Together the individuals, movements, events, and ideas that have shaped the Baptist past. Moreover, he appropriately considers the wider contexts in which Baptist history has developed, including the theological legacy of the Magisterial Reformers and the thorny subject of the Anabaptist influences on our Baptist forebears. Consistent with his earlier work, Bebbington locates Baptists within the general stream of British and American evangelicalism; in this regard, he applies his previous arguments about the impact of the Enlightenment and Romanticism specifically to Baptists. His perceptive discussion of Baptists and revivalism is similarly driven by his interest in the flow of broader evangelical history.

Bebbington’s goal is to render “a work of synthesis that attempts to put the pieces of the puzzle into an intelligible framework” (4). Hence, the overriding approach of each chapter is topical. At the same time, the author maintains a more or less chronological format within each chapter. For example, “Divisions among Baptists in the Nineteenth Century” (chapter 6) surveys major controversies in England and America in such a way that the average reader should be able to sense historical progression. The blending of thematic and chronological methods works fairly well in the earlier chapters. However, it begins to fray somewhat in chapters 9 to 14, where topics like race, women, religious liberty, and missions are covered over rather long stretches of time; as a consequence, unity and coherence tend to suffer.

Nonetheless, Bebbington’s judicious and historically sensitive treatments of a variety of issues reinforce his emphasis on multiple Baptist identities. They also alert his audience to the diverse personalities, groupings, and movements that have dotted the denominational landscape since the seventeenth century. Indeed, his first fifteen chapters fittingly anticipate his conclusion that “Baptists have a multifaceted identity” (284).

This book, based on a course that Bebbington has taught several times at Baylor University’s Truett Seminary, artfully weaves together the individuals, movements, events, and ideas that have shaped the Baptist past. Moreover, he appropriately considers the wider contexts in which Baptist history has developed, including the theological legacy of the Magisterial Reformers and the thorny subject of the Anabaptist influences on our Baptist forebears. Consistent with his earlier work, Bebbington locates Baptists within the general stream of British and American evangelicalism; in this regard, he applies his previous arguments about the impact of the Enlightenment and Romanticism specifically to Baptists. His perceptive discussion of Baptists and revivalism is similarly driven by his interest in the flow of broader evangelical history.

Bebbington’s goal is to render “a work of synthesis that attempts to put the pieces of the puzzle into an intelligible framework” (4). Hence, the overriding approach of each chapter is topical. At the same time, the author maintains a more or less chronological format within each chapter. For example, “Divisions among Baptists in the Nineteenth Century” (chapter 6) surveys major controversies in England and America in such a way that the average reader should be able to sense historical progression. The blending of thematic and chronological methods works fairly well in the earlier chapters. However, it begins to fray somewhat in chapters 9 to 14, where topics like race, women, religious liberty, and missions are covered over rather long stretches of time; as a consequence, unity and coherence tend to suffer.

Nonetheless, Bebbington’s judicious and historically sensitive treatments of a variety of issues reinforce his emphasis on multiple Baptist identities. They also alert his audience to the diverse personalities, groupings, and movements that have dotted the denominational landscape since the seventeenth century. Furthermore, his focus on a wide range of Baptist identities does not keep him from suggesting common threads like believer’s baptism, regenerate church membership, and the priesthood of all believers as principles around which virtually all Baptists unite (285).

Although the book’s strengths far outweigh its faults, some minor blemishes should be noted. On the factual side, occasional historical errors mar the narrative. For instance, Bebbington
exaggerates the length of the papal schism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (7). In matters of ecclesiology, since Baptists in America most commonly refer to baptism and the Lord’s Supper as “ordinances,” they may be put off by some of his discussion of “Church, Ministry, and Sacraments among Baptists” (chapter 11). In addition, Baptists outside of the United Kingdom probably need more context in order to understand the “sacramental revival” in which some British Baptists are engaged.

All the same, *Baptists through the Centuries* is a balanced and commendable overview of the Baptist past. This reviewer adopted it for an undergraduate class in Baptist history, finding it to be much more serviceable and much less partisan than Leon McBeth’s *The Baptist Heritage* (1987). Beyond the academic classroom, Bebbington’s volume should also be useful in church study groups and discipleship training sessions, even if it is pricy for a paperback.

James A. Patterson, Ph.D.
Associate Dean
University Professor of Christian Thought and Tradition
School of Theology and Missions
Union University
Author of *James Robinson Graves: Staking the Boundaries of Baptist Identity*

---

**Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood**

Christian Smith with K. Christofferson, H. Davidson, & P.S. Herzog
New York: Oxford University Press, 2011
296 pp. $27.95 hardback

Reviewed by: Kimberly C. Thornbury

Notre Dame sociologist Christian Smith and his colleagues have followed up his *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (2009) with this portrait of 18-23 year olds beset by problems including a lack of moral reasoning, consumerism, alcohol and drug use, a culture of hooking up, and civic and political disengagement. This age period of “emerging adulthood” (or arguably “extended adolescence”) has developed from social forces including the rise in college attendance, the delay of marriage, and career exploration that often leads to several job changes in their young adulthood. Additional factors delaying maturity include the generous resources children receive from their parents between the ages of 18-37 (an average of $38,340), the ability (and tools) to disconnect sex from procreation, and postmodern thinking.

In addition to these social issues, those serving in higher education should be aware of the verbal message emerging adults hear throughout adolescence. “The entire time we were growing up we were taught ‘that when you get to college, you’re supposed to party, be wild, get crazy, have fun, drink a lot. Their answer, in short, is: *we do exactly what we were told to do*” (142). Christian educators already know where this party culture leads: “…not far beneath the surface appearance of happy, liberated emerging adult sexual adventure and pleasure lies a world of hurt, insecurity, confusion, inequity, shame and regret” (193).