

as orthodox doctrines, but all that he wrote was theological. This means that theologians can theologize, raise questions and propose alternatives, but not all of these can be accepted as doctrines. In light of Gunton's distinction, we can say that *The Lord and Giver of Life: Perspectives on Constructive Pneumatology* is a work in theology, but a lot of what it says will find difficulty in becoming considered as doctrines.

MARTIN SUTHERLAND, *CONFLICT AND CONNECTION. BAPTIST IDENTITY IN NEW ZEALAND*. AUCKLAND: ARCHER PRESS, 2011. (XXIV + 260 PP.) [ISBN: 978-0473192167]

KEN MANLEY
WHITLEY COLLEGE

Martin Sutherland, currently Vice-Principal at Laidlaw College in Auckland, is one of New Zealand's leading Baptist historians and this latest publication adds significantly to his deserved reputation. Not a conventional denominational history in the sense of a chronological and thematic narrative, it most helpfully marks out significant aspects of that history. This collection of essays is "an interpretation of Baptist life in New Zealand, exploring the tension between Baptists' talent for conflict and their desire for connection" (p. xix). His integrating theme is the quest for identity, a recurring question not only for settler nations like New Zealand and Australia but also for global Baptists. Although many of these chapters have been published previously as articles in a variety of places it is helpful to have them collected here and woven into a coherent theme. Thus this book complements and in some cases redefines earlier historical publications by New Zealand Baptists.

Indeed, Sutherland's book was only possible after these detailed local and denominational stories had been told as well as the valuable publication of documents and archival organisation had been completed. There is a scholarly maturity and reflective character to these chapters where the theme Sutherland identifies is abundantly illustrated.

Sutherland argues that Baptists are "the shape-shifters of Christian history", although it is not quite clear to this reader just what he means by this phrase. His view that Baptists are best studied not by "static essentialist understandings", such as doctrinal creeds or ecclesial practices, but as a dynamic movement changed by contexts and demands is perceptive. The competing forces of conflict and connection, quarrels and cohesion are key elements in understanding New Zealand Baptists and indeed the global Baptist community. Whilst many of his studies analyse conflicts of earlier periods he does not hesitate to discuss contemporary tensions in a spirit of "affection and respect". Here then is a Baptist history with relevance not only for those wanting to understand the religious experience in New Zealand but also for global Baptists.

In particular, Sutherland offers a wider context for the history of Australian Baptists. The parallels of development and direct personal influences across the 'ditch' of the Tasman Sea invite further reflection. Perhaps a collaborative effort by Baptist historians of both nations would be an instructive and valuable project for both bodies. Although 'Australia' is not listed in the index there are numerous individuals who

impacted on Baptists in both countries and the intertwining influences, as in so much of the history of the two 'dominions', are numerous. At one stage New Zealand shared in discussions with Baptists of the Australian colonies and explored possible structural links. Although this inevitably became impractical and from New Zealand's perspective undesirable exchanges have continued to benefit both communities. Sadly, differences and tensions between the Australian state bodies have over time diminished a genuinely national awareness to say nothing of a trans-Tasman connection. Australia offers a striking and virile example of just those conflicts and cohesive forces that Sutherland argues are a feature of Baptist identity.

An introductory essay situates New Zealand Baptists within the English 'diaspora' that continues to receive much scholarly attention and introduces the theme of the book: the history of New Zealand Baptists is "a litany of conflict". Four sections follow a broadly chronological sequence. In the first the dominant theme is conflict as Baptists struggled to find their place in the nation. Studies of Canterbury and Cambridge are followed by a discussion of the problem that confronted Baptists in many of the settler nations: finding suitable ministerial leaders. The famous Downgrade Controversy linked with Spurgeon had a strong impact in New Zealand as it did, for example, in Tasmania. Conflicts over religious education which raised the complex questions of church-state relationships and ecumenical cooperation is yet another issue that has resonance with Australian Baptists. The political activism of J.K. Archer, for whom there is no obvious Australian parallel, was another controversial figure to emerge among New Zealand Baptists.

The second section, "Ways of Connection", studies forces that helped shape a credible denomination that was distinctly New Zealander. The influence of Alfred North and his son J.J. North provide striking evidence of this stage in the denomination's development although Joseph Kemp's impact in Auckland was significant. A strong denominational organisation, essentially male, was complemented by the roles of Baptist women through the Ministers' Wives Union and the Women's Missionary Union. The author's analysis of female Baptist spirituality as seen through the missionary movement is important. Linked with these forces of cohesion were the denominational paper, *The New Zealand Baptist* that gave a focus of identity for Baptists and the Theological College founded in 1926.

Part Three is called "Harmony and its Challengers" and offers studies of some sadly divisive figures whose moral failures threatened Baptist unity and identity. The "cover-up" of a "missionary crisis" is detailed with refreshing honesty and the challenges they posed for denominational integrity clearly analysed. There was a general move to "structure and control" in New Zealand society and Baptists tended to mirror this trend. The career of Oswald Machattie of Napier is outlined in detail and the crisis this provoked for the Baptist Union during the 1930s is a striking demonstration of the book's theme. However, the 1940s were "the most disrupted years in the denomination's history" with the Auckland Tabernacle crisis over Dr Alexander Hodge, controversy over involvement with the World Council of Churches, and the forced resignation of Luke Jenkins as Principal of the Theological College.

Possibly the most challenging section for contemporary leaders is Part Four, "Shifting Sands", which first recounts changes in the Theological College from 1952 to 1974 described as "hesitating too long". His conclusion is that the college which had played a key role in fashioning denominational identity struggled to find its own way in the 1970s and was "no longer generating the core of the denomination's ethos". The

last provocative chapter is termed “from confidence to chaos” which argues that the charismatic movement which has had a striking influence on New Zealand Baptists had inevitable consequences for denominational structures and marked a “centrifugal model” of organisation. A series of restructures, in which decentralisation and devolution of denominational leadership was fused with what was termed “apostolic leadership”, has led to the confusion that Sutherland identifies. As a shrinking denomination in the twenty-first century New Zealand Baptists are hesitant and unsure of themselves.

A concluding “unhistorical postscript” links the New Zealand experience with global Baptists. Conflict seems to be a feature of church life, not only among Baptists. But conflict can be a force for good if it is handled sensitively and honestly although modern Baptists seem to be embarrassed by vigorous argument. A drift to hierarchical leadership has muted debate and dissension. A desire to avoid conflict prevents real change, Sutherland concludes, and that is fatal for Baptists who need to be constantly reinventing themselves.

This is a stimulating and relevant book that insists that troublesome questions should not be ignored. New Zealanders have a resource here that should provoke not only a sharper awareness of lessons from the past but also an honest assessment of the contemporary. Baptists in many other places will also find this an invaluable resource since the New Zealand experience, here so perceptively reviewed, will provoke searching questions for many other contexts.