

understanding of Israel and the church. He includes a necessary examination of the question of household baptisms and makes the case that the New Testament actually insists on believer's baptism or what Goeman would like to call *biblical baptism*. Goeman includes chapters on the mode and significance of baptism and a chapter on the importance of baptism. The importance of baptism is often assumed or denied. That assumption or denial often leads the uninformed to ignore or minimize the significance of biblical baptism.

This book is eminently readable. There are several stylistic strengths: footnotes (instead of endnotes), a Scripture index, and an extensive bibliography (over 200 referenced works). These features demonstrate the author's familiarity with the pertinent literature. The book lacks a subject index which should be considered in the next edition. The author writes clearly and carefully; he demonstrates a scholar's hand but also a pastor's heart. This is not mere academics; this deals with intense, intimate issues of faith including its possession and profession.

Goeman's analysis of relevant New Testament passages is both detailed and definitive. He does not avoid difficult passages or principles. He deals forthrightly with apostasy, for example (91–93). He also demonstrates considerable historiographical skill in surveying early, medieval, and Reformation church history. He combines exegetical, historical, and logical threads to present an outstanding case for credobaptism. He maintains an honest, yet humble, tone that should invite paedobaptists to engage his arguments.

He summarizes the issue: "I believe Scripture is clear on baptism. Although Reformed paedobaptism is a logically coherent system, it does not have biblical support. If we prioritize the biblical evidence over theological system and tradition, we will inevitably embrace the biblical position of baptism. The Bible teaches that those who embrace Christ in faith are baptized as a profession of that faith. Therefore, we call it believer's baptism. But we should call it biblical baptism" (201). Goeman's book is the most candid, complete, and careful defense of biblical baptism I have read. Its approach to Scripture is correct. Its exegesis of Scripture is clear. And its presentation of Scripture is coherent. Credobaptists should celebrate this volume and paedobaptists should seriously consider it. Credobaptists should hold this truth for the right reasons and this book will be an invaluable resource. I give this work my highest recommendation and urge its widest possible distribution.

David Pitman
Addyston Baptist Church, Cincinnati, OH

Baptist Political Theology, edited by Thomas S. Kidd, Paul D. Miller, and Andrew T. Walker. Brentwood, TN: B&H, 2023. 774 pp. \$59.99.

To establish one's right to be called a *Baptist*, one must appeal not

merely to Scripture but also inevitably to history. Suppose a Baptist pastor comes to be convinced of the validity of infant baptism. Should he now regard himself—or be regarded by others—as a *Baptist* who believes in infant baptism? Surely not. His new position may be sincere. It might, in his judgment, be grounded in the Word of God. But whatever else his position is, it is not a *Baptist* position, because it is out of step with one of the most obvious marks of historic Baptist identity.

Baptists do not distinguish themselves from other Christians merely by their convictions about baptism. Another major historical boundary of Baptist identity has been political: to oversimplify, Baptists have opposed religious establishment by the state. In the present moment, as loud voices are insisting that the solution to the disintegrating Christian moral consensus in our culture is the establishment of an explicitly Christian government, Baptists in particular must attend to their historically distinctive voice on this subject.

Thus, while a book titled *Baptist Political Theology* could be expositional, theological, or philosophical, it is also fitting that it might be—as this volume is—chiefly historical. In addition to an introduction and a conclusion authored by the editors, *Baptist Political Theology* compiles 26 essays, each by different authors. The essays are divided into two major sections. The first 17 essays, accounting for roughly two-thirds of the book, are expressly historical, each with a focus on a specific figure or era of Baptist history. The final nine essays are topical, attempting to articulate a Baptist position on issues as diverse as religious liberty, gender, the environment, and just war. While this second section offers more exegetical arguments for its proposals, even these essays often need to appeal to Baptist authorities of the past to establish the Baptist position on this or that issue.

Some books compile essays such that, although each essay might have a different author, the book as whole speaks with a single voice. This is not that kind of book. Some of the contributors have a well-established reputation for being relatively conservative in both a theological and political sense: Michael A. G. Haykin, Thomas Kidd, Tom Nettles, Jonathan Leeman, and R. Albert Mohler. For most readers of this review, the essays by these authors will provide substance for deeper reflection on convictions already shared.

Other contributors are notably less conservative. The editors acknowledge this; although this volume is a product of B&H, “not all contributors affirm the Southern Baptist Convention’s *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, and even...the editors...do not affirm every judgment and every conclusion found herein” (14). I do not believe it would be possible for any one individual to affirm all of the judgments and conclusions of this book.

The diversity precludes a simple evaluation of this compilation. Because identifying a Baptist view of any particular topic is unavoidably historical, an is/ought fallacy lurks: how many self-identified Baptists with a particular view or practice does it take to alter the boundaries of Baptist political philosophy? Can a self-identified Baptist enact a

political philosophy that is, at root, anti-Baptistic? If so, how would we know? The editors acknowledge this tension in their concluding essay. They wish to distinguish Baptist theology from Baptist practice, so that not all errors of past Baptists can be attributed to their identity *as* Baptists (726).

The editors explicitly wish to distance Baptist theology from the scandal of Baptist defenders of slavery and racism. But this is/ought or “No True Baptist” (726) fallacy has application to all manner of issues. Because there has been a strain of Baptist identity that exalted soul liberty as the most—sometimes in effect the *only*—important Baptist distinctive, no credible history can ignore the existence (and at times the preponderance) of liberalism in Baptist institutions. This theological liberalism has often expressed itself in a much more robust advocacy of political engagement than is typical of more conservative Baptists.

Walter Rauschenbusch, the father of the Social Gospel, was a Baptist. Aaron Douglas Weaver, contributing an essay on the progressive Baptists, writes that “these progressive Baptists have been united through a shared belief in the Social Gospel and the conviction that Christianity must be an activist faith” (287). Should we conclude, therefore, that the Social Gospel is an important component of any truly Baptist political theology? One essay concludes by celebrating the election to the US Senate of Raphael Warnock (pastor of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Ebenezer Baptist Church); his election is seen as an expression of “the continuity of African American Baptist faith and civil rights activism...that stretches back to colonial history” (259). Perhaps Warnock, endorsed by NARAL and Planned Parenthood, represents a Baptist victory in much the same way that Joe Biden’s advocacy of abortion represents the pinnacle of the Irish-Catholic American experience.

There are good reasons for allowing advocates of less-conservative positions to contribute histories of their own facets of Baptist history (as this volume does). If the boundaries of Baptist identity are determined by history, it would be dishonest to ignore liberal Baptist history. Further, it would also be both academically suspect and somewhat counter-productive to assign the essays recounting these eras and figures to historians who flatly oppose the ambitions of those about whom they are writing. The diversity of contributors to this volume mirrors the diversity of Baptist positions on politics. In the main, then, it is useful that the editors chose authors across the ideological spectrum; assembling all these essays in a single volume must be viewed as a gift.

All that said, the majority of contributions to this volume do reflect the theologically conservative stream of Baptist theology. Happily, this is especially true in the topical section of the book and the editorials, which are by their nature more prescriptive than the historical essays. Even conservative Baptists may not agree with every conclusion in these essays, but they will find that these contributions are grounded in shared theological foundations.

By definition, there will be no Baptist Magisterium who will be able to announce the definitive Baptist political theology. But no Baptist who

wishes to speak meaningfully on these questions can do so without awareness of the shape of the Baptist convictions that precede him. Because these questions are of enormous contemporary importance, Baptist leaders and Baptist pastors should acquire this book and read these essays.

It is the reader who must evaluate the scope of Baptist history on matters political and to decide how those convictions will shape his own political theory and practice. And that, we must acknowledge, is appropriate for Baptists.

Michael P. Riley
Calvary Baptist Church, Wakefield, MI

Arminian Baptists: A Biographical History of Free Will Baptists, edited by David Lytle and Charles Cook. Nashville: Randall House, 2022. viii + 466 pp. \$27.99.

In their edited book, David Lytle and Charles Cook, have assembled a stellar team of historians to present a unique resource. Much like the volume edited by David Dockery and Timothy George, *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition* (B&H, 2001), *Arminian Baptists* tells a long history through the presentation of individual chapters on specific figures. In the same way that Dockery and George's volume focused more on a particular denomination (Southern Baptists), Lytle and Cook's volume focuses on a different denomination (the National Association of Free Will Baptists, the NAFWB). Lytle and Cook both claim some education from the NAFWB's school, Welch College, and live within that orbit, as do most of the contributors. Though many Baptists are Arminian, this book has the clear intention of presenting key figures from a particular strain of Arminian Baptists that have had Arminian theology at the core of their identity throughout their history.

With the unique focus on self-identified Arminian Baptists, the twenty-eight chapters of this book are organized around three broad eras. The first is the "Rise of the Arminian Baptist." This section begins in the early seventeenth century with Thomas Helwys and considers mostly English General Baptists (including Henry Denne, Thomas Grantham, and Thomas Monck) but also the pioneering ministry of Paul Palmer in early eighteenth-century North Carolina. Arminian Baptists were much like their Calvinist counterparts in that they struggled for identity and toleration. Despite these struggles, the General Baptists demonstrated tenacious evangelism and organization in their effort to survive. One theme of this era is that these Arminian Baptists worked not only to distance themselves from a certain strand of Arminian theology that bordered on semi-Pelagianism but also to demonstrate their theological bona fides. This is clearly seen in an early and exceptionally robust confessional document from this group, "An Orthodox Creed"