

Thomas White, Jason G. Duesing, and Malcolm B. Yarnell, III, eds., *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008. 262 pp. Paperback, \$18.99.

A recent collection of essays on the various details of Baptist polity deserves a wide reading. It is *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches*. I have found it a gold-mine of informed reflection on such things as the meaning and mode of baptism, the nature of the Lord's Table, the necessity of a regenerate church membership, and the vital importance of church discipline. And believe it or not, what I found as important as the content of the articles were the riches in the footnotes.

My hearty commendation of this work does not mean that I concur with all of the sentiments and convictions expressed. I was surprised that Thomas White, for instance, affirmed that the Calvin's view of the spiritual presence of Christ at the table "has not found favour among Baptists" (p.148). Actually, during the 18th century—those halcyon days of Baptist advance—the spiritual presence of Christ dominated Baptist convictions about the Table. See, for instance, this blogger's " 'His soul-refreshing presence': The Lord's Supper in Calvinistic Baptist Thought and Experience in the 'Long' Eighteenth Century" in Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson, eds., *Baptist Sacramentalism* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, vol.5; Carlisle, Cumbria, U.K./Waynesboro, Georgia: Paternoster Press, 2003), p.177-93. But this is a minor blemish in an otherwise excellent essay.

On the other hand, I was thrilled to see the point—for some, minor—made by Malcolm Yarnell that Nicene Christology went hand in hand with the affirmation of the church's independence of the state and his drawing upon some articles of George Hunston Williams to make his point (p.235-36 and n.44). I have never forgotten reading those articles in the late 1970s and being convinced of the same.

All in all, it would be very difficult to single out an essay or essays in the book that was or were better than the others. This is rare. Usually, a collection of essays like this suffers from an uneven quality of content and argument. Not so here, I felt. White, Duesing, and Yarnell have produced an excellent compendium of contemporary—yet fully biblical—reflection on Baptist polity that every Baptist pastor would do well to read, study, and ponder, and that every Baptist seminary should use as required reading in their courses in Baptist history and polity.

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