
The *History* opens with an Introduction into the history of Baptists and deals with preliminary issues such as nature of history, historical method, terminology, literature, and applied approach. This, preface is an invaluable integral part of this methodologically careful and thought out study. For instance, the author consulted virtually all available primary and secondary sources from the very beginnings. Further, he consolidated the material without forcing it into an interpretational framework directed by whatever prevailing politically correct (Baptist) language might be.

In the second chapter the author sets the stage by providing a brief survey of European Reformation and post-Reformation developments after which chapter three portraits the religious-political climate in the Croatian lands in the latter half of the 19th century. The following chapters deal with several periods: the beginnings (1872-1921), the activity of the prominent leader Vinko Vacek (1922-1939), the World War II period (1941-1945), the period of the Communist totalitarianism (1945-1953), the mature period of indigenous Baptism (1954-1966), and finally the confessional [denominational] recognisability and the dawn of the Yugoslavian Baptist Union (1967-1990). A broad sketch of the last decade and its developments, and the final comment conclude the study.

The study will satisfy both a person with no background knowledge as well as a student of the topic. The author has succeeded in unearthing many until now unknown information and has made them throw light on the historical events. The reader will learn about the most prominent Baptist leaders, the facts about the founding of churches and missionary stations, theological influences, publications and mission and church growth initiatives. The author also addresses potentially controversial issues with due care and balance. Among them are the date of the founding of the Baptist Union in Yugoslavia, the intersecting and often competitive influences of foreign denominational missions and interdenominational agencies, personal and theological tensions and divisions, the role of the Union in the Communist state, etc.

The work has appeared as a volume in the series made by the Baptist
Institute, a training programme that was initiated by the Baptist Union of Croatia. Thus the work is primarily intended as an “interactive” aide for students of the course in Croatian Baptist history. This purpose in a certain way directs the form: there are study guidelines for students, chapters are actually integral units with suitable subdivisions, the use of bold print and underlining, and suggested readings at the end of each chapter. As it stands, the work makes an exceptionally compact, clear and interesting reading. However, plans exist to expand the text and publish it by the end of the year in the form of a book to complement the current spine-bound study materials.

Beyond the obvious benefit for the immediately intended readership, why should the wider Baptist community be made aware of this study? One reason is that it is a good example of responsible historical scholarship from an area where the Baptists are only now starting to deal seriously with their history and identity. As this tendency is evident in several European countries, the other reason presents itself: so that the Baptists in similar circumstances might make comparisons and draw conclusions relevant for their historical research.

A word of caution: the study is written in Croatian. Does this not invalidate the very rationale for writing and publishing this review? Yet the reader should not haste to succumb to anger or anguish: historians in search of material will make sure they consult sources in languages they normally do not use. But beyond this, an academically oriented Slavic-language speaker will be able, with the aide of a dictionary and with some effort, to read a text in another Slavic language. Others will miss out.

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