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# The BAPTIST QUARTERLY

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## EDITORIAL

In this issue, after a lapse of sixteen years, there is resumed a regular feature which was greatly appreciated by many readers during its previous life, and the absence of which has evidently been a cause of increasing regret to those anxious for guidance in serious contemporary theological writing. "In the Study", by the Rev. Neville Clark, now reappears to provide Baptists with fewer excuses for ignorance, accidental or wilful, concerning the latest movements in theology, especially in the fields of Biblical scholarship and systematic theology. We are deeply grateful to Mr Clark for his willingness to undertake this service again.

Theological publishing continues in full spate, fashions change, new specialities emerge, old ideas are revived under new titles. Ministers in particular are (rightly) told that they must "keep up" their reading after leaving college, and (equally rightly) often reply that this is difficult in view of the many pressures on their time. But difficulty is not impossibility. It is partly a matter of incentive, partly of

discipline. The incentive for reading in the pastorate should be supplied both by the intrinsic interest of theology for those who seek to love the Lord their God with all their *mind*, and by the basic requirements of effective ministry in preaching and teaching, and enabling the whole people of God. In the second of a recent series of articles in the *Expository Times* on the pastor's problems, "Maintaining Reading and Study", Bruce Grainger writes of the minister: "If he does not himself read widely, he is likely to indoctrinate lay people with some narrow party line, so giving them a view of Christianity which makes it out to be an ideology". The minister, then, is to be a kind of mediator between the technical theological world and the congregation. Agreed, ministers also plead for mediation between advanced theology and themselves, and "In the Study" is intended to be a span in that bridge, giving readers an accurate account of certain major items in the current book-lists, and a judicious assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, not to mention the unresolved questions and tensions with which any living theology has to cope. Moreover, good reviewing does not just inform on *what* there is to read and its significance; it also exemplifies *how* to read it - or anything else. A subtle blend of sympathy and final critical detachment is what many already know they can expect from Mr Clark's pen.

This issue also adds to the number of recent essays on the theology and practice of baptism, with the Rev. Michael Quicke's helpful survey which appears at the request of the Baptist Union Advisory Committee on Church Relations. Baptismal discussion is increasingly ecumenical in its context, and it is important that Baptists as a whole keep abreast of the shifting points of convergence and the continuing lines of difference between their own and other traditions. Responses to this article, and others in recent issues, will be welcome for consideration in the *Quarterly*.

Finally, turning to the more historical field, three shorter articles in this issue nicely illustrate how varied the historian's primary source material can be, from the seeming impersonality of statistics (Cumbrian Baptists) to the very personal (and sometimes highly-charged) correspondence between contemporaries (Wheeler Robinson and Edward Robertson); and, somewhere in between, the letter supplying statistical information (Andrew Fuller on Northamptonshire religion). To reiterate what has been said before in these pages, in bringing the past to light and life, even the shortest of notes - especially where freshly-discovered material is concerned - can be highly important.