

'Tis Finished! The Messiah Dies

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

'Tis finished! the Messiah dies,
cut off for sins, but not his own.
Accomplished is the sacrifice,
the great redeeming work is done.

The veil is rent; in Christ alone
the living way to heaven is seen;
the middle wall is broken down,
and all the world may enter in.

'Tis finished! All my guilt and pain,
I want no sacrifice beside;
for me, for me the Lamb is slain;
'tis finished! I am justified.

The reign of sin and death is o'er,
and all may live from sin set free;
Satan hath lost his mortal power;
'tis swallowed up in victory.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Not Growing Up Fundamentalist, Part 2

Jeff Straub

Last week I began a brief series here in parallel to Kevin Bauder’s “Growing Up Fundamentalist.” Kevin showed how his early interaction with fundamentalism was healthy and uplifting. My early exposure and experience entering into fundamentalism was equally healthy, though I entered into the *movement*, if it can even be called one, in my late teens. I had scarcely heard of fundamentalism before I went to Bob Jones University. I studied at BJU not because it was a fundamentalist school but because I met a young man who loved God and had a major discipleship role in my life. His purpose was not to make me a fundamentalist but to help me in my personal journey to become a thriving believer. His emphases were not on externals—forms of music, clothing styles, Bible versions, or social taboos. He emphasized a love for God and a commitment to serve Him. He modeled true Christianity to me and was someone I wanted to be like.

In a similar fashion, many of those whom I subsequently met in my days in college were equally interested in my personal growth in godliness. From fellow students to University professors and staff members, God placed men and women in my path to help shape me and direct me into His service. I had many positive experiences at this part of my journey and there were many who helped me along the way. But there were a few challenges. Those who know my story may be tempted to suggest that I am only telling half the story. Indeed, there were some hard relationships and some difficult interactions, but before I say a word about those, let me commend several other individuals who helped on my spiritual pilgrimage.

Perhaps the most influential professor I had at BJU was Mike. I took him for more hours (19 as I recall) than any other professor. He taught me second year Greek, first year Hebrew, Aramaic, and Advanced Old Testament (I took it the only year he taught it!). He had a way of saying things that stuck with me, like saying that he would not make us memorize the sixteen uses of the genitive in Greek. His wife could do that and she didn’t know Greek. One day in Hebrew, someone was laboring over a Hebrew dagesh (a small part of a letter). Mike said off the cuff “Don’t sweat the dagesh!” That became for me a handy phrase when I was struggling—don’t sweat the small stuff!



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Our Hebrew exams in his class were brutal. A score of 35% might be a B+. After one particularly difficult exam he told us his rationale—“I don’t want to know what you know. I want to know what you don’t know!” Finally, I remember a lecture he gave: “The Nature of the D-Stem in Semitic Languages.” I was in his class the only time he ever gave that lecture. So why am I telling you all of this? Because Mike left a mark on my life that abides to this day. He was a great professor with an engaging manner who gave his students a desire to learn difficult things. As an historian, I don’t keep up with some of what Mike taught me so long ago. My own academic interests lie elsewhere than the biblical languages. I cannot know everything. But this is no reflection on Mike. I hope I can have the same kind of influence on my students that he had on me.

Then there was Jesse. I tremble even calling him by that name. Perhaps I should say Mr. Boyd. He modeled Bible exposition in a way I had never heard. His preaching and teaching was substantive and rich. I grew much under his teaching and I was grateful for the hours I spent attending his church on Sunday nights.

I should also mention Fred. He ran the dining hall during my later years. I worked there three of my four years at BJU so I knew the people there well. Fred was a friend and mentor to me. He rebuked me when it was needed, laughed with me, and encouraged me. Near the end of my journey, I said something I shouldn’t have said but he instructed me and helped me. Thanks, Fred, for your role in my life also.

One last man I wish to thank is Doug, who sixteen years ago took a chance and hired me to teach at Central. I am about to complete my fifteenth year here. Thanks, Doug, for your ministry in my life. You are a blessing indeed.

Life is about sanctification, becoming more like the Lord Jesus. Not every relationship in life is pleasant. Sometimes interactions with people go awry. Sometimes these sour experiences were my fault and sometimes not. I learned valuable lessons even in these hard things. What is happening *in* us is more important than what is happening *to* us. Sure, people do wrong. I did and so did others. There are two ways to respond—biblically and otherwise. I wish I could say I always acted in a biblical manner. Such is not the case. But as I look back over these experiences, they were not the fault of nasty fundamentalism. They were the result of sinners sinning. Sadly, we sin against each other, and that sin causes disruption. However, even in the disruption, God is still on the throne.

A verse that has come to mean a great deal to me down through the years is Philippians 1:6. “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.” There is a well-known story of Franz Schubert’s Symphony No.8 in B Minor, commonly called the “Unfinished Symphony” because he started it in 1822, lived six additional years, but left only two complete movements

of the four typical of symphonies. Scholars debate the whys of Schubert’s incomplete work, but it stands out as an incomplete musical legacy.

With the child of God, the Father never leaves His work unfinished in our lives. He will do a good (perfect) work in us and we will be brought into greater conformity to Christ in preparation for eternity. Those professing believers who do not exhibit the sanctifying work of God should be concerned about their eternal destiny. God will complete what He starts. In some of my difficult situations with others, I was being sanctified. God allowed certain things to happen. He even allowed me to be wronged that I might be sanctified. My duty in those situations was to learn to respond in a biblical fashion. Did I always? No. But God was orchestrating my life to conform me into His image. Sure, there were men who sinned against me who happened to be fundamentalists. And I sinned against them, despite being a fundamentalist. This is a sin problem, not a problem of fundamentalism.

I have met many fine men in the movement called fundamentalism. Most good, some flawed. I found fundamentalism to be filled with good and godly men and women who have stood with me, prayed for me, rebuked me, and encouraged me as I have made my forty-five-year journey. I did not grow up in fundamentalism. But I have no problem being associated with those whom God has brought into my life these past forty-five years. Soli Deo Gloria!



This essay is by Jeff Straub, Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
