

## 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.

**Laurie Guy**  
**Carey Baptist College**

**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.