

Introduction

THE ESSAYS IN THIS volume were originally papers given at the fifth annual conference of The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies, co-sponsored by the Canadian Baptist Historical Society, which took place at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. This annual conference is normally stretched over a two-day period with a variety of plenary sessions and some smaller parallel papers. All but three of the papers given at the plenary sessions on 26 and 27 September 2011—the three being those of Larry Kreitzer, Keith Harper, and George Rable—are contained in this volume.

While Baptists have generally not shunned military involvement, there has been a Baptist stream of pacifism, which the first paper by Anthony Cross seeks to ground in the Anabaptist witness in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and which he sees represented in the thought of John Smyth. Cross's paper contrasts Smyth's view with that of Thomas Helwys, a forerunner of English Baptist engagement in the political and military turmoil of the mid-seventeenth century. Paul Brewster's paper then looks at the thought of the eighteenth-century author and preacher Andrew Fuller about war during the British Empire's struggle against Napoleon. Fuller recognized that there was a place for patriotism in the Christian life and thus the military defense of one's homeland against the aggression of a foreign power. Yet, he was quite adamant that loyalty to Christ superseded this natural duty. James Robertson's chapter reflects on the oft-forgotten (though not by Canadians) War of 1812 and Baptist response to it within the American republic. Gordon Heath's essay explores the exuberant support of Canadian Baptists for the fight of the mother country (the British Isles) in Egyptian Sudan and Abyssinia during the 1880s. Heath sees this support as a forerunner of the way Canadian Baptists would react when they were called to greater sacrifice during the South African War at the turn of the century.

Four essays look at Baptist response to war in the twentieth century, possibly the bloodiest century on record. Doug Adams details the impact of World War I upon the life and ministry of T. T. Shields, and sees it as a key turning-point in that influential Baptist's thinking. Doug's essay is the only one in this volume not actually given at the conference. Robert Linder examines the way Australian Baptists approached participation in World War II and, upon the whole, finds them "reluctant warriors." The seventh paper draws upon Maurice Dowling's extensive knowledge of and involvement with Russian Baptists, and provides a fascinating look at their perspective on the Cold War of the 1950s and 1960s. The final paper in this book is a fresh examination by Nathan Finn of the way that American Baptists profoundly disagreed among themselves about how to regard the Vietnam War—in this they reflected the larger culture of the United States.

Preparing these papers for publication has been a strong reminder for the editors of two things in particular: while Baptists in their history have been certain that, as the saying has it, "war is hell," they have not been able to agree about how to respond to it. In our day, it is imperative that serious thought be given to the way Baptist followers of the Prince of Peace should live in a world increasingly filled with violence and war and rumors of war. That this book might in some small way aid in that process of thinking is the ardent wish of its editors.

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