

## O For a Faith That Will Not Shrink

*James Montgomery (1771–1854)*

O for a faith that will not shrink,  
Though pressed by every foe,  
That will not tremble on the brink  
Of any earthly woe.

That will not murmur nor complain  
Beneath the chastening rod,  
But, in the hour of grief or pain,  
Will lean upon its God;

A faith that shines more bright and clear  
When tempests rage without:  
That when in danger knows no fear,  
In darkness feels no doubt;

That bears, unmoved, the world's dread frown,  
Nor heeds the scornful smile;  
That seas of trouble cannot drown,  
Nor Satan's arts beguile;

A faith that keeps the narrow way  
Till life's last hour is fled,  
And with a pure and heavenly ray  
Illumes a dying bed:

Lord, give us such a faith as this;  
And then, what e'er may come,  
I'll taste, e'en now, the hallowed bliss  
Of an eternal home.



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## ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

### *In the Nick of Time*

#### **Larry Pettegrew (1943–2024): A Life Lived to the Glory of God**

*Jon Pratt*

One of the favorite books in my library is a festschrift written in honor of Larry Pettegrew (published by Shepherds Press in 2022). I value it so highly not because of its content (though the 14 essays are certainly noteworthy) but because of the personal note of thanks Larry wrote to me on the title page. One sentence stood out to me: “We’ve been friends for a long time, and your faithful ministry has been a blessing and encouragement to me.” This sort of Barnabas-like behavior was so typical of Larry; he had the knack of saying the very things to you that you wished you would have said to him first.

Larry Pettegrew was born and raised in Danville, Illinois. His home church was First Baptist Church, where he met his wife Linda in junior high. They were married in 1966, the year after he graduated from Bob Jones University with a Bachelor of Arts degree. God blessed their union with three children and eight grandchildren, and 2023 marked 57 years together.

After college Larry moved to Minnesota so he could attend Central Seminary, where he earned the M.R.E., M.Div., and Th.M. degrees. In 1968 Larry began his teaching ministry, which would span more than 50 years. He would serve on the faculty at Pillsbury Baptist Bible College until 1980 as the head of the Christian Education and Bible departments. During his time at Pillsbury, Larry earned the Th.D. degree in Historical Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary in 1976. His dissertation on the Niagara Bible Conference is still considered the best resource available on the significant contribution that annual gathering provided for dispensational theology.

From 1980–1995 (with the exception of one year) Larry served in several capacities at Central Seminary: professor of systematic and historical theology, registrar, and academic dean. After his first year at Central, Larry moved to Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, where he would teach for only one year (1981–1982) before coming back to Central. It seems the main impetus behind Larry’s return to Central was the encouragement of his friend, Doug McLachlan, who was the newly installed pastor of Fourth Baptist Church and who wanted Larry to assume dean responsibilities at the seminary.

In 1995 the Pettegrews moved to Sun Valley, California where Larry worked as a professor of theology at The Master's Seminary, a position he would hold for 12 years. At the age of 64, when many might have considered retirement, Larry believed the opportunity to serve as Dean and Executive Vice President for the fledgling Shepherds Theological Seminary in Raleigh, North Carolina, was a challenge too exciting to pass up. So in 2007 Larry's final professorial position began, and he served there until his death on January 30, 2024. Shepherds' president and founder Stephen Davey described Larry's work this way: "[He] set out to graciously and wisely construct the structure of our school. He added trusted faculty members and worked hard with our seminary board as we pursued accreditation."

Consider with me four aspects of Larry's ministry that demonstrate his good stewardship of the manifold grace of God evidenced in his life: church ministry, writing, teaching, and mentoring.

Although Larry never held a paid position on a pastoral staff, he certainly loved the church and faithfully served in a local church at every one of his teaching posts. Whether he was teaching adult Sunday School, helping other local churches as interim pastor, or serving as a deacon, Larry left an indelible Christ-shaped impression on his brothers and sisters in the local church.

Besides his dissertation on the Niagara Bible Conference (which appeared in 5 parts in the *Central Bible Quarterly* [19.4–20.4]), Larry published *The History of Pillsbury Baptist Bible College* (1981) and *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (2013). He also edited and was the main contributor to *Forsaking Israel: How It Happened and Why It Matters* (2020). Additionally, he wrote numerous journal articles and book essays. His writing was always clear, well-researched, and immensely helpful.

Larry's teaching ministry was where he shined most brightly. His students would agree that his classroom instruction was marked by his humble demeanor, clear and careful scholarship, and compassionate concern for students. I was one of the students greatly affected by Larry's willingness to use his God-given gift for instruction and writing. He taught me church history, systematic theology, apologetics, and pedagogy. In acknowledging this I know that thousands of others in ministry today can say the same thing, whether they had Larry as a professor at Pillsbury, Central, Detroit, Master's, or Shepherds.

One feature of Larry's ministry that was not as well-known as his other more public activities was his role as a mentor to so many of us. In my case he functioned as a model in many ways. First, he showed me what being a wonderful friend and teaching colleague should look like by the way he interacted with my dad when they worked together on the faculty at Pillsbury. Second, he taught me how to be a seminary professor and Bible teacher by how he exemplified love for God, excellence in the teaching craft,

thorough knowledge of his subject, and humble concern for every student. Another discipline Larry demonstrated was prayer for his students. Many years after I had graduated from seminary Larry remarked to me in passing, "I pray for you every Thursday." While I suspect that he could not have prayed for all of his former students in this way, it buoyed my own spirit significantly that I was on his prayer list, and I have been so affected by Larry's example that I, too, pray for a long list of former students on a weekly basis. Third, Larry exhibited for me how to be an effective seminary dean. While I caught only glimpses of this as a seminary student, I learned much more in the years after I became the dean at Central in 2010. We attended a dean's conference together, and even there, I saw him actively taking notes and pursuing ways he could improve in this calling.

Central's chancellor Doug McLachlan described Larry in an email he sent to him in July 2022: "I believe you, Larry, have fleshed out this [paradigm of the simultaneous expression of holiness and love] admirably in the world of Christian scholarship, both in your proclamation and defense of the truth of God's Word. Countless students and servants of the Lord have been helped by your commitment to this Christlike paradigm of doing ministry and mission as a theologian.... Larry, it is this virtue especially that has characterized your ministry for a lifetime—approved; no need to be ashamed; a good steward of Holy Scripture; rightly handling the word of truth. We express our gratitude to you for this 'long obedience in the same direction.'"

I praise the Lord for finding Larry faithful and putting him into the ministry, and I also praise Him for His kind providence in allowing me to study with, learn from, and enjoy the friendship of a man of God like Larry Pettegrew.



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This essay is by Jon Pratt, Vice President of Academics and Professor of New Testament 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.

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