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BIBLE, HISTORY AND MINISTRY

Bible History and Ministry represents an unusual festschrift in several ways: in the first place it celebrates a ninetieth birthday. Secondly, we deeply regret that Dr Champion had all too short a time to read and reflect upon these essays. Thirdly, this is very much an institutional tribute, of those within the Bristol tradition, for in addition to contributions from the pens of those taught by Dr Champion, in recognition of his encouragement of younger scholars, essays are included from later cohorts of students, though I am not clear why David Martin should feature as the man without a biography!

After a sensitive appreciation of Dr Champion's contribution to the life of the denomination from the pen of Roger Hayden, the first five essays - open, reverent, revisionist - relate to different approaches to biblical scholarship. Ken Manley, in a way that only he could offer, analyses the contribution of Bristol men to the establishing of Baptist life in Australia. As elsewhere in this collection he is driven to reflect upon the Bristol contribution as that of an 'able and evangelical' ministry,

though the ability sometimes seems to have gotten them into trouble with the more conservative parts of the antipodean constituency. Stephen Copson, by following through a seventeenth-century controversy between Thomas Hall, described as 'a staunch puritan', and the west-country Baptist leader, Thomas Collier, shows clearly the radical stance of the Baptists in the late seventeenth century, for in Hall's opinion their teaching jeopardized 'the three pillars on which rested the welfare of the civilized state, ... the nature of authority, an ordered community and the importance of learning'.

From history the essays move towards a consideration of the ministry of the church in the world today. Continuing the study of dispute, Brian Haymes, in an intriguing article entitled 'Christian Realism and Doing Nothing' helpfully uses the Manchuria crisis of 1931 and an argument between the brothers Niebuhr to explore the way God is at work within and beyond history, and the consequential pressures upon Christians to react to world events: does faithfulness necessarily require action, or might action only serve to add to the cycle of sin? Might it be more appropriate simply to 'repent, watch, wait and serve' in the knowledge that God himself is already at work within the historical process? Tony Barker moves us on from God at work in the world to God at work in the church in an essay which shows that an ecumenical theology of mission is both real, practical. and motivating. Grenville Overton's essay explores the interrelationship of the priesthood of all believers and the work of the ordained ministry, setting the debate afresh within the scope of a well-worked out and properly balanced Baptist ecclesiology which one could wish might be the starting point for any local church's thought about its existence, its obedience and its mission. The pastor of that congregation could then go on to read John Houseago's article which has wise things to say about the essence of the pastoral task. Finally, David Martin takes that missionary imperative that renewed Baptist life in the revolutionary years of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and in which Bristol men played such a significant part, and tries to identify what that vision and calling might mean for the church today in a very different but none-the-less challenging global situation.

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ERRATA

The editors apologize for errors in the October 1997 issue of the *Baptist Quarterly*.

Keith Clements was reported as having received a PhD from the University of Bristol. This was not an honorary degree as stated but one granted in recognition of published work and following a viva voce examination.

The notes on Ken Manley's article on W.T. Whitley ('The right man in the right place', pp.174-92) were wrongly numbered in the text 50-141, running on from the previous article, but at the end given as 1-92. The article only just arrived in time, and missed our usual proof-reader's careful checking. We much regret this.