

William H. Brackney. *Historical Dictionary of the Baptists*, 2d ed. Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements, vol. 94. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2009. Pp. xlii, 669. \$135. Hardback.

William Brackney is widely considered to be one of the most prominent scholars of Baptist Studies in North America. His numerous books and articles in Baptist history, historical theology, distinctives are standards in the field. During his four decade career he has served as executive director of the American Baptist Historical Society and occupied teaching and administrative positions at seminaries and universities identified with American Baptist, Southern Baptist, and Canadian Baptist traditions. Brackney currently serves as the Millard R. Cherry Distinguished Professor of Christian Theology and Ethics at Acadia Divinity College in Nova Scotia, where he also directs the Acadia Center for Baptist and Anabaptist Studies.

Since the late 1980s, Brackney has contributed a substantive reference work in Baptist Studies about every ten years. *The Baptists*, published in 1988, was part explanation of Baptist identity and part historical dictionary. His *Historical Dictionary of the Baptists* appeared in 1999 and quickly became the most comprehensive single-volume dictionary in the field. The present volume is a second edition of the *Historical Dictionary of the Baptists*, published as a “400th Anniversary Commemorative Edition, 1609-2009.” Brackney has added over 150 pages of new material to the second edition.

Several helpful features characterize this dictionary. An eight page chronology provides most of the important dates in Baptist history. Brackney’s ten page introduction is as good a brief introduction as one will find to such a diverse denominational tradition. The entries themselves, which amount to almost 700 pages, comprise the bulk of the dictionary. Brackney covers the full spectrum of Baptist history, evidencing a remarkable familiarity with the figures, institutions, doctrines, practices, and controversies found in numerous Baptist subdenominations in many different countries. The entries related to Baptists in a non-English-speaking context are especially helpful as many Western historians tend to focus most of their attention on Baptist in the British Isles and North America.

The only drawback to Brackney’s dictionary is a corollary of the project’s scope. While Brackney clearly knows a great deal about Baptist history, one finds occasional minor factual errors. The present reviewer is Southern Baptist, and as such is especially sensitive to inaccuracies about that tradition. There are undoubtedly similar minor errors related to other traditions as well. This is an almost inevitable limitation in a single-author dictionary, though Brackney is probably the best scholar to write a single-author Baptist dictionary. The hardback edition’s \$135 cost, which is characteristic of this entire series, almost certainly consigns the volume to research libraries. Fortunately, a paperback edition titled *The A to Z of the Baptists* is available for \$45, which though exorbitant for a paperback is much more reasonable than the cost of the hardback. This is fortunate because every scholar and student of Baptist Studies will want to be able to easily and regularly access this excellent reference work.

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