

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am delighted to be allowed this opportunity of paying tribute to Keith Clements and both his work as Editor of the *Baptist Quarterly* since 1979 and of the wider contribution he has made and is making to our life and thought as a denomination.

Keith is one of a number of Cambridge and Regent's men who have done notable service for the denomination and already he shows signs of an importance greater than most. Especially since he became a tutor at Bristol Baptist College in 1977 his gifts of careful scholarship and incisive and wide-ranging theological thought have become more and more widely recognised.

He has not only served the Baptist Historical Society with his editorship of the *Quarterly* and *Baptists in the Twentieth Century* (1983) (within which his own contribution 'A question of freedom?' should not be overlooked), but he has served the Baptists of Great Britain in other and very varied ways. He has been involved with religious broadcasting, he has been one of our denominational representatives in British Council of Churches and World Council of Churches consultations, he is currently secretary of the committee charged with the responsibility for producing a new hymnbook. Furthermore, he not only found time to publish *Faith* (1981) but also a most notable contribution to the field of political theology in *A Patriotism for Today: Dialogue with Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (1984). Perhaps for many of us this has been his most notable contribution up to the present time.

Of this book Eberhard Bethge has said, it is a treatment of 'this exciting and vitally important topic, which is admirable in its analysis, presentation and structure'. Certainly for many of us Keith has pointed the way to a patriotism, a Christian patriotism, which is far deeper, more thoughtful and infinitely more costly than most of what currently goes under that heading in Britain, the United States or even, tragically enough, West Germany. As he says, 'Bonhoeffer illuminates what it means to love one's country in its ambiguity: to recognize and cherish its good; to acknowledge and confess its guilt; to search for a deeper appreciation of its character in the total life of its people; to identify the points at which it becomes a danger to itself and others, through searching for security by power alone; to look to the future, the continuation of the story for the next generation. Those are the elements of true patriotism'.

Today we do not only need historians to recreate the past, nor even Church historians to trace the footsteps of the Spirit across the years: we need men committed to a theology of politics. So we release Keith from the present burdens of editor with real anticipation of what may come next from him.

BARRIE WHITE

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