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Counter-Cultural Communities: Baptistic Life in Twentieth-Century Europe

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COUNTER-CULTURAL COMMUNITIES: BAPTISTIC

LIFE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY EUROPE. Edited by Keith G. Jones and Ian M. Randall.

Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 32. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2008.

Pp. xvi. + 366. \$46.00.

This book's six essays were originally presented as master's degree dissertations at the International Baptist Theological Seminary (in the Czech Republic). Four chronicle the struggles of Baptist communities facing opposition and persecution in Eastern European societies under communist rule. One probes the theological tensions around the issue of Pentecostal understandings of Spirit-baptism within the Finnish Baptist Union. The final essay explores the life and thought of Bruderhof member Hans Meier. The authors have engaged in groundbreaking research, drawing upon primary sources such as archives, documents, and records of Baptist congregations and organizations, many of which have only recently become accessible. This strength is also a weakness, as at points the essays are tedious, with pages of names, dates, places, facts, and statistics. Further, with the exception of the final essay, which employs James McClendon's conception of theology as biography, the conscious utilization of any theoretical framework as a tool of analysis is lacking. Yet the reader's patience will be rewarded as these are extraordinarily valuable accounts and interpretations of Baptist life in relation to their social, political, and historical contexts. The Baptist movement at its best has long been characterized by the recognition that commitment to Christ means conflict with this world's ruling powers, who often demand ultimate allegiance. These essays tell stories of costly Christian faithfulness all Baptists should appreciate. This book will provide a foundation for future research of Baptist life in Eastern Europe and should be included in the library of every Baptist institution of higher education.

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