

## Preface

IN 2002 SPURGEON'S COLLEGE London established a series of lectures in honor and in memory of Dr. George Raymond Beasley-Murray who had served with distinction as its Principal from 1958 to 1973, and died in the year 2000. Himself a graduate of Spurgeon's, George had gone on, while serving in two Baptist pastorates, to qualify himself as a highly competent New Testament scholar of world rank. He was to serve as President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and to be a prominent figure in national and international Baptist and ecumenical life. The motivation behind the lectures lay in the conviction that there was much in his legacy that demanded to be given further thought and reflection, not least at the beginning of a new millennium into which his various contributions could be extended. The lectures were to be delivered at the annual Assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, wherever in the United Kingdom it might be held. The series yielded eleven lectures in all over the period 2002 to 2012. The present volume now collects those essays and by so doing extends their own contribution indefinitely.

Those giving the lectures were invited to take some aspect of George's theological or denominational work and reflect further on it in ways that would inform the churches' present and future life, practice and mission. As will be seen, some have chosen to do this by giving thought to a theme or concern clearly rooted in George's writing. Others have paid attention to his own life and ministry and have built on that. The lecturers themselves all have had some particular engagement with George as either his students or as fellow scholars, teachers or later students at Spurgeon's College. To be a British Baptist in the second half of the twentieth century was to be indebted in some way to the man. When I began my preparation for ministry at Spurgeon's in 1970, benefiting from the last three years of his tenure there, it was as much George's reputation as that of the College that drew me. I have never had cause for regret on either ground.

I am grateful to Wipf and Stock for the willingness to publish this volume under its Pickwick imprint. Initial editorial work has involved for me the somewhat ironic task of transposing a series of lectures written and delivered uniformly by British scholars in British contexts to British audiences into American spellings and grammatical conventions.

Although a lengthy task this has not been an overly difficult one, but it has required certain decisions. I have, as is usual, retained the original spellings when other British writings than those of the lecturers have been cited directly. I have varied this, however, in the case of verbs and nouns in which the authors have preferred the *-ise* form (as in “realise” or “realisation”) and have conformed to the American preferred usage of *-ize*. As this also continues to be an accepted usage in British English it seemed better to have a degree of equalization at this point. Each lecturer has had liberty to present their chosen topic in the way that best suited them. I have sought to reflect this individuality in the lectures gathered here. All in all, the work of adapting to American usage in a publication produced in America seemed a small price to pay for having these lectures in print.

A word of thanks is due to the colleagues who accepted the responsibility of writing and delivering these lectures and who cooperated in the editing of this volume. My warm thanks to all those who contributed and who are introduced in the pages that follow. In addition to their intrinsic value the lectures reflect some of the events, issues, and personalities of the time in which they were written and so have come to have their own historical value.

Finally I am pleased to record that when delivered nearly all of these lectures benefited from the presence both of Dr. Paul-Beasley-Murray and Mrs. Ruth Beasley-Murray at some personal cost in the traveling involved. It is to Ruth that this book is dedicated.

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