener, Ralph Austen and the Milliner, Thomas Williams. Kreitzer has done an astounding job in reconstructing as much detail as possible on these men's lives. Of the five, only Austen left any substantial direct record in terms of private correspondence or published writings. The lives of the others are built tangentially, from such accounts as references in court records or mention in minutes books.

For all this exhaustive detective work, perhaps indeed because of it, one is left with the question whether we are in the end presented with too much information here, much of it bearing only slightly on any significant picture of the individuals concerned. In the case of the Tanner, Richard Tidmarsh, for instance, we find that five instances of his signature have been identified. Two are in relation to the Will and estate of Tidmarsh's son's father-in-law Edward Wyans. Due to this connection we are given twelve pages on the career of Wyans and his own son. Various appearances for Wyans's senior's failure to attend the parish church are detailed. Wyans appears to himself have been a Baptist but his story adds little to that of Tidmarsh, other than

establishing a marital link. The account is similar for Ralph Austen, details of his publications on fruit trees are given in detail with smaller biographical studies of some of his associates. Despite his writings on Quakers however we are left somewhat unsatisfied in terms of understanding his theology.

Volume one reads as if Kreitzer determined that absolutely everything he uncovered would be recounted in full. The historian's job is to sift, arrange and highlight. This is not done sufficiently in this volume. The significance of the bulk of the material is not made clear.

What then of the second, documentary volume? Here again we have abundant evidence of Kreitzer's exhaustive archival search and excellent textual work. How useful, however, is this collection to subsequent researchers? It is a companion volume, which provides the text of most of the manuscripts which are referenced in the main volume. These are arranged chronologically, with an assigned number which appears in the footnote entries in the main text. This clearly aids in pursuing the points Kreitzer makes about his subjects, but it is of limited value beyond this ability to check his sources. The problem is that there is no particular connection between the documents themselves, other than the people they mention. This is not like, say, a complete transcription of a Church's minute books across a period, which might facilitate a range of questions. These documents must essentially be approached with Kreitzer's questions, which limits their value.

Paternoster is to be congratulated on producing this valuable series. It would be better still with greater attention to editing. The copies reviewed had a number of blank pages which annoyingly interrupt the text. There is no question that the depth and extent of this study has revealed some important aspects of Baptist life in seventeenth-century Oxford. Unfortunately this massive work displays some of the faults associated with parish histories of the 'labour of love' variety. We don't need to know it all. We need to know what it means. Less detail and greater interaction with the secondary literature on religion in Stuart England and Oxford in particular would have made this material more useful.

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Allan Coppedge, *The God Who is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2007. (345pp).

The Wesleyans strike back! Or at least that is what Coppedge (Beeson Professor of Theology, Asbury Theological Seminary, Kentucky) leads us to believe in the Introduction. From the Preface we learn that this work is the first fruits of a collaborative systematic theology to be written by a group of around fourteen scholars and friends (including his daughter and father-in-law), all associated with Asbury Theological Seminary, who established a theological project that would begin with Jesus, move to a triune understanding of God, and address the main themes of Christian theology. Three contemporary movements motivate the current work: the revived interest in trinitarian studies; the debate between classical and open theism; and the reconnection between biblical and systematic theology.

The main contention of the work is that when Jesus is made central to systematic theology a trinitarian theology ensues which changes everything. Coppedge contends he is constructing a theology he terms 'triune theism' or 'trinitarian theism', in contradistinction to classical or open theism. His work promises to be a *via media* between these systems and to creatively open up the divine essence, divine attributes, and the doctrines of creation and providence to a more biblical and trinitarian understanding, which will radically alter Christian experience and practice. This accounts for the subtitle: *Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*.

Over thirteen chapters Coppedge constructs a consistent and coherent theology and offers a wonderful range of new insights, nuanced doctrines, and refreshingly lucid opinions. In the biblical survey a methodology for recognising the Trinity in Scripture is offered: instead of limiting our search to trinitarian formulas, triadic texts, and those which explicitly mention all three persons of the Godhead, Coppedge successfully argues that texts which mention any *two* of the divine persons is sufficient to show how the God of the Old and New Testaments is fundamentally triune. He states: 'Old Testament monotheism is a monotheism of the triune God, who reveals himself more fully in the New Testament as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The best way to describe this view of God is 'triune theism,' which begins with the one God of Jewish theism but accents his triune nature. Jesus is our way into this expanded understanding of God' (p23). Coppedge then explains how the movement from

Scripture to theology involves a change in method from the order of knowing (*ordo cognoscendi*) to the order of being (*ordo essendi*).

Chapter Three surveys the formulation and development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the early church. A common failure of the work is first highlighted in this chapter, the work tends towards oversimplification, lacks nuance, and relies upon the readings of secondary sources. Coppedge draws uncritically upon the work of T.F. Torrance, C. LaCugna, and R. Jenson, for example, but shows no awareness of their conflicting theologies or readings of history. He also misunderstands people at key points as when he perpetuates the fallacy that Barth was a modalist due to his use of 'modes of being', and following Moltmann (p109), that Barth so stressed the oneness of God that he was somehow undermining an understanding of God as triune!

Chapters Four to Six cover the economic and ontological trinity, endorsing Rahner's *Grundaxiom* but then explaining the limitations of this if taken ontologically rather than methodologically. The 'triune theism' Coppedge constructs adopts the eastern starting point of the three persons over the one divine essence. This allows Coppedge to define the essence (*ousia*) of God as holiness and love. The three divine persons are discrete instantiations of this essence, drawing upon Torrance's theology of onto-relations and Nicene theology's stress on the *homoousios* of Father, Son, and Spirit.

Chapters Seven to Nine deal with the divine attributes from the trinitarian theology already constructed. This means ordering the discussion in a particular way, namely: personal attributes must come first, followed by moral, relative, and absolute attributes. Personal attributes include reason, imagination, emotions, and will. Moral attributes include love and righteousness, relative attributes include the omni's, and absolute attributes include simplicity, infinity and self-sufficiency. In adopting this order Coppedge is able to understand such attributes as simplicity, immensity, and immutability as subordinate to the personal and relational attributes. God's impassibility is denied (as Coppedge adopts an anachronistic reading of Patristic theology), and his immensity appears to be relativised. According to Coppedge, it is this ordering and understanding of the divine attributes which enables triune theism to adopt the perceived strengths and reject the perceived weaknesses both in classical and open theism. After discussing the concept of analogy, Coppedge concludes with outlining eight major 'roles' or attributes of divine identity to round off his discussion: God as Redeemer, Shepherd,

Creator, King, Priest, Judge, Personal Revealer, and Father. The last two are analogies of intrinsic attribution and thus reveal more of God than the six analogies of extrinsic attribution.

The remaining four chapters apply triune theism to the doctrines of creation and providence. God is clearly shown to be distinct from creation and yet intimately involved with it as Creator. In addition, the six central purposes for creation, especially human persons are stated: the chief purpose is to share God's life and love in fellowship with other persons; to share God's moral character; developing the mind of Christ; have close person-to-person relationships; serve God in their work; and to delight in the created order. Coppedge provides a contrast between naturalism and supernaturalism, and outlines a classic Arminian doctrine of providence, prevenient grace, and responsible and free humans. Throughout this section Coppedge insists that what is required is to relegate the concept of God as sovereign king to a lesser place and instead to begin with the concept of God as loving Father in relationship with the other two divine persons and with creation. Apparently the two are incompatible.

It is not until the final chapter that Coppedge directly defends triune theism against classical theism, process theology, and open theism. In the process he makes some audacious claims. According to Coppedge, 'Logically, those who begin from a trinitarian starting point are indeterminists' (p313). By indeterminism he is advocating the classical Arminian position of Molinism. (He does note that trinitarian theists could adopt the Boethian solution, Molinist solution, or the Ockhamist resolution, however [p315, fn. 8]). These are audacious claims given the fact that the most celebrated trinitarian theologians of our age, many of whom Coppedge cites with approval, are not Arminian. These include Karl Barth, T.F. Torrance, Colin Gunton, John Zizioulas, Cathy LaCugna, and Paul Molnar. There is no attempt in this work to defend Coppedge's claim against any of these authorities. Coppedge necessarily makes a distinction between foreknowledge and foreordination; the former is endorsed while the latter is radically redefined. Further, he argues that a trinitarian approach to theology necessitates that before God is considered the sovereign King he is a loving Father, Son, and Spirit. Coppedge concludes with three constituent features of trinitarian theism: first, it starts with Jesus Christ; second, it balances transcendence and immanence; and finally, it highlights God's relationality.

In his attempt to enrich the church by constructing a new trinitarian model Coppedge has provided a stimulating and helpful work. Written from a Wesleyan perspective this is a useful barometer of contemporary Arminian theology. Coppedge is to be commended for attempted to defend Arminianism from the recent challenges of open theism and also for attempting to articulate its differences from classical theism. The concept of triune theism is bold and Coppedge has made a fine attempt to outline what this new theology may look like. The focus on Jesus Christ as God's ultimate revelation was welcome, as were the pastoral and applicatory sections of the work. It is obvious Coppedge loves the triune God and wants as many others to love him as well.

That being said, the work does have some serious problems. Throughout Coppedge settles for generalisations and caricatures rather than detailed and nuanced theological analysis. Coppedge draws extensively upon the theology of Thomas Torrance, citing his work 42 times according to the index (compared to Pannenberg 18 times, Thomas Oden 16 times, Gunton 15 times, and Jenson 11 times). Despite this heavy reliance upon Torrance there is no detailed interaction with his work and at key points Coppedge affirms the opposite of what Torrance is affirming, with no comment on how he comes to these divergent views. On other occasions Coppedge makes comments that seemingly contradict his central argument, when, for instance, on p203, fn. 12 he affirms that 'After the incarnation, though, God the Son is fully corporeal'. Coppedge has argued for the incorporeality, infinity, immensity, and omnipresence of God before making this claim. So how can the two be reconciled? Coppedge offers no explanation. One simply assumes that Coppedge is committed to a Lutheran conception of the ubiquity of Christ, but this is radically inconsistent with the rest of the theology outlined in the work. Many other theological frustrations of this nature were also evident throughout which lead one to suspect that 'triune theism' will not catch on in this present form.

The God Who is Triune offers a general introduction to the doctrine of God, clearly explains some fundamental concepts and offers some fresh new insights. It also contains numerous eccentricities and theological aberrations which, in the final analysis, make the work both frustrating and disappointing.

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William H. Brackney *Baptists in North America: An Historical Perspective*, Malden MA, Blackwell, 2006 (296pp)

Bill J. Leonard, *Baptists in America*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005 (315pp)

Not surprisingly, these two very useful surveys have much in common. Each traces a story of diversity across four centuries and both seek to portray the complexity and richness of Baptist life as it stands today. It is a curious quirk of geographic identity that Brackney's work, although its title includes a qualifier, actually covers a wider area than Leonard's. Brackney includes Canadian Baptist development whilst Leonard is focused on the story in the United States. This obviously creates some differences of content and approach but the two studies nevertheless address many issues, movements and people in common. Both books are volumes in more general series. Leonard's is a contribution to the *Columbia Contemporary American Religion Series* whilst Brackney's is part of Blackwell's studies of *Religious Life in America*. Each book is therefore tied to the demands of its series. Both trace a more or less chronological development and then turn to various themes such as theology, politics and gender. There are advantages of course to this helpful shape and the constraints of publication make both books of accessible length and coverage. The intended readership is also important. As elements of general series the books are written for non-specialist and, indeed, primarily non-Baptist markets. They are as much introduction and explanation of Baptist characteristics and foibles as historical studies. As such they should not be looked to for groundbreaking new scholarship, although the work of such leading interpreters of American Baptist life inevitably provides new and fresh perspectives.

Are there, then, points of difference to note? Brackney, having to cover a wider field, elects a greater chronological focus, giving four chapters to the history up to the start of the twentieth century. Leonard gives only one. Brackney thus tends to weave themes into the historical development; Leonard prefers to tell the story through the lens of his chosen themes. Each achieves his aims very well, making both books excellent resources for historians of other traditions or of Baptist life in other regions. Both books include full indexes. Brackney's bibliography is more comprehensive and is divided by subject. Leonard's is helpfully annotated but more

selected. For the non-specialist scholar, then, Brackney's list is probably the more useful.

There are some areas in which the limits of the formats probably prevented adequate coverage. A point of interest for non-specialist Baptist scholars for instance is the role and response of American Baptists to slavery. Here neither treatment is entirely satisfying. Both authors note the divisions in Baptist attitudes to slavery in the nineteenth century but emphasise the progressive approaches. Brackney discusses the issues as part of Baptists' activism for human rights. Leonard places slavery within the broader question of race relations. For the reader seeking to comprehend pro-slavery positions of many Baptists, especially in the South, there is a disappointing paucity of analysis. There is perhaps a hint of 'whiggism' here, with the more palatable emancipation efforts being stressed.

It is, however, always a little uncharitable to criticise works, especially survey treatments like these, for what they leave out. Both Brackney and Leonard offer excellent introductions to Baptist history and development in the most Baptist region of the world, providing considerable insight to students in places and cultures where the story is very different.

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D.G. Bloesch, *Spirituality Old and New: Recovering Authentic Spiritual Life*. Grand Rapids: IVP; Nottingham: Apollos, 2007. (191pp.)

Spirituality has become one of the most written about subjects in contemporary thought – both secular and Christian. Most of these works are consumed with defining 'spirituality' and articulating its importance or otherwise for the targeted readership. Many Christians see the spirituality renaissance as something of a boon, an open door to Christian evangelism. Donald Bloesch is not so optimistic. Bloesch, Professor of theology emeritus at Dubuque Theological Seminary, is well known to most Evangelicals in the academic world

for his prolific output, erudite and exhaustive surveys of various topics, and his bold and impassioned writing style. Never one to hold back with an opinion, Bloesch clearly sees the task of writing as the positive expression of his beliefs set against the backdrop of those beliefs with which he does not agree. Having been a student of his writing for over a decade now I have come to appreciate Bloesch's candour, courage, and cadence. His writing style is a model of eloquence and his theology is always rigorously informed by a respect for Holy Scripture and the role of tradition.

In an earlier project, the 7 volumes of his Christian Foundations series, Bloesch's theological commitments and method were laid bare. What stands out in this series is his commitment to a theology of Word and Spirit: a catholic, evangelical, churchly theology that seeks to resource the church for its witness in the world. While Bloesch self-consciously works from a Protestant, Reformation, and Calvinist orientation, his catholic commitments are thus that he seeks to build bridges wherever theologically possible. The current work contains, for instance, favourable reflections on Augustine, John Wesley, the Booth's, Luther, and Thérèse of Lisieux, the latter with the suggestion she could be an 'evangelical saint'! All this is, of course, by way of introduction. What may Bloesch so introduced have to say about spirituality and the contemporary and pluralistic flourishing of the term? Will he be in favour of it or critical of it? Will he speak primarily to the church or to the academy?

Spirituality Old and New is vintage Bloesch. Every page is ripe with quotations. Each chapter is packed with a theology enriched by the tradition. At every turn Bloesch is quick to point out the weakness and shallowness resident in any spirituality that is not expressly evangelical (by which he means biblical as much as anything else). Over eight chapters and five short appendices, three 'types' of spirituality are surveyed: mystical, biblical, and the new spirituality. The reader is left with no confusion over the supremacy of the biblical view, something Bloesch terms 'biblical personalism', to that of 'classical mysticism' and 'new age' varieties of spirituality. The five appendices are short reflections on aspects of these three types of spirituality. Appendix A considers the perils of Gnosticism as a form of mysticism, Appendix B rebukes the New Age movement and its 'Christian' advocates as a version of the new spirituality, while appendices C, D, and E contain comments on various aspects of Christian spirituality including a hymn of pietism entitled, 'One Thing Needful, Greatest Blessing', by Joachim Neander, that Bloesch considers profitable for all Christian traditions today.

In a work on spirituality the first thing one looks for is a definition. In the Preface Bloesch defines 'spirituality' as follows: 'Spirituality is inseparable from theology'; 'True spirituality is service to the most high and holy God through service to our fellow human beings'; 'A spirituality that can ignite the church will furthermore be churchly'; 'Spirituality in the Christian sense is not so much an upward progression nor an inward possession. Instead, it is an outward succession'; and finally, 'We must recognize that biblical faith creates its own form of spirituality, which resists any accommodation to cultural ideology and religion' (pp.13-15). Simply put Bloesch recommends a spirituality that is churchly, rational, traditional, mystical (with specific qualifications), and cotemporary. This definition may not satisfy everyone; it does not define 'spirituality' so much as describe it, and the rest of the book continues in the same vein.

Spirituality Old and New is as interesting as it is frustrating. It is not written for the church, generally considered, but for the academy. And yet, it is not a work of academic precision but more of a personal theological reflection by a respected mentor in the faith. For that reason those who know Bloesch will tend to love it, others may well wonder what the purpose of the work is. This should not, however, put people off reading the work. The comments Bloesch makes about the role of Scripture, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit are timely and sage. Those advocates of a form of Christian spirituality which lacks theological robustness will be rebuked, while others who may have tended to overlook the role of spirituality in the Christian faith will find themselves being chided. Finally, the spirituality Bloesch advocates encourages responsible involvement in the world. In his own words, 'The practice of faith in the world (*orthopraxis*) flows from the right praise of God in the church (*orthodoxa*). The ethical is rooted in the spiritual, but the spiritual finds its culmination in the ethical' (p.149). If spirituality is to be Christian at all, argues Bloesch, then 'true spirituality begins with God. False spirituality begins and ends with the self' (p.150). In a world of competing spiritualities Bloesch offers a useful if not complete guide dividing the chaff from the wheat of spirituality.

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Robin Parry. *Worshipping Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005. (xvii + 202 pp.)

There are many books currently in print on the Trinity, most of which deal with the intricacies of theological and historical debates. While many of these books are exceptional they are not targeted at the pastor or the informed laity and for that reason, fail to impress themselves upon a churchly audience. Parry's book is different, and wonderfully so! With chapter titles like, 'Theology and Worship up a Tree, K.I.S.S.I.N.G' and 'Singing the Trinity', Parry appeals to pastors, worship leaders, and other practioners to *get back to the heart of worship – the triune God*. He writes, 'The basic idea of this book is very simple: worship is about God and God is the Trinity, therefore worship is about the Trinity...This book is a journey of exploration into the implications of that simple thought' (p. 3).

After an introduction outlining why the Trinity is essential to Christian worship, Parry provides three chapters which chart some of the important biblical and theological resources from which a doctrine of the Trinity emerges. The remaining chapters focus on applying a doctrine of the Trinity to worship, specifically to our songs, prayers, sacraments, Bible reading, preaching, and the arts. Throughout Parry provides theological theses which summarize the trinitarian shape of worship in differing contexts. These include: 'the mission of the church is nothing less than the gift of sharing by the Spirit in the Son's mission to the world on behalf of the Father' (p. 58); and 'Christian ethics is about participating in the Son's holy obedience to the Father with the help of the Spirit' (p. 59). These statements and others in the book show the influence of certain trinitarian thinkers on Parry, most obviously J.B. Torrance (*Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*). Parry does an excellent job of applying much of this theology to concrete church practices.

The real strength of the work is the applied sections in the later chapters. In 'Singing the Trinity' Parry provides 'reflections on how songwriters might go about writing more Trinitarian songs and how worship leaders might think about selecting songs so as to facilitate a greater awareness of the richness of the Trinitarian God' (p. 122). Songs ranging from those of Charles Wesley to Graham Kendrick, and the Psalms to Hillsongs, are analysed, critiqued, and recommended. Worship leaders will find in this chapter sane and erudite advice on how to deepen corporate Christian worship by thinking through more clearly what we are singing and who we are

singing to. Without succumbing to the facile advice that we must always sing songs which include the words 'Father', 'Son', and 'Holy Spirit', Parry provides comprehensive and practical ways for worship leaders to ensure a trinitarian 'balance' is achieved, thus escaping a Unitarianism on the one hand and a polytheism on the other hand.

Of special interest is the chapter on 'Praying the Trinity' and the case Parry mounts for why it is at least appropriate to pray to the Holy Spirit. This is a highly contested practice in church history and Parry handles this issue with sensitivity and skill. Parry pleads with the readers to 'consciously teach ourselves Trinitarian prayer habits and break any sub-Trinitarian habits we have picked up along the way' (p. 150). This requires worship leaders to think about their prayers before leading the congregation and for individuals to consider who it is they are praying to and what may be appropriate to ask each person of the Trinity without falling into the trap of 'divide and conquer'. Parry considers the place of written prayers, liturgy, and even speaking in tongues.

Worshipping Trinity concludes with reflections on a range of practices and contexts into which a trinitarian theology needs to work its way out in worship. The arts in particular come in for a sustained reflection and here again Parry offers insights and personal experiences which model the kind of trinitarian worship he is recommending. Those looking for practical insights will find plenty in this section.

Parry writes with humour, insight, passion, and theological accuracy. His style is always fast paced and fresh, with both eyes squarely on how the local church can worship the Triune God and in so doing, participate more fully in God's love for us, our love for him, and our love for each other. Difficult doctrinal themes like *perichoresis* are handled with skill and the richness of one who knows the triune God and his Word as intimately as he loves God's people. This is an academic book wonderfully disguised in language most in our churches would understand. I cannot recommend this work highly enough. Pastors, worship leaders and mature Christians must read this and practice the sort of trinitarian worship Parry recommends.

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Allan Webb (1839-1902) was a key leader among colonial Baptists in both Australia and New Zealand.

International Conference on Baptist Studies V

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Australian Baptist Research Forum III

Whitley College, Melbourne, Australia

15 - 18 July 2009

Following four successful International Conferences on Baptist Studies at Oxford in 1997, Wake Forest in 2000, Prague in 2003 and Acadia in 2006, there is to be a fifth at Whitley College, Melbourne, Australia, from Wednesday 15 to Saturday 18 July 2009. On this occasion we are glad that the conference will also be the biennial meeting of the Australian Baptist Research Forum. All the conferences take Baptists as their subject matter, but are not restricted to Baptists as speakers or attenders. The theme this time is 'Interfaces: Baptists and Others', which includes relations with other Christians, other faiths and other movements such as the Enlightenment. What has been the Baptist experience of engaging with different groups and developments? The theme will be explored by means of case studies, some of which will be very specific in time and place while others will cover long periods and more than one country.

A number of main speakers will address aspects of the subject, but offers of short papers to last no more than 25 minutes in delivery are welcome. They should relate in some way to the theme of 'Baptists and Others'. The title should be submitted to Professor D. W. Bebbington, Department of History, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4TB, Scotland, United Kingdom (e-mail: d.w.bebbington@stir.ac.uk).