

*How Tedious and Tasteless the Hours**Robert Herrick (1591–1674)*

How tedious and tasteless the hours
 When Jesus no longer I see!
 Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flow'rs,
 Have all lost their sweetness to me.
 The midsummer sun shines but dim;
 The fields strive in vain to look gay;
 But when I am happy in Him,
 December's as pleasant as May.

His name yields the richest perfume,
 And sweeter than music His voice;
 His presence disperses my gloom,
 And makes all within me rejoice;
 I should, were He always thus nigh,
 Have nothing to wish or to fear;
 No mortal so happy as I;
 My summer would last all the year.

Content with beholding His face,
 My all to His pleasure resigned,
 No changes of seasons or place
 Would make any change in my mind.
 While blest with a sense of His love,
 A palace a toy would appear;
 And prisons would palaces prove,
 If Jesus would dwell with me there.

Dear Lord, if indeed I am Thine,
 If Thou art my sun and my song,
 Say, why do I languish and pine?
 And why are my winter so long?
 O drive these dark clouds from my sky;
 Thy soul-cheering presence restore,
 Or take me unto Thee on high,
 Where winter and clouds are no more.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

*In the Nick of Time***The Rockford Conference***Kevin T. Bauder*

Every year I travel through a kind of circuit of conferences. Some I speak at and others I just attend. It's rare for me to go to any given conference every year. Some move around from year to year (especially those that are connected to groups like the FBFI) and these are often too distant for travel. Others get scheduled when I'm supposed to be teaching, and that keeps me from attending. There is, however, one conference that I try to attend every year. That's the Conference on the Church for God's Glory.

The CCGG is sponsored by a local congregation, First Baptist Church of Rockford, Illinois. First Baptist is one of the old capitals of Baptist fundamentalism, a church that helped to establish some of the present-day fellowships of New Testament Baptists. Over the years the church declined in numbers, but under the pastorate of Scott Williquette it moved into a residential neighborhood and, with the help of Continental Baptist Churches, erected a beautiful new building. The CCGG was also Williquette's idea. He wanted a pastors' conference that would highlight doctrinal, expository preaching and conservative music. He also wanted a place where a preacher could admit to believing the doctrines of grace without being mocked or otherwise verbally assaulted.

The first conferences were small affairs, but as word began to spread more and more pastors started to show up for the meeting. Williquette left First Baptist several years ago to become a missionary with Baptist Mid-Missions. The CCGG has continued to grow under his successor, David Huffstutler. This year's attendance was probably the largest so far, with a crowd that pretty well filled the auditorium at First Baptist.

The theme of the 2017 conference was "Reformation 500," and the day was a fitting celebration of the five hundredth anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. The meeting featured seven addresses. The first was an exposition of Hebrews 12:1-3 entitled "What Lies Ahead," delivered by the host pastor. The gathering closed with an exposition of Ezekiel 1 by Dr. Michael Barrett, whose title was "Assurances for Dark Days." These two sermons alone would have made the conference worthwhile.



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In between were five addresses, each of which expounded one of the five “solas” of the Protestant Reformation. Pastor Mike Harding of Troy, Michigan, discussed *Sola Scriptura*. Pastor Steve Thomas of Flat Rock, Michigan, expounded *Sola Fide*. The job of discussing *Solus Christus* went to Pastor Ralph Warren of Waukegan, Illinois. Dr. Michael Barrett from Grand Rapids, Michigan, delivered an historical address dealing with *Sola Gratia*. Perhaps the most unusual presentation came from Dr. David Saxon of Maranatha Baptist University. His task was to discuss *Soli Deo Gloria*, and his approach was a theological, biblical, and historical exploration of this theme in Calvin’s *Institutes*.

Saxon’s treatment was striking for several reasons. First, he was able to explore Calvin without getting wrapped up in arguments about Calvinism. Second, he was able to do serious theology and serious history simultaneously, all the while bringing biblical principles to the surface. Until you’ve tried to keep this many homiletical balls in the air, you have no idea how difficult it really is. Third, Saxon actually made his discussion interesting. It was anything but a dry lecture. Finally, the real focus of the entire presentation was on the glory of God. Those who heard it did not go away thinking what a great speaker Saxon was or what a great theologian Calvin was (though both are true enough). They went away thinking about how glorious, how utterly deserving of all praise and adoration, the true and living God is.

Did I mention music? The auditorium was nearly full of men, and they were ready to sing. There was absolutely no fluff in the musical selections: no praise choruses, no sentimental Victorian claptrap, no praise team for the attendees to watch doing their singing for them, no band thumping away on the platform. There were only psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs—among the best in the English language. Sometimes the assembly sang to piano and organ; sometimes they sang with no accompaniment at all. At all times they sang with intensity and feeling, for they understood that they were singing to God Almighty.

As with most conferences, one of the real benefits was the opportunity to visit with co-laborers and to renew relationships with old friends. This process was enhanced by frequent breaks and a generous spread of edibles provided by First Baptist. To tell the truth, at most conferences I don’t feel guilty about skipping a session or two for the opportunity to discuss ministry with friends. That approach went by the wayside this year, however, because there wasn’t a session that I was willing to miss.

Over the years I’ve attended plenty of conferences in other places that featured ranting, textual allegorization, weak topical preaching, diatribes against pet peeves, and doctrinal nit-wittery. The CCGG at Rockford is the complete opposite of all that. Going there won’t help anybody who’s trying to climb an ecclesiastical ladder, but it does combine serious exposition and

thoughtful application of Scripture with good fellowship, doctrinal sobriety, and intelligent conversation about issues that churches are facing now. For whatever my opinion is worth, I continue to recommend this conference.



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.
