



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

It is very difficult to slot Albert Schweitzer into a single category for he was multi-faceted. In his autobiography, *Out of My Life and Thought*, he calls himself a pastor who loved to preach, a theological professor with a Ph.D., an organist devoted to the study of Bock, and a jungle doctor (M.D.) who lived among the natives of Africa to help them cope with life's challenges. He writes that the greatest of all his discoveries was *an ethical find*: "the reverence for life." For him, real goodness is "preserving life" while evil is "destroying life." As I finished reading his work, I felt the need to fall to my knees to worship Jesus, who is my "greatest discovery." In Paul's words, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us." Thank you, Lord!



Pastor Les Litchfield II graduated from college in 2000 and immediately moved to Virginia Beach. Through divine circumstances, God brought Les to Colonial Baptist Church, and in 2006 he was offered a ministry position in the church as the Business Manager. Not long after this, Les met and married Shannon, a godly young lawyer. God has since blessed them with three boys: Patrick, Ian, and Myles. In May 2012, Les graduated from VBTS with a concentration in counseling and has recently assumed the title of Pastor of Business and Counseling. God is blessing the multiple ministries of Les and Shannon, and they are models of grace to all within the church body. Les says, "Our greatest passion is to personally know Christ and be faithful to him. We also desire the people to whom we minister to become faithful to the Scriptures." Thank you, Les and Shannon, for your godly leadership at CBC.



Truth for the Agora: Why Ben Franklin Quit Church Attendance

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) is one of the most well-known names among America's founding fathers. However, what is little known among Americans today is his insightful *Autobiography*. This monograph, which he began when he turned 65 years of age (1771), may give more insight into Franklin's life than any other document he produced including *Poor Richard's Almanac*. What interests me most is Franklin's comments about his spiritual life. Let me share with you a few of his thoughts, which may encourage us today to be Word-centered believers (Matthew 4:4).

Franklin's *Autobiography* reveals why he was disinterested in church attendance. While he maintained membership in the Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia by paying yearly dues, he rarely attended the Sunday services. One pastor of this church (unnamed by Franklin) pestered him enough to make a commitment to attend five consecutive Sundays. Franklin writes that this pastor was not a good preacher, being "very dry, uninteresting, and unedifying since not a single moral principle was inculcated . . . [and his] aim seeming to be rather to make us Presbyterians than good citizens." To prove his point, Franklin referred to one Sunday in which the pastor took his text from Philippians 4:8. He writes, "I imagined, in a sermon on such a text, we could not miss of having some morality. But the preacher confined himself to five points only: 1. Keeping holy the Sabbath day. 2. Being diligent in reading the Holy Scripture. 3. Attending the public worship. 4. Partaking of the Sacraments. 5. Paying a due respect to God's ministers." Franklin noted that these are fine things to consider, "but they were not the kind of good things that I expected from that text." Therefore he said, "I was disgusted and attended his preaching no more."

Though Franklin determined not to attend church, he was captured by the ideal of morality and decided to develop his own "code of virtues" by which to live. He writes, "I conceived the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection." He states that since he believed he knew "what was right and wrong, I did not see why I might not always do the one and avoid the other." He came to the conclusion that there are 13 virtues he must follow that would help him to "imitate Jesus and Socrates." He took a small notebook and allotted one page per virtue – from "temperance" being the first to "humility" being the thirteenth. Across the top of the page, he wrote each day of the week; and underneath he would place a black mark on the day he did not keep that virtue. He concluded that his life was like a garden – one will never "eradicate all the bad herbs at once" – but as one continually works to eradicate the bad, one will have the pleasure of seeing progress of the good. He arose every morning at 5:00 a.m. and retired at 1 a.m., and he sought to account for each hour of the day as he determined to pattern his life after his code of virtues.

There is much to admire in Franklin's *Autobiography*. What saddens my heart is that he sought moral perfection rather than Jesus Christ. When he was asked to attend church, the text of Scripture was never developed, and Jesus was not exalted. Franklin left the worship service continuing his own moral pursuit. What if Franklin heard the text preached and saw Christ exalted by the text made clear when he attended those five consecutive church services? I know that this is only a hypothetical question, but it does emphasize the importance of clear Bible exposition. To all of us who will be preaching and teaching God's truth this week, I echo Paul's words in 2 Timothy 4:2, "Preach the Word!"