

evolving—Sexton suggests that “the church remains the most significant actor in the public square” (p. 189).

The final four standalone essays offer practical examples of theological-missiological practice, beginning with Kirkpatrick’s exploration of the eclectic global influences which shaped C. René Padilla’s emphasis on integral mission. Andrew Marin draws from his experience of the church working with the LGBTQ+ community in Chicago, and argues for the necessity of embodiment in the journey towards healing; rather than forcing reconciliation out of political necessity, space must be made for experienced trauma to be integrated into one’s identity before forgiveness may also become part of that identity. Jonny Baker offers some insightful reflections ‘from the field’ in reflecting on CMS’s training programmes for pioneers – those with a vocation to reach beyond the existing boundaries of the church. His point that formation needs to not only shape inward Christlikeness, but also form each individual to be an agent of Christ’s transformation in the world, is well made (pp. 237–38). The final contribution is from Krish Kandiah, who suggests that the theological paradigm of adoption leads to a more integrated understanding of mission as something that flows from our identity as children of God. Kandiah outlines his work with Home for Good, an effort encouraging British Christians to foster and adopt those children that are considered hard to place, and outlines theologically why this should be considered missional.

As a systematic theologian with an interest in missiology, stand-out chapters included Goheen’s proposal for a missional hermeneutic, Sexton’s observations about the role of the church in communicating theology in public spaces, Baker’s practical observations about the process of forming missional pioneers, and Kirkpatrick’s survey of Padilla’s theological journey. *The End of Theology* does not set out to provide the definitive answers about how the relationship between theologians, missiologists, and missionaries should be shaped in the future. Instead its aim is to provide a collection of essays which provoke further thought about the need for such dialogue, which it does admirably.

David W. Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People*. 2nd edn. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2018. (371 pp.) [ISBN 9781602582040]

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Four hundred years of Baptist history; scores and scores of countries with a Baptist presence; competing versions of ‘Baptist’ in many of the countries: how can one successfully write a global history in such circumstances?

Bebbington has wisely opted not to comprehensively include all branches of the Baptist church in all countries in facing this challenge. Thus New Zealand Baptists get very little coverage. The material on India focuses on Nagaland: “the most solidly Baptist area on earth” (p. 333). However, Baptist churches in many other parts of India get no coverage. Thus it has no mention of the 90,000 Baptists in Tripura, a main focus of New Zealand Baptist missionary endeavour in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Essentially Bebbington has opted not to use an open-cast mining technique to deal with the totality of Baptist history. Rather he has put down mineshafts into the larger material, opting to explore major themes and developments of the Baptist story, highlighting exemplars of that total story.

Bebbington locates the Baptist narrative within the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation with its Church of England expression and its Separatist splinter. This context was the matrix for the emergence of distinct Baptist beliefs, practices and identity. Separatist connection in Netherlands exile led to the birth of the Baptist movement in 1609. How much influence did the Waterland Mennonite Anabaptists have in the birth of the Baptists? Here Bebbington well-marshals his evidence, concluding stronger Waterlander influence than some have conceded in the past.

Although Bebbington indicated at the outset that his book would be studying problems rather than periods (p. 4), chapter four essentially explores General (Arminian) and Particular (Calvinist) Baptists in the seventeenth century. He highlights the lack of mutual recognition between the two bodies: “When an adherent of the Calvinist body transferred to the General Baptists, the person had to be baptized for a second time, ‘*Because (said they) You were baptized into the wrong Faith, and so into another Gospel.*’” Did this indicate initial, excessive, doctrinal, Baptist fussiness, stemming from a reliance on an over-literalistic and narrow reading of scripture?

Conversely Bebbington notes strong connection between seventeenth-century General Baptists and their Quaker counterparts. The fact that Baptists of that time wrote significantly against the Quakers suggests that at grassroots level Baptists were vulnerable to Quaker recruiting. Bebbington seems to take this one step further: “There was a tendency among General Baptists . . . to rely on impulse and so to exalt the Spirit above the written word” (p. 56). This needs further evidence than Bebbington provides. Given the later General Baptist drift in a rationalistic Socinian direction (the opposite of Quaker subjectivism), the evidence suggests a certain instability amongst early Baptists as they struggled to interpret their foundational Bible. The lure of Quakerism was probably more to rank-and-file Baptists rather than to the movement as a whole.

Treatment of initial Baptist beginnings in America from 1639 is contrastingly brief (p. 49). Baptists remained a small body there until transfused by the eighteenth and nineteenth century evangelical revivals. Bebbington’s exploring together Baptist developments on both sides of the Atlantic at this time highlights the influence this extra-Baptist development had on Baptist life generally.

Baptists seem frequently to have been prone to divide. A rigorously Word-centred approach, which still always needs human interpretation, likely fuels this problem. In chapter six Bebbington notes divisions among Baptists in the nineteenth century. Here he emphasises interconnection of currents in America and Britain. Is this altogether helpful? America was so torn over the slavery issue and the subsequent Civil War, that its dividing into Northern (later American) and Southern Baptists seems almost inevitable. However, in Britain, despite minor splits, the trend seems rather towards unification of the two main Baptist bodies as high Calvinism had reduced emphasis.

However, another split was potentially in the making, between the conservative and broad ends of the Baptist movement. This took acute form in America in the 1920s' fundamentalist-modernist split, which Bebbington deals with pretty fair-mindedly in chapter seven.

This cleavage lay over the place of scripture and its relation to the contemporary world. Several chapters – on the social gospel, on race, and on women – explore differences, particularly among Baptists in America, on these issues. One disturbing, long-lasting aspect was that only 11 percent of Southern Baptist churches admitted African Americans to membership as late as 1968 (p. 150). Bebbington notes, however, a Southern Baptist apology in 1995 for its earlier racism (p. 154), and the election of an African American as president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2012–2014 (p. 155). Yet despite a western trend towards equality for women, Southern Baptists have taken a stance rejecting the ordination of women and restricting their areas of ministry (p. 174). That would, however, match parts of the non-western world, though Bebbington does not discuss this.

Bebbington explores church, ministry and sacraments among Baptists in chapter 11, arguing for an initial, fairly high sacramental position, with this lessening in more recent times. Though others have argued similarly, I rather see diversity of evidence on these matters.

Baptists have often trumpeted their consistent affirmation of religious freedom. The plea for tolerance of Thomas Helwys, co-founder of the General Baptists, even for “heretiks, Turcks [and] Jews” is celebrated. While Bebbington notes the strand of liberty in Baptist history, he indicates that Baptists have not always lived by that principle (p. 213). While not discussed by Bebbington, the fact that that in earlier centuries Baptists in England might be put out of their church if they married someone outside of their faith-body supports Bebbington's caution. Is liberty a fundamental Baptist principle or is it simply freedom of worship?

Baptist pride is better focused on Baptist influence on world missionary endeavour. This began with the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in England in 1792. Bebbington discusses this missionary outreach and the consequent global spread of Baptists in chapters 13 and 14. In 1800 Baptist presence was essentially confined to the British Isles and North America. Today there are major Baptist communities around the globe, with very large numbers in countries such as India, China, Brazil, Nigeria and the Congo (p. 232)—something indeed to celebrate.

Global expansion leads to three new chapters in the second edition of Bebbington's book. These chapters focus on Baptists in Latin America, Nigeria, and Nagaland (India). This global focus highlights the varying contexts and variety of Baptists today. Bebbington's Latin America chapter spotlights the problems of the rich-poor divide, with key Baptist voices (Orlando Costas, Samuel Escobar and René Padilla) urging a holistic gospel that focuses on justice as well as evangelism, in the context of moderate liberation theology (pp. 263–69).

The chapter on Nigeria and its five million Baptists is welcome – the second largest grouping of Baptists in the world. The influence of charismatic renewal along with cultural influences far removed from western perspectives creates a very different, but much more authentically African, Baptist church.

The Nagaland chapter cannot pretend to summarise the variety of Indian Baptist life. But it does highlight issues facing Baptist life in a fringe, tribal area of India, where Baptists are an overwhelming majority of the population. Searching for a right balance between faith, culture and justice has led a minority to create a militant blend of Maoist Christianity. Good Baptist theology? No—but a common issue for young churches seeking to make sense of their new Christianity and its relationship to their old culture and current context.

Bebbington then discusses the issue of Baptist identity against the backdrop of cleavage in the largest Baptist denomination, the Southern Baptists, with conservatives (fundamentalists in many cases) stressing an inerrant Bible, and moderates (liberals in some cases) stressing freedom. The outcome in recent decades has been a hardening of conservatism in the Southern Baptists and their increasing alienation from Baptists in the wider world. This alienation eventually led to the Southern Baptists withdrawing from the Baptist World Alliance in 2003—interesting to note parallels with Trumpist America today.

Bebbington finally notes seven forms of Baptist life today (1) liberal Baptists (a small minority) (2) classic Evangelicals (3) premillennial Fundamentalists (4) charismatic-renewal Baptists (5) Calvinist Baptists (6) Baptists drawn to Anabaptist emphases (7) High Church Baptists.

Given the diversity of such emphases, is there such a thing as Baptist identity today? This is Bebbington's final question. Noting, too, other traditions that also embrace believers' baptism, Bebbington gives an uncertain answer: "In the end, therefore, the Baptist identity, a phenomenon of the flux of history, may elude definition" (p. 338).

In the reviewer's New Zealand the question has particular pertinence, given the great deal of commonality of Baptists with progressive Open Brethren churches. Are they Baptist? After all, they are closer in perspective and practice to mainstream Baptists than are some Baptist churches more to the edge of the Baptist movement. The question also has pertinence because, as with many countries in the world, many ethnically-based Baptist churches have emerged, which, while affiliated with the Baptist Union, have great divergence of practice and lesser fellowship connection with the mainstream of European-background Baptist churches.

So who is a Baptist? My answer (not Bebbington's) is those who practise believers' baptism and self-identify as Baptist.

I have enjoyed the stimulation of Bebbington's book. Thoughtful laypeople and beginning theology students will find Bebbington's book a very good starting place to wrestle with what is now a globally focused question, "Who are the Baptists?"