

some of the conclusions the authors arrive at—although the risk is that Walton and Sandy’s nuanced version of inerrancy might be unrecognisable to non-scholarly members of that constituency.

Walton and Sandy are to be commended for giving significant time and thought to the theological implications of their propositions. Lost worlds are attractive to explorers for the wonders to be found there, and this book has the potential to help a wider audience find the joy of a scholarly *and* trusting reading of the Bible, rather than merely seeing the dangers of modern scholarship.

JOHN TUCKER. *A BRAIDED RIVER: NEW ZEALAND BAPTISTS AND PUBLIC ISSUES 1882-2000*. INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, VOL. 5. BERN: PETER LANG, 2013. (364 PP.) [ISBN 9783034313728].

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Patient readers must wait until the conclusion of this important study to understand the significance of “braided river” in the title. Drawing on a history of New Zealand art by Hamish Keith who suggested that “the great braided Rakaia that meanders across the shingle plains of Canterbury” provides the perfect metaphor for New Zealand culture, John Tucker argues that the New Zealand Baptist movement similarly has “not been limited to one stream ... it has flowed along many different channels, taken many different courses” (p. 333). His view, based on his PhD thesis, is that whilst the majority of Baptists in New Zealand have abstained from debate of public issues altogether, other streams have understood the church’s mission more broadly. The analysis of these tributaries that made this ‘braided river’ and the careful discussion of various issues that have (more or less) attracted Baptist attention makes for a significant contribution to Baptist history in New Zealand, although the interest and relevance of this book will extend to all students of global Baptist and evangelical thought.

The role of the churches in political and social debate is a well canvassed theme and there is much here that will stimulate this discussion. Tucker first summarises the English Baptist attitudes on these issues since these were influential in the colonies, and then addresses three questions (pp.16–17). First, to what extent did New Zealand Baptists attempt to reshape their society through public debate? Second, what were the forces that influenced involvement in public debate and in particular, how significant were the wider cultural and intellectual changes? Third, what did Baptists achieve? Did they make any significant contribution to public debate in New Zealand?

Wisely, Tucker does not seek to cover every public debate that interested Baptists. Debates about sabbath observance, film censorship and the like are not reviewed. Rather, ten topics are selected from across the period in order to illustrate how Baptists have engaged in public debate. The rich resources of the national denominational press and valuable archival collections are examined closely. The

challenge for anyone wanting to understand Baptist views on controversial themes is not to be underestimated. Tracking a way between debates and formal resolutions emanating from Baptist Union assemblies or appointed committees and individual Baptist voices, even of trusted leaders, which may not represent the whole community is complex. Given Baptist ecclesiology, which emphasises the search for discernment within the gathered community, to discover 'the' Baptist position on any controversial issue is notoriously problematic.

Tucker follows a clear structure in each chapter. The issue is placed in world and New Zealand context, the response of other churches in New Zealand is examined, parallels and influences from other Baptist groups and evangelicals are traced and then the local Baptist responses, both official and individual, are analysed.

On some questions the consensus among New Zealand Baptists was striking. Thus the crusade against prohibition (1882–1930) showed a largely unanimous condemnation of alcohol although attempts to achieve prohibition failed. As is the case throughout his book, Tucker notes comparisons with Britain and Australia, though these are not normally suggested as direct causes of New Zealand attitudes. Parallels do not necessarily reflect influence. The role of dominant and vigorous leaders like J. J. North in the early campaigns is emphasised and this provides a dramatic contrast with later periods when no such advocate for social justice issues had a similar impact. A growing and more complex religious scene meant that Baptists attracted what Tucker calls "conservative refugees from other denominations" and helped produce a denomination with little awareness or interest in historic Baptist concerns.

Successive chapters are devoted to attacks on the gambling industry (1890–1940) and "the struggles of labour" (1882–1919). Humanitarianism and an evangelical hatred of sin and evil forces, tinged with a sectarian suspicion of Catholicism, motivated much Baptist activity. Some radicals such as North, J.K. Archer and W.S. Rollings struggled with complex issues but a more conservative stream avoided controversy and stressed a more individualistic and pious approach to social justice questions.

During the era of the Great Depression (1920–1939) several theological currents dragged Baptists away from engagement with social justice. For example, there was theological controversy centred in a fear of 'modernism' by 'fundamentalists' whilst a fascination with premillennial theology diverted many from tackling social ills. Some Christian Socialists, such as A. H. Collins, showed another approach although Baptists, like most other denominations, struggled to relate their message to the fearful disasters of the depression years.

Sadly, the churches generally were slow to defend conscientious objectors in the period 1899–1945. Pro-war sentiments dominated even though the Baptist heritage of religious freedom might have been expected to prompt a greater defence for religious objectors against war.

The second half of the book is devoted to more contemporary issues such as New Zealand's Defence policy (including the Vietnam war and nuclear testing in the Pacific), the racism and rugby debates (1960–85) and the even more controversial questions of attitudes towards abortion law reform and the homosexual law reform debates of the 1970s and 80s. Here the tensions and divisions were

striking and Tucker has a sure touch in placing these developments in context. These chapters offer a convincing interpretation of the changes that have come in New Zealand Baptist life during these decades.

The concluding chapter reviews Baptist attitudes during the 'New Right Revolution' 1990–98. His basic conclusion is that Baptists had become "uninformed, unconcerned and uninvolved" in the crucial issues of society. The Public Questions Committee and its experienced chairman Angus Macleod despaired of any real interest, judging that the Assembly had become more of an inspirational type of gathering and that no questions of a deliberative or divisive nature were welcomed. Political conservatism led to a relegation of religion to a purely private sphere. The charismatic renewal movement and the emphasis on American pragmatism such as in Church Growth principles led to "the demise of the Baptist social conscience." By the end of the century, Tucker concludes, social services conducted by the denomination and community ministries by local congregations had "all but supplanted social action and public debate" (p. 335).

For this reader the Australian references were of great interest and prompts (again) the reflection that Baptist scholars across the Tasman have much to share and learn from each other. This volume is one of a series of contributions by Baptist scholars under the editorship of Keith Dyer of Whitley College, Melbourne and the publishers are to be congratulated for this initiative. Several individual Baptists have exercised considerable influence in both countries and common problems have prompted similar developments. Tucker's critique of how New Zealand Baptists have changed extends to more than public issues and should also prompt critical questioning by Australian leaders of developments in their various states.

*SILENT WITNESSES: LESSONS ON THEOLOGY, LIFE AND THE CHURCH FROM CHRISTIANS OF THE PAST.* BY GARRY J. WILLIAMS. EDINBURGH: BANNER OF TRUTH, 2013. (264 PP.) [ISBN: 978-1848712171]

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Dr Garry Williams (Director, The John Owen Centre, London Theological Seminary) explains on the book sleeve that "... (this) book tells the story of a selection of figures from the Christian past, witnesses whose lips have now fallen silent, but who yet speak through their writings and their stirring stories of their lives." With Church history a growing academic discipline, and many evangelical pastors seeking to reconnect with divines from earlier periods, this is a timely addition to the bookshelf. Williams is passionate about Church history and has a strong desire to communicate this passion to all Christians, regardless of whether they are pastors, academics or lay believers.

It is interesting to note that the author acknowledges that not everyone will be enthused by the studying of historical figures and that many people's perceptions of history are coloured by experiences of