

## REVIEWS

PHILIP J. HUGHES AND DARREN CRONSHAW, *BAPTISTS IN AUSTRALIA: A CHURCH WITH A HERITAGE AND A FUTURE*. NUNAWADING, VIC.: CHRISTIAN RESEARCH ASSOCIATION, 2013. (120 PP.) [ISBN: 978-1-875223-74-9].

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This is a revised and expanded version of a book first published in 1996 by Philip Hughes, senior research officer with the Christian Research Association and an honorary research fellow at the University of Divinity in Melbourne. Darren Cronshaw is a Baptist pastor and mission researcher for the Baptist Union of Victoria. He also serves as Head of Research and Professor of Missional Leadership with the Australian College of Ministries (Sydney College of Divinity). For this edition, Hughes and Cronshaw have drawn on the 2011 Australian Census, the 2011 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) and the 2009 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes. The subtitle, “A Church with a Heritage and a Future”, captures something of the book’s scope. It traces the story of Baptists in Australia, both in the past and in the present, in order to help Baptists navigate the challenges and opportunities of the future.

The book can be divided into two parts. The first part looks to the past. It begins with a general history of the Baptist movement. The authors trace its development from its origins in Amsterdam, through its growth in England in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, its subsequent decline and renewal in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and its expansion and division within the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The focus is overwhelmingly on English and American Baptists, the two groups of Baptists that have had the greatest influence on Baptist churches in Australia. This is followed by a more extensive history of Baptists on that continent. The authors highlight a number of characteristics of early Australian Baptists that have featured prominently among Baptists in other settler societies, such as a strong preference for personal evangelism over social reform. The portrait of Australian Baptists in the second half of the twentieth century stresses several dominant influences: the Southern Baptist Convention in the USA, the experience of charismatic renewal, the ecumenical movement and post-war immigration.

The authors then outline the beliefs that have been part of the Baptist movement since its beginnings and demonstrate how these are expressed in the behaviour of Australian Baptist congregations (such as the historic reluctance to use creeds in public worship). The discussion is enriched by frequent reference to the Australian NCLS to illustrate or substantiate the authors’ claims. The following section offers newcomers to the Baptist movement a helpful orientation to the organisation of Baptists at the local, state and national levels. This is followed by a short discussion of Baptist groups not associated with the state Baptist Unions: Independent Baptist churches (mainly small conservative congregations supported by American churches), Reformed Baptist churches, Strict and Particular Baptist churches, and Seventh Day Baptist churches.

The first part of the book concludes with a series of brief biographies of inspirational Baptist leaders. These include English Baptists who profoundly influenced Australian Baptists from afar (John Smyth, William Carey, and Charles Spurgeon), Baptist ministers who played a direct and significant role in the development of the Baptist movement in Australia (John Saunders, Silas Mead, Frederick John Wilkin, Joseph Hunter Goble, Samuel Pearce Carey, Frank Boreham, Tim Costello), and significant female Baptist leaders (Matilda Jane Evans, Cecilia Downing, Ellen Arnold). All of this makes for a brief, but effective, introduction to the history of the Baptist movement in Australia.

If the first part of the book looks primarily to the past, the second part focuses more on the present. It analyses census data and church surveys to offer a rich and nuanced picture of the social and religious life of contemporary Baptists. This section shows that, while there is much to celebrate in Australian Baptist life today, there are also some serious challenges. The authors note, for example, that in recent years the Baptist population has grown more than most other denominations, making it now the third largest group of church attenders in the country. Indeed, between 1991 and 2011 Baptists grew at a similar rate to the general population. However, much of this growth can be attributed to immigration, especially from Asia and Africa. During this period immigrants actually accounted for 98 per cent of the growth of Baptists. By contrast, they accounted for only 65 per cent of the growth of the Australian population. Baptists have not kept pace with the Australian-born population. These figures therefore “show the importance of giving fresh focus to reaching Australian-born people” (p. 79). They also stress the importance of welcoming and integrating migrants and their children.

Besides numerical growth, the authors also examine the Australian Baptist population according to age, gender, marriage, education, occupation and participation. They highlight several encouraging features. For example, compared to the other mainline denominations, Baptists have a relatively young age profile. The age profile of those who identify themselves as Baptists is only marginally older than the general population. However, the picture is not all rosy. Migration has clearly contributed to the relatively young age profile of Baptists, since most immigrants to Australia are young adults or young families. And there is a skew in the age profile of those Baptists who attend a church monthly or more often: 32 per cent are aged 60 years or older, compared with 26 per cent of the population. In the coming years Baptist churches will likely face a stern challenge connecting with the younger generations.

The book concludes with a discussion of the NCLS and its indicators of church health. This shows several significant developments among Australian Baptists in recent years. Firstly, attitudes to worship appear to be evolving. In the 2001 NCLS 35% of attenders said they highly valued contemporary worship or music, but this fell to only 26% in the 2011 survey, suggesting that the preference for contemporary styles of worship has weakened considerably. Secondly, leadership within Baptist churches appears to be increasingly centralised. In 2001 27% of Baptist attenders said that their leaders encouraged them to use their gifts within the church. This declined to 20% in 2011. Of the 12 hoped-for emphases or priorities for the future, this was the most frequently selected. It seems to match a decline in leadership among lay people.

Thirdly, missional practices among Baptists are also changing. In 2011 just 11% of attenders said that wider community care or social justice emphases were aspects of church life they most valued. By 2011 this

had increased to 21%. Over the same period, there was a decrease in the willingness to invite unbelievers to church (down from 44% in 2001 to 36% in 2011). Fewer people were involved in communicating their faith verbally. This represents an important shift in emphasis from witness by word to witness by work. Finally, the authors note that the level of movement between churches is much higher among Baptists than in most other denominations, apart from the Pentecostals. These changing patterns raise a number of difficult and important questions for Australian Baptists in terms of ministry and mission in the future, questions on which church pastors and denominational leaders will certainly want to reflect.

There is much to commend about this short volume. It is carefully researched, clearly written and quite unusual for the amount of ground it covers. The authors show not just where Australian Baptists have come from, but where they are now, and where they might be going. However, there are one or two weaknesses. In the first place, the structure could be improved. There is some duplication between the historical and biographical sections. For example, the material on John Saunders and his role in the establishment of the Baptist movement in New South Wales (pp. 22-24) is largely repeated in the biography of Saunders (p. 61). Secondly, the section on distinctive Baptist beliefs could be strengthened. The authors, by their own admission, do not attempt to explain the theology which underlies these beliefs. The result is that the reader is left wondering how these beliefs are distinctive or why they are important. Even a minimal engagement with the writings of contemporary Baptist theologians would have significantly enriched this introduction to Australian Baptist life.

Thirdly, the section analysing the social and religious profile of Baptists in Australia contains a number of statements that really demand a fuller explanation. For example, the authors argue that Baptist churches have attracted people with a high level of education partly because of their commitment to congregational governance and the importance given to Bible study (p. 105). This kind of assertion really needs to be argued with evidence. However, it must be acknowledged that the authors have clearly not set out to write a comprehensive account of Baptist life in Australia. Readers who are interested in that should consult Ken Manley's magisterial two-volume work, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006). The present book, however, serves an altogether different purpose. For Baptists, for denominational leaders, and for students of religion, it is an excellent orientation and guide to the Baptist movement in Australia.

KEITH S. GRANT, *ANDREW FULLER AND THE EVANGELICAL RENEWAL OF PASTORAL THEOLOGY. STUDIES IN BAPTIST HISTORY AND THOUGHT* 36. MILTON KEYNES: PATERNOSTER, 2013. (xx. + 157) [ISBN: 978-1842277799].

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With this work Grant examines how the eighteenth century Evangelical Revival changed pastoral theology. He argues that the ministry of Andrew Fuller ably demonstrates this change, explaining that Fuller served