

Hope Fulfilled, Treasure Gained

By PAUL J. SCHARF

No one will ever replace Dr. Myron J. Houghton.

“Dr. Myron” was my seminary theology professor. He served at Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary from 1983 until his retirement in 2019.

He died on Tuesday, less than two weeks from his 79th birthday.

There are, in fact, many aspects of his life that can never be replicated—such as his wit, his unique life experiences and the incredible rapport that he had with his students who, through the years, became an increasingly smaller fraction of his age. He even spent most of his evenings going out to dinner with one, or sometimes a small group, of them.

But perhaps his affinity for students grew from the fact that Dr. Myron had so much in common with them.

A lifelong bachelor, Dr. Myron devoted his life to the academic study of theology. He graduated from nine different institutions of theological higher education. These schools represented not only his own fundamental, Baptist and dispensational views, but also the views held by the Grace Brethren, Methodism, confessional Lutheranism, Eastern Orthodoxy and the Roman Catholic Church. He also undertook arduous study of other theological perspectives.

For Dr. Myron, this was not merely an academic exercise. Rather, he aspired to be competent to provide—from direct testimony—an accurate representation of the best version of the view that any given theology had to offer. He believed that anything less than this approach was Biblically and academically unacceptable.

The idea that someone would be able to duplicate such an endeavor in today’s world seems, practically speaking, most unlikely. Dr. Myron also had the opportunity to attend schools such as Moody Bible Institute, Grace Theological Seminary and Dallas Theological Seminary at a time when he studied under many of the greats of a bygone era.

Yet Dr. Myron was not a dry or stuffy academic. He was, at heart, a preacher, and his preaching influenced me greatly. As I saw him at the lectern in seminary chapel with no notes, except for the writing and highlighting in his well-worn study Bible, his appeal as a communicator was most compelling. Everyone who sat there knew unmistakably that his was a model worthy of emulating.

He gave you that very same sense in his classes. Although he used notes there, his communication was still based around his Bible and his Greek New Testament, and you got the sense that if he were forced to lecture with nothing but those tools, he could teach in the most engaging way for an incredibly long time.

What made his teaching so appealing was his devotion to the Scriptures, based on the recognition of their supernatural origin. He truly practiced the doctrine of verbal inspiration. While recognizing that our interpretation of any one verse must be able to bear the load of the entirety of Scripture, Dr. Myron showed us how we could also rest our entire hermeneutical weight (even the weight of our entire eternal lives) on the frame of just one word, within one verse, if it was rightly understood in its context. His teaching exemplified the practice of true Biblical interpretation in both the grand flow of Scripture as well as in the most minute details. I will never forget hearing him say in class, in response to a misuse of Scripture, that, "I cannot in good conscience handle the Word of God in that way."

Dr. Myron amassed a personal library representative of his academic background—and he used it! When he found duplicates or other books he no longer needed, he brought them to class and set them on his desk for students to take. He needed the room, as he was always ordering more. You could watch him—or hear him—pick up his mail after chapel. The excitement was that of a kid on Christmas morning.

One taste that I acquired directly from Dr. Myron was his love of bookshelf ties. He came to a point where he desired to wear one almost every day. The statement was not lost on his students.

Graciously, Dr. Myron wrote an endorsement for me in my service with The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. I will forever treasure that, and I hope that those who hear me teach will find that I have more in common with Dr. Myron than just his taste in ties (see Luke 6:40).

Dr. Myron went to find the treasures for which he had spent his life on Tuesday. The only things he left behind were his students and his legacy.

Paul J. Scharf (M.A., M.Div., Faith Baptist Theological Seminary) is a church ministries representative for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, based in Columbus, WI, and serving in the Midwest. For more information on his ministry, visit sermonaudio.com/pscharf or foi.org/scharf, or email pscharf@foi.org.

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