

Behold, How Good a Thing*Charles Wesley (1707–1788)*

Behold, how good a thing
 It is to dwell in peace;
 How pleasing to our King
 This fruit of righteousness;
 When brethren in the faith agree—
 How joyful is such unity!

Where unity is found,
 The sweet anointing grace
 Extends to all around,
 And consecrates the place;
 To every waiting soul it comes,
 And fills it with divine perfumes.

Grace, every morning new,
 And every night we feel
 The soft, refreshing dew
 That falls on Hermon's hill!
 On Zion it doth sweetly fall:
 The grace of one descends on all.

E'en now our Lord doth pour
 The blessing from above,
 A kindly, gracious shower
 Of heart-reviving love,
 The former and the latter rain,
 The love of God and love of man.

In Him when brethren join,
 And follow after peace,
 The fellowship divine
 He promises to bless:
 His choicest graces to bestow,
 Where two or three are met below.



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ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***The Foundations Baptist Fellowship International 2024***Kevin T. Bauder*

This week I had the opportunity to attend the annual meeting of the Foundations Baptist Fellowship International. The meeting was hosted by the Tri City Baptist Church in Westminster, Colorado, pastored by Will Senn. The meeting began with scheduled training for chaplains on Monday, followed by a general preaching session on Monday night, then other sessions through Wednesday night.

The chaplains' training was important, since the FBFI is an endorser for chaplains serving under the Department of Defense. In addition to endorsing individuals for military chaplaincy, the FBFI also provides structure and training for people who minister in community chaplaincy (such as police, fire, and hospital chaplains). Since separatist Baptists have few recognized endorsers for chaplains, this is an important function of the FBFI.

The opening session of the conference on Monday night featured Bruce McAllister preaching. McAllister is now the executive vice president at Bob Jones University. His presence at the meeting sends a message from both the FBFI and BJU of their determination to continue a cordial and cooperative relationship. That message was reinforced by the presence of Joshua Crockett, the new president at BJU.

Bob Jones University is not the only institution of higher learning that cooperates or identifies with the FBFI. Central Baptist Theological Seminary regularly has a representative at this meeting. Several other schools were also represented, either on the platform or by exhibits. These included Appalachian Bible College, Baptist College of Ministry, Faith Baptist Bible College and Seminary, International Baptist College and Seminary, and Maranatha Baptist University. Each of the colleges had a musical ensemble at the conference, and on the last night these ensembles combined to form a fair-sized choir.

Several mission agencies also had representatives present at the meeting. These included the Northwest Baptist Mission, Bibles International, Baptist World Mission, Baptist Evangelistic Missionary Endeavors, Baptist Home

Missions, International Partnership Ministries, and Baptist Mid Missions, which was represented by its president, Patrick Odle. While Mid Missions is often viewed as a GARBC institution, an increasing proportion of its missionary recruits are coming from other circles, including churches whose pastors fellowship with the FBFI. In their core commitments (Baptist polity, dispensationalism, separatism, and cessationism, to name a few), the FBFI and BMM are virtually indistinguishable.

The FBFI did not ignore the fact that Denver has become a very Hispanic city. Multiple Spanish-speaking churches cooperated as partners in hosting the event. Those churches provided a dinner on the opening night. All songs that night were sung simultaneously in Spanish and English, and McAllister's sermon was translated from the pulpit as he preached. This struck me as a genuine effort to live up to the "International" part of the FBFI's name. Perhaps next time a Spanish preacher will be interpreted for the English speakers.

An intriguing aspect of the conference was that most of the preachers were second-generation FBFI members in their twenties or thirties who were introduced to the audience by their fathers. Each preached on an assigned theme related to the specific mountains mentioned in the four gospels. Even though the preaching was thematic, most of these men chose to develop their assigned texts in an expository and even exegetical way. If these young men are any indication, then there is reason for optimism about the future of preaching within Baptist separatism.

In addition to the preaching sessions, the conference featured several other events. One was a chaplains' session that included the recognition of a key military chaplain and a key community chaplain. Extended afternoon prayer meetings were held separately for women and men. The host church sponsored a chuck-wagon dinner before the Wednesday evening service, complete with Western music and a yodeler. It offered dessert fellowships after the evening services. The day after the conference ended, attendees were given the opportunity to participate in a mountain hike above tree line. Nobody had any excuse for being bored during the week.

The FBFI occasionally presents a "Torchbearer Award" to individuals who have evidenced integrity and who have substantially advanced the Lord's work over a process of decades. Such recognitions are, I think, appropriate. They are part of rendering honor to whom honor is due. They are part of remembering those who have ministered among us. They neither presume upon nor replace our ultimate judgement at the Bema, but they do allow us to express our gratitude and respect for one another.

This year a Torchbearer Award was presented to Pastor Mike Harding of First Baptist Church in Troy, Michigan. Partly this award honors

Pastor Harding for decades of ministry in Troy, but it also has greater significance. Pastor Harding serves on the boards of both the FBFI and Bob Jones University. This conjunction has placed him in an uncomfortable position over the past couple of years, and it has occasionally placed him in someone's crosshairs. The Torchbearer Award recognizes that, throughout a difficult situation, Pastor Harding has acted at all times with grace, dignity, balance, and charity.

The Foundations Baptist Fellowship International of today still holds the biblical principles that it has held from its founding. It has, however, changed through the years. During the 1920s and 1930s it was a fellowship that worked *within* a modernistically-dominated convention. During the 1940s and 1950s it led in organizing an entire Conservative Baptist Movement separately from the convention. From the 1960s through the 1980s it could sometimes lack a biblical sense of balance. From the 1990s onward it has positioned itself to become the leading individual fellowship within Baptist separatism. Under its current leadership the FBFI is growing in understanding and in grace, and I am personally grateful for it.

A kindred organization of the FBFI is the New Testament Association of Independent Baptist Churches. While the FBFI is an individual fellowship, the NTAIBC is a fellowship of churches. Several years ago the two organizations met jointly for the first time. Next June 9–11, 2025, the NTAIBC and the FBFI will again meet together at Calvary Baptist Church in Watertown, Wisconsin. That should be a conference worth attending.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research 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.
