

Review: A Festschrift in Honor of Karen O'Dell Bullock

November 24, 2020

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(Baptist History & Heritage Society)

A festschrift is a collection of writings honoring and celebrating a scholar. In this instance, the scholar is Karen O'Dell Bullock. Bullock is a prolific Baptist and church historian who taught at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Dallas Baptist University. She now is the director of the Ph.D. program at B.H. Carroll Theological Institute and a regular contributor to *CommonCall* magazine.

The festschrift contains six historical essays written by colleagues, friends and former students of Bullock. Each author treats a topic important to her. The essays are written in an academic style. Though off-putting to some readers, the essays are accessible to general readers.



Those with a general interest in history will enjoy Gregory Tomlin's essay

examining Roger Williams' influence on religious liberty enshrined in the First Amendment. Tomlin describes Williams' concerns about state-sponsored and compulsory church membership that led him to see the Church of England as the beast depicted in Revelation.

General readers also likely will appreciate Stephen Stookey's history of Brooks Hays, a prominent progressive Southern Baptist pastor and politician during the turbulent years of desegregation in the United States. Hays' sense of calling and his proximity to significant national history make for compelling reading.

Michael Williams' essay on Leslie Lee Gwaltney may appeal more to those with particular interest in the history of Baptist journalism. Gwaltney was the editor of *The Alabama Baptist* from 1919-50 and was known for such things as pacifism and some ambivalence about the Ku Klux Klan.

Similarly, Melody Maxwell's essay on ordination of women "within the Baptist context in Atlantic Canada" in the 1980s might seem at first blush to be too specific. But here again, readers can gain general insight into a topic still under discussion among Baptists.

Sheila Klopfer's essay on a theology of laughter is a bit more technical and ought to be read by ministers. What Klopfer doesn't include—but this author knows—is that her interest in humor stems from her own parents, Paul and Sally Klopfer, who ran Sivells Baptist Camp outside Cloudcroft, N.M. for at least a generation. Paul—fluent in Spanish, Navajo and Karl Barth—is known for his intelligent humor, and Sally is known for her rich smile, laughter and cinnamon rolls. Knowing this background to Klopfer's essay humanizes her academic treatment of humor.

Brian Talbot closes the festschrift asking a question on many Baptist minds: Who are we? In search of an answer, Talbot examines what has been important to Baptists throughout their history and several lists of what

makes Baptists distinct to come to his conclusion. But if I told you what it is, you wouldn't have to read his essay.

A Festschrift in Honor of Karen O'Dell Bullock was published by The Baptist History and Heritage Society, a nonprofit scholarly organization for Baptist historians in America that brings its scholarship to bare as a congregational resource. To learn more about the society, [click here](#).

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Baptist Standard*