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# FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME



## THE FUNDAMENTALS: Separation of Church and State



# Separation of Church and State



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## Baptists: A Consistent Plea for the Separation of Church and State

**T**hroughout most nations during the Christian era, the idea that the Church and State occupy two different worlds and that one should not coerce the other came under constant ridicule and persecution. Those who held to such ideas were often extinguished. Seen as the radical wing of the Reformation, they were drowned or burned on the European continent, executed or banished in England, and imprisoned and flogged in Colonial America.

What is now so accepted in those first fifteen words of the Bill of Rights—the disestablishment of the state/church and the acknowledgment of the God-given right to freely exercise religion or no religion as conscience would dictate—were as revolutionary in the eighteenth century as was Columbus’s claim that the world wasn’t flat in the fifteenth century. We can easily forget what a treacherous road it was for those who boldly proclaimed that the state did not have the right to coerce religious opinion. Further, we can also wrongly believe that a coercive state’s involvement in religious practice couldn’t possibly happen in America.


The concept of the separation of church and state has been a cornerstone for freedom from tyranny and oppression. Our Founders never envisioned the church walking away from its

influence on the state; rather, their vision was of the state no longer having the right, through taxation or imprisonment and death, to force a man to kneel to the approved church, whether the “church” be secular or sacred. Those fifteen words—heavily influenced by Baptists thinkers, pastors, and laymen, who fought, argued, endured persecution, and voted as one—came to epitomize what freedom from coercive worship should be.

As you read the pastors and scholars in this issue of *FrontLine*, let them reacquaint you with known principles that are tied to Scripture and history, as well as the sacrifices made by heroes who suffered so these truths could advance. We trust you will be challenged and encouraged.

The ideal of separation of church and state—along with its corollary of a noncoercive state meddling in man’s worship—is an aberration in human history. The norm is a totalitarian state that coerces its citizens’ worship. Human history tends, over time, to revert to the norm. I trust we are not beginning to revert to that norm in America, but remembering scriptural teaching and the sacrifices those before us have made will strengthen the arms, minds, and vigilance of our generation and those who follow.

*Mike Sproul*



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I just received Bended Knee International's letter referencing your two 2020 position statements. They both blessed my heart, as they follow Scripture. I thought that it might be a help to you as a resource to know that my husband/pastor wrote a book critiquing N. T. Wright's perspectives on Paul. Wright's book concerned him many years ago, and he self-published this book. [The] book is, *Indeed, Has Paul Really Said?* by Michael Beasley (<http://www.thearmouryministries.org/indeed-haspaulreallysaid.html>).

*Sandra Beasley  
Pfafftown, North Carolina*

Dear Kevin,  
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*Anne Fenske, Publisher  
Green Acres Press  
Larkspur, Colorado*

I want to inform you that in a business meeting held on July 28, 2020, our congregation approved a recommendation to share a one-time special gift of \$3,500 with *FrontLine* magazine as one of the Christian ministries we regularly support in our missions budget.

We know that the pandemic has presented special challenges to most Christian ministries. We are sending this gift with the desire that it meet any special needs currently faced by the publication of the magazine by the FBFI. We rejoice with you in God's provision for *FrontLine* magazine. May the Lord richly bless you today as you continue to faithfully serve Him.

*Douglas W. Becker  
Missions Committee Chairman  
Mount Calvary Baptist Church  
Greenville, South Carolina*

*FrontLine* has a new group of associate editors who will be handling publication of the magazine going forward: Kevin Bauder, Gordon Dickson, Mark Herbster, Bruce McAllister, Ken Rathbun, and David Shumate.

## Kevin Bauder

Kevin T. Bauder is research professor of systematic theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary of Minneapolis.



## Gordon Dickson

Dr. Gordon A. Dickson has served as the senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Findlay, Ohio, since 1994.



## Mark Herbster

Mark Herbster is the dean of College of Bible and Seminary at Maranatha Baptist University. For eighteen years before this he served as a full-time evangelist, preaching all over the world in evangelistic and revival meetings, youth camps, and conferences. He has also served as the leader of the Herbster Evangelistic Team.



## Bruce McAllister

Dr. Bruce McAllister oversees church planting and development, church staffing assistance, and pastor and church relations at Gospel Fellowship Association (GFA). He preaches in churches and conferences, representing GFA and building ministry relationships throughout the USA.



## Ken Rathbun

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## David Shumate

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HOLY  
BIBLE

# State, Church, and the Bible

**O**ld Testament Israel recognized no separation between the civil order and the religious order. Israel was a theocracy, the Kingdom of God on earth. God Himself was the king, and His reign not only prescribed the forms of worship but also stretched over the political, economic, and social spheres. Every aspect of life was under the governance of the divine sovereign, which was mediated through His appointed officials, whether prophets, priests, or kings.



## Christ and Earthly Government

The ultimate prophet, priest, and king was to be the Messiah. Jesus presented Himself as the Messiah, but instead of welcoming Him, Israel's leaders tried to snare Him with His own words. Since Israel was under Roman dominion, they asked Him whether it was lawful to render tribute to Caesar. A negative answer would make Jesus guilty of insurrection against Rome. A positive answer would approve the subjugation of the theocracy to a pagan Gentile regime. Either way, Jesus could be condemned.

Jesus, however, slipped through the horns of the dilemma (Matt. 22:15–22). Pointing to Caesar's image on a Roman coin, He said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." In other words, God permits even pagan governments a rightful sphere of authority, and God's people are required to recognize governmental authority within that sphere. At the same time, God retains direct authority over a different sphere. Within that sphere people are directly accountable to Him, and governmental authority is null and void.

## Paul and Peter

Later, in the Book of Romans, the apostle Paul would emphasize that believers must recognize the rightful sphere over which civil governors exercise authority (Rom. 13:1–7). They hold authority from God to restrain evil (if necessary through violence) and to reward the good. Consequently, Christians ought to pray for those who exercise civil authority, because the faithful execution of their responsibility allows us to live quiet lives characterized by piety and dignity (1 Tim. 2:1–3). Peter also emphasized that Christians must ordinarily submit to civil authority, thereby silencing the ignorance of the foolish (1 Pet. 2:13–17). Clearly the apostles saw governments, even pagan governments, as good rather than bad.

Nevertheless, these same apostles refused to allow civil authorities either to dictate or to hinder their Christian message. The Sanhedrin was a religious court with civil authority, but when it attempted to stifle their message about Jesus, Peter and John replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19). When the Sanhedrin again tried to muzzle their message, Peter and all the apostles stated bluntly, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Before long King Herod Agrippa began to persecute Christians overtly. Specifically, he martyred James and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12:1–19).

Christianity grew in the face of governmental opposition, and the text of Acts offers no hint that churches or Christian leaders should expect any sort of endorsement or help from the civil order. That principle is reinforced in Acts 17:1–9, where the city fathers of Thessalonica actually required a good-conduct deposit from the Christian leader Jason.

## Three Critically Important Elements

The picture that begins to emerge from these passages contains three elements. First, Christians were willing to submit to governmental authorities in all matters of decency and order, even to the point of providing extra assurances of their good conduct. Second, Christians were willing to brook no dictation from these authorities in matters of faith and morals. Third, Christians and churches never relied upon any support, endorsement, or promotion from the civil authorities to help advance the cause of Christ.

These elements are again on display at Paul's trial before Gallio at Corinth (Acts 18:12–17). In this case, the Jewish leadership in Corinth actually seized the apostle and dragged him before the judgment seat of the proconsul in Achaia. Their charge against him was that, "This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law" (Acts 18:13). Gallio's response was that a religious dispute could not be settled in a civil court. In other words, Gallio was recognizing a sphere within which he had no authority to judge. When the Jewish leadership tried to reject this reasoning, Gallio had them driven out of his courtroom.

It could be argued that this text merely presents Gallio's opinion and not God's. That argument fails because the text nowhere indicates that Gallio was mistaken. In fact, if Gallio had been wrong, this would have been the ideal occasion for Paul to have spoken up and reminded him that he really should have passed judgment against the Jews on the religious question. Nevertheless, Paul seems to have been content with Gallio's response. He expected no support, endorsement,

or promotion from Gallio. He surely would have accepted no dictation from Gallio in matters of faith and morals. He was perfectly willing to submit to Gallio in matters of decency and order.

## Paul's Arrest and Civil Authorities

Paul's arrest in Jerusalem and his subsequent trials before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa provide other opportunities to glimpse the relationship between civil and church authority. Paul was arrested when the Jews of Jerusalem staged a riot because of his preaching (Acts 22:22–29). The Roman commander, Claudius Lysias,

**Christians and churches are obligated to submit to civil officials when they operate within their rightful sphere of authority.**

assumed that Paul must have been guilty of something and was prepared to have him interrogated by scourging. When Paul claimed his Roman citizenship, the commander instead brought Paul to the Jews to see whether he could discover their complaint. This meeting soon degenerated into a wrangle over Jewish technicalities, and Paul had to be rescued by force (Acts 22:30–23:11). What had begun as an arrest now took the form of protective custody. Almost immediately, Jewish assassins vowed to murder Paul, leading the commander to send the apostle to Governor Felix in Caesarea. In his letter of explanation, the commander claimed that Paul was “accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds” (Acts 23:29). As far as Claudius Lysias was concerned, the state had no interest in the religious issues that were being argued. If the Jews wanted to press charges, they would have to travel to Caesarea and appear before Felix.

When Paul’s opponents arrived, they accused him of sedition and of profaning the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 24:5–9). Paul denied the charges, which he insisted that his opponents could not prove. Instead, he acknowledged that a theological disagreement stood between them and him, implying that a theological disagreement did not belong in court. Felix seems to have understood this point, and should have released Paul on the spot. The reason that he did not was because he was corrupt and hoped to extort a bribe from Paul in exchange for his freedom (Acts 24:22–27). In the end, he kept Paul imprisoned as a gesture to pacify the Jewish leadership.

Felix was followed as governor by Festus (Acts 25:1). Paul’s opponents again appeared to charge him with crimes. He again argued that he was innocent and that none of those charges could be proven. Festus should have released Paul immediately, but instead he hoped to curry favor with the Jewish leadership by arraigning Paul all over again in Jerusalem. At that point, recognizing that he was dealing with a corrupt court, Paul appealed to Caesar.

Paul’s speech when making his appeal is revealing both for what he said and for what he did not say. What Paul said was that he recognized the right of the court to judge him with respect to criminal offenses (Acts 25:11). In fact, he explicitly submitted himself to this judgment, up to and including capital punishment. Paul was perfectly willing to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s. What he did *not* say was that Festus should offer any kind of official endorsement or support to Christianity. Nor did Paul appeal to his office as a preacher, apostle, and teacher. He claimed no special privilege because of his church office. On the contrary, the ground of his appeal was simply that he was a Roman citizen being illegally detained.

Paul’s “trial” (really just a hearing) before Agrippa recapitulates several of the foregoing themes (Acts 26:1–32). Paul repeated his claim of innocence before the law, arguing that his differences with his accusers were focused upon theological issues. Of course, Paul took the opportunity to preach the gospel to Agrippa. When everything had been said, Festus and Agrippa agreed that Paul had done nothing actionable. If he had not appealed to Caesar, then he should have been set free.

God grants a sphere of authority to the church and its officers. God also grants a sphere of authority to the state—the civil government—and its officials. Christians and churches are obligated to submit to civil officials when they operate within their rightful sphere of authority. Christians and churches are obligated to resist civil officials when, in their governmental capacity, they try to dictate matters of faith and morals. Christians and churches must also refuse to appeal to the coercive power of the state for any special endorsement, support, or advancement for their Christianity.

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# History of Separation of Church and State

## Baptistic Peoples and Their Influence

**B**aptists have cherished a core belief in the separation of church and state that we believe is derived from the Word of God and the practice of the primitive church. It is easy for the American church of the twenty-first century to forget the meaning of this doctrine, what it cost to give it to us, and the vigilance required to maintain it.

During the first three hundred years of Christianity, every believer practiced this doctrine of separation of church and state. During these years the Roman state at times ignored, sometimes persecuted, but certainly never endorsed Christianity. The Roman state had an official state-church that demanded emperor worship. As long as the Roman citizen worshipped the emperor, he could worship any other god he wished. In the Roman mind a state-church brought unity and protection of the state against constant encroachment by barbarians.

On October 28, 312, a battle took place that would change the course of both Christian and world history. Constantine won a victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge. Eusebius, the Christian historian, recounts that Constantine personally

told him that he had two visions that when combined told him he would conquer through the Christian God. In AD 313 Christianity became legal, and for the next sixty-seven years, push and pull existed between pagan and Christian emperors until AD 380 and the Edict of Thessalonica. At this time all pagan religions were made illegal, and pagan worshippers' property was seized.

In the course of a little less than seventy years, Christianity had gone from practicing separation of church and state, to being officially allowed to exist, to being completely co-opted by the state. Scripture never records a New Testament passage advocating for the commingling of the church and state. The church and Augustine had gone from conversion as an ongoing process "between a person and God to [believing in] the legitimate use of the state in prompting conversion" (Gaumer, 1). It is this theological innovation by Augustine that destroyed nearly four hundred years of Christian practice and the original ideal of the New Testament regarding the separation of church and state.

## Donatism

Donatism was basically a rebellion against this Constantinian change. The tensions between Augustine (who was in line with the Emperor) and the Donatists were not “those of doctrine and philosophy; it was the question of the nature of the church as a society and its relationship to the world, rather than any distinctive beliefs, that formed the heart of the controversy between the Catholics and the Donatists” (Verduin, 32).

Augustine’s justification contained six arguments against the Donatists and what he viewed as their heresy of “rebaptism” and schismatic behavior.

The last argument is that civil authority has the duty to intervene in religious matters. The state has to take care of its subjects. Christian state authorities have to defend the highest good: faith and unity in faith. This reasoning is based on the interpretation of schism and heresy as a crime falling, like all other crimes, within the juridical power of public officials and thus punishable under the Theodosian codices (Gaumer, 19).

These Theodosian codices would be used for over one thousand years to persecute anyone who dared to disagree with Catholic (the Church universal) thought regarding the separation of church and state.

By the early fifth century, Augustine had completely changed his mind about how to treat Donatists and now fully supported the state’s issuing a fine of ten pounds of gold to a Donatist, the confiscation of Donatist church property, and the refusal to allow Donatists property and inheritance rights (Gaumer, 12).

When Augustine argued with the Donatists, he claimed that in Christ’s famous parable about the wheat and tares, the field was the church and not the world as Christ clearly taught (Gaumer).

Out of this theological matrix of believing that the field is the church and not the world (or all of humanity) emerges the state’s right to coerce belief. If the field was the church and the state and church were bound together, any “heresy” against the church becomes a treasonous act against the state.

According to Verduin, “This ‘Donatism’ was never absent from the medieval scene. . . . In the twelve centuries that went before the Reformation it has never lacked for attempts to get away from the State-Church Priests’ Church and to reinstitute the apostolic congregational structurization . . . a Church based on personal faith will challenge the concept of a Church embracing all” (Verduin, 35).

## The Reformation

As we move toward the Reformation period, it is important to remember that Luther was an Augustinian monk. He knew Augustine like we would know the backs of our hands. He understood the disagreements that Augustine had with the Donatists. In the Anabaptists Luther recognized a similar belief system to the despised Donatists whom the state had persecuted. “Just as erstwhile Donatists had

**Because Baptists disagreed on points of theology with the state-church idea, whether in Switzerland, Germany, England, or later Colonial America, the state brought persecution.**

insisted that the ‘independence of the Church with respect to the Emperor must be upheld’ so did the later Donatists insist that a ‘true Church cannot exist where the secular rule and the Christian Church are blended together’” (Verduin, 37).

Four types of people in the 1500s were known as “Anabaptists” by their enemies. They knew themselves as “Brethren” and not “re-baptizers” because they viewed infant baptism as no baptism at all. Of the four, we would identify with only one group in any kinship basis, and that is the group that said the Word of God was their sole source for faith and practice. Other so-called Anabaptist

groups were revolutionary, mystical, and in some cases outright heretical, but the stream of Anabaptists which were believers strongly held to separation of church and state.

Vedder states, “This notion of the essential nature of Christianity (only personal faith) led them to their idea concerning the Church. . . . Such a Church could not possibly exist if it were ruled by princes and town councils; hence the Anabaptists insisted on the sharp separation between the secular and the spiritual—as we should say, between Church and State” (Vedder, 12).

Most of the Evangelical Anabaptists were pacifists. Their view of separation of church and state moved them to disavow any association for the believer with the state, whether in the military or as a civil magistrate. In an era of intense persecution decreed by judges and carried out by the military, this view is understandable.

But the current Baptist view was likely mediated through an Anabaptist martyr and noted scholar Balthasar Hubmaier. Roland Baintan suggests that the “modern Baptist belief in separation of church and state was transmitted from Anabaptism to modern Baptists” (Vedder, 143). Truthfully, as noted above, it wasn’t so much Anabaptists as it was Hubmaier. Hubmaier believed that the state operated as an arm of God, much like the church but in a different sphere. He believed that Christian magistrates make the best magistrates and soldiers. Hubmaier wrote on this subject in “*Ketzern und ihren Verbrennern*” (1524). His writing is exactly in line with modern American and British Baptist teaching on the subject of separation of church and state. Hubmaier believed any church that participated in the execution of people based on the theological disagreements was a true heretical church (Mabry).

Ironically, the disagreement over Christ’s parable of the wheat and tares and sheep and goats that Augustine had with the Donatists was the same that Zwingli and the other Reformers had with Hubmaier. These disagreements were separated by 1100 years but were the exact same arguments. Augustine said the field was in essence the church so there could exist both saved and unsaved in the church together. The Donatists dissented and advocated for a pure church. Hubmaier agreed with the Donatists while Zwingli and Luther agreed with Augustine. Zwingli put Hubmaier on a rack and violently injured him in order to get him to sign a confession against biblical beliefs,



such as the separation of the church and state. The academic/theological argument over the disagreement related to an established church was not a mere seminary exercise as it led to countless deaths of Baptist peoples through the centuries. Without a state-church symbiotic relationship, the argument remains on a theological plane without persecution, but when a disagreement of theology arises in a state-church nation, then the argument is life and death.

## Persecution

The British and American experience in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is one of persecution and tyranny because these governments held to the same Catholic, Augustinian, and Reformed church-state view. Because Baptists disagreed on points of theology with the state-church idea, whether in Switzerland, Germany, England, or later Colonial America, the state brought persecution.

An interesting life is Hanserd Knollys' and the story of his imprisonment in Newgate Prison. His ministry through the Great Plague in London that took nearly 69,000 lives and followed the next year by the Great Fire of 1666 that destroyed two-thirds of central London is riveting. However, even with all the good he did through a horrific plague and a dreadful fire, persecution against Knollys came about because of the state-church relationship in England. If a person disagreed with the church, he automatically disagreed with the Crown and was persecuted as a traitor to the secular government.

Roger Williams, the first American Baptist, wrote "Queries of the Highest Consideration." Williams declared that the root of the persecution was the state-church system. Williams argued that no government "can force the consciences of all [its citizens] to Worship without committing spiritual rape" (Beale, 368). Williams view was that "state churches, inevitably force sheep and goats into the same fold" (Beale, 368). Williams was deprived of safety in Massachusetts and forced to flee. He founded the first Baptist church in America and edited the first dictionary of the Native-American languages.

John Leland was a colonial Massachusetts pastor who was reared in a Congregational home but became convinced of "believer's baptism" and the separation of church and state. He moved to Orange County, Virginia, and pastored two churches. James Madison's and his home were about ten miles apart. Madison had finished writing the Constitution and it needed to be ratified. The Anti-Federalist sentiment ran high in Virginia. James Monroe and Patrick Henry were both noted Anti-Federalists. They believed the Constitution gave too much power to the central government.

The Baptists had fought wholeheartedly for the Revolutionary cause, just as they had with Cromwell a century before and a continent away; the famous Baptist pastor, John Bunyan, fought in Cromwell's army. While Cromwell ruled, religious minorities achieved a level of tolerance, but when Charles II was restored to power, the Baptists were again martyred.

One hundred years later the Baptists of America had learned the lesson that they should not put their confidence

in a particular ruler but in law. A small park exists in Orange County, Virginia, just ten miles from Montpelier, Madison's home, to commemorate the famous meeting between Madison and Leland in 1788. (I had the privilege recently to visit the little park.) When Leland and Madison met, Madison was running to be a delegate to the Virginia convention to ratify the Constitution. Leading Virginians were opposed to the Constitution, and more importantly for Madison, the sizable contingent of Baptists of Orange County were opposed. Madison's Constitution had nothing in it about religious toleration or the separation of church and state. The Baptists had learned the hard way after the English Civil War not to trust a particular leader. They wanted their freedoms ensconced in law.

Madison was sympathetic to John Leland and promised him that, if the Baptists would vote for him, the Constitution would be ratified; furthermore, if they again voted for him in his Congressional race, he would create religious toleration in law. They agreed together. Virginia ratified the Constitution. When Madison ran against Monroe for the first Congress, Leland invited Madison to speak to his congregation. As Chris DeRose mentions in his book *Founding Rivals*, Patrick Henry, the Governor of Virginia, had gerrymandered the district to favor Monroe, but the normally Anti-Federalist Baptists gave their votes *en masse* to Madison, and today we are blessed with the First Amendment, which states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

From the Donatists to Hubmaier, from Bunyan and Knollys, to Williams and Leland, Baptist people have always pleaded for this simple truth: the state should not have coercive powers regarding the spiritual choices of its citizens.

We should be grateful that our spiritual forefathers paid in coin and caskets so we could have this freedom of "free exercise" today. It is not a coincidence that the next century, after the destruction of the state-church in America, history records the founding of many more nations who included freedom from a state church in their constitutions.

Mike Sproul is the director of the Air National Guard (ANG) Chaplain Corps and is stationed in the Washington, DC, area. In this role he oversees policy, procedures, accessions, deployments, force development, and domestic operations. He also advises commanders, ensures religious accommodation, and home station support for nearly 600 ANG Chaplains and Religious Affairs Airmen at ninety wings, in the fifty states, three territories, and the District of Columbia for the 107,700 Air National Guard members.



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# From Liberty of Conscience to Separation of Church and State

## The Baptist Journey

**T**he separation of church and state is a cherished American doctrine. Based on the First Amendment to the Constitution—"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"—this doctrine has become the bedrock of American religious liberty. Americans are free to practice the religion of their conscience or no religion at all. Christians of many other countries have no constitutional promises. For example, in China today, the largest country in the world by population, the Xi Jinping government is in the process of sinicizing (making Chinese) the Christianity practiced by Chinese believers. Crosses are removed from buildings, pictures of Jesus are taken

down and replaced with pictures of Xi, pastors and church leadership are government-appointed cronies, and the Chinese government is working to rewrite the Bible in a more Chinese-friendly way. Chinese believers resist such moves as unconstitutional. The 1982 Chinese Constitution of the People's Republic of China (Art. 36) actually gave to the people the promise of religious freedom, but as there is no guarantee of separation of church and state, the state has changed its mind and the onslaught of radical sinicization is underway. Jail, or worse, awaits those who resist. The interment of Uighurs of Xinjiang Province, most of whom are Muslim and live in eastern China, may be a harbinger of things to come.



## A Persecuted Faith

A bit of ancient history is in order to provide some background. Since the days of the early church, Christianity was a persecuted faith. From the beheading of John the Baptist through to the beginning of the fourth century, to be a Christian meant persecution and often death. Things changed under Constantine (AD 313), who lifted the persecution of Christians. By 380 Theodosius II made Christianity the official religion of Rome. Some might think this was a good thing, but when Christianity fell under the watchful eye of the emperor, the Church became a tool in his hand to control the masses. Many early doctrinal controversies were presided over by the emperors, who simply wanted theological harmony to ensure the peace of the nation. Through the Middle Ages and into the Reformation era, monarchs saw religion as a tool for control. Henry VIII broke from Rome in 1533 and established the English (Anglican) Church to wrest control of the populace away from the pope, who used his influence over Catholics to try to control the king.

It was out of this milieu that religious liberty and separation of Church and State arose. English dissenters wished to worship God according to the Bible, newly translated into English. Liberty of conscience—from which separation of Church and State springs—began percolating among early separatists (those who broke with the Anglican Church), some of whom had fled to Amsterdam. An early form of liberty of conscience may be found in a dedicatory letter of 1612 by Thomas Helwys, pastor of a small company of Baptists lately returned to England from the Netherlands who were driven by the conviction that their departure from their homeland was wrong. They established themselves in Spitalfield, London, and commenced to worship according to the dictates of their conscience and an open Bible. In a letter to the king attached to a gift copy of *A Short Declaration on the Mystery of Iniquity*, Helwys wrote,

*Heare, O King, and dispise not ye counsell of ye poore and let their complaints come before thee.*

*The King is a mortall man and not God, therefore hath no power over ye immortall soules of his subiects, to make lawes & ordinances for them, and to set spirituall Lords over them.*

*If the King have authority to make spirituall Lords & lawes, then he is an immortall God and not a mortall man.*

*O King be not seduced by deceivers to sine so against God whome thou oughtest to obey, nor against thy poore subiects who ought and will obey thee in all thinges with body life and goods or els let their lives be taken from ye earth.*

*God save ye Kinge\**

*Tho: Helwys.*

*Spittlefeild neare London.*

Helwys was arrested and confined to Newgate Prison, dying four years later at the age of forty.

## Those Who Suffered

American Baptists took up the cause of liberty of conscience and separation of church and state. Early in the American experiment, a group of Baptists under the leadership of John

Clarke of Newport, Rhode Island, held meetings in Lynn, Massachusetts, in the home of a friend. The colony regulated its religious worship, meaning that the meeting was illegal. Authorities broke up the gathering and arrested the lawbreakers. Fines were assessed. Friends paid the fines of Clarke and John Crandall, but Obadiah Holmes refused to pay his fine. He was subsequently beaten with thirty lashes and sent home. So severe was the whipping that for weeks he was able to sleep only on his elbows and knees.

As the nation formed, Baptists spoke out for religious liberty and separation of Church and State. Connecticut Baptists, led by Nehemiah Dodge, Ephraim Robbins, and Stephen Smith Nelson, encouraged the newly elected president Thomas Jefferson to make clear the need for the right of personal choice in religion. On October 7, 1801, these men on behalf of the Danbury Association wrote to Jefferson, stating, “Our sentiments are uniformly on the side of religious liberty: that Religion is at all times and places a matter between God and individuals, that no man ought to suffer in name, person, or effects on account of his religious opinions, [and] that the legitimate power of civil government extends no further than to punish the man who works ill to his neighbor.” Baptists petitioned the newly formed government to draft what would become the first of ten initial amendments to the Constitution called the Bill of Rights. The goal was to entrench the right of religious self-expression without government interference. A citizen could even practice no religion if he so desired. It simply wasn’t the government’s place to decide on the religion of its people.

Stories of suffering and pleading on both sides of the Atlantic for religious liberty could be multiplied many times over. In Virginia as well as Massachusetts, religious persecution was leveled against the Baptists who simply wanted to worship God as the Bible commanded. Fines were levied for breaking the law and believers’ property was seized and sold, sometimes for pennies on the dollar to pay unjust penalties. Few modern Baptists know much of our forebears such as John Leland and Isaac Backus who argued for religious liberty, or Henry Dunster, the first president of Harvard, who came to realize that infants were not the proper subjects of biblical baptism and, refusing to sprinkle his young daughter, lost his position at the school. Thomas Gould, pastor of the Baptist Church at Boston, had to set up his church on Noodle Island, outside the jurisdiction of local authorities so that believers could worship unhindered.

These early Baptists suffered, and some died, because they dared to argue for liberty of conscience and separation of church and state. The United States was first among the nations of the world to provide its citizens with absolute religious liberty.

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\* The copy Helwys gave to the king may be found in the Bodleian Library, London. The king to whom this book was given was James VI of Scotland, a.k.a. James I of England, the king whose name is remembered today because of the Bible version named after him.







## Introduction

Those who identify as Baptists are not a perfect people. Baptist history is not without grave sin. However, one of the positive ideals that Baptists have sought to uphold in their history is that of the separation of religion and government. Related to this idea is the Baptist insistence on religious liberty, sometimes called “soul liberty.” Historically, Baptists have understood that a religious group should not have overriding influence in the affairs of government because it can lead to the persecution of those who do not agree with the dominant religious party. The reason for this resolve was not that Baptists considered religious convictions important. Rather, they thought of religious liberty as of the highest significance.

The separation of the church from the state ensured Baptists freedom to practice their faith as they saw fit. In this they were influenced by the example of the English Separatists of the latter sixteenth century. In the relatively few instances in history where Baptists became the majority in a society, they refrained from establishing civil laws that favored their theological convictions (which are always characterized by persecution for those who refuse to agree).

Let’s examine Baptists Thomas Helwys, Roger Williams, and Isaac Backus, all of whom were influencers and leaders who suffered because of their principled position on the separation of religion and government.

### Thomas Helwys (1575–1616)

Helwys lived in the Gainsborough area in the county of Lincolnshire, England. His family had means, and he studied for a time in London. Later, back in Gainsborough, both he and his wife became active in an English Separatist congregation and endured the persecution that came to many in that movement. (She was imprisoned for a time.) Helwys decided to join others in the Gainsborough and Scrooby Separatist congregations (including John Smyth, John Robinson, William Bradford, and William Brewster) who had fled England seeking relief in Holland from religious persecution. (A part of these English Separatist congregations would later decide in 1620 to make the journey to the New World and become known to the world as the first Pilgrims.)

In Holland, under John Smyth’s leadership, the congregation Helwys was a part of accepted believer-only baptism. This was a notable break from the English Separatists, who practiced infant baptism. Later, Helwys objected to Smyth’s decision to join a Dutch Mennonite group who descended from the Anabaptists of the previous century.<sup>1</sup> In 1611 Helwys wrote his “Declaration of Faith” in Amsterdam, which in part distinguished his views from Smyth’s. William Lumpkin calls this the first English Baptist confession of faith.<sup>2</sup>

Helwys came to the conclusion in 1612 that he should return to England to reach his own people. He was well

aware of the certain persecution that awaited any dissenting group there. Several others from the congregation joined him. Helwys planted the first Baptist church in England, and he did indeed suffer persecution for his beliefs.

Helwys defends the idea of the freedom of conscience in *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity*, written in 1612. He also discusses the proper powers of the state and the different realm of the church, which was the source of the persecution for conscience’s sake. Helwys asserted that all peoples ought to be afforded religious freedom, including heretics, Jewish people, and Turks (Muslims) and not be subject to the punishment from the state. This was nearly unheard of in his day.<sup>3</sup>

Obviously, his views were not popular in England under James I. Thomas Helwys died in the infamous Newgate Prison in 1616 in part because of his written protest against the Church of England.<sup>4</sup>

From England, we now move to the American Colonies, also in the seventeenth century.

### Roger Williams (1603–83)

Roger Williams was born in England and trained for the ministry at Cambridge. That career never materialized, since he became convinced of Puritan principles and lost all opportunity because of the policies of persecution of William Laud, Bishop of London (later the Archbishop of Canterbury).

Before escaping to the New World in the early 1630s, Williams broke from the Puritans and became a convinced Separatist. He taught at the church in Plymouth Colony but eventually left because of his Separatist convictions. Both the governor of the Plymouth Colony, William Bradford, and the ruling elder of the Plymouth church, William Brewster, noted conflicts in the colony and church that involved Roger Williams.<sup>5</sup>

After another negative experience in a church at Salem, Williams began interacting with the Native Americans. He would learn their languages, buy land from them, and try to evangelize them. He called the land he purchased “Providence,” and this land would be the basis of the Rhode Island Colony.

According to John Calvin Davis, by 1635 Williams began to state publicly that “civil authority had no right to govern in matters of religion and conscience, arguing that the power of the state extends only over the bodies and goods of its citizens.”<sup>6</sup> Trouble seemed to follow him everywhere. In the latter 1630s Williams was a baptized believer and had interactions with Baptists.<sup>7</sup> He helped found a church around 1639 in Providence, which is considered the first Baptist Church in the American Colonies. However, within months, he severed all denominational ties to any religious group. He lived some forty-three more years. Baptists highly

Continued on page 28

# Balthasar Hubmaier

1480–1528

**B**althasar Hubmaier died a martyr's death at the hands of Charles V in March 1528. He was a Roman Catholic theologian educated by Drs. Eck and Fabri. He came to faith in Christ, most likely, under Anabaptist Wilhelm Reublin. I've had the privilege of visiting his church in Waldshut, Germany. The pulpit area dates to Hubmaier's time.

Hubmaier was an incredible intellect and found a midway point in the "free church" movement between outright pacifism and a coercive state-run church (Torsten Bergsten, translated by W. R. Estep, *Balthasar Hubmaier: Anabaptist Theologian and Martyr* [Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA, 1978], p. 43). He believed that a Christian could be a magistrate or soldier, which separated him from many Anabaptists, but he also believed that a coercive state that demands infant baptism is not biblical. While he agreed on many points with the magisterial Reformers, on this point of infant baptism and a coercive church/state, he strongly disagreed, even citing Zwingli's words against him, to Zwingli's consternation. He was tortured by Zwingli and expelled from Zurich. Hubmaier easily excelled Zwingli in learning and intellect (p. 31). He was likely Calvin's or Luther's equal in writing but is not so well known because he was hunted for most of his few short years after salvation, tortured by Protestants and Catholics alike.

Hubmaier's pietistic emphasis on a personal commitment of faith in Christ cut across the grain of his contemporary Lutheran and Reformed theologians (p. 27).

## Two Important Works

Two important works explain Hubmaier's understanding of the church/state relationship when it comes to coercive religion and state punishment for theological disagreement: *On the Sword* and *Concerning Heretics and Those Who Burn Them*.

Mabry, in his work "Balthasar Hubmaier's Doctrine of the Church," states,

Although in Hubmaier's theology the church and the state have a cooperative relationship, he would not quite agree with some of the magisterial reformers that the church and the state were two component parts of one entity. While Hubmaier would agree with the Anabaptists that both the state and the church were ordained of God as His servants, to do His will, he would also say that the church and the state were divinely ordained to play



*Die warheit ist untödtlich.*  
"Truth Is Immortal."

very different roles; with the role of the state being supportive, but inferior to the more important role of the church. Also, while the roles of the state and the church are somewhat supportive, these roles are, by definition, so essentially different that both the church and state are better off when they restrict their activities to their own specifically ordained roles (p. 189).

This understanding of Hubmaier is almost exactly what modern Baptists believe. *On the Sword* is a masterpiece of original thought regarding the state and church relationship. He broke with his Zurich Anabaptist brothers on the role of the state/church as they saw the church and state so completely separate that a Christian could not be a part of any

facet of government. Of course, the Catholic Church and the magisterial Reformers believed in religious trials wherein if the individual were found guilty of heresy, he would be turned over to the state for punishment (p. 192). Hubmaier found the middle ground of biblical truth. The believer is in the world and not of the world. The believer can use the "sword" under the authority of the government as long as the "order" from the government does not disobey God's law.

Hubmaier's spiritual kinsmen, the Baptists of Virginia, pushed Madison and Jefferson in the direction of religious freedom. The living result today is that Baptists can and do take part in civic life with a clear conscience.

## Final Comments

In *Ketzern und ihren Verbrennern*, Hubmaier stated that "the only sword that the church is to use against heretics is the sword of the Word of God" (p. 193). As Mabry continues, "For Hubmaier, then, the church and the state are to remain separate because of the fact that their divinely ordained roles are essentially different (p. 193). And,

Hubmaier believed, therefore, that the church should not only pray for the state and support and cooperate with the state in performance of its divinely ordained duties, but church members should also pay taxes, bear arms (for causes of the state that are according to God's will), and serve as judges and as other public officers. Church members are not to isolate themselves from the state (as was the practice of many Anabaptist groups of this period); rather, they are to be active in the state affairs.

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## 1st Amendment

# Baptist Influence on the First Amendment

That the people of any tribe, nation, or empire should be free to choose their own religion is extraordinarily rare in human history. Allowing divergent opinions on the most fundamental questions of value and morality virtually ensures conflict. Have we not seen this in our own day? In a pluralistic culture (one that insists that no perspective is superior to another), disunity and chaos are inevitable. Shrewd political leaders, even when not personally religious, have often seen the value of a mandated religion for precisely this reason.

Most civilizations have therefore sought to compel the religious practices and beliefs of their citizens, and most religions have jostled to be in position to benefit from the state's imprimatur. Baptists have been among the few exceptions to this, objecting to any privileged place for other denominations and not seeking it for themselves. There are at least two reasons that Baptists have been advocates for liberty of conscience, one practical and the other theological.

### A Practical Reason

The practical reason is that Baptists have historically been a religious minority: they have been the oppressed rather than the oppressors. Without getting into the spirited debate over Baptist origins, there is no version of their history in which the Baptists have had the machinery of state at their disposal. Instead, on both sides of the Atlantic, Baptists were outsiders to power. In many cases their minority status subjected them to a variety of tactics intended to pressure people back into the established churches. As a result, Baptist theologians in

America heavily influenced the eventual adoption of the First Amendment language that precludes an established church.

Baptist historian Leon McBeth writes, "No Baptist is known to have been executed for religion in America. However, many Baptists were severely whipped, forced to pay taxes to support the state church, had property confiscated, paid fines, and suffered lingering imprisonments." He chronicles a variety of these abuses: members finding their church doors nailed shut on a Sunday morning, imprisonment of those who fell behind in paying their church taxes, and seized livestock and land valued far more than the tax owed.

In early America, such pressures were especially common in the New England colonies. McBeth observes that because the "Pilgrim Fathers" were "obsessed by Old Testament patterns and Reformed theology, they felt obliged to establish a kind of theocracy." The notion of an established church, which had been the impetus for at least some to become pilgrims in the first place, is paradoxical to us in hindsight. How could it be that those who came to America seeking religious liberty would found colonies with official government churches?

Among the most portentous incidents was the imprisonment of a widow, one Mrs. Elizabeth Backus, for her failure to pay her church taxes. McBeth says, "When the officers came for her late one night, she was sick, wrapped in quilts to promote perspiration, sitting by the fire reading her Bible. They hauled her away to jail despite her condition." It would be hard to think that this event (in 1752) had no effect on her son Isaac, who became the preeminent Baptist spokesman for religious liberty in the colonies.

As America gained her liberty from England, the incongruity of established churches became increasingly evident. In *A Door Opened to Christian Liberty*, Backus offers this striking argument:

All ministers who were supported by tax and compulsion among us before the late war received that power in the name of the King of Great Britain, and not King Jesus, and they are the only officers in this land that have retained the power over the people which they have received in that name. Whatever gifts and graces any of them have received from Jesus Christ let them faithfully improve the same according to his direction, but, as they would appear loyal to him or fiends to their country let them renounce the holding of any earthly head to the church.

Though aimed specifically at the Anglican church, Backus's point stands regardless of whether the "earthly head" of the church were the king of England or the president of the United States. As a further demonstration of Backus's profound influence on American religious liberty, consider the language of his proposed bill of rights for the state of Massachusetts:

All men are born equally free and independent, and have certain natural, inherent and unalienable rights, among which are the enjoying and defending life and liberty, acquiring, possessing, and protecting property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.

It hardly seems possible to read Backus's words here (written in 1779) and not see their influence on the national Bill of Rights penned a decade later. Backus continues, more specifically on religious liberty:

Every person has an unalienable right to act in all religious affairs according to the full persuasion of his own mind, where others are not injured thereby. And civil rulers are so far from having any right to empower any person or persons, to judge for others in such affairs, and to enforce their judgments with the sword.

The other Baptist minister whose efforts directly led to the disestablishment of religion in America is John Leland. Like Backus, Leland wrote extensively on the necessity of the freedom of the conscience. But his greatest influence may well have been in the impact he had on James Madison. While Thomas Jefferson expressed concerns that the Constitution failed to articulate protections of certain rights (including religious liberty), Madison originally rejected that objection.

The lack of these guarantees prompted Leland and other Virginia Baptists to campaign against the ratification of Constitution in their state. Because of the strength of their opposition, Madison asked Leland to send a list of his objections. There is some evidence that the two men met, and upon agreement from Madison for a protection for religious liberty (now our First Amendment), Leland promised Baptist support for ratification.

Because of their mistreatment at the hands of the established churches, Baptists were well positioned to understand the value of the liberty of conscience. But one might raise a counterargument here: perhaps the Baptist embrace of religious freedom was *merely* prudential. Would Baptists have had the same conviction if they had held the reins of

power? This is not merely a question of historical curiosity. It is relevant to our present convictions.

If Baptists favor religious liberty when oppressed but reject it when they have the occasion to take power, their position is opportunistic rather than principled. In the science fiction series *Dune*, a character writes, "When I am weaker than you, I ask you for freedom because that is according to your principles; when I am stronger than you, I take away your freedom because that is according to my principles." My hunch is that most who read this essay will think of one particular world religion when reading that quotation.

But we should acknowledge that Baptists have gained a measure of political and popular ascendancy (consider that the most widely-admired religious figure in the past century was a Baptist). Ought we still retain our core conviction of the *goodness* of the separation of church and state, and not its mere pragmatic utility? Our principles are tested when we are weak—and when we are strong.

Is there some ground for the Baptist advocacy of separation of church and state other than a desire to avoid persecution for ourselves? Why is it that even after the War of Independence, when there were undoubtedly patriotic Americans of all denominations, that Baptists such as Backus and Leland were uniquely keen to reject a state-sanctioned church?

There have always been Baptists who were covenant theologians. But the basic distinctive of Baptists (believer's baptism) undercuts the vital expression of continuity between Israel and the church: infant baptism. And if we press this point, we find a strong argument against a state church that is *intrinsic* to Baptist theology.

## A Theological Reason

One obtains earthly citizenship upon physical birth. In a nation with an established church, one's earthly citizenship also includes membership in the state church. But because Baptists reject the notion that their children are to be from birth considered citizens of the Christ's Kingdom, they must of necessity reject any system of church/state linkage that would make their children, by virtue of their earthly citizenship, also members of the church of Christ.

I contend that this is why the freedom of religion, enshrined in the First Amendment to our Constitution, was decidedly shaped by Baptists such as Isaac Backus and John Leland. It is also why their work is no mere historical curiosity but remains an example to us today. Inasmuch as we are Baptists, it is incumbent upon us as well to be advocates for the freedom of conscience.

The week I'm writing this essay, the Supreme Court has announced a 6–3 decision that makes homosexuality and transgenderism protected classes under Title VII. As Christians, this is an ominous decision, encroaching mightily on the freedom of religion that is our heritage as Americans and as Baptists. Let us rededicate ourselves to this principle and to our obligation to pray "for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:2).

Michael Riley is pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Wakefield, Michigan. He holds a PhD in Apologetics from Westminster Theological Seminary and serves as a chaplain for the Michigan State Police.





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Greeley, CO 80634

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4030 West Yorkshire Drive  
Glendale, AZ 85308

### March 1-3, 2021

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Berean Baptist Church  
1405 Hewatt Road SW  
Lilburn, GA 30047  
252.256.1351

### March 8-9, 2021

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Westgate Baptist Church  
12930 SW Scholls Ferry Road  
Tigard, OR 97223

## June 14-16, 2021

Annual Fellowship  
Colonial Hills Baptist Church  
8140 Union Chapel Road  
Indianapolis, IN 46240

## July 26-28, 2021

Alaska Regional Fellowship  
Hamilton Acres Baptist Church  
138 Farewell Avenue  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
907.456.5995

## October 16, 2021

New England Regional Fellowship  
(Meeting with the New England  
Foundations Conference)  
Heritage Baptist Church  
186 Dover Point Road  
Dover, NH 03820  
603.749.0762

## 2022

### April 4-6, 2022

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Grace Baptist Church  
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# SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

## First Partaker

### Nonnegotiable Devotional Life

In the May/June issue I began a consideration of the pastor's devotional life. It's a subject about which there's surprisingly little in many books on pastoral life and practice. Charles Bridges' *The Christian Ministry*, Charles Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students*, and, more recently, Albert Martin's *The Man of God: His Calling and Godly Life* are exceptions. But there's an acute need for a great deal more attention to be paid to this most vital of all facets of a minister's life.

E. M. Bounds may be best known to us for his work *Power Through Prayer*. Actually, his original title was *Preacher and Prayer*, and he wrote the book because he had discovered how little attention many preachers give to being alone with the Lord. Yet this, Bounds proposed, is what really makes a man of God.

The man—God's man—is made in the closet. His life and his profoundest convictions were born in his secret communion with God.

Perhaps these articles will stir up some readers to add to them in various ways. When it comes to this topic, there's spade work to be done in the Scripture, much to be gleaned from the devotional practices of men and women of the past, and a great deal that could be learned from shared experiences.

The first installment (May/June 2020) was primarily an attempt to describe what a *deeply, satisfying devotional preoccupation with the Bible* is and to offer just a single evidence of it: that *God's words come out of our mouths spontaneously and naturally* (Matt. 12:34).

In this second installment I'd like to suggest two compelling reasons for a minister to devote himself to the developing and maintaining (at all costs) of such a deeply satisfying devotional routine. My hope is to add two more in the next issue.

*"The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits"*  
(2 Tim. 2:6)

### 1. A pastor is first of all an ordinary Christian man, and only secondarily a minister to others.

#### A Great Peril

One of the greatest perils of the ministry is the almost undetectable tendency to begin to conceive of ourselves almost entirely occupationally rather than fundamentally—that is, primarily by our calling, not our constitution.

Constitutionally we are not ministers but mere men. We are not fundamentally preachers but ordinary Christians. Hopefully, by the grace of God, we are sanctified to a maturity surpassing that of the generality of our congregation. But this is not true of us completely. We are not like Christ entirely. And it is this spiritual incompleteness that justifies using the word *ordinary* of us (regardless of how advanced we may be beyond our people relatively speaking).

But functioning from Lord's Day to Lord's Day in an official position and from the elevation of a platform suggests even visibly that we stand above the congregation and are delivering down what is needed by *them*, and what has been prepared for *them*. If this is our subconscious perspective, we're in significant spiritual danger of continually overlooking our own still-unsanctified humanity.

In his masterpiece on pastoral theology, *The Christian Ministry*, Charles Bridges warns of the *peculiar self-deception* of this way of thinking. *We are apt, he says, to merge our personal into our professional character, and in the Minister to forget the Christian.* He explains further,

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For if we should study the Bible more as Ministers than as Christians—more to find matter for the instruction of our people, than food for the nourishment of our own souls; we neglect to place ourselves at the feet of our Divine Teacher; our communion with him is cut off; and we become mere formalists in our sacred profession. . . . We cannot live by feeding others or heal ourselves by the mere employment of healing our people (162–63).

**We ourselves, we ordinary Christian men, have needs that are just simply beyond and outside the scope of whatever we're preaching about from week to week, just like our people do. And there's only one bright and sure way for all of us. The everyday way of secreting our spirits far away from every human face, the cares of life, and the cares of ministry, in order to meet with the Lord in quiet, humble, hungry subservience.**

#### *Fundamental Needs*

Because a pastor is first of all an ordinary Christian, and only secondarily a minister, his fundamental needs are identical to those of his congregation. One of Scripture's most significant testimonies to this fact is Hebrews 11. There it is recorded that the common need, even if a man were a patriarch, a prophet, or a king was as basic as it gets: faith! Faith in what God says. Faith in God Himself.

Pick any other Christian grace or Christian discipline or Christian practice, and it is the pastor's vital need as well as the people's. And what do pastors tell their people to do in order to grow in any of these fundamental areas? We tell them to start with reading their Bibles and praying every day. We urge them to memorize Scripture, to keep prayer lists and to record the answers to their prayers. We encourage them to add the reading of rich, experiential, devotional literature by the classic authors on the inner life. We suggest that they make use of the hymnal and that they learn to journal their earthly pilgrimage.

How can we ourselves neglect these most elementary of all Christian habits and expect to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18) as we ought? Unarguably (who would even begin to contest it?), our constant preparing of lessons and sermons gives significant growth to our lives. But here's an important consideration about that: our spiritual development from preparing and preaching is unlikely to be any more full-orbed and scripturally bal-

anced within us than it will be within our people, if we do not also, like we press upon them to do, read regularly through the *entire* Word of God, pray daily for our *own* unique complexity of needs, and memorize whole passages of Scripture that have *nothing* to do with the current sermon series, but *everything* to do with where we are in our own walk with God at any particular time.

If we confine our Bible reading to the passages and cross references of each week's pulpit preparations, how many years and years will it be before we ourselves ever read through the entire Bible? If we pray only for the needs common to the generalities of our congregation (*Lord, bless us today. . . . Lord, help us today. . . . Lord, meet our needs today. . . . Lord, comfort us today*) and just don't have any system for getting downright *alone* with God day by day to really pour out our carnal, faithless, frightened, powerless souls before Him in agonizing individuality (*Oh, Lord God, I'm miserable and shrunken inside, I'm as fragile as a little child, I'm going to die if You don't treat me tenderly today and shelter me in Your love and wipe away my tears and assure me of Your love!*), what well-founded confidence can we possibly have that we will survive, let alone actually grow through our straits (*tight places* is the Hebrew word for them) rather than turn bitter and brittle and sad and old before our time?

We ourselves, we ordinary Christian men, have needs that are just simply beyond and outside the scope of whatever we're preaching about from week to week, just like our people do. And there's only one bright and sure way for all of us. The everyday way of secreting our spirits far away from every human face, the cares of life, and the cares of ministry, in order to meet with the Lord in quiet, humble, hungry subservience.

Andrew Bonar wrote of his dear friend, the saintly M'Cheyne, that *he used to feed on the word, not in order to prepare himself for his people, but for personal edification. To do so was a fundamental rule with him; and all pastors will feel that, if they are to prosper in their own souls, they must so use the word,—sternly refusing to admit the idea of feeding others, until satiated themselves* (Memoir and Remains, 55).

And what an instructive example it is to find that "Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray" (Luke 5:16 NASB). If it is true that much more of the content of the psalms than we've suspected is Messianic, actually giving voice to *His* prayers, we discover that much of that praying concerned *Himself*, and His *own* deeply felt need for personal communion with His eternal Father. Psalm 69, for instance, with indisputably Messianic lines (vv. 9, 21, 26), takes on a much different character when much of it is read as the heart cries of our Lord in the secret place. Or try reading Psalm 119 as if it is largely the praying of our Lord. There are very few lines which couldn't be. Indeed, there are very few lines which *wouldn't* be, given that He is the perfect Man of Psalm 1, who meditated in the law of the Lord day and night, delighting in it as He did so!

The clinching observation for this first point, that *a pastor is first of all an ordinary Christian man, and only*



*secondarily a minister to others*, is that our Lord Himself was in all respects (apart from sin, Heb. 4:15) a man. And He, overwhelmingly busy as He was ministerially, sought out secret times to pray and meditate upon the Word with the passion of Psalm 119, a psalm focused not upon a man's needs as a professional pastor but his needs as a Psalm 1 man attempting to walk uprightly in a Psalm 2 world (see vv. 1–3). What more needs to be said than to urge us that following Him will mean that we go and do likewise?

### *Discipling*

But in addition, pastors who aren't growing in their own satisfying devotional communion with the Lord are at an embarrassing disadvantage in discipling their people in even the most basic personal devotional habits. One of the reasons that many of the Lord's people have doggedly persevered in trying to develop a consistent daily devotional routine is because they've fallen under the heartening influence of Christian leaders who have shared the blessedness of their own private time with the Lord.

Many years ago I read the journal of Andrew Bonar. His frequent entries about giving himself to generous habits of daily prayer kindled an inspiration that remains with me to this day. The devotional habits of various Puritans, Cotton Mather, Matthew Henry, John Wesley, David Brainerd, Henry Martyn, Mary Slessor, Hudson Taylor, Frances Ridley Havergal, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, A. W. Tozer, and most recently, J. Graham Miller (*A Day's March Nearer Home*) have ministered examples, suggestions, and inspiration to me my entire ministerial life. I can scarcely imagine my spiritual impoverishment without them.

I wish that I'd kept a notebook of all the accounts of the daily devotional practices I've come across in the reading of biographies, journals, and letters of the Lord's choice servants. Some are indelibly recorded in my mind. One of the most precious, and upon which I've fed for inspiration many, many times comes from the boyhood home of John Paton, missionary pioneer to the New Hebrides. In the little village of Torthorwald, Scotland, he and his ten brothers and sisters were raised by godly parents in a small, three-room thatched cottage. The middle room contained a bed, a little table and chair. It was lit by just a small window.

This was the Sanctuary of that cottage home. Thither daily, and oftentimes a day, generally after each meal, we saw our father retire, and "shut to the door"; and we children got to understand by a sort of spiritual instinct (for the thing was too sacred to be talked about) that prayers were being poured out there for us, as of old by the High Priest within the veil in the Most Holy Place. We occasionally heard the pathetic echoes of a trembling voice pleading as if for life, and we learned to slip out and in past that door on tiptoe, not to disturb the holy colloquy. The outside world might not know, but we knew, whence came that happy light as of a new-born

smile that always was dawning on my father's face: it was a reflection from the Divine presence, in the consciousness of which he lived.

Never, in temple or cathedral, on mountain or in glen, can I hope to feel that the Lord God is more near, more visibly walking and talking with men, than under that humble cottage roof of thatch and oaken wattles. Though everything else in religion were by some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory or blotted from my understanding, my soul would wander back to those early scenes, and shut itself up once again in that Sanctuary Closet, and hearing still the echoes of those cries to God, would hurl back all doubt with the victorious appeal, "He walked with God, why may not I?" (*Missionary to the New Hebrides*, 8).

Are there any higher "callings" than to walk with God like that? Is there any amount of busy "service" that could possibly justify a minister's failing to be able to testify to at least *something* of a similar, daily routine of secret devotion? How could we possibly atone for its absence on any grounds whatsoever? It would be better to leave off a dozen church programs than to fail to pursue more and more, all our life long, that kind of shining example of intimacy with God. It will do our people more good than a hundred of our sermons, because it *shows* not merely *tells* them the way to walk with God.

## **2. A pastor at his very core is a "man of God" with spiritual needs peculiar to him in that calling.**

### *The Calling*

The expression *man of God* is used of seven named individuals in the Old Testament (Moses, Samuel, David, Shemaiah, Elijah, Elisha, and Igdaliah), four unnamed prophets (1 Sam. 2:27; 1 Kings 13:1; 20:28; 2 Chron. 25:7), and the mysterious Angel of the LORD (Judges 13:6). In every case the designee is a messenger of the LORD. In the New Testament it is used of Timothy (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:17).

Undoubtedly, the apostle Paul's using this expression of Timothy was divinely designed to elevate the younger man's perspective on his ministerial office to something of that same inestimable eminence accorded to those Old Testament prophets. Certainly, Timothy was not ever (at least as far as we know) the recipient of divine revelation. But he was, nevertheless, like the Old Testament prophets, God's spokesman—a messenger of the Lord.

### *Peculiar Needs*

Now here's the point. As you read the lives of the prophets, or of the apostles, and as you digest Paul's pastoral counsels to Timothy, it's conspicuously apparent that any man attempting to speak to others as a *man of God* is needy beyond the norm. And those needs stem mostly from the peculiarities of his momentous calling.

This is something of which every minister is pain-

fully aware. But to give a single example, is it not confirmatory of this point that when the LORD commissioned Joshua, He exhorted him repeatedly, *Be strong and of a good courage. . . . Be thou strong and very courageous. . . . Be strong and of a good courage. . . . Be strong and of a good courage* (Josh. 1:6, 7, 9, 18). How often do we find in Scripture that God said very similar things to those called to speak for Him? Just this morning my own devotional reading brought me to the first chapter of Deuteronomy. What do I find? That Moses charged those who would communicate God's Law in adjudicating personal disputes, *Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man* (Deut. 1:17). Why not? *For the judgment is God's.*

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## One of the reasons that many of the Lord's people have doggedly persevered in trying to develop a consistent daily devotional routine is because they've fallen under the heartening influence of Christian leaders who have shared the blessedness of their own private time with the Lord.

How pleasant it would be if we could be always completely at ease when we spoke for God, in the certainty that the content is His (*the judgment is God's*). But sometimes (perhaps more often than we dare admit) that's not our experience, is it? *Fightings without and fears within*, Paul confessed of himself (2 Cor. 7:5). These are not the ordinary *fears within* of common Christian testing or trial. These are the nerve-shattering anxieties that go with finding oneself disliked and abandoned by church members for little more than faithfully cutting straight the Word of God. Those fears are involuntary. They're many. They're powerful and paralyzing. No amount of personal will power can bring them entirely under control. What to do?

Surely the only genuinely renewing resort is for us to do as did David when the people were so embittered that they were openly talking about stoning him; he *encouraged himself in the LORD his God* (1 Sam. 30:6). Or what Moses did after the nation, including Aaron his own brother (!), had so quickly, shockingly defected: *And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp. . . . And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses* (Exod. 33:7a, 9).

This was not *the* tabernacle, which had not yet been

constructed; it was strictly a tent for meeting with God. Anyone could go out to it. But Moses especially felt the need for a place removed from the everyday noise and business of the camp. A place where he could meet alone with the LORD. And it was here that the Lord would speak with Him *face to face* (v. 11).

*Had I a glance of Thee, My God, kingdoms and  
men would vanish soon;  
Vanish as though I saw them not, as a dim candle  
dies at noon* (Isaac Watts).

### From Fear to Joy

Haven't we all been instructed thrillingly by George Muller's explanations of his daily routines of Bible study and prayer? Those routines weren't optional. They were critical to supplying the needs *peculiar to his calling*. One in particular is a fundamental need of pastors and preachers overworked, underappreciated, unfairly criticized, and frequently tempted to close their mouths rather than offend yet another church member.

According to my judgement the most important point to be attended to is this: above all things see to it that your souls are happy in the Lord. Other things may press upon you, the Lord's work may even have urgent claims upon your attention, but I deliberately repeat, it is of supreme and paramount importance that you should seek above all things to have your souls truly happy in God Himself! Day by day seek to make this the most important business of your life. This has been my firm and settled condition for the last five and thirty years. For the first four years after my conversion I knew not its vast importance, but now after much experience I specially commend this point to the notice of my younger brethren and sisters in Christ: the secret of all true effectual service is joy in God, having experimental acquaintance and fellowship with God Himself.

So much more could (perhaps, *should*) be said along this line, that *a pastor at his very core is a "man of God" with spiritual needs peculiar to him in that calling*. And that those needs are not necessarily met through his regular routine of preparing sermons. But I'll conclude for now with a general warning from Charles Bridges. May it open eyes to the possibility of a crippling defect in our lives.

The most effectual hindrances . . . to our work are those which impede our personal communion with the Lord. When the great enemy thus successfully intercepts our spiritual supplies, the work of God in our hearts, and connected with it, the work of God in our hands, languishes from the want of its accustomed and needful support. We have great need to watch, lest public activity should be considered to atone for neglect of private intercourse with God (*The Christian Ministry*, 150). ☞



# Bring . . . the Books

*A Minister's Obstacles* by Ralph G. Turnbull

Ralph G. Turnbull lived from 1901 to 1985. He was a Scotsman who graduated from Princeton Seminary and pastored in Great Britain, Canada, and the United States. From years of pastoral experience and keen observation of other pastors, he wrote *A Minister's Obstacles* in 1946 as an aid to stimulate and revitalize men in their ministry. The book was so helpful that the Fleming H. Revell Company later republished it in 1959 as part of its *Preaching and Pastoral Aid* series. The Publishers stated:

The easy, swift-flowing writing of this little volume is a joy to read, but there is something far better: there is stimulation and challenge for the pastor who may be losing heart. It stabs the conscience and reminds us again of the dignity, the glory, the wonder and the magnificence of the God-given vocation of the sincere and the searching—and growing—minister (p. 8).

Moreover, in his book *The Minister's Library*, Cyril J. Barber highly recommends Turnbull's volume in the "Pastoral Duties" section where he describes it as "a must" (Vol. 1, 1985 [Chicago: Moody Press], 335).

I agree with the publishers that the book is encouraging and at the same time motivating. Turnbull does a good job drawing from the life experiences of many pastors and Christian leaders who fell prey to one obstacle or another, and he then records how they identified their problem and overcame it. Being a pastor himself, the author recognizes the unique challenges that pastors face. He observes, "Preaching is the most perilous of all vocations. We shall not find it listed in any government returns of dangerous occupations, nevertheless, it is an occupation of greatest danger—to the soul of the preacher" (p. 110). He is quick to remind us that temptation is natural. Our Lord Himself faced temptation. How we respond to that temptation is what this book seeks to help us with.

There are chapters on "The Spectre of Professionalism," "The Dry Rot of Covetousness," "The Bane of Jealousy," "The Paralysis of Pride," and "The Peril of Privilege." He further warns against cleverness, sloth, fads, substituting social reform and liberal ideas for the gospel, dissidence, and taking it easy in our latter years of ministry. He encourages the importance of preaching, faithfulness, and missions.

Let me choose one chapter on which to focus and share my thoughts. The second chapter deals with sloth. At the beginning he includes a prayer from Samuel Johnson who says, "Grant, O Lord, that I may not lavish away the life which Thou hast given me on useless trifles" (p. 21). Whether you are pastoring in the eighteenth or twenty-first century, this is always an obstacle of which to beware. Turnbull observes, "A transition from ease to evil is always our peril" (p. 22). One topic in this chapter particularly convicted me. Turnbull challenged pastors who work

throughout the week in reading, studying, visiting, and administering not to neglect the labor of prayer. In fact, he maintains that "prayer is labour" (p. 27). We desire rest when there is a call for prayer. He continues, "Because it is labour, an exercise, perhaps that is why we are prone to indolence in this respect" (p. 27). He then quotes John Calvin: "Oh! What deep-seated malice against God is this, that I will do anything and everything, but to go to Him and remain with Him in secret prayer!" (p. 27). Turnbull includes this confession of a pastor at the end of his ministry:

*"... when  
thou comest,  
bring with thee  
... the books"  
(2 Tim. 4:13)*

I have not failed to study; I have not failed to write and meditate; but I have failed to pray. . . . Now, why have I not prayed? Sometimes because I did not like it; at other times because I hardly dared; and yet at other times because I had something else to do. Let us be frank. It is a grand thing to get a praying minister. . . . I have heard men talk about prayer who never prayed in their lives. They thought they did; but when you have heard them, they made their own confession in a ruthless way (p. 27).

This confession inspired me to make sure that I am not saying the same thing at the end of my ministry! *Oh Lord, give me the grace to desire Your presence and to kneel before Your throne in time of need. May I have the spiritual insight to recognize I am constantly in a time of need and that the people to whom You have called me need an earthly example of prayer-dependence on You.*

The last chapter, "While I Was Musing," provides a summary of thoughts and general encouragement to the pastor from one who had traveled the road before. He states, "The ministry was never intended to provide a safe place or a comfortable living for preachers. If the Cross and not a cushion is our symbol we should not be shocked by the antagonisms of life" (p. 146). He pleads with pastors to humbly but boldly preach an unvarnished gospel that reminds men of their sin and draws them to Christ. He reminds them that they never really have a day off and that they should expect no praise in this world from men. All we need is God's approval, however, and His rewards are eternal for those diligently serving Him.

There are times when the author favorably quotes men such as Karl Barth and John Henry Cardinal Newman, but overall I was blessed by reading the book and would recommend that all pastors and Christian servants read it devotionally with a tender heart for spiritual growth. ☞

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# Straight Cuts

## Ecclesiastes 9:7—A Command to Drink Wine?

It is increasingly rare these days to encounter believers who have formulated a biblical standard against drinking alcoholic beverages. So when I find some I like to talk about their experiences. I query them about what scriptural input shaped their standard, and any fallout that has come their way from family, friends, and coworkers. I often learn they have experienced mockery or outright hostility as a result of their stand against alcohol. Some of the harshest reaction comes from fellow Christians—not from unbelievers.

It's quite unexpected, however, when I find derogatory language in commentary literature. Normally the commentator maintains a scholarly demeanor that manifests equanimity even in an area of disagreement. But while I was writing a book on the biblical theology of Ecclesiastes, I found an exception to this rule in an otherwise helpful commentary by Iain Provan on Ecclesiastes. It was his discussion of those who have decided that they should abstain from drinking alcohol that elicited his disdain. Provan notes that God told Adam and Eve that they could freely eat of any of the trees of the garden, but it was Satan that focused Eve's attention on the one exception: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Provan thus implies that it is satanic and legalistic to emphasize behaviors the Christian should avoid: "Christian communities everywhere are burdened with a legalism that has nothing at all to do with biblical revelation but is presented nonetheless as authentically Christian." Provan thinks that it is particularly horrendous that Christian colleges and seminaries subject their students and faculty to "a whole plethora of rules and regulations that they are required to keep even though they are merely cultural impositions and have nothing to do with obedience to God. A repressive, authoritarian spirit lies at the root of much of our religion."<sup>1</sup>

Provan then brings up the example of drinking wine and mentions Ecclesiastes 9:7, a verse that commends our enjoyment of God's agricultural blessings: "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works." Provan thinks that rules against drinking are "petty" and "particularly astonishing" when promoted by Christians who uphold a high view of the inerrancy of Scripture, because the Bible says that wine is a good gift to mankind (Deut. 7:13; 11:14; 14:26; 33:28; Ps. 104:14–15; and Prov. 3:9–10). He further maintains that someone who would avoid drinking wine thinks "the Christian life is . . . about the repression of life in the here and now in order to gain

life in the future."<sup>2</sup> For Provan the choice is clear: drink wine or live a pharisaical, legalistic, repressive lifestyle under the burdensome manmade rules made by some authoritarian leader who delights in the power he wields over people. I'm not sure I have ever encountered a starker example of a false dichotomy!

So, how should someone who has chosen to shun the consumption of alcoholic beverages, but believes wholeheartedly in the inspiration of the Scripture, apply Ecclesiastes 9:7 to life in the modern world? The verse does say, "Drink [an imperative] thy wine with a merry heart."

First, we must recognize that there is an important difference between the 12–14% alcohol content of modern wine and the diluted wine people drank in the ancient world. People in Bible times mixed one part of wine with two, three, or more parts of water because they needed hydration, and water alone was often unsafe to consume. Undiluted wine also had a strong flavor acquired from the pitch used to coat the inside of clay storage jars. Spices and other flavorings were added to mask the flavor of the pitch, resulting in a wine of remarkably strong flavor that needed to be diluted before consumption. In contrast with modern wine, one would have needed to drink large quantities of diluted wine before becoming inebriated. We have no modern wine that is equivalent to the wine of biblical times.

One standard drink of modern wine consists of five ounces, which contains enough alcohol to produce a blood alcohol content of about 0.02% in the average-sized person. Although that level is well below the 0.08% level that most states have set for defining driving under the influence of alcohol, studies have shown deterioration of motor skills at the 0.02% level. In recognition of this fact, Sweden has set the 0.02% level as the definition of DUI.<sup>3</sup> Surely *no* alcohol in one's bloodstream is safest when driving.

We can fulfill the imperative of Ecclesiastes 9:7 by enjoying the plethora of beverages available today that were unavailable in past ages. I like to drink sparkling water that comes in a variety of tasty flavors. We can also purchase grape juice, a drink that was unavailable before the work of Louis Pasteur in the mid-nineteenth century. It is loaded with the antioxidant resveratrol. Who doesn't love a glass of iced tea on a hot summer day? We have sports drinks that replenish lost minerals during and after strenuous physical activity. Many

**"Rightly  
dividing  
the Word  
of Truth"  
(2 Tim. 2:15)**

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Continued on page 8 of *Sound Words*



# Windows

## The Feast of Tabernacles

### The Pouring

The Feast of Sukkot (booths, tabernacles) in Jesus' day included a water-pouring ceremony. Each day of the feast the priests descended from the temple down to the Gihon Spring, which flowed into the Pool of Siloam. There a priest filled a golden pitcher as a Levitical choir chanted Isaiah 12:3: "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." The water was then carried back up the hill to the Water Gate, followed by crowds carrying tree branches ("lulav") in their right hand to remember the tents they lived in while in the desert. In their left hand, was a citrus fruit ("etrog") in memory of the harvest. The crowd would shake these and sing Psalms 113–118. When the procession arrived at the temple, the priest would climb the altar steps and pour water into a special silver funnel onto the altar while the crowd circled him and continued singing. On the seventh day of the festival, this process took place seven times.<sup>1</sup>

The Jewish people saw this water ceremony on multiple levels. On one hand, it was a plea to God for rain, since the summertime produced no rain and threatened drought. On the other hand, it was a source of rich symbolism. The feast was established as a memorial to their desert journey and God's provision of water from the smitten rock (Num. 20:8–10). The pouring out of the water which flowed onto the sacrificial rock of the temple altar represented the day God's life-giving water would flow out of God's temple during Israel's kingdom age. Zechariah and Ezekiel had visions of rivers flowing from the temple in a miraculous display of God's blessing (Ezek. 47:1; Zech. 14:8). On the last day of the feast known as the Hoshana Rabbah, the trip to the spring and back would be made seven times. At last, the priest for the seventh time that day poured the final pitcher of water onto the altar. The congregation would be shouting "Please save!" As soon as a moment of silence occurred, Jesus stepped into public view as an uninvited rabbi and shouted loudly and emphatically the most stunning pronouncement of the feast: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37–38). He made this water-pouring ceremony a beautiful picture of the Spirit-filled life for service (John 7:39). He showed how to access the Messiah's life so that His life may flow through our lives to others.

### The Cup

One Christian author pictures our heart as a cup which we hold out to Jesus, longing that He might fill it with the refreshing water of life. Just as the Jewish priest filled the golden pitcher with fresh, living water

from the Gihon Spring and poured it into the silver funnel that channeled it onto the altar, Jesus is pictured as bearing a golden pitcher filled with the water of life, which is the Holy Spirit. As He passes by He looks into our cup, and if it is clean, when we ask, He fills it to overflowing with the living water. Because Jesus is always passing by, our cup can always be running over. The Rock has already been smitten. All we must do is speak to the Rock. Simply ask the Lord to fill our cup, then take that fullness by faith, and offer Him thanks for it.<sup>2</sup>

*"To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, 'A window shalt thou make in the ark.'"*

*Charles Spurgeon*

People never desire a drink if they are not really thirsty. We need a genuine God-given "thirst." At times our circumstances become so spiritually dry they create a deep craving for living water. For the spiritually thirsty, there is only one place to go to, and that is to Christ: "All my springs are in thee" (Ps. 87:7b). We are totally dependent on Christ for all of our refreshment. Spiritual refreshment does not depend upon trying harder.

### The Living Water

Water was of special importance to the people of the Bible. They lived in a very dry land, completely dependent upon seasonal rains. Fresh water was not available everywhere, so it was necessary to dig wells and cisterns. Water was stored in a cistern carved out of a rock or a pit that was dug in the ground. The pit was lined with rock and covered with plaster to enable it to retain water. Water from rain or a stream was channeled into it. Water stored in a cistern could easily be contaminated by people, animals, and things falling into it, causing sickness. The purest water was spring water or well water. Water that was constantly moving and being replenished was called "living water." This was the source of water that Jewish law approved for ritual cleansing.

Such an important resource as fresh water would

naturally be a symbol of *spiritual* reality. In Jesus' day rabbinic teaching was compared to water. If the water (teaching) was good, then the disciple could drink from God's waters. If the rabbi gave poor teaching then they were "exiled to a place of evil water and the disciples who come after [him] will drink and die." So when Jesus promised to give living water to thirsty souls, He was referring to spiritual truth that would provide people with God's life inwardly and completely satisfy.

## The Thirst

People never desire a drink if they are not really thirsty. We need a genuine God-given "thirst." At times our circumstances become so spiritually dry they create a deep craving for living water. For the spiritually thirsty, there is only one place to go to, and that is to Christ: "All my springs are in thee" (Ps. 87:7b). We are totally dependent on Christ for all of our refreshment. Spiritual refreshment does not depend upon trying harder. Christ promises a free-flowing, natural (or should I say supernatural) moving within us. It is never stagnant, always new, fresh, and thirst-quenching. We get a continual supply of fresh spiritual energy to proceed.

Stephen Olford experienced real thirst when he was a child. He was born and raised with his beloved missionary parents in the heart of Central Africa. During dry seasons they often ran out of water. On one occasion his father was contacting a new tribe. There was no road, not even a trail. On and on their family travelled, with only a few native people accompanying them. What they didn't realize was that they were moving away from any river. When they ran out of water, his father asked their African guides to find and bring them some. One day went by. A second day went by. On the third day under the blistering sun, they began to really suffer.

Stephen said that he'd never forget suffering extreme thirst. He was a teenager, and his tongue was clinging to his jaws. All his saliva had gone. His eyes were blistering from the heat. His brother John was delirious. With the possibility of death staring them in the face, his father drew the family together. Under that cloudless sky, with the heat and bright sun beating down on them, he said, "Let us all kneel." As best Stephen could remember, his father just raised his hand to heaven and said, "Father in heaven, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I bow before You. You sent us to this place. I thank You for the translation of Scriptures and the building of churches. If it's the hour of our ultimate sacrifice, we're ready. But, Lord, You're sovereign; You're mighty. You're the God of the impossible. Lord, I cry to You, I plead with You—Lord, send us rain!"

In a matter of moments the clouds began to gather. The sun was shielded, and suddenly there was lightning and a roar of thunder, and a deluge came down. They put out everything that could contain water that they possessed—their canvas, their tub, their washbasin—everything, and they drank, and they drank, and

they drank. Are you thirsty like that for Jesus? Do you intensely desire His person?<sup>3</sup>

## The Rivers

Mount Hermon is the highest elevation in Israel, towering an estimated ten thousand feet above sea level. Because of its height, it captures a large amount of precipitation, and its peaks are snow-capped much of the year. Melting snow from the mountain runs down the slopes and feeds springs below, which form into three main rivers: the Hasbani, the Banyas, and the Dan. These three rivers eventually merge to become the Jordan River. The Jordan Valley is the most fruitful land in Israel, featuring forests, flora and fauna, and fertile farmland. Because of this, Israel is not only able to be self-sufficient but also to export her abundance elsewhere.

This living water that Jesus promises will become like rivers that flow out of a Spirit-filled believer and will result in others' being blessed and refreshed. Christ pours out His Spirit into a believer's innermost being, and that life-giving flow finds its way out into the hearts of those whose lives they touch. Jesus promises "rivers": not just one but multiple streams of living water. He is pointing to the fact that God's supply through the believer's life is abundant. The Spirit-filled Christian will bring rich spiritual nourishment and refreshment to many others. ☞

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, Book 4 (Hendrickson Pub., 1993), 582–87.

<sup>2</sup> Roy Hession, *The Calvary Road*, CLC (1950), 25–26.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from a sermon, "The Person for Revival," preached by Dr. Stephen Olford at 1998 Heart Cry for Revival Conference.

Jim Bickel is the senior pastor of Bethel Baptist Fellowship in Brooklyn, New York.

## A Command to Drink Wine?

Continued from page 6 of *Sound Words*

people enjoy starting each day with a nice cup of coffee. All these beverages are God's gracious gift to us for our enjoyment. Instead of seeing how close we can model our behavior after the world system that prizes drinking alcohol, we ought rather to repudiate what has the potential to enslave us (1 Cor. 6:12). ☞

<sup>1</sup> Iain Provan, *Ecclesiastes/Song of Songs*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 100.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.government.se/government-of-sweden/ministry-for-foreign-affairs/diplomatic-portal/diplomatic-guide/9.-respect-for-the-local-laws-and-regulations/9.1-drunk-driving/#:~:text=In%20Sweden%2C%20driving%20a%20motor,in%20an%20accident%20or%20not>, accessed 6/22/2020.



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# The Baptist Influence on the US Constitution

**J**ohn Leland (1754–1841) finished the struggle begun by Roger Williams and Isaac Backus for religious liberty in America. This apostle of religious and political liberty was born in Grafton, Massachusetts, but moved to Virginia in 1776 to join the Baptist effort against the Anglican establishment. (A religious establishment is a religion imposed by government that compels everyone under its jurisdiction to give tax support and special privileges to a single religious denomination.) Leland's writings, like those of Williams and Backus, are important because of their relevance to the current church-state debate in America. Central to this debate is the knotty problem of where to draw a clear line between the proper authority of government and that of religion. Written from personal experience and with forceful logic, Leland's works are an important historical and theological analysis that attempts to identify the exact limits of civil and ecclesiastical power.

## Liberty of Conscience

An understanding of Leland's church-state views begins with his concept of liberty of conscience and his fear of religious establishments. In one of Leland's works owned and valued by Thomas Jefferson, *A Blow at the Root*, he gives his definition of liberty of conscience: "I mean the inalienable right that each individual has of worshipping his God according to the dictates of his conscience, without being prohibited, directed, or controlled therein by human law, either in time, place, or manner."<sup>1</sup> Leland lists and refutes the three basic arguments usually given for establishment: "To prevent error," "to effect and preserve uniformity of sentiment," "and to support the gospel." He concludes his argument thus: "The New Testament churches were formed by the laws of Jesus, and the acts of the apostles only, and so it shall be among us."<sup>2</sup>

Striking his blow at the root of the establishment, he states why religious laws and test oaths (religious qualifications for holding political office) should never be written into a

civil constitution or into state laws. Leland believed that the inevitable result of mixing church and state was religious hypocrisy, civil discord, social inequity, persecution, ignorance, and increased religious skepticism—in other words, a national curse.<sup>3</sup>

John Leland was present at the creation of the American nation—not merely present, but an active participant in it. He was a reflective thinker on political as well as religious issues who counted Thomas Jefferson and James Madison among his friends. He often advised both men on church-state questions. It was Leland, as leader of the Virginia Baptists, who led the Baptist petition movement which helped make possible the passage of Jefferson's Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom in 1786. Perhaps Leland had the greatest influence of any Baptist in Virginia politics.

Strong evidence suggests that Leland exercised influence on the US Constitution by extracting a promise from James Madison to offer a bill of rights to protect religious freedom. A neighbor of Madison in Orange County, Leland led a powerful Baptist constituency that opposed the ratification of the Constitution because it lacked sufficient guarantees of religious rights. In exchange for Madison's commitment, Leland promised to support him for election to the Virginia ratifying convention if he would remedy this defect by offering the amendments. Madison kept his promise.<sup>4</sup>

Leland had been the candidate to the convention of those opposing ratification but withdrew from the race in favor of Madison. With this Baptist support, Madison was easily elected. Leland helped send to the convention the man who, above all others in Virginia, understood the new scheme of government and was best prepared to defend it against its enemies. It has been claimed that, had Madison been defeated, the Virginia convention would have failed to ratify. Virginia, the largest and most populous colony ratified by only ten votes, 89–79. The Hon. J. S. Barbour, in a eulogy upon the character of Mr. Madison, referred to this incident and gave





Elder Leland the credit for the ratification of the Constitution by Virginia and the triumph of the new system of government.

It was a very unusual, if not an unprecedented proceeding, and it is to be accounted for only on the ground of the former relations of Madison to the Baptists in their struggle for religious liberty. He had, while yet a young man, shown his warm sympathy for them in their persecutions; he had been the true yoke-fellow of Mr. Jefferson in his great work in pulling down the establishment: and then when Jefferson was representing his country at a foreign court, he had taken his place as the political leader of the Baptists and their allies in their fight against Patrick Henry's establishment General Assessment Bill. Knowing, as he did, the chief ground of opposition to the Constitution, he felt that he could afford to approach their leading representative in Orange with the view of explaining that paper which he himself had framed, and relieving their apprehensions as to its bearing upon the question of religious liberty. Thus were Leland and Baptists of Orange won over to the side of Madison. Madison was sent to the Convention to meet and to defeat Henry, who opposed the Constitution.<sup>5</sup>

### **A "Courageous . . . Resourceful . . . Champion"**

L. H. Butterfield, Leland's chief biographer, wrote that he was "as courageous and resourceful a champion of the rights of conscience as America has produced." His epitaph summarized his life: "Here lies the body of John Leland who labored to promote piety, and vindicate the civil and religious rights of all men." Believing that political liberty was essential to religious liberty, he was a staunch Jeffersonian Republican. An implacable foe of the pro-religious establishment and strong government philosophy of the Federalist Party, Leland, in an 1802 oration, stated, "I would as soon give my vote to a wolf to be a shepherd, as to a man, who is always contending for the energy [power] of government, to be a ruler."<sup>6</sup>

Leland called Jefferson "my hero" and "the greatest statesman that the world ever produced." During the presiden-

tial election campaign of 1800 and in later statewide races, Leland vigorously campaigned for Jefferson and Jeffersonian Democratic-Republicans. (The party later dropped the name Republican.) He and his coworkers carried practically whole towns for Jefferson and Jeffersonian candidates in the New England stronghold of John Adams and the Federalist Party.

His church and the citizens in the Baptist-dominated town of Cheshire celebrated Jefferson's election victory with a gift to the new president of a 1235-pound cheese. The "mammoth cheese," as it came to be called, was presented to Jefferson by Leland in Washington on New Year's Day in 1802. On this occasion, Jefferson asked Leland to preach to the House and Senate with himself in attendance. It is not recorded that anyone in the House or Senate protested the sermon as a violation of the First Amendment, which had been law for a decade.<sup>7</sup>

After returning to New England in 1791, Leland joined the labors of Isaac Backus against the Congregational establishment. The citizens of Cheshire elected him to the Massachusetts legislature from 1811 to 1813. While in the General Court, the name given to the Massachusetts legislature, Leland submitted a religious liberty amendment to the Massachusetts constitution which failed to pass. The church-state theory which he attempted to implement was the logical extension of his Baptist theology. Baptists see the New Testament as normative for church-state relationships. By contrast, defenders of religious establishment, on the basis of Calvinistic covenant theology, see the Old Testament Mosaic code given to Israel as normative for church and society. Leland stated:

Our faith is firm in the divinity of the Old Testament, as it is in the New, but as many things in the Old Testament are only historical, others form a code of political laws and moral precepts. While many things therein were typical and temporary, suited to the condition of a national church (religious establishment), we believe that



Christians should have recourse to the New Testament for precepts and precedents to direct them in social worship.<sup>8</sup>

Persecutors of religious conscience found their proof texts in such Old Testament passages as Deuteronomy 13:1–5; Ezra 7:25–26; Isaiah 49:23; and in the religious reformations of Old Testament political rulers such as David, Hezekiah, Josiah, Nehemiah, and others.

John Leland cited the New Testament in his response to the Standing Order's Old Testament justification for religious oppression. In his much circulated *A Blow at the Root* he wrote:

The people of Massachusetts boast of their religious knowledge; to them I appeal. Pray tell me where Jesus, or the apostles, ever called upon rulers of state to make any laws to oblige people to part with their money to hire preachers or build meeting houses. I have seen it, and until I do, I shall call all such laws anti-scriptural and anti-Christian.<sup>9</sup>

Leland, like Backus and Williams, considered man's personal accountability to God the primary argument against state interference in religious affairs. This accountability rests on the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer and individual soul responsibility. The Old Testament limited the priesthood to a select few within the tribe of Levi. The New Testament declares all believers to be priests who enjoy even greater access to God than Israel's High Priest on the Day of Atonement (Heb. 10:19–22; 1 Pet. 2:1–10; John 17:7). In 1791, after his return to Massachusetts, Leland published his most well-known and perhaps, most important work, *The Rights of Conscience Inalienable*. Here he draws the implications of this New Testament priesthood:

The word *conscience* signifies "common science," a court of judicature which the Almighty has erected in every human breast: a censor morum over all his conduct. Conscience will even judge right, when it is rightly informed and speak the truth when it understands it. . . . Every man must give an account of himself to God, and therefore every man ought to be at liberty to serve God in a way that he can best reconcile his conscience. If government can best answer for individuals at the Day of Judgment, let men be controlled by it in religious matters; otherwise let men be free.<sup>10</sup>

Bob Dalton was born in Elkton, Maryland. A Bob Jones University graduate, he pastored churches in Mississippi and Tennessee. He taught Bible and church history at Crown College and Seminary and Ambassador Baptist College. He and his wife, Jane, live in Port St. Lucie, Florida.

<sup>1</sup> L. F. Greene, ed., *The Writings of the Late Elder John Leland* (New York: G. W. Wood, 1845. Reprint Gallatin, TN, 1986), 323.



<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>4</sup> L. H. Butterfield, *Elder John Leland, Jeffersonian Itinerant* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1953), 188–89.

<sup>5</sup> Charles James, *Documentary History of the Struggle for Religious Liberty in Virginia* (Harrisonburg, VA, Sprinkle Publications, 1992), 154–58.

<sup>6</sup> Butterfield, 157.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 266.

<sup>8</sup> Greene, 199.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 1, 247.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 18081.

Article taken from Dr. Dalton's book *Struggle for Liberty: The Baptists, The Bible and Church-State Conflict in Colonial America*.



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## Chaplains' Retreat

Mike Ascher

Many things have changed in 2020 due to COVID, including increased pressure on our military. However, the Lord has also used the pandemic to bring to light unforeseen opportunities. The cancellation of the FBFI Annual Fellowship in June enabled Chaplain Commission leaders to organize the first FBFI chaplains' retreat. The event was held from Wednesday through Friday, September 2–4, at The Edge Christian Camp in Spring Grove, Virginia. Located across the James River from historic Williamsburg, The Edge hosted several chaplain families that included fifty-five adults and children. Dr. Gordon Dickson, FBFI chairman and pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Findlay, Ohio, challenged the group in several sessions on the theme of being an encourager, companion, and mentor like Barnabas. Mrs. Harriet Dickson also taught the chaplains' wives how God helped Naomi in the book of Ruth to overcome her bitterness so that she became an encourager like Barnabas.

Along with the excellent spiritual food received during the preaching times, attendees also enjoyed the delicious meals prepared by the camp kitchen. Group events organized by the camp staff were great fun, as well as the generous free time set aside for table sports in the activity center, hiking, and numerous waterfront activities. The camp's riverfront was ideal for swimming, canoeing, kayaking and fishing. Time between sessions allowed chaplains to mingle, listen and share without the pressures of a conference schedule and training. One chaplain who attended the retreat said, "I thoroughly enjoyed the fellowship with sage Christian men and the younger men who were there with their families." Another told Chaplain Joe Willis that he was grateful for the "outstanding messages and speaker, schedule, food and good location."

The Chaplain Commission is grateful for all those who made this event such a great success for our chaplains and their families. Special thanks to camp director Scott Carsley, his wife Jennifer, and their very capable staff. Plans are already being made for next year's chaplains' retreat at the beginning of September.





## New York City Regional Fellowship

Matt Recker

The Lord gave us a rich fellowship in our recent FBFI New York City Regional Fellowship on Tuesday, September 21. Our attendance was excellent as pastors, their wives, missionaries, and servants from our churches attended.

Dr. Jim Bickel preached a powerful message from Romans 1:18–32 on “Where Are We and What Are We to Do.” This message woke us up to our present distress and our responsibility to live as Spirit-filled soul winners in our city during these days. While in the last days perilous times will come, God has also promised to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. We know that God has not given up on our city because He has called us to serve Him and He is with us.

Dr. Craig Hartman gave an extremely helpful and informative session on “Demonstrating Liberty When World Government Takes It Away.” He shared Constitutional background and context and related it to what is happening today.

Each participant received a recent copy of *FrontLine* magazine, and pastors were given *The Revived Life* by Evangelist John Van Gelderen.



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## The Separation of Church and State in Baptist History and Its Influence in the Formation of the United States

Continued from page 15

respected him, and he continued to advocate for policies they upheld, such as the separation of church and state.

Williams was in England securing a charter for the Rhode Island Colony when he published his famous treatise “The Bloudy Tenet of Persecution” in 1644. Another, “The Bloudy Tenet Yet More Bloudy,” followed in 1652 in response to a book by John Cotton attacking his first treatise. Williams used both Scripture and history to show religious persecution is always wrong. He maintained civil leaders had only civil powers. His controversial contention that religious liberty would lead to peace and tranquility was roundly rebuked. Keep in mind that Williams was ahead of his time. England would not pass its Toleration Act<sup>8</sup> until 1688, after its Glorious Revolution. Williams’ second “Tenet” book explored the power of the civil sword in the spiritual realm. For him, religious liberty was essential, and the only way to ensure that everyone had liberty was for there to be a clear separation between the sphere of the state and that of the church.<sup>9</sup>

Williams consistently argued for the separation of church and state for the rest of his life, for which Baptists have greatly revered him. Williams’ convictions required him to forgo a promising ministerial career and often to live

in peril, on the run from civil authorities. While it may be difficult for Americans to imagine a society in which the church and state are united (or even overtly supportive of each other), such was the reality for the society in Williams’ day. From Williams we move to the eighteenth century and another American colonialist (and later, an American citizen), Isaac Backus.

### Isaac Backus (1724–1806)

Isaac Backus converted to Christianity during the First Great Awakening. He lived in Massachusetts, which was dominated by the state-supported Congregational Church. After becoming a pastor, in 1751 he was convinced of believer’s baptism and was baptized by immersion. He required all members of his church to do so in 1756.

During this time, Massachusetts discriminated against the Baptist churches for the support of the Congregational Church; they forced everyone to pay taxes for its funding. People were often imprisoned, and their goods were confiscated.<sup>10</sup> Backus’s mother was imprisoned in 1752, which probably was the worst mistake they could have made. Backus became a life-long zealous opponent of the state church.

Both during the American War for Independence and after, Backus continued the fight against hegemony of the established state church. As head of the Warren Association, he led the charge by exposing and opposing unfair treatment in all of New England, even advocating that Baptists not



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pay this unfair tax. He resisted a proposal in 1778 for the adoption of the state constitution, since it continued these discriminating practices.

Several of his writings are notable. His treatise<sup>11</sup> in 1773 articulated well his impassioned plea for soul liberty. Further, he expressed his desire for the separation of church and state that would provide the basis for soul liberty in 1778.<sup>12</sup> Backus would argue that the Revolutionary War was being fought for freedom for civil liberty.<sup>13</sup> But that was not enough. There needed still to be freedom for the conscience—religious liberty. As had been done by Sectarians during the Reformation and English Separatists later, Backus laid bare the inconsistency of those who wanted freedom for their own religion but who had no basis for it unless they extended that right to others.<sup>14</sup>

Backus was especially pleased with the inclusion of the Bill of Rights in the US Constitution. Many people today do not realize that though the Constitution of the United States (1789) prohibits the establishment of a national church, the individual states were free to maintain their own state churches. However, in his lifetime he was never able to see the Congregational Church removed from its position of authority and power. Massachusetts was the last state to disestablish their state church, and they did not do so until 1833, some fifty-seven years after the founding of the country.

## Conclusion

Backus, Williams, and Helwys all suffered for their Baptist convictions, with Helwys having made the ultimate sacrifice. All three were known for their views on seeing the state as a necessary part of society but by no means able or empowered to rule on religious matters. Permitting a society to have a union (or even strong cooperation) between religion and government would not allow freedom of conscience for both the religious and nonreligious. For religion to be genuine, it must not be forced.

Baptists have their faults, but they have maintained the principle of religious liberty, which requires the separation of religion and government. Baptists are not the only group that have advocated for this separation and the religious liberty it brings. Other religious groups have claimed allegiance to that principle. But of course, the real test of a religious group's commitment to that ideal is when that group becomes the majority in a society or government. History is full of examples of such groups who failed miserably. May that never be true of the Baptists. So far, so good.

Dr. Ken Rathbun was a Baptist Mid-Missions missionary in Jamaica from 2002-16 and taught at the Fairview Baptist Bible College, where he was also the academic dean; he also preached and taught in many other areas of the world, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, England, Guyana, India, Liberia, Peru, Scotland, Thailand, and the United States. He currently serves as vice president for Academic Services and dean of the College at Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary.



*Writings of Thomas Helwys* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009). The quote I allude to is found on page 209, within the context of the power of the state; he references the king specifically.

<sup>4</sup> For additional details, see Anthony L. Chute, Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A. Haykin, *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2015), 14–20.

<sup>5</sup> McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 127–28. Brewster was concerned that if Williams continued on this path of separatism and “Anabaptistry,” he would become like John Smyth (*ibid.*).

<sup>6</sup> “Introduction,” *On Religious Liberty: Selections from the Works of Roger Williams* (Cambridge, MA: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 12. This is a good modern edition of Williams’ works.

<sup>7</sup> McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 130–31.

<sup>8</sup> Note too that it was only an act for religious toleration, not liberty. Naturally, after what had just transpired under King James II, the act excluded Roman Catholics.

<sup>9</sup> For the text of these treaties, see Davis, *On Religious Liberty*, “The Bloody Tenet of Persecution,” 85–156, and “The Bloody Tenet Yet More Bloody,” 167–226. For a brief general analysis, see McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 132–35.

<sup>10</sup> Additional penalties were assessed throughout the American colonies: “No Baptist is known to have been executed for religion in America. However, many Baptists were severely whipped, forced to pay taxes to support the state church, had property confiscated, paid fines, and suffered lingering imprisonments. They also faced public harrassment [*sic*]; Baptist preachers endured occasional indignities, public baptisms were often mocked or disrupted by onlookers,” McBeth, 252–53.

<sup>11</sup> My copy is Isaac Backus, *An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty, against the Oppressions of the Present Day* (Boston: John Boyle, 1773).

<sup>12</sup> My copy is Isaac Backus, *Government and Liberty Described; and Ecclesiastical Tyranny Exposed* (Boston, MA: Powars and Willis; Phillip Freeman, 1778).

<sup>13</sup> “No taxation without representation” was no doubt a familiar slogan in his day.

<sup>14</sup> Chute, Finn, and Haykin have a small section on Backus in their *The Baptist Story* (76–77 and 87–88); a more robust presentation is found in McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 204–205, 242–43, and especially 255–266.



Visit the FBFI blog at  
[proclaimanddefend.org](http://proclaimanddefend.org)

<sup>1</sup> H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1987), 33–39.

<sup>2</sup> *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1959, rev. ed., 1969), 115.

<sup>3</sup> For a modern edition of his writings, see Joe Early Jr., *The Life and*

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# ON LANGUAGE & SCRIPTURE

The summer after my freshman year of college I had a fellow camp counselor say to me, "Don't you think God would love us enough to give us a perfect Bible?" (I will let the reader speculate as to which Bible version my friend had in mind.)

Some believers have always wanted—or assumed they had—a perfect Bible translation. But the Bible simply does not tell us to expect a perfect Bible in our language.

Such an expectation is not new. The very name of the Greek translation of the (Hebrew) Old Testament, the "Septuagint," is a reminder that people want a perfect Bible translation.

Septuagint means "seventy" in Latin. Why in the world is a *number* used as the name of a Bible? Because legend has it that the Septuagint was produced by seventy scholars who were all sent to separate rooms to translate the entire Hebrew Bible—and they all came out with precisely matching texts.

Do you get the point of the legend? It's a way of claiming that the Septuagint was inspired by God without actually saying so explicitly. Clearly, only a divine miracle could make seventy translators all choose exactly the same words when moving a large book from one language to another.

People thousands of years ago had like passions as we do. But God never gave them warrant to expect a perfect translation. And He hasn't given us warrant either.

God has given us a situation in which translation is required in order for us to have His Word. And we English speakers have many excellent translations. But at numerous points where it would be kind of nice to know exactly how we should translate an ambiguous phrase, God has left us to our prayer-filled best lights. We can't reach the standard of "perfect," and we would have no way of knowing if we did. The KJV translators themselves specifically pointed out that nothing was ever "perfect under the sun, where Apostles or apostolic men, that is, men endued with an extraordinary measure of God's Spirit, and privileged with the privilege of infallibility, had not their hand." Indeed, they did not believe their own work was perfect.

Mark Ward, PhD, is editor in chief of Faithlife's *Bible Study Magazine*.



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This column originated to provide a condensed, wide-angle, big-picture view of a Bible book or topic. I want to zoom out that focus to about as wide-angle and big-picture as you can get: Is the Bible strictly a collection of doctrinal statements designed merely to be codified into catechisms, creeds, and confessions, or systematized into theology textbooks for the sole purpose of distinguishing orthodoxy from heterodoxy? Or does the Bible also tell a continuous story with an overarching plotline? How would you summarize—in one sentence—what the Bible is *about*?

Let me clarify from the outset that nothing I have said is in any way derogatory regarding the serious doctrinal use of Scripture. But if the Bible is nothing more to us than a textbook of theological ideas, then we are missing one of the most glorious, God-given dimensions of this utterly unique Book as a living, breathing body of divinely inspired literature.

Every child understands that humans are created with a hunger for story. And we also understand that there are differences between stories—that some are imaginative and fictional and fun, and others are true and trustworthy and . . . real. There are stories about George Washington and a cherry tree, and then there are stories about George Washington and Valley Forge, Yorktown, and the presidency. There are the stories I used to tell my children about fantastical things made up out of my own head, and the stories I used to tell them about things I did growing up.

Not every story is historical, but every story is at its roots theological. Every story presupposes some theological construct of the world (a worldview), some view of good and evil, some tilt toward naturalism or supernaturalism. It is impossible to untwist story from theology and, therefore, impossible to disentangle story from worldview. More on that in a moment.

History is nothing more or less than a narrative of reality, a story of how we got where we are. Biblical history is *the* narrative of reality, *the* story of how we got where we are. Have you ever noticed how much of the Bible is in the *form* of story? Historical narrative is story, and the Bible's historical narratives (Genesis–Job; Matthew–Acts)\* are reality told as story. The remainder of the Bible primarily explains and expands the Bible's story of reality.

Story is a noble, God-given vehicle of truth. God sanctifies story as His primary mode of choice for communicating theological reality in Scripture. Never let the world rob you of the dignity of story by defining the word as inherently fictional by default. Etymologically, “story” derived from “history,” not vice versa. Moreover, the first stories, the oldest stories,

were not fictional tales but factual accounts. Story is first and foremost truth, history, reality—and secondarily, by extension, a form of fictional subcreation (some good, some bad).

## The Relation of Biblical Theology and Story

Biblical study has for centuries differentiated between systematic and biblical theology. It's beyond my present purpose to delve into the distinctions between these disciplines. I'll simply begin with my own definition of biblical theology as *the discovery and expression of the message that emerges from the Bible when explored inductively on its own terms and interpreted in its own context—whether on the level of words, subjects, books, themes, corpuses, testaments, or the whole Bible.* (\*This inductive exploration employs the tools of historical, literary, and exegetical disciplines.) Usually this column focuses on biblical theology at the book level (Malachi or Galatians), sometimes at the corpus level (Gospels or Epistles) or thematic level (Prophecy or the Church). But it's the “whole Bible” application of biblical theology that I'm interested in at the moment.

Every story is theological, every story assumes a worldview, and every worldview tells a story. Most readers are probably familiar with the common Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration arc that is often attributed to the Bible's storyline. In his book *The Story of Reality* Greg Koukl argues that, in fact, *every* worldview follows the same basic storyline pattern. Every worldview has some account of where everything came from (a “creation” element), a recognition that the world isn't as it should be and some explanation as to why (the “fall” component), a conviction about what needs to happen to fix what's wrong (“redemption”), and a vision of what the world could be like if and when it is fixed (“restoration”).

Given how fundamental and universal the concept of story is, it seems remarkable that the nearly universal emphasis on viewing Scripture as a storyline is a relatively recent development in biblical theological studies. And yet the basic idea has actually been around for a long time.

The Welsh-born Anglican priest and poet George Herbert (1593–1633) expressed a sense of the Bible's interconnected big picture of reality:

O that I knew how all thy lights combine,  
And the configurations of their glory!  
Seeing not only how each verse doth shine,  
But all the constellations of the story.

One could hardly ask for a better poetic expression of the task of biblical theology.



# as Story

## Biblical Theology for the Church

The prevailing assumption within the current generation seems to be to think of biblical theology—especially holistic (whole-Bible) biblical theology—as the discovery of fairly recent evangelicalism, especially by the evangelical academy. But there are earlier examples that are generally ignored, if even recognized at all. I suspect a couple reasons for this: (a) they were expressly produced for the church and published outside the academy, so they are widely viewed as “popular” rather than “scholarly” writers; and (b) they tend to be dispensational in approach. Before getting into some of the more contemporary efforts to articulate the theme of a whole-Bible storyline (next time), I want to briefly highlight two of these older pastor-theologians who understood this concept.

*W. Graham Scroggie (1877–1958)*

Born in England to Scottish parents, Scroggie was one of nine children. He attended Spurgeon’s College in London to prepare for ministry. His opposition to liberalism cost him his first two pastorates, though he later pastored Spurgeon’s Metropolitan Tabernacle during World War II (1938–44). Scroggie became a preacher of international repute as well as a writer. Some of his best-known works include *A Guide to the Gospels*, *A Guide to the Psalms*, and most pertinently for this column, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*. In this 1953 work, Scroggie was attempting what today would be called whole-Bible biblical theology. He believed the Bible had a thematic center: “The underlying theme of all the Scriptures is redemption.” And he viewed the whole Bible as comprising one story: “the historical unfolding of the redeeming purpose presents a dramatic unity. The stories make one Story.” If you do any reading in the contemporary field of biblical theology, that sounds remarkably modern.

*J. Sidlow Baxter (1903–99)*

Though born in Australia, Sid Baxter grew up in England. Despite a godly, praying mother, he spent much of his youth in worldly pursuits until God used his reading of one of Spurgeon’s sermons to convict and convert him. Like Scroggie, he enrolled at Spurgeon’s College to train for the ministry and, also like Scroggie, he developed an international reputation as a preacher and author of some twenty-six books. In his celebrated volume *Explore the Book*, Baxter describes his methodology in biblical theological terms: “to get hold of the controlling thought, the outstanding meaning

and message of each book, and then see it in relation to the other books of Scripture.” That method entailed attention to each book’s structure, a synopsis of its contents, and attention to distinctive features that warranted further study. His operational procedure is one well worth emulation by modern preachers: “We shall resolutely guard against forcing any artificial outline on any book of Scripture. To sacrifice exactness for the sake of smart alliteration is an impertinence when dealing with Divinely inspired writings. . . . [For] an erroneous analysis, however adroitly drawn up, obscures the real and vital message of a book.”

Brian Rosner defines biblical theology as “theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyze and synthesize the Bible’s teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible’s overarching narrative and Christocentric focus” (*New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 10).

Scroggie and Baxter seem to fit that definition of biblical theology rather well as prototypes of modern evangelical biblical theologians, however imperfect they may have been (as most prototypes are). They certainly lack the scholarly sophistication of recent works in biblical theology, but that’s because of a characteristic that has much to commend it—their writing is aimed primarily at the church not the academy, just as Rosner says biblical theology should be. Some might think of them (somewhat disparagingly) more as popularizers than prototypes. It may be more accurate to say that, even without the benefit of all the advanced scholarly training and background brought to the table by modern biblical theologians, they were intuitively doing holistic biblical theology.

We all have a native tendency to historical myopia—to think that everything significant and worth knowing began in our lifetime. We need to cultivate an awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of those prior to our generation. At the same time, we should also be prepared to welcome and appreciate the advances and insights of our own generation, including the biblical theological study of the Scriptures that has burgeoned over the last few decades.

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\*I understand this is somewhat oversimplified; a number of other genres are mixed into (especially) the Pentateuchal books. But the exceptions highlight the rule. In both cases, over half of each testament is essentially narrative-story.

## The Importance of Prayer in Witnessing

*Jim Tillotson*

Three “big things” we need to remember about witnessing include (1) the Bible wants us to tell others about Christ (Matt. 28:18–20), (2) we all naturally talk about what we love (cf. Rev. 2:5), and (3) the importance of prayer. So what is the role of prayer in witnessing?

In Matthew 9:37–38 Jesus says to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” I believe this is a clear command to pray for missionaries and pastors. When is the last time you prayed for this group when you were not in the actual church building? Even that is vanishing, with many churches changing or canceling the midweek prayer meeting. The Bible tells us in Luke 19:10 that Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. If we believe we are to be like Christ, then this must also be our passion.

This means not only should we pray for the pastors and missionaries but that we should be praying for the lost in our circle of influence. Whom are you praying for by name to get saved? When you think of someone dying and going to hell, whom are you praying for specifically to go to heaven?

James 4:2 tells us we do not have because we do not ask. Many say they want to see lots of people go to heaven, yet they can’t remember the last time they prayed specifically and consistently for someone to get saved. Both are important. Some people start praying but then get discouraged and give up on people.

I could share so many stories of adults getting saved whose mom or dad prayed for them for decades, but one of my favorite stories is that of my grandmother. Our family had witnessed to and prayed for my grandma for over thirty years. We had just finished building our new auditorium in Edmonton, part of which my dad had spent a summer overseeing. We were excited because up until then, all of our baptismal services were held at a Seventh-Day Adventist Church because we did not have one and they did not need theirs on Sundays. As we planned our dedication service, those who had gotten saved said they wanted to wait and get baptized in our own church. So for the dedication of our new building, we invited my mom and dad to honor them for all their work, and then planned to baptize ten adults. My grandma heard we were going to honor her son, and she asked if she could come. Of course, we said yes, and we prayed again that as she heard the testimonies of all these new Christians, it would make sense. She came to the service that night and listened to the testimonies of those getting baptized. After I got out of the tank, she came right up to me and said, “Jim, I don’t have what all those people were talking about. Can we talk?” I had the joy of seeing my grandmother, in her late eighties, accept Christ as her Savior at our dining room table.

Can I challenge you to pray for a few people by name to get saved? And don’t quit until they do. Prayer is one part of witnessing that every Christian can do.

Jim Tillotson has served as the president of Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in Ankeny, Iowa, since June of 2015. He was the senior pastor of Meadowlands Baptist Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, for eighteen years. During his time in Canada he led Meadowlands Baptist in planting three new churches and helped begin a Christian school and a small Bible institute.

## Balthasar Hubmaier

Continued from page 16

This assures that the state will be ruled by Christians, who will rule according to the will of God. Thus, the church members are to be good citizens of the state that rules under God; . . . however . . . neither church nor state is to interfere in the ordained duties of the other (p. 194).

Finally, the saltybeliever.com blog sums Hubmaier’s influence up well when it says,

More significantly, the Anabaptist theology—with the exception of pacifism—gave birth to the idea that the church must be free of governmental control and manipulation, is comprised of believers only through baptism by confession, and that the Lord’s Supper is not a sacramental guarantee of God’s grace. . . . Hubmaier . . . [taught] that magisterial church-government leadership is not the biblical picture for the Church. Each person has the free will to believe how he or she will; therefore, the government cannot force belief or membership into

any specific church. If it is not obvious, Hubmaier’s contribution to the Reformation was the significant second part of Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli’s work. Had it not been for the Anabaptists, there is a possibility that the Church today would look much like the Catholic Church of the sixteenth century, only bearing the name of Luther or Calvin. If not for Hubmaier, the ideas may not have been worked through so thoroughly, and they certainly would not have been published and preserved for the Church today. Today’s evangelical church has much for which to thank Hubmaier (<http://www.saltybeliever.com/blog/the-forgotten-reformer-balthasar-hubmaier>).

Mike Sproul is the director of the Air National Guard (ANG) Chaplain Corps and is stationed in the Washington, DC, area. In this role he oversees policy, procedures, accessions, deployments, force development, and domestic operations. He also advises commanders, ensures religious accommodation, and home station support for nearly 600 ANG Chaplains and Religious Affairs Airmen at ninety wings, in the fifty states, three territories, and the District of Columbia for the 107,700 Air National Guard members.







# Annetta Small—An Unanticipated Ministry

An Interview by Don Johnson

**K**now ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9–11

In His providence, the Lord has given Annetta Small a ministry she never anticipated when she first launched out into Christian service.

Annetta and her husband, Gary, live in Washington State, where they now serve in a ministry of helps to local churches. Gary retired a few years ago from the pastorate and now supplies pulpits and holds special meetings. Annetta serves by ministering to transgender and homosexual people as they struggle with the consequences of their lifestyles. Let's let her tell us a bit about her ministry and some of the biblical principles that guide her.

## How did you get involved in this ministry?

My husband and I were active on the homosexual issue in Washington in 1995. We brought a Christian young man who had been involved in homosexuality and who was HIV positive from Alaska to Washington to do a state tour. At that time we were dealing with an initiative that would prevent giving homosexuals minority status. Subsequently, this young man came to our state to help us pass a bill to define marriage.

We were in contact with a number of homosexual activists at press conferences and in the media, and I became burdened for homosexuals spiritually.

We became very close to the young man we mentioned. In 1996 he learned he had AIDS, so he moved to Virginia to be with his parents. We all thought he would die within one-and-a-half years, since his HIV diagnosis came much earlier in 1986. He was an excellent public speaker, so I volunteered to do his scheduling on a national level. I did this from Washington State. He nearly died in September 1996 but regained his health. However, he was limited in his physical endurance. There were times that my husband and I went to his speaking engagements, and I could see that he needed more help. I offered to fill orders for him and soon found that many people who contacted his ministry wanted to talk to someone.

That began my ministry on a whole new level. From 1997 until November 2002 I had contact with over 2400 individuals. Of those, about 350 were homosexuals. The others were family members or friends of homosexuals.

## Are you still involved in this ministry?

I have been a volunteer online missionary with Global Media Outreach (<https://globalmediaoutreach.com>) since May 2012. I am in a specialty community that deals with homosexuality and transgender issues. Currently I am working with individuals from several foreign countries and with an individual who is transitioning back to her birth gender here in the USA.

In addition, I also have a ministry helping other ladies involved in similar outreach. For example, I am currently working with a lady in a church in another state who is discipling an individual coming out of the lesbian lifestyle.

## What foundational concepts do you use in your ministry?

At the very heart of it is *the power of God's Word* (Ps. 119:42). It is important that an individual knows that the Word of God is central to our lives. It is the foundation for all that I believe. It is paramount that we are passionate for God's Word.

We should not be *apologetic* for God's Word or *ashamed* of it, nor be defensive or have a chip on our shoulders but rather have an *excellent* spirit like Daniel did (Dan. 6:3). Daniel was humble, always gave honor to God, and was not ashamed of his beliefs. We should not be ashamed to identify with Christ as a Christian and as one who loves God's Word. When it comes to ministering to people bound up in sin, such as homosexuality, we should not underestimate the power of God's Word to speak to a person's heart (Heb. 4:12).

When it comes to specific ministry to homosexuals, here are some things I have shared with them.

The Bible is the only supernatural book in existence. Because the Bible is a supernatural book, it tells me more than I like to know about the wickedness of my heart. It shows me exactly what I really am. Even more, it shows that God in His wisdom knows what is best for me and for all of us.

Some may say, "I don't understand the Bible." If they are unsaved, they won't understand about the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, but I will tell them, "We may not understand everything in the Bible because it's a supernatural book, but there is enough that we can understand to keep us busy for the rest of our lives."

God changes lives. God works in hearts. He does not leave us without hope!





## The Baptist Distinctive of Separation of Church and State

Baptists believe in the separation of church and state.<sup>1</sup> As Americans, we owe much of our Constitutional protections to a tireless abolitionist Baptist pastor who encouraged James Madison to include them in a bill of rights. His epitaph tells the story: “Here Lies the Body of John Leland, of Cheshire, who labored 67 years to promote piety and vindicate the civil and religious rights of all men.” His dream of liberty for all men—both from slavery and state religion—was ratified in our Bill of Rights in 1791, notably in the First Amendment.

Notwithstanding, Madison’s brilliant prose, with clauses on “establishment of religion” and the “free exercise thereof,” did not include the words “wall of separation.” Those words flowed from the pen of Thomas Jefferson in his 1802 letter to the Danbury Connecticut Baptists assuring them that they need not fear government interference in their affairs. Jefferson’s phrase was referenced later in Supreme Court rulings such as the one in 1948 that substituted his words for the originals.

Nowhere is the tension between establishment and free exercise more evident than in the chaplaincies of the armed forces, where ordained ministers are paid by US taxpayers. Thus, there are calls to reign in or even eliminate the chaplaincy. One such advocate’s stated purpose is to “restore the obliterated wall separating church and state in the most technologically lethal organization ever created by humankind: the United States armed forces.” Founder and President of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF), Michael L. “Mikey” Weinstein, Esq., left his other legal work in 2006 to “focus his fulltime attention on the nonprofit charitable foundation he founded to directly battle the far-right militant radical evangelical religious fundamentalists.”<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, both the MRFF and Bible-believing Baptists are in bitter controversy, both in the name of separation of

church and state. But, are we standing for the same thing? In practice, he is fighting for freedom *from* religion, while we stand for freedom *of* religion. To illustrate the tension, consider the paragraph below, which was posted on the MRFF website in May 2020, after a senior chaplain had sent a digital copy of John Piper’s book *Coronavirus and Christ* to his subordinates through military channels. Was this an appropriate response? You be the judge.

22 CHRISTIAN military chaplains came to us at MRFF horribly aggrieved by the wretchedly illicit and unconstitutional actions of Chaplain (Colonel) Kim at US Army Garrison Humphreys, South Korea. They felt they would face only the most onerous and oppressive retaliation, revenge and reprisal from both their military chaplain and operational chains of command if they tried to publicly object to this pathetically putrescent, odious email and its attachment sent by this US Army full colonel to them. And, after 15-plus years of MRFF fighting the disgusting filth of fundamentalist/dominionist Christianity night and day, we would agree with the rationality of their fear.

Of course, the principle he claims to fight for is worth fighting for—the separation of church and state—but he fights dirty. He talks like a hater. As Christians we are not free to hate him. That senior chaplain has been painfully reminded of the numerous military regulations that guide the wise application of “free exercise.” But Weinstein’s aggressive and bullying tactics seek to damage him further. His words are offensive and smack of self-promotion.

The fact remains that, as Baptists, we believe in the separation of church and state and yield no ground to Weinstein or others on that count. Further, we are ready and eager to oppose the state and push it back into its proper domain





when necessary. But here is the tough question: Are we just as ready and eager to police ourselves when the temptation comes to make a quick incursion into the domain of the state? Sometimes the answers are not as easy as we might think.<sup>3</sup> But we try diligently to ensure that FBFI chaplains are well trained in duties both to church and state. Simply put, “Never pull rank to present the gospel.”

*FrontLine* has dedicated entire issues to chaplaincy, and regularly includes a chaplaincy column. We stand on the shoulders of General George Washington, who, after the Declaration of Independence was signed, issued his first order, establishing the chaplaincy in the US Army. We stand beside John Leland, James Madison, and Thomas Jefferson. We stand for the separation of church and state. We seek to “render . . . unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” After all, those words of Christ are the perfect expression of the dual role of the military chaplain.

Dr. John C. Vaughn is the past president of FBFI and former editor of *FrontLine*. He served as the chaplain endorser for FBFI and is an ACPE-certified Health Care Chaplain, who writes and teaches extensively on Chaplaincy.

<sup>1</sup> The duties of the church are stated in Matthew 28:19–20 and those of the State in Romans 13:1–7. Balancing our duties to each is taught in Matthew 22:15–22 and in Acts 5:17–29.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/about/michael-l-mikey-weinstein/>

<sup>3</sup> Consider the measured approach of Pastor Drew Conley in a helpful article on flying the American flag in our churches at this site: <https://answersingenesis.org/culture/america/does-flag-belong-in-church/>.



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# My Fiftieth Year in Evangelism

**B**ack in 1970 when I started out in evangelism, I was twenty-eight years old. (Now you know how old I am!) It has been a wonderful journey, traveling across America and in different foreign fields. As the late evangelist B. R. Lakin said, "I have preached across America like a farm boy working a row of corn."

I am grateful for men from three different walks of life who have been a tremendous help and encouragement to me in the ministry. Dr. Bob Jones Sr. said, "When gratitude dies in the heart of a man, that man is well nigh hopeless."

First, I am grateful for evangelists Glen Schunk, Ron Comfort, and Bill Hall, who recommended me to pastors across the country.

Second, I am grateful for the many pastors I have been privileged to know and serve with: Dale Simpson, Al Bradshaw, Bill Schroeder, Ed Nelson, Dewayne Felber, Wendell Heller, Larry Hufhand, Bennie Moran, Ed Johnson, and Doug Rutherford. These men were a constant source of encouragement and blessing to our ministry! They poured their wisdom and instruction into my life and helped me grow into the person I am today.

Third, I am grateful for godly businessmen on the board of our evangelistic association, where we are incorporated in the State of Indiana. These men—Larry Estes, Jim Tice, Bob King, Reese Kaufmann, Keith Anderson, and Ron Estes—have been a wonderful help and inspiration to me! Someone has said, "Wise is the man who surrounds himself with godly men who will strengthen and encourage him in serving the Lord." The Word of God states in Proverbs 24:6, "In [the] multitude of counsellors there is safety." Proverbs 27:17 says, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." All the men I've listed have greatly impacted my life and ministry; I am humble and thankful!

Now let me tell you about my family. My wife, Sharon, and I have three sons and a daughter. I was determined to make it a priority to have my family travel with me. I told a pastor in the early years of our ministry that if I could not have my family with me, I would not travel as an evangelist because my family is more important than my ministry! If you are a young pastor or evangelist, I would exhort you to put your family above your ministry—because if you lose your family, you have no ministry.

All our children traveled with us until they went to college. They were in services every night. One time we had sixteen solid weeks of meetings. During that stretch of meetings, I told my children to stay home and rest one night. They said, "No, Dad, we would rather be with you than stay home." You see, we made the ministry enjoyable for them. They are all in full-time ministry today. My oldest son, Todd, is a pastor in Lilburn, Georgia. My other two sons, Brent and Scott, are evangelists. My daughter Jennifer married Mike Thomas, who is the pastor of the church we attend in Starr, South Carolina (and I had nothing to do with his being our pastor!). How blessed we are!

I have purposely saved the best for last. My wife, Sharon, has truly been the greatest source of blessing to me! Can you imagine leaving your home in January and not seeing it again until November? We did that in the early years of our ministry. Sharon never complained as she also homeschooled the children and sang almost every night in our meetings. Plus she cooked meals and kept up with daily household chores. She never complained. Many times she prayed in the presence of our children, "Lord, we count it a privilege that we can serve You as a family." Proverbs 31:28 states, "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her." It truly has been a wonderful journey for our family in evangelism.

Today, as some churches are no longer holding evangelistic meetings, I would sound an alarm that this is not wise. Ephesians 4:11–12 says, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The Lord Jesus gave the office of evangelist for His church. Lord willing, I will continue serving Him as an evangelist, being used to edify the Lord's people and reaching the lost for Jesus Christ. My theme verse in evangelism is 1 Corinthians 3:7, which says, "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

"Let God give the increase!" should be the cry of our heart.

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at PO Box 141, Starr, SC, 29684 or via e-mail at [evangsivn@aol.com](mailto:evangsivn@aol.com).



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