

## Reviews

**P. Naylor, *Calvinism, Communion and the Baptists: A Study of English Calvinistic Baptists from the Late 1600s to the Early 1800s* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003) pp 240**

This is a volume in the relatively new series *Studies in Baptist History and Thought* from Paternoster. Its focus is the link or otherwise between the hyper-Calvinism of some Baptist groups of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the practice of restricted communion. It is in some ways a curious study. Careful documentation is provided throughout and the bibliography is up to date, at least with regard to the Calvinistic groups themselves. Indeed the book could function acceptably as a theological survey of the first two centuries these bodies.

However, the reader is left wondering whether the central question is broad enough to sustain this research. The author is adamant that restricted communion was not unique to Calvinistic groups and that in any case not all of those followed the practice. He does not convincingly establish, however, that there is a weight of historical interpretation making the point he disputes in the first place. The suggestion seems like a straw man and the conclusion is narrow enough to have been suited more to a closely reasoned article than deserving a book length treatment.

Even if an extended study on the matter were warranted there are areas which might have received greater consideration. A principal argument is that restricted communion was enough of a feature of Arminian, 'General' Baptists to suggest that there was 'no relation' (239) between the practice and hyper-Calvinism. This is a negative argument which does not survive close examination. The monograph contains little critical study of the roots of General Baptist practices of closed communion. This needs to be done, if the conclusion is

to be accepted. If General Baptists were found to have come to the practice by quite different theological paths from Calvinistic Baptists then the force of the comparison diminishes almost to nothing. Naylor concedes that 'evidence...may hint that Baptists...whose Calvinism was "high" invariably practiced closed communion.' If so it remains possible that the logic of hyper-Calvinism might inexorably lead to restricted communion. The mere fact that others also adopted the practice does not preclude that possibility.

This, then, is an ultimately unsatisfying volume, despite the presence of some interesting detail. Baptist and historical scholars should nonetheless be pleased such projects are at last being presented for debate and review. Paternoster is to be congratulated on bringing these studies to a wider readership, beyond those with direct access to university theses.

### **Martin Sutherland**

**R.F. Keam, *Dissolving Dream: The Improbable Story of the First Baptist Maori Mission*, Auckland: self-published, 2004, 236pp.**

What is an academic physicist doing writing a mission history book? The answer is quickly evident. The Baptist Maori Mission was located close to Mount Tarawera, which underwent major eruption just as the mission was drawing to a close. In the process of doing major research on the Tarawera eruption as a physicist, the author 'stumbled' across this mission story.

Keam, has traced the story of the mission in fine detail. He has explored extensively the family background of American philanthropist William Snow before tracing his journey to New Zealand in 1880 in the hopes of strengthening his indifferent health, but also to promote the cause of temperance in the Rotorua-Tarawera region. This led to his organising funding for a Maori mission there, drawing in the Auckland Baptist