



The Queensland Baptist Forum

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BHQ Baptist Essay Prize 2012 Winners



Every time Malyon College runs its course on Baptist History and Principles, we offer a prize for the best essay. Dr David Parker usually teaches part of the course, and we are involved in setting the essay topic.

The course was taught last in August 2012 and we have pleasure in announcing that this time there were two equal winners. Both top essays were judged by members of the BHQ panel to be of such a quality that it was best to award a joint prize. Each recipient received copies of our latest books, *Something more than Gold*, and *Pressing on with the Gospel*, a year's membership in BHQ and a cash prize (the total amount for the prize was raised by 50% and divided equally).

The prizes went to **Matt Littlefield**, Youth Pastor at Beenleigh and District Baptist Church, and **Tim Lucas** of Gateway Baptist Church. Matt's prize was presented by the chair of BHQ at our meeting on 23 Feb (see picture above), while Tim's was presented later at Gateway Church (left—centre, with Pastor Jason Elsmore and right, Anne Klose, the recipient of the last prize).



The **essay topic** required students to discuss a statement made by a NZ Baptist leader who claimed that contemporary Baptists are influenced too much by ideas dating to the earliest days of Baptist life stemming from the earlier Anabaptists rather than the Bible. He claims that because of this there is too much emphasis on the independence of the local church at the expense of interdependency. This claim also had to be discussed in relation to the situation in Queensland.

Abbreviated versions of their essays are printed in this issue (without full references or bibliography). For more details contact the prize-winners direct.

2013 Meeting Dates —15 June, 9 Nov (AGM) at 2pm @ Archives—Be Sure to Come!

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Prize winning Baptist History and Principles Essay

Tim Lucas (abbreviated by the editor)

In announcing changes to the structure of the New Zealand Baptist Union in 2009, their National Leader, Rodney Macann, made a statement which is the focus of this essay. He said,

“(These changes were) fuelled by a recognition that a number of our less well resourced churches are not equipped to share the gospel effectively in our current context. We recognized that we can be hampered by an ecclesiology which can be shaped more by our beginnings emerging from the Anabaptists than by the New Testament values of the different parts of the body enhancing each others ministry as described in Ephesians 4: 16 [sic].”

In the statement, Macann appears to be promoting a more significant role for the Baptist Union in the life of individual churches, particularly smaller churches. Inherent in the statement (and the context of structural reorganisation) is a debate between the independent autonomy of local churches and mutuality or cooperation between churches (known as associationalism), in the context of the role of the Baptist Union.

However, another thread through Macann’s statement centres around the formation of the Baptist movement. Macann asserts (in a clarifying email) that the Baptists emerged from the Anabaptists, who, with “their passion to see church governed by believers and not the state unwittingly left us an inheritance of determined independence which has become part of our dna [sic]” (Macann, 2010). Macann suggests that the Baptist movement has been shaped by the Anabaptist movement which was fiercely independent. These claims need to be investigated for their accuracy.

Anabaptist Influence on the Baptist Movement

The Anabaptist connection with the early Baptists has been the subject of significant debate (Lee, 2003). Some scholars argue that the Baptists emerged from the English Separatist movement with little influence from the Anabaptists (eg White, 1983). Other authors believe that the Mennonites (one group of Anabaptists) had a dramatic influence on the Baptists’ development (Coggins, 1984).

These theories can almost be summed up in the life of one person within the Baptist movement – John Smyth (Lee, 2003). As a separatist in England, he, along with Thomas Helwys and others, fled to Holland due to the oppression of the Separatist movement under King James (Ball, 1994). The believers met together in Amsterdam, and it is here that a distinctive Baptist faith emerged (McBeth, 1987). Smyth and the group in Holland came to accept the concept of regenerate church membership and believer’s baptism, where Helwys and thirty others proceeded to be baptised, and the first Baptist congregation was born (Bebbington, 2010).

However, Smyth became more influenced by the Mennonite Church (a stream of the Anabaptists), and he applied for membership to their church (Ball, 1994). Helwys and others refused to follow, excommunicating him from the Baptist church. Smyth passed away before he could join the Mennonites, and due to the abatement of persecution in England, Helwys and a small group returned, establishing the first General Baptist church on

English soil in London in 1611 (McBeth, 1987).

John Smyth was obviously influenced by the Mennonites, so whilst there appears to be some interplay between the Anabaptist and Baptist movements, there remains a question over the extent of that connection. An examination of the respective movement’s theology will shed some light on the issue. Comparing the Anabaptists’ Schleitheim Confession with early Baptist thought and practice shows some overlap between the movements. The most striking similarity is the emphasis on believer’s baptism and the rejection of paedobaptism. As Smyth’s congregation was baptised in Holland, it is not inconceivable that the Anabaptists had a significant impact on this belief and practice.

Both movements state in their confessions a reliance on Scripture, and limit the sharing of the Lord’s Supper to those who have been baptised (Lumpkin, 1969). These areas indicate some similarity between both the Anabaptist and Baptist movements. However, there are many points of divergence. The Anabaptists had a very strong perspective of separation from the world. According to the Schleitheim Confession, believers were not permitted to serve in the military or magistracy, they refused to take up weapons for any cause, and they took no oaths (Lumpkin, 1969). They relied on the church imposed “ban” as a method of discipline, and they lived a life of withdrawal from the impure world around them.

These latter practices and beliefs are clearly not in line with those of the later Baptists (Ball, 1994). Torbet (1975) argues that the refusal of the Baptists to follow these Anabaptist principles provides a marked distinction between the two groups, whilst Robinson (1927) goes further by arguing that despite the points of contact between the Anabaptists and the English who became Baptists, the origin of English Baptists is found more so in their Puritan ancestry.

This is definitely true of the Particular Baptists who emerged in 1616 quite independently from the General Baptists and also distinct from the Anabaptist movement. Henry Jacob founded an Independent congregation at Southwark in 1616 which over time moved away from the established Church of England and its practice of infant baptism (McBeth, 1987).

This congregation suffered under oppression and leadership transition until Henry Jessey took on the pastorate in 1637, and it adopted the practice of believer’s baptism. This was the first Particular Baptist Church, which differed from the General Baptists on a major point of doctrine. The Particular Church held a doctrine of limited atonement (or Calvinism), whilst the General Baptists believed in general redemption and that Christ died for all (that is, Arminianism). The Particular Baptist Church grew, and in their 1644 Confession went to great pains to indicate that they were not associated with the Anabaptists, titling their confession “The Confession of Faith, of all those Churches which are commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptists” (Lumpkin, 1969: 44).

Whilst the General Baptists may have inherited the view of believer’s baptism from the Anabaptists, it is suggested that Anabaptist belief and practice had little further impact on the development of Baptist theology (both General and Particular), and certainly not in re-

spect to their ecclesiology. Thus, Macann's view that current Baptist ecclesiology is "shaped more by our beginnings emerging from the Anabaptists" (in Grigg, 2009) is misplaced at best, and fallacious at worst.

Beginnings: Independence or Associationalism?

Attention now turns to Macann's assertion that the Baptists inherited a fierce independence in their DNA. An examination of the early Baptist church movement provides evidence contrary to Macann's assertion that Baptist churches lived in independence of one another. Whilst Helwys was concerned with the rights of a particular church, he nevertheless held that the broader church was one body, echoing Ephesians 4: 16 (Wamble, 1957). In fact, mutuality and associationalism was evident from early on in the life of the English Baptist Church. The London Baptist Confession of 1644 which was signed by seven Particular Baptist churches stated that the Baptist movement consisted of:

"distinct and severall Bodie, every one a compact and knit Citie in it selfe; yet are they all to walk by one and the same Rule, and by all meanes convenient to have the counsel and help one of another in all needful affaires of the Church, as members of one body in the common faith under Christ their onely head [sic]" (Lumpkin, 1969: 168-9).

Thus, whilst churches were to be autonomous, they were also to be interdependent. This worked itself out in practical ways. During the early years, Baptist churches met separately due to distance and security, but at appointed intervals they came together for discipline and communion services (Wamble, 1957). Churches were also related to one another through the constituting of new churches, the ordination of officers and the certification of preachers (ibid). Additionally, when local churches could not resolve their own disciplinary problems, they requested the aid of sister churches, or an association (Carter, 1982). In the 1650's associationalism developed rapidly amongst Baptists. Due to the General Baptists' theological opposition of Calvinism and movement away from Anglicanism and Puritanism, early General Baptists tended toward associationalism to find security and fellowship, despite their stated independence and autonomy of the local church (Wamble, 1957).

For the General Baptists, an inclination toward associationalism preserved unity and served as an antidote to disruptive forces (Wamble, 1957), and continued on through Dan Taylor (McBeth, 1990), and even persisted amidst the decline of the General Baptists into the eighteenth century which was due to their Arian theology (Underwood, 1956). Congregations associating with each other brought benefits such as mutual encouragement, sharing new ideas, providing practical support, and giving doctrinal instruction to one another (Brown, 1986). On the other hand, the Particular Baptists enjoyed growth, and turned to associationalism in order to educate young ministers, supply needy churches and provide benevolence (Wamble, 1957). Associationalism served functional purposes, but always in a way consistent with the Baptist doctrine of the church. When the inevitable question of associational authority reared its head, the General Assembly of Particular Baptists resolved this in 1689 by ruling:

"We disclaim all manner of superiority and superintendency over the churches, and that we have no authority or power to prescribe or impose anything upon the

faith or practice of any of the churches of Christ. Our whole intendment is to be helpers together of one another, by way of counsel and advice" (Ivimey, 1811: 3)

Clearly, Particular Baptists never elevated the association over the churches, upholding the autonomy of individual congregations, but clearly utilising associationalism to encourage, support, and build the Church. Renihan (2008) argues that for the Particular Baptists, the commitment to cooperation and mutuality played a vital role in their ecclesiology. In light of this discussion, Macann's (2010) statement that in comparison to the context of our forefathers Baptists should temper their independence is again erroneous, as from the very outset of Baptist history, churches strived to work together and support one another.

Although the assumptions behind Macann's statement that Baptist churches emerged from Anabaptist beginnings, and have inherited independence in their DNA from the outset are inaccurate, the heart of New Zealand Baptists to resource and equip churches to share the gospel effectively in their context is to be applauded. There are many benefits of working together and living out the metaphor of Christ's body in the Baptist movement today, and the remainder of this essay will examine this within the current context in Queensland. But a brief survey of the history of Queensland Baptists is first needed.

Baptists in Queensland

The history of the Baptist church in Queensland stretches back to the 1830s and 1840s, before the creation of the State. German and British Baptists arrived in the Moreton Bay region with the purpose of missionary endeavour amongst the Aborigines and to play a role in Lang's vision of Christian Commonwealth built on the ideals of "pure religion, sound education and industry." (Ball, Nickerson and Morcom, 2012: 106).

With the Baptist movement being bolstered by immigrants from Britain, a landmark came in 1859 with the Wharf Street Church, Queensland's first official Baptist church opening under the pastorate of B G Wilson, who was a key influence in the identity of Baptists in Queensland over the next twenty years (ibid). Over time, preaching stations matured into individual congregations led by independent, charismatic leaders, who were happy to lead churches that were autonomous and independent in both thought and deed (Ball, 1994).

After a number of attempts at bringing churches together were aborted (seemingly due to strong personalities of those in leadership which resulted in division, as well as doctrinal differences) the Baptist Association of Queensland came into being in 1877 and took on oversight of preaching stations, the training and provision of pastors, outreach into new areas, and encouraging conferring and cooperation amongst the churches (Ball, 1994).

Despite a slow start, the Association grew and became more influential as individual churches transferred authority to the Association. Over time and as it grew, the Association intervened in church discipline, took more initiative in property matters, and oversaw the accreditation and control of pastors. By the turn of the century, the Baptist movement in Queensland had become a denomination with a strong sense of self-awareness (Ball, 1994).

Association & Independence in Queensland Today

Over the ensuing century, a variety of denominational functions have risen out of the Association, now called Queensland Baptists. The balance between emphasising association and autonomy appears to have shifted over time depending on situations and personalities, and today, this balance is summed up in Queensland Baptists' statement of purpose, which is "to extend the Kingdom of God by assisting each local church to develop and achieve its own vision under God and to achieve together what individual churches cannot do alone." (Queensland Baptists, 2012)

The interaction between local church autonomy and associationalism is further documented in the Queensland Baptists Guidelines for Belief and Practice. In the Core Values section of this guideline, "each local church has the freedom and responsibility to conduct its own ministry. Whilst affirming the place of leaders to guide, the local Baptist congregation has the final authority, under Christ, for the life and mission of the church" (Queensland Baptists, 2012). This statement empowers the local church to be autonomous and responsible for its own decisions. Furthermore, the document states that "no one can force a church to accept a creed. Central to the Baptist identity is a strong commitment for total religious freedom" (ibid).

However, the same document also outlines how Baptist churches in Queensland relate with one another. Using the metaphor of different churches constituting the Body of Christ, Appendix C makes a number of statements about the importance of Baptists working together. These include "building relationships within the body of Christ is essential;" "the Body of Christ is to be united but diverse;" that "diversity does not mean division, as unity does not mean uniformity;" "the Kingdom of God advances through the cooperative effort of the Body of Christ;" and that churches "should help each other to develop their potential by sharing with others." Finally, Appendix C states that "Queensland Baptists need a denominational structure which will facilitate the building of relationships."

Through these statements, it is evident that for Queensland Baptists there is a stronger emphasis on cooperation, working together, and collegiality than on independence and autonomy. Furthermore, in a final appendix, the Guidelines articulate a position on autonomy and accountability of local churches, drawing on the experience of the early church as recorded in Scripture to justify the importance of accountability in Queensland Baptist churches. This appendix defines accountability as "mutual cooperation to ensure that we individually and corporately remain within the accepted position statements and policies" (Queensland Baptists, 2012), and concludes with four principles to guide the formation of autonomy and accountability practice.

It is evident from the Queensland Baptists Guidelines for Belief and Practice that there is a much stronger focus on cooperation and mutuality than on autonomy and independence at a denominational level. In many ways it is not a surprise for a denominational document to have such an emphasis, but it could also be interpreted, as Sell (1999) suggests, that autonomy and independence come easier and more naturally to current Baptists than do associationalism and mutuality. Certainly in many regards, some Baptist churches fiercely protect their right to autonomy and independence.

This can be observed in some responses to directives from Queensland Baptists. There have been tensions across Baptist churches over issues of ordination, the Personal Ministry Development Plan for accredited pastors, affiliation fees and even the vision of Queensland Baptists. It could be argued that some of these issues have been addressed in a 'top-down' approach, and undermine the independence of the local Baptist Church. Here, we must be reminded of the statement from the Assembly of Particular Baptists that associations "have no authority or power to prescribe or impose anything upon the faith or practice of any of the churches" (Ivimey, 1811: 3). Considering the disdain shown for the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church – as evidenced in the Second London Confession which accused the Pope of being the Antichrist (Lumpkin, 1969) – denominational heads have many tensions to balance as they seek to set the direction of the movement and support the growth and vitality of individual churches.

Both Macann's statement (in Grigg, 2009) statement and the Queensland Baptist Guidelines on Belief and Practice, posit the view that Baptists should be working to enhance each other's ministry and advance the Kingdom of God through the co-operative effort of the Body. Both statements allude to the metaphor of the Body of Christ in Ephesians 4, where Paul writes that "the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (verse 16). Of importance, however, is that the head of this body is Christ himself (verse 15). And it is in this context of building the Kingdom of God, and strengthening the body, that the ministry of Queensland Baptists has been beneficial in the eyes of this author.

At a pastoral level, there are many initiatives that encourage churches and ministries to connect together, build one another up, and support each other to advance the Kingdom of God.

Conclusion

The heart of the New Zealand statement is that the pendulum has swung too far towards independence and needs to be brought back towards associationalism. The premises that this statement has been based on, in that the Baptist movement emerged from Anabaptism, and that Baptist origins resulted in a deep commitment to independence and reluctance to work together have been highlighted to be inaccurate.

However, in 2012, the current interplay between autonomy and association in Queensland appears a little confusing. There seems to be some movement to centralise more authority at denominational level, whilst various ministry arms of the denomination serve alongside Baptist Churches to strengthen and encourage them and their ministries to accomplish their own God-given goals. In our increasingly post-Christendom context, it is important that churches work together to strengthen one another and continue the mission to reach the world for Christ, whilst still retaining a sense of autonomy. Thus, a vision of independent local churches working together in the spirit of interdependence towards the fulfilment of God's mission on earth is a noble and worthy cause for Queensland Baptists.

END

Prize winning Baptist History and Principles Essay

Matt Littlefield (abbreviated by the editor)

Rodney Macann, speaking as the head of the Baptist Churches of New Zealand, believes that the Baptist ecclesiology of the autonomy of the local congregation, which he sees as passed down by the Anabaptists, can militate against Baptist churches working together in harmony as the body of Christ.

This is a very significant statement to make, as the autonomy of the local congregation is part of the bedrock of Baptist distinctives (Pitt 2009, 377), and is indeed affirmed on the Baptist Churches of New Zealand website (2009). It is this writer's contention, that while there is some merit in Macann's statement, it is fundamentally flawed, first because of some historical inaccuracies, and also because of some practical evidences that he is not correct.

Did the Baptists emerge from the Anabaptists?

Macann's statement is partly based on the premise that the Anabaptists are the forefathers of the Baptists. This ancestry is however debated. Bebbington (2010, 25) notes that "the most developed historiographical controversy concerning Baptists surrounds their relationship with the Anabaptists."

Anabaptists first sprang up amid the more radical disciples of Zwingli, in Zurich (Bebbington 2010, 27). They were considered radical because they sought the separation of church and state, and believed the church should not just be reformed but reconstituted on biblical lines, as the true church had been lost (Colewell 1987, 121). During the reformation the Anabaptists, who were a varied bunch, managed to cause quite a stir, especially in 1535 with the debacle at Munster, which blackened the name of the Anabaptists for some centuries (White 1990, 44).

However, the Anabaptists sought to, and succeeded in, setting up a free church, formed around the local congregation, rather than the state, with the only members being believers baptized upon a confession of faith (Bebbington 2010, 29). Ideologically, at least they were forerunners of the Baptists.

As the Anabaptists were largely located in the Netherlands, this meant that meant that ideas crossed over the channel into England (Bebbington 2010, 29). However, though there were certainly Anabaptists in England, there is no concrete literary evidence that they passed their ideas onto the separatists, who eventually gave birth to the Baptist church (Ross 1987, 38).

Ross (1987, 38-9), does acknowledge that the possibility of Anabaptist influence cannot be denied in such a time as it was, but neither can it, according to him, be conclusively demonstrated. Estep (in Ross 1987, 38-9) argues that as the Separatists emerged the Anabaptists on the English scene virtually vanished therefore it seems to him more than likely that the Anabaptists joined the Separatist movement (Ross 1987, 39).

But there were also wide differences between the Anabaptists and Separatists; including the fact that the former espoused the freedom of the will, while the latter were uniformly Reformed (Bebbington 2010, 30). According to Bebbington (2010, 30) the differences between the two movements are too diverse for it to be said conclusively that Anabaptist ideas were transmitted

to the Baptists through the channel of separatism.

There are two other ways in which some historians posit links to the Anabaptist church for the early Baptists. One is through connections with the first Baptist church. The first historically identifiable Baptist Church was established by John Smyth, a Puritan Separatist, in 1609 in the Netherlands (Rankin 1996, 4). Smyth and his congregation had fled persecution in 1608 and moved into a Mennonite bakehouse where they also worshipped (Weaver 2008, 12). Weaver (2008, 12-13) says that it was during this time that Smyth and his church came to the conclusion that believers Baptism was the true baptism and the means through which one became a member of a true church. Therefore he concludes that the Anabaptists influenced the creation of the first Baptist church.

However, it is documented that Smyth's critics asked him why he had not sought rebaptism from the Waterlander Mennonites of Amsterdam who already practiced baptism (Ross 1987, 40). "Smyth met this criticism by making contact with [the Mennonites] and so...established the first discoverable tie between the English Separatists and the Anabaptists" (Knappen in Ross 1987, 40). This key piece of evidence, that Smyth's group was not influenced by the Anabaptists in performing their rebaptisms, supports the thesis that the first Baptist church began before its congregants connected with the Mennonites. Indeed Bebbington (2010, 37) suggests that Smyth's congregation moved into the Mennonite Bakehouse after their rebaptism, perhaps as a consequence of it. Hence the General Baptist church began apart from the Mennonites.

This would seem to be the end of the discussion, except Estep (1987, 19) counters that,

"the crucial question is not whether or not John Smyth was influenced to adopt believer's baptism due to direct Mennonite influence. The question is the extent to which the congregation of Thomas Helwys carried back to England a faith and order that was neither Mennonite nor Separatist but incorporated elements of both."

Shortly after connecting with the Mennonites, Smyth's views developed along Anabaptist lines, and he and some of his congregation applied for membership to the Waterlander Mennonites in 1610 (Bebbington 2010, 32-33). At this time Thomas Helwys led a split of ten people away from Smyth's church, as they did not wish to become Mennonites (Lumpkin 1959, 115).

It was Helwys and his followers who moved back to England in 1612 and planted the first Baptist church on English soil (Weaver 2008, 15). But it is clear from a statement of faith produced by Helwys in 1611, that he took back a church with a theology differing from that of the Separatist Calvinism. For example he teaches general atonement, an Arminian/Mennonite concept (Article 3) (Helwys in Lumpkin 1959, 117), whereas Calvinists hold to limited atonement (Piper 1998). Both Estep (1987, 21), and Bebbington (2010, 40-41) assert, what appears to be most likely, that the General Baptists drew their distinctive theology of salvation from the Anabaptists.

So the Anabaptists did pass some of their theology and practice down to the General Baptists, but as Estep

asserts above, it created something which was neither Anabaptist or Separatist, it was indeed an unique denomination; Baptist.

Another way is that proposed by Glen H. Stassen (1962, 322-348), who has done some extensive research on Menno Simons' *Foundation of Christian Doctrine*. He argues that *Foundation* is the source of the Particular Baptists move away from aspects of Separatist theology in their confessions. These Particular Baptist's began when "in 1641, members of a Calvinist-Congregationalist church in England decided they should be baptized, as believers, by immersion into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ" (Stassen 1998, 35).

Stassen notes some incredibly strong documentary and historical evidence that the Particulars took from Menno the use of the word 'ordinance' for baptism and communion (1998, 36), the teaching of plunging, which Menno acknowledged *baptizo* meant even if he practiced pouring (1998, 39), and other significant teachings.

His argument is detailed and persuasive, though Nelson (1994, 34) asserts that you can find all of the innovations in the Bible, which both Anabaptists and Baptists were reading from a similar point of view. However, Stassen (1962, 327) also notes that the Particulars went to the Collegiants, a Calvinist/Anabaptist mixed congregation which practiced immersion, to have Richard Blunt baptized and then return to England to baptize the rest of this small group, by immersion. The first time this is documented in England (Stassen 1962, 327); this is telling evidence.

However, even if Stassen is correct is asserting that *Menno's Foundation* was so highly regarded by this group of Calvinistic Baptists, this only proves what Estep stressed with the General Baptists. Baptists are neither Separatists, nor Anabaptists, but instead are a unique denomination, with both branches of the Baptist church clearly influenced by the Separatism they both came out of, and at least with the General's and maybe with the Particular's, influenced in some of their distinctive doctrines by the Mennonites.

This would mean that at least in regards to the part of his statement about Anabaptists being the forefathers of the Baptists, Rodney Macann is incorrect. The Anabaptists are ideological forerunners of the Baptists, and to some degree influencers, but not forefathers.

Indeed it can be seen that although Macann was correct in saying that our forefathers had a passion that the church be governed by believers and not the church, he is incorrect in saying that part of this was a culture of independence which could harm the churches ability to work together. This was not a part of Orthodox Baptist teaching. However, just because it was not a part of Orthodox Baptist teaching, does not necessarily mean that Baptists have not acted in such way.

Early Baptist Ecclesiology and Independence

We have already demonstrated that neither with the Anabaptists, nor the Baptists, was a determined independence part of their thrust or teaching, even though they believed in the autonomy of the local congregation. However, this does not mean that there is not at times a culture of independence amongst Baptist associations.

There have been Baptists who have advocated for extreme independency. Patterson (2009, 75) mentions James Robinson Graves (1820-1893), who "continually

fretted that associations, publishing societies, mission boards, or authoritarian pastors could threaten the prerogatives of autonomous congregations." Grave was extremely protective of the independence of local Baptist churches, he maintained "that the New Testament restricted *ekklesia* to visible, local, and absolutely [emphasis added] independent congregations of believers" (Patterson 2009, 75)

Graves' ecclesiology goes a step further than that of the early Baptists, who advocated for voluntary interdependence, rather than complete independence. Patterson (2009, 76) hits on the likely reason why, he says,

"Graves was likely unaware of how much he filtered some of his ideas about the church through the tenets of individualism and republicanism; he was, therefore, oblivious to both the culture-bound character of his ecclesiology and the way it influenced his understanding of history."

In other words, it was not the ecclesiology of autonomy of the local church which led Graves, and his followers, to a determined independence, but rather it was a culture of individualism among Graves and his followers which led them to interpret Baptist autonomy as complete independence. Again this was a marked step away from the teaching of early Baptists.

Macann says above that this independent ecclesiology can hamper ministry and stop it from being done "by the New Testament values of the different parts of the body enhancing each other's ministry as described in Ephesians 4:16." Ephesians 4:16 says, "Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

It would seem that when compiling their doctrine of the church both the Anabaptists and early Baptists sought to give weight to the teaching that all parts of the body, that is various congregations as applied here, need to work together, and not alone in being the church to this fallen world. It would then follow that the answer to our question at the start of this section is that a determined independent line does not stem logically from the Baptist ecclesiology of church autonomy and interdependence. Determined independence is rather an aberration of early Baptist thought.

It must be noted that Baptist history is not a rosy collection of perfectly united Baptist associations. As early as the late 17th and early 18th centuries, because of controversies among Particular Baptists, the associations and assemblies they had formed started to fracture (Morcom 2012, 57-8).

Churches started to work in independence of each other, in some areas associations thrived, in others not (Morcom 2012, 58). But the key point is that modern Baptist churches are not hampered by an ecclesiology from the past which leads to determined independence, to the exclusion of working together for the good of the gospel. Rather, if modern Baptist churches and associations display a culture of determined independence it is because they have been influenced by modern culture to give up the ecclesiology of Baptist beginnings.

We, in the West, live in an individualistic world. David Kelley (Atlas Society, 2012) in his discussion of Ayn Rand's book *Atlas Shrugged* says, "Radical individualism is precisely what the world needs. Radical individualism, and rational individualism. A free society, by nature, is an individualist society." (23)

The world which the likes of Ayn Rand and David

Kelley advocated for is actually upon us. In this world of pronounced individualism, doctrines such as the autonomy of the local church can often be applied to the exclusion of the biblical emphasis on unity and working together as the body of Christ. Therefore it is not the ecclesiology of the early Baptists which leads to a situation such as described in New Zealand by Macann, but rather it is when biblical Baptist ecclesiology is high jacked by modern western individualistic values that we get such situations occurring.

Qld Baptist ecclesiology and Ephesians 4:16?

We shall now turn to my contemporary situation in Queensland to attempt to answer the question: Does Baptist ecclesiology as it is applied today in Queensland, hamper ministry as envisioned in Ephesians 4:16?

According to the *Queensland Baptists' Constitution* (2005) one of the objects of the Union is "to promote unity amongst the Churches in Faith, Fellowship and Work... To create means for the Churches to work together for the advancement of the Kingdom of God" (Article 3.1 (2) and (3), 2-3).

This is held in tension with the recognition "that each Church has the liberty to govern its own affairs in whatever way it chooses..." (Article 4.3, 4). So encapsulated in the Union are the principles of autonomy and interdependence, and as the Union is made up of the participating churches of *Queensland Baptists* then this is an agreed principle of all the affiliated churches. (The essay gives several local examples illustrating both positive and negative instances of interdependency which are not reprinted due to space)

This all goes to show that while the NZ leader was incorrect in attributing the independence of some Baptist churches to their historic roots, his statement still has virtue, for he is correct in asserting that Baptist churches can be hampered when they choose to work independently of each other.

This research has shown that both early Anabaptist and Baptist churches believed autonomous churches should work in tandem with each other. If Queensland Baptists wish to be true to their historic origins, then it would follow that unity should not be sacrificed at the altar of independence. Rather, both interconnectedness and autonomy should be upheld as equally biblical and necessary to a healthy denomination.

Baptist churches in the *Queensland Baptist Union* should pay more attention to the constitution that representatives from their churches agreed to. That Constitution calls them to work together for unity, while still retaining their own identity and autonomy. It is not enough to just support an administrative body and a Bible College.

Churches on the ground in the areas where they work should actively seek to build each other up, encourage each other's ministers, and pool resources so that the gospel can advance with a unified Baptist church behind it. It is not enough even for just the church leaders to do this, congregants must see that this "ministry is fundamentally the calling of the whole church" (Warford 2002, 50). As Cook (in Lumpkin 1958, 253-4) says, 'the Church's ministry is the Church itself,' because every member is supposed to partake in its ministry. A church lives and grows by the diversified and harmonious participation of its members in its ministry." This extends also to the health of a denominational body. Individual members of churches should seek ways to build up not just

their own church, but 'The Church' in general.

It would appear that as the Union now stands, to some degree the way Baptist ecclesiology is applied in Queensland is hampering ministry as envisioned in Ephesians 4:16. The church is a body with many and diverse members, but we have a situation here in Queensland where parts of the body are acting independently to scoop people and resources aside for themselves, rather than working together for the good of all the body. This was not how our true forefathers, the General and Particular Baptists envisioned how Baptist churches should act. The body of Christ is made up of many diverse churches, all of which are cities unto themselves, yet they should pool their counsel for the good of the kingdom. To act in any other way harms the body of Christ.

Conclusion

So we can conclude that Macann was wrong in some of his historic specifics. Anabaptists are not the forefathers of the Baptist church; however, they did have some influence on the General Baptists, and may have had some influence on the Particulars. Also neither early Anabaptist, nor early Baptist ecclesiology militated against these groups working together among their various denominational affiliates; we saw clear historical examples of this. We also saw that determined independence is not a logical progression from the application of early Baptist ecclesiology, but however can be explained by a revision of Baptist ecclesiology through a modern individualistic mindset.

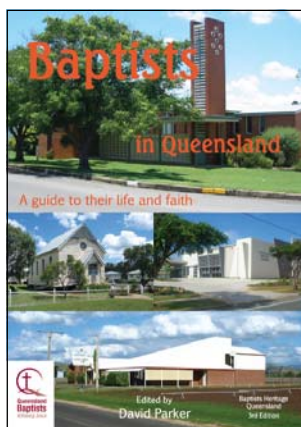
We live in an individualistic world and this has influenced how Baptist Ecclesiology is applied. Truly applying biblical and Baptist ecclesiology will mean a rejection, to some degree, of the individualistic culture of this modern western world. But this is necessary for the continued health of Baptist churches.

However Rodney was not completely wrong in the sentiment of his statement. When Baptist churches work independently rather than interdependently this causes harm to the combined effort of the church. As an example of this we saw that Baptist ecclesiology as it is being applied in Queensland is hampering the ministry of the church as envisioned in Ephesians 4:16. There is a culture of churches working independently of each other, despite some examples to the contrary, and a prescribed determination for unity by the *Queensland Baptist Union*.

The Church is part of the one Christ, subscriber to one faith, and there needs to be more interconnectedness. It is chilling to think that even at a denominational level that Baptists are not working together as one unified body of churches. If a denomination cannot work together in harmony for the gospel, what hope is there of the larger church doing so? Conversely if the Baptist churches, can display to the world that they can remain autonomous and retain their identity, while still working together with other Baptist churches, then perhaps through that example we could see that unity spread to other denominations, and Christian bodies, and we could move closer to the Christian unity which Jesus prayed for (John 17:21).

END

Two New Publications from Baptist Heritage Qld



Two new publications have been launched by the Baptist Heritage Queensland – both updates of earlier works.

Baptists in Queensland is an information book about the practical aspects, beliefs and history of Baptists in Queensland, and was the first book ever published by BHSQ when it appeared in 1994. It sold very well, with some reprints necessary and a second edition in 2000. It was therefore long overdue for an update, especially on account of the many changes that have taken place in the 12 years since the ‘millennium edition’ was produced.

It is still the same size at 52 pages but now has a full colour cover featuring 4 Queensland churches. It has been extensively revised with new material (including a section on Baptists and Marriage) and changes to reflect the current state of affairs. Statistics have been updated in the light of the recent census. The book retains its original aim as an introduction to Baptist life locally here in Queensland for new and existing members, students and enquirers. This revision was largely funded by Queensland Baptists who will distribute copies amongst the churches. Additional copies from BHQ cost \$5 plus \$2.50 p & p.

The other book is *The National Guide to Australian Baptist Historical Resources and Services* which includes information from every state and the national Baptist bodies about their records, with contact details of archives and libraries from which more information may be obtained. It also contains a list of Baptist periodicals in Australian libraries. It has information about Baptist logos and advice about the nature and use of Baptist records.

This 40 page book, which is a ‘print on demand’ publication, also has a companion website with additional material. Visit <http://home.pacific.net.au/~dparker/ng/index.htm>. The publication is designed for students and others wanting to know where to find sources of information about Baptists in Australia. The help of Archivists and others in all states of Australia, Australian Baptist Ministries and Global Interaction is acknowledged in the compiling of this resource book. Copies are available from BHQ or the Archives at a special introductory price of \$5.00 plus \$2.50 p & p.

Memorial Display Cabinets for Archives



Two attractive display cabinets have been placed in the Baptist Archives as a memorial to one of our keenest members – Rev Mel Williams. The cases have been donated by Mrs Madeleine Williams as a fitting tribute to her husband who died 20 July 2011 at 86 years of age after a long ministry. Mr Williams was trained at NZ Bible Training Institute and the Baptist Theological College of NSW. He served in several pastorates in NSW from 1950 onwards before coming to Queensland in 1970 where he led churches at Nundah and Bundaberg. He was also interim pastor at several other churches. As well as his original BSc degree, he gained his BD and researched Neo-Pentecostalism for his MA degree, producing a valuable study of that movement which deserves wider circulation.

Mr Williams was a long time member of BHQ and wrote two of its popular books – *Cameos of Baptist Men in 19th Century Queensland*, and *Mission to Queensland*, as well as many articles for the Society’s newsletter. He was also a deeply involved in numismatics with a good personal collection of items. He wrote many articles and won awards for his work in this field.

The cabinets are being used in the Archives to display its artefacts and book collection. Another cabinet donated earlier houses important Minutes of the Baptist Union of Queensland.