

11-1-2013

Editorial

Journal Editors

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Recommended Citation

Editors, Journal (2013) "Editorial," *Eruditio Ardescens*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 1.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/jlbs/vol1/iss1/1>

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Editorial

Some six and a half years ago, the pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church and Chancellor of Liberty University went home to be with the His Lord. He entered into the presence of the One to whom he gave a lifetime of service. When the faculty editors were seeking a topic for the first issue of the seminary's new journal, the suggestion was made and enthusiastically endorsed by all concerned to launch the publication with reflections on the life and ministry of this great man of God.

In doing so, the editors hope to accomplish several things. The first is to give honor to whom honor is due, for without a doubt our own calling and opportunity to minister at Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary was made possible only by the breadth of the educational vision of the school's founder. Without his recognition of the enormous potential for Christian higher education to advance Christ's kingdom, this seminary and the university it is a part of would not even exist. Second, we felt enough time had elapsed since Dr. Falwell passed on to glory, to reflect upon his impact on both the Church and society at large from an academic perspective. Therefore these articles contain a mix of thorough scholarly analysis and informal 'reflections' as the editors intended. Nevertheless, they were penned by professors at the seminary who knew him both up close and from a distance and have the requisite academic background for a thoughtful evaluation. It may be that these 'reflections' will stimulate other scholars to take up their pens (keyboards) in the future and offer further insights into this remarkable man and his impact on American evangelicalism in the second half of the 20th century.

When one peruses these reflections on the life and ministry of this man of God, several characteristics stand out. Jerry Falwell was a man of extraordinary faith and indefatigable energy. Epithets like 'entrepreneur,' 'pastor,' 'pastor's pastor,' 'soul winner,' and 'culture warrior' come to mind. However, the reader should not lose sight of the fact that Dr. Falwell was also humble enough to recognize his own failings and weaknesses and was willing to learn from them.

In some ways, Dr. Falwell's passing represents the end of an era in American Christianity as one of a cadre of evangelical megachurch pastors who recognized that the Gospel of Jesus Christ lays claim to all of life. Since Christians were to be both salt and light, the Church was indeed called to evangelize the lost and disciple converts but the body of Christ was also bound to 'give a cup of water in Jesus's name.' It was this all-encompassing understanding of the nature of the gospel that led Jerry Falwell with the pastors of his generation like W.A. Criswell and D. James Kennedy, to dare to bring the gospel to bear in every avenue of life. From education and alcohol/drug addiction to the plight of unwed mothers and the halls of government, no arena was considered off limits to the voice of Christ through His church.

We will leave it to future generations to evaluate the lasting results of their beliefs about the Church's role in fulfilling the Great Commission, but know that Dr. Falwell and his peers were looking forward to and hastening the day when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11:9b KJV)

For Christ and His Church,

The Editors