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Book Reviews

***First Freedom: The Baptist Perspective on Religious Liberty.* Edited by Thomas White, Jason G. Duesing, and Malcolm B. Yarnell III. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007. ix + 195 pages. Softcover, \$15.99.**

Thomas White, Jason Duesing, and Malcolm B. Yarnell III edit this volume that contains contributions from leading scholars in Southern Baptist life, including Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; Daniel Heimbach, professor of Christian ethics at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; and Paul Pressler, retired member of the Texas legislature, district court judge, and justice for the 14th court of appeals. This work arose from the first annual conference in the Baptist Distinctives Series held at the Riley Center at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in September 2005.

As indicated in the title, this book seeks to discuss the Baptist perspective on religious liberty, especially as it relates to the freedom established in the First Amendment. The contributors provide theological, historical, philosophical, cultural, and legal arguments for the Baptist understanding of religious liberty. In addition, the contributors seek to remind "Baptists in the twenty-first century of the price that was paid by their forefathers for the establishment and defense of religious liberty" (4).

The book contains several excellent chapters on the development of religious liberty in Baptist thought. One major strength presented by this work is the theological development of the concept of religious liberty. While some would say that the concept of religious liberty is grounded in the social order, Barrett Duke, vice president for research and director of the Research Institute of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, and Paige Patterson offer a theological foundation for such liberty. Patterson traces religious liberty in relation to the exclusivity of Christ. His conclusions are pertinent for contemporary American culture, which faces the dilemma of trying to provide freedom while maintaining a status of "political correctness." Patterson notes, "Christians embracing the exclusivity of Christ as the only saving and accurate expression of the true and living God are properly the most effective advocates of absolute religious liberty" (46). He accurately depicts Christians who believe in the exclusivity of Christ as ones who would have a strong desire to see religious liberty for

all religions because it would allow for the opportunity of non-believers to come to faith in Christ without governmental persecution.

Another strength of the work is how it traces the historical development of religious liberty and the involvement of Baptists in promulgating this liberty. White, Yarnell, and Land provide a thorough historical perspective of religious liberty in early Baptist traditions, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the founding development of America, respectively. Their contributions to the volume are crucial for a proper understanding of the development of religious liberty from the days of the Anabaptists through the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention. As a result of their work, one can see how Baptists played a role in shaping culture in the area of religious freedom.

Heimbach's chapter on the difference between religious liberty and religious autonomy is the "city set on a hill" for this book. His work delineating the value, views, and recipients of religious liberty is worth the cost of the book itself. Heimbach opens by warning his readers, "It is difficult to have a casual discussion of religious liberty because discourse on the subject is highly charged and rightly so" (125). He then proceeds to apply the paradigms of ordered versus autonomous and institutional versus individual to the concept of religious liberty. Heimbach states, "Ordered liberty is a concept of freedom that is restrained by moral obligations" (133). In contrast, autonomous liberty has "no limitations, no responsibility, no accountability" (134). Next, he applies these two concepts to institutions and individuals. Ultimately, he promotes the concepts of ordered liberty for institutions and individuals as a proper understanding of religious liberty because they strengthen society. Heimbach concludes, "When a government hinders ordered religious liberty, it cannot be stable, and it eventually destroys itself because it loses the respect and support of the responsible, public-minded segment of its citizenry that produces and strengthens social cohesion" (142).

First Freedom provides an insightful look at the theology, history, and cultural implications of religious liberty. Written primarily from the Baptist perspective, this work provides a unique understanding of how Baptist doctrine and belief has shaped government and culture regarding religious freedom. The book demonstrates the role Baptists have played in the development of this concept in Western thought and informs Baptists of the challenges they may face in protecting this liberty in the future.

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***Devoted to the Service of the Temple: Piety, Persecution, and Ministry in the Writings of Hercules Collins.* Edited by Michael A. G. Haykin & Steve Weaver. Profiles in Reformed Spirituality. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007. 140 pages. Softcover. \$10.00.**

This is the third volume in the Profiles in Reformed Spirituality series edited by Joel Beeke and Michael A.G. Haykin published by Reformation Heritage Books. The book itself is ingeniously constructed so as to allow for use as a devotional, being of small size and composed of attractive, durable and high-quality materiel. The editors of this particular volume in the series are Haykin, a superb Baptist historian that the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kentucky recently and wisely added to their faculty, and Steve Weaver, a Tennessee Baptist pastor and research student of Haykin. Haykin wrote the introduction and Weaver led in the compilation of selected readings from the writings of Hercules Collins.

Hercules Collins was a leading Particular Baptist pastor in London, who was born (ca. 1646), born again, and died naturally (1702) during a formative period of British Baptist life. Collins was the author of some thirteen books and was the fifth signatory upon the confession adopted by a meeting of Particular Baptists in 1689 (*A Confession of Faith*, 3rd ed. [London, 1699], flyleaf; a.k.a. "The Second London Confession"). Collins lived out a faith that was hard-pressed to survive, suffering a horrific imprisonment in the diseased Newgate Prison, where at least three of his fellow Baptist pastors died. Collins himself remarked that his compatriots for Christ had been "hurried off to prison for nothing else but worshipping their God" (15). Deprived of formal education through the system of persecution and "toleration" established by the British government, Collins nevertheless persisted in his intellectual development. Moreover, his ministry of books and proclamation ended successfully with a congregation of some 700 people, in spite of the handicaps he had suffered. Collins is an inspiring and laudable figure whose pious thoughts and example are ably introduced by Haykin.

The bulk of the text is comprised of 36 selected readings from the works of Collins and from a funeral sermon preached by John Piggott. Included are selections from a catechism he authored, based largely upon the Heidelberg Catechism (*An Orthodox Catechism*); stirring testimonies while suffering persecution, drawn from his *A Voice from Prison and Counsel for the Living*; discourses upon divine sovereignty and human responsibility (*Mountains of Brass*); thoughts upon Scripture and worship (*The Scribe Instructed* and *An Orthodox Catechism*); helpful instructions regarding the calling, ordination, and work of a pastor and preacher (*The Temple Repair'd*); private devotional considerations from various works; and, a

portion of the funeral sermon discussing Collins's own faithful witness. As Piggott said, "He began to be religious early, and continued faithful to the last" (129). The readings are carefully chosen both for the typical Christian but especially the aspiring minister. They truly are inspiring (if technically not inspired) because the author imbibed and lived Scripture, and the editors are to be commended for their careful reading of Collins and spiritual concern for the modern reader.

While this little jewel has laudable strengths, it suffers from one glaring lacuna: the omission of the profound and deep baptismal piety of this convinced Baptist. This is extremely odd in light of the fact that Collins himself wrote four of his thirteen books in order to defend the practice of believers-only baptism by immersion! Moreover, this is something of which the editors are fully aware (135–36). Perhaps at least one citation from one of these four books would have shown how Collins considered baptism properly administered and received to be part of true Christian piety. For instance, in *Believers-Baptism from heaven, and of Divine Institution. Infants-Baptism from Earth, and Human Invention* (London, 1691), Collins writes: "Believers are baptized as an Act of their Judgment, Choice, Will and Affection; so worship God in Spirit and Truth, *John 4.24.*" He follows this devotional affirmation with a disclaimer that paedobaptists can truly act in this godly way: "*Infants cannot worship God in that Act, in Spirit and Truth, because not an Act of Judgment and Choice, Will and Affection*" (Collins's italics; *Believers-Baptism*, 86).

Perhaps the reason that the book editors, both convinced Baptists, excluded the references to baptism was because this book is published by a thoroughly Reformed agency. The uncritical bias towards a Reformed outlook is also evident in the introduction, where non-Reformed Puritans, such as the vigorous General Baptists, are summarily dismissed in order to stress Calvinistic orthodoxy; the Second London Confession is described as "that most important of all Baptist confessional documents"; and, Reformed doctors are given sole credit for the doctrine of aseity (3, 8, 23). In spite of such imbalances, this book is worthy of purchase and reading. We also look forward to the promised publication of Weaver's critical edition of Collins's last and perhaps most significant work, *The Temple Repair'd*.

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'Seditious Sectaryes': *The Baptist Conventiclors of Oxford 1641–1691*. Studies in Baptist History and Thought. 2 volumes. By Larry J. Kreitzer. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006. Vol. 1: xviii + 1–533. Vol. 2: xi + 534–1056. Paperback, \$89.99.

Who were the early Baptist conventiclors of Oxford? According to Daniel Featley's *The Dippers Dipt, or, the Anabaptists duck'd and plung'd over head and eares* they belonged to the lower strata of society, "Russet Rabbits, and Mechanic Enthusiasts, and Profound Watermen, and Sublime Coachmen, and Illuminated Tradesmen" (1:11). Larry J. Kreitzer, Fellow and Tutor of New Testament at Regent's Park College, Oxford, has done much in *'Seditious Sectaryes'* to dispel Featley's caricature of early English Baptists.

The first volume of *'Seditious Sectaryes'* contains biographical studies of five leaders in the Oxford Baptist conventicles: Richard Tidmarsh, Lawrence King, Roger Hatchman, Ralph Austen, and Thomas Williams. The appendices of the first volume contain the family trees of the Oxford dissenters along with several source documents and a full index. Volume 2 is a chronological source catalog of over five hundred pages containing wills, baptismal records, ecclesiastical proceedings, court judgments, personal letters and more. Kreitzer has graciously translated sources which were in Latin. The selection of individuals for biographical treatment in volume 1 is based on a 1662 court record which identified four of the individuals as Baptist conventiclors, three of whom were charged as 'seditious Sectaryes & disloyal persons and for being present at an unlawful Conventicle' (1:18). Kreitzer gives these individuals extended treatment with a chapter devoted to each leader. Kreitzer accomplishes an herculean feat of research by combing through unpublished court, city council, and ecclesiastical documents along with eye witness reports.

Chapter 1 tells the story of Richard Tidmarsh, a successful master tanner and valued civic leader. Municipal leadership proved to be problematic to Tidmarsh and many other Baptists. The chief obstacle was the swearing of oaths, which Tidmarsh refused to do. Tidmarsh was implicated with other dissenters in a supposed plot against Charles II. Such accusations highlighted the anti-Baptist sentiment of the time. Tidmarsh's name is noted twenty-four times in ecclesiastical court record from 1673–1683. In 1683 Tidmarsh was excommunicated from the Church of England for failing to attend the local parish church. Other documents reveal Tidmarsh as a significant denominational leader, one of which is *Innocency Vindicated: or, Reproach Wip'd Off*. This 1689 document bears the names of both Tidmarsh and the Particular Baptist luminary William Kiffin.

In chapter 2 Kreitzer examines the glover Lawrence King. King was not only a master craftsman, but also a noted Baptist leader in Oxford, according to the associational records. King, along with other dissenters, was considered an insurrectionist and troublemaker. Like Tidmarsh and the others, King also made regular appearances before the civil and ecclesiastical authorities to give account for his dissenting activity.

Chapter 3 treats Roger Hatchman, a stone mason turned soldier, who joined the company of “seditious sectaryes and disloyal persons” when he stood before the Oxford Petty Sessions court on January 9, 1662. Hatchman, Tidmarsh, and King were jailed in the Bocardo prison located at the North Gate of Oxford. Their crime was a refusal to swear an oath of allegiance to Charles II. Imprisonment did not have the desired effect, for one year later Hatchman stood before court again accused of dissent.

In chapter 4, Kreitzer judges Ralph Austen to be the most notable of the Oxford Baptist conventiclers charged in the 1662 court document. Austen served as Register for the Visitors of Parliament for a number of years. Such a distinguished position and responsibility gives evidence of Austen’s recognized ability and loyalty. Austen was also a noted gardener, horticulturalist, and cider-maker whose reputation and publications on fruit trees caught the attention of the Royal Society and Isaac Newton.

The final biographical chapter focuses on Thomas Williams the milliner. Williams was not only a successful tradesman, but also progressed in civic affairs. From 1633 to 1643 he rose through the ranks of civic office from the position of constable to member of the city council. The highlight of Williams’s municipal career was his service as mayor in 1653. Kreitzer observes that ecclesiastical records reveal Williams’s activity of religious dissent significantly increased after his 1664 marriage to a dissenting wife. Prior to their wedding Williams was apparently comfortable working for reform within the establishment.

‘Seditious Sectaryes’ stands as a definitive work on early Oxford Baptists. The volumes bristle with footnotes and references to ecclesiastical and court documents that sometime leave the reader longing for a diary entry, sermon or portrait of the subjects. The unavailability of such sources only serves to magnify Kreitzer’s accomplishment. In the end Kreitzer effectively reveals the Baptist conventiclers of Oxford to be in large part a conscientious, responsible people of peculiar genius, neither seditious nor sectarian in a negative sense. *‘Seditious Sectaryes’* breathes life into the obscure beginnings of Oxford Baptists, who frequently found themselves between the Rock and a hard place.

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A Genetic History of Baptist Thought: With Special Reference to Baptists in Britain and North America. By William H. Brackney. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004. 592 pages. Softcover, \$40.00.

Although earlier Baptists (Underhill, McGlothlin, Lumpkin, Parker) published volumes on the Baptist confessions of faith and others (Tull, George/Dockery) authored or co-edited volumes on selected Baptist theologians, William Brackney, at Baylor University at the time of publication and now at Acadia University, is the first author to have produced a comprehensive history of "Baptist thought."

Building on the foundation that "Baptists do have an identifiable theological heritage" and that there has been "no dominant stream of Baptist theology" (p. 2), Brackney employs the term "Baptist thought" somewhat ambiguously, since at times "thought" is synonymous with doctrine and at other times it also includes ethics or spirituality.

Baptist confessions of faith, including their resurgence during the twentieth century, and the theology of Baptist-composed hymnody are treated in introductory chapters that are not organically related to the remainder of the book. That remainder deals with Baptist theologians in Britain, the United States, and Canada.

In treating English Baptist and Northern (USA) Baptist theologians, the Baylor scholar divides between the pastor-theologians and the academic theologians, but in treating Southern (USA) Baptist theologians no such separation is made. Because of this division and the author's training and experience as a church historian, the treatments of academic theologians tend to be a history of the teaching and writing in Baptist theological colleges/seminaries rather than a history of Baptist doctrine per se.

The chapter on English Baptist pastor-theologians is one of the best, although the omission of William Kiffin and the rather brief section on John Gill may be questioned. The writings of those who taught in English Baptist theological colleges are thoroughly reviewed. Among Northern Baptists, the detailed coverage of Brown, Newton, Madison/Colgate, Rochester, Chicago, and Crozer is coupled with silence as to Central, Northern, Eastern, and California. Likewise the treatment of Mercer, Furman, Southern, and Southwestern in the South is joined with the omission of Baylor, New Orleans, Golden Gate, Southeastern, and Midwestern, and of pastor-theologian Herschel Hobbs, biblical theologian Frank Stagg, and ethicists T.B. Maston and Henlee Barnette. The chapter on African-American Baptist thought presents ethics or spirituality with the single exception of Deotis Roberts. Other Baptist theologians in the USA are presented as being "in diaspora," although W.A. Criswell had deep ties with the SBC.

The term “genetic” in the title is designed to emphasize that Baptist theology has had “genes,” defined as entities “concerned with the transmission or development of hereditary characteristics” (p. 4). Hence there is stress, more implied than specified, on transmission from pastor to members and from professor to students. In the final chapter the genes are identified as the Baptist distinctives or emphases: the Lordship of Christ, the priority of the scriptures, Christian experience, “a modified Reformed theological tradition,” regenerate church membership and congregational polity, evangelism/missions, and freedom. The entire book would seem to have demanded another gene: believer’s baptism by immersion.

Masterful in bibliography, insightful as to the relation of theology to context, and loyally sympathetic, while being analytical and critical, Brackney has made a major contribution to the understanding of the Baptists.

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***Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches.* Edited by Thomas White, Jason G. Duesing, and Malcolm B. Yarnell III. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2008. 272 pages. Softcover, \$18.99**

As a local church minister for eight plus years, I have been deeply grieved on occasion by the spiritual condition of older, yet sometimes immature followers of Christ. Some problems have been easily diagnosed and remedied. Others have not. Needless to say for pastors like me, *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches* has hit the nail on the head. Challenging, convicting, applicable, and biblical are words to describe this work edited by White, Duesing, and Yarnell. It will remain close by my side for many years to come as I seek to restore integrity in the Baptist church I pastor.

After reading this work from cover to cover, many strengths are readily identifiable. First, the authors of the individual chapters are some of the best and brightest theologians in the Southern Baptist Convention. Three of our six Southern Baptist seminaries are represented along with one state Baptist university. Furthermore, this “dream team” of theologians includes one seminary president, three deans, and multiple professors.

Other strengths of this work are its timeliness, courage to address current and real issues, and applicability. As for timeliness, the Baptist church that I pastor has lost much of the influence that she once possessed in the community. Why is that? One of the prominent reasons is that the pagan world has witnessed her lack of integrity. Therefore, this book is needed not only in my church and in my hands but also in the hands of the forty-thousand plus pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention. As John

Hammett notes in the volume, on any given Sunday in the morning worship service, approximately two-thirds of Southern Baptists are nowhere to be found (27). That is startling and a serious problem.

As to addressing current issues, many of the book's contributors referenced controversies at Henderson Hills Baptist Church, Bethlehem Baptist Church, and within our own International Mission Board specifically related to baptism and its subject, mode, place, and administrator. The authors then offered real solutions for real problems in real churches. As for applicability, these chapters not only answer the "what" and the "why," but they answer the "how." Particularly refreshing was Professor Norman's step-by-step guide to reestablishing church discipline in a local congregation. Norman shares practical considerations for the reestablishment of church discipline including the adoption or revision of a church covenant and revising the church's legal documents (212–214).

The last strength that deserves mention is the authors' convincing appeal to a host of authoritative sources. Of course, for Southern Baptists, our final authority is the Word of God, and *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches* is chalked full of biblical references in their proper context. Dr. Akin (63) and Dr. Allen (95) set forth overwhelming evidence from the Scriptures for believer's baptism by immersion. In addition, the authors have appealed to hundreds of years of church history in making their case for some of our most cherished and essential distinctives such as regenerate church membership and church discipline. On the acceptance of regenerate church membership, Hammett appeals to the Anabaptists, English Baptists, and the Somerset Confession of 1656 as proof that this practice is part of our heritage (25). As for church discipline, Norman points to multiple early Baptist confessions, including the Belgic Confession of 1561 and The First London Confession of Particular Baptists of 1644 that include statements on church discipline (202–206).

When it comes to areas of improvement, I mention only two. Pastor Mark Dever's contribution to this book is one aspect that gives the volume potential wider reading among pastors. Even though many, if not all, of the other contributors have had extensive and successful local church ministries, there is often a perceived disconnect between pastors and academicians. Unfortunately pastors sometimes see professional theologians as having all the solutions while never encountering any of the problems on a local church level. While that is not the case in *Restoring Integrity*, the inclusion of more authors who are presently local church pastors would only strengthen and increase the book's value among those of us serving in the churches.

The only other area of improvement in this author's opinion was the absence of any discussion regarding the belief of the eternal security of the

believer as it relates to baptism or the gospel. In my own congregation, there have always been questions about receiving Christians for membership from Assembly of God or Pentecostal backgrounds due to their belief in a Christian's ability to lose or forfeit his or her salvation. Dr. White gives three paragraphs to Alien Immersion and includes some insightful thoughts about churches that do not normally immerse and if those baptisms should be accepted as valid (111–12, 117–118). However, nowhere does he address the issue of the church or the administrator's belief in falling from grace or losing one's salvation. Answers to this question might have been included in his chapter on baptism and the definition of a true church. They certainly would have benefited this pastor and provided clarity for some otherwise precarious situations.

Again, hats off to the editors and contributors to this fine volume that if read and practiced by Southern Baptist pastors could be the catalyst for a twenty-first century spiritual awakening and revival in America's largest Protestant denomination.

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