



The Authorized
Biography

J. SIDLOW BAXTER
A *HEART AWAKE*

E. A. Johnston - I - -

Foreword by **Adrian Rogers**~ Introduction by **Stephen F. Olford**
Afterword by **H. D. McCarty**

J. SIDLOW BAXTER A HEART AWAKE

The Authorized Biography

E. A. Johnston

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With heartfelt appreciation the following chapters
are dedicated to my dear friend,

Mrs. J. Sidlow Baxter (Isa):

few have seen such a jewel shine more brilliantly,
few have known such indomitable character.

SAMPLE PAGES

CONTENTS

- Foreword by Dr. Adrian Rogers 9
Acknowledgments 11
Introduction by Dr. Stephen F. Ifford 13
1. The Lad 19
 2. The Young Adult 34
 3. The Early Marriage 48
 4. The Early Pastorates 62
 5. The Edinburgh Pastorate 67
 6. The Move across the Atlantic 93
 7. The Illness and the Healing 99
 8. The Grief and the Loss 110
 9. The Scottish Sweetheart 116
 10. The Itinerant Preaching 128
 11. The Author and Poet 168
 12. The Octogenarian 192

CONTENTS



- 13. The Praying Saint 199
- 14. The Heavenly Homecoming 208
- 15. The Legacy 218

- Postscript 237
- Afterword by Dr. H. D. McCarty 239
- Notes 252

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FOREWORD

It is a pleasure and a challenge to introduce this volume on the life of the late, great J. Sidlow Baxter. In some ways he was very much like the apostle Paul - a great scholar and theologian. Yet he would have epitomized the apostle John who emphasized to us God's mighty love. Also, when I think of J. Sidlow Baxter, I think of a man upon whom the spirit of Daniel is resting. He was fearless and courageous and, like Daniel, had served the Lord from his youth up. Or could it be that]. Sidlow Baxter had the soul of a David, the sweet singer of Israel? He was not only a theologian, a preacher, and a prophet, but he was also a great musician.

Born in Australia, he was brought up in England. From his youth he had a deep love for music and became an accomplished pianist. He was converted at the age of sixteen, and by nineteen he was the National Young Life Campaign pianist. This was the largest evangelical movement in England. God used J. Sidlow Baxter as a preacher, prophet, evangelist, and musician while he was still a teenager. His was a life multifaceted and greatly used.

J. Sidlow Baxter studied for the ministry at Spurgeon's College. He served three pastorates with unusual blessing. His last pastorate was in Edinburgh, where he pastored the largest Baptist church in Scotland. After twenty years

FOREWORD

God called him to a wider ministry. He traveled extensively, preaching, teaching, and sharing the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps his greatest legacy is his written work. He was a gifted and prolific author. When booksellers wanted a book of devotions to place in the library of the president of the United States, they chose J. Sidlow Baxter's book *Awake My Heart*. It was leather bound and placed in that library so that the president might read it and be inspired.

Baxter wrote twenty-six books in all. Among the best, and the one that I want to commend especially to you, is *Explore the Book*. This comprehensive overview of the Bible is without parallel and has been studied in Bible schools and seminaries around the world.

A personal word is fitting here. I love this man like few men I have known. His intellect and devotion have strengthened my own ministry. To be around J. Sidlow Baxter was to be enriched.

Now let me say a word about the author of this volume. E. A. Johnston has labored faithfully to capture the heart and mind of J. Sidlow Baxter. He has done careful research and prayerful writing. I am grateful that he has taken this task. This volume has done much to strengthen my own life, and I believe it will be used correspondingly in the lives of many others. He has done the kingdom of God a great service by writing this volume for us. Much of what I have read in this biography is new to me; therefore, I treasure it all the more.

I encourage the reader to enjoy and absorb this volume. I don't want to sound overly enthusiastic, but I sincerely say, with all of my heart, when you read it, you will be blessed.

DR. ADRIAN ROGERS
SENIOR PASTOR
BELLEVUE BAPTIST CHURCH
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

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istry. He traveled extensively, bringing the glorious gospel of Jesus

is his written work. He "was a man whom booksellers wanted a book in their library of the president of the University of Chicago. Sidlow Baxter's book A Man of the Cloth and placed in that library to be read and be inspired.

Books in all. Among the best to commend especially to you, is this extensive overview of the Bible that has been studied in Bible schools throughout the world.

Here, I love this man like few others. His piety and devotion have strengthened me around J. Sidlow Baxter was

the author of this masterpiece. He has done careful research and is so faithful that he has taken this task to strengthen my own life, and wonderfully in the lives of many. The freedom of God a great service by which I have read this before, I treasure it all the more. I enjoy and absorb this volume enthusiastically, but I think when you read it, you will be

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I first want to acknowledge my blessed Lord who is the solid rock on which I stand and the sovereign King whom I serve. I wish to thank my beautiful wife, Carla, and darling daughter, Carly, for their patience and love during my absence in writing. I must acknowledge the memory of Clem Dear of Oak Park, Illinois, who led me to the Lord in 1968. I am indebted to both Dr. Adrian Rogers, my beloved pastor, and Dr. Stephen F. Olford, my beloved mentor. The encouragement and support I have received from both these giants in the faith is deeply appreciated. [Dr. Stephen F. Olford passed away during the time the manuscript was being edited for publication. -Ed.]

I would also like to acknowledge the following: Mrs. J. Sidlow Baxter (Isa) who at age ninety-seven is my inspiration and dear, dear friend. [Mrs. Isa Baxter passed away just a few days after her ninety-eighth birthday, during the time the manuscript was being edited for publication. -Ed.] Dr. H. D. McCarty and his staff at University Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, for their warm welcome and hospitality. Dr. Darwin and Eleanor Holian for hospitality in Santa Barbara. Satellite Music and Video in Edinburgh,

reductions to the Scottish friends
 ing.
 Sidlow Baxter's niece, Mrs. Mu-
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 g their friendship with Dr. Baxter
 no- forget Dr. Vicki Crumpton at
 cienng in the project and seeing
 . May the Lord bless and reward
 qantly!

INTRODUCTION

Let me introduce you to J. Sidlow Baxter by telling some stories about my interactions with him that reveal the kind of man he was. Sidlow was a man of prayer. Whether we were kneeling in my study or at a convention with other speakers, I just wanted to hear him pray. He had a way of praying which was awesome.

He told me how he was converted. The Wood brothers began a movement across England called the Young Life Campaign. Fred Wood was an outstanding evangelist with an incredible heart. Sidlow was a get-around-town young man who was searching for truth and fascinated with detective stories. The Wood brothers had hired a theatre for a crusade in a certain town in the Midlands of England. On the marquee were the subjects for each night. This particular one was "The Infallible Detective." Sidlow saw it either in the paper or from the street and said to himself, "The Infallible Detective, I'm not missing that!" So, in he came. I believe that Fred Wood's preaching would have appealed to him because his sermons were well argued. The next was, "Be sure your sin will find you out." That night I found Sidlow out, and he was converted. Now I have

a sermon called "The Infallible Detective," and I've used Sidlow Baxter's story hundreds of times in crusades!

Sid and I were friends and on a number of occasions we happened to be in the same conventions and conferences. In particular, I refer to the Keswick in Port Stewart, Ireland. He was there with Donald Grey Barnhouse. He made quite an impact on Barnhouse, so much so that when he was over in the United States and Barnhouse couldn't teach at his New York Bible study class (which was always held on a Monday night), Sid would stand in for him. I just couldn't believe my eyes or ears to see and hear those two as friends: one an Arminian and the other a hard-boiled Calvinist!

On one occasion, I went to a Manhattan church to hear Sid preach. I remember there was a very high pulpit, almost like Charlotte Chapel in Edinburgh, and an incident occurred right in the middle of Sidlow's message. A tame tomcat came walking on the rails toward Sid, and, of course, all eyes looked that way. Without breaking a step, Sid said, "and that reminds me of that wonderful portion of Luke's Gospel that records *the Magnificat*." Well, the crowd went wild. It took five minutes to calm them!

He took me by surprise one time. He phoned me and said he was in town at the Hotel Salisbury, next to our church. Of course, I felt obliged and said, "Sorry I didn't know you were around or I would have asked you to preach on Sunday at Calvary." "No, my brother," he answered. "No problem. No problem. That's your throne. You guard your throne. Let nobody interfere with your throne. That's your throne."

He came to my study at the hotel and we had a long, long discussion on "everything": the two natures, the American scene, preaching, and on various other issues. Eventually I said, "It's lunchtime. I have booked a local restaurant, please come along with me." So Sid got up and grabbed his briefcase. I said, "No need for that, my brother, just leave it

right in my study. him. So we went you could get the sat down, and the myself, *I wonder* came. And I said, I want is a glass a "Man alive, this is had to make a qw

The waiter bmn US PRAY." With to my *horror*, with opened his little 6l I mean *everybody* over it. There he of that, and he be water he had orde That was Sidlow.

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Early in my ffill tions together. Or, his speaking time about twenty min

right in my study." "No, no, no," he said, and brought it with him. So we went down to this beautiful restaurant where you could get the best fish. We were taken to our seats, sat down, and the menus were brought. And I thought to myself, *I wonder what this man's going to eat.* So the waiter came. And I said, "Sid, go ahead. He said, "No thanks. All I want is a glass of water and maybe a pot of tea." I said, "Man alive, this is a great fish restaurant!" "Well, I ordered-I had to make a quick decision-a little fish dish.

The waiter brought it and Sid said, "Let us pray. LET US PRAY." With his arms spread out he prayed. And then to my horror, with these swanky Yankees all around us, he opened his little briefcase and brought out his *Biblical* diet! I mean *everybody* was looking at me. I really couldn't get over it. There he was with a little bit of this, and a little bit of that, and he began to stir into the concoction the hot water he had ordered! He ate his meal while I ate my fish! That was Sidlow.

The next morning he was away again, but I remember his defending my pulpit. "That's your throne. That's your throne, let no one dethrone you." Then this incredible meal together. I normally wouldn't even go to that restaurant, it was too costly, and he ordered nothing but a pot of tea and hot water! That's why he carried his briefcase with his Biblical diet and his little containers!

He was always immaculately dressed and looked the picture of dignity every time he stood in the pulpit. He was a striking figure with that white hair. His language and flowing speech were quite a contrast to his "concoction" in a swanky restaurant!

Early in my ministry, in the UK, we were often at conventions together. One was in South Wales where he overshot his speaking time. I was the second speaker and only had about twenty minutes, and for some reason or another the

conveners insisted we keep to the time allotted, so that I had to curtail my message. Another occasion we were together and he was the second speaker and the first speaker took *his* time. I remember Sid got up and said, "My brother, and the message he has brought, reminds me of a conference to which two or four preachers went, and the first man started with *condemnation*, then went on to *justification*, and then *sanctification*, and *thenglorification*." Then he said, "Now I must go to the *station*, so I can't preach anymore." He had the crowd roaring.

Then we were together at the Port Stewart convention, in Ireland, and whom should we be once more yoked with than Dr. Donald Barnhouse. Dr. Barnhouse opened the convention with a complicated address on Ephesians and likened it to the tabernacle with its outer court, the Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, and so forth. Then followed Sidlow Baxter. I don't know whether he dropped his bag or handed it to his driver, but he didn't have a Bible! So, he borrowed a Gideon Bible. He opened it to the Ephesians epistle. I don't know whether or not he did it for effect, because Sid was quite an actor, but he bellowed forth, "Well now! How interesting! God led my brother to speak on Ephesians and here I am determined to speak on Ephesians. But first of all let's examine what my brother Donald's been talking about. He calls Ephesians the picture of the tabernacle. I think it is more like a BARNHOUSE!" The crowd roared!

But somehow he reconciled the whole issue with his incredible winsomeness; then what he did was not the Barnhouse approach, because Barnhouse was not a homiletician. He was more of a theologian who went into the Greek words and so on. I mean, Barnhouse could preach a whole message on one word, and with his Ph.D. researchers, he could fill a book with one word. So, Barnhouse went one way with the message and Sid opened up Ephesians and gave the

divisions, all with brilliant expositions. I can't remember a single thing Barnhouse said apart from that one opening address. But Sidlow's treatment of Ephesians throughout that week at Port Stewart Keswick Convention remains with me to this day.

When Sid finished with a subject it was sheer clarity and finality. You didn't see how he could add anything to it. And in that sense, he seemed to be a reproduction of Graham Scroggie. Dr. Graham Scroggie's ministry was obviously followed and studied by Sidlow Baxter. They were similar in structure, homiletics, and to a certain extent, good use of alliteration.

Now, Sidlow had a creative mind. When he couldn't find a word that fit, he just coined one and used it with ease! He also loved to delve into areas that could be termed controversial. And when we met at conventions he would come up to me and say, "Oh my Stephen. Oh my Stephen. My Stephen." We were very fond of each other. At one time I had all his books, and hopefully one day "'e'll get all his books back again for our library here.

DR. STEPHEN F. OLFORD, FOUNDER
THE STEPHEN OLFORD CENTER FOR BIBLICAL PREACHING
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

one

THE LAD

Now Samuel did not yet know the LoRD, neither was the word of the LoRD yet revealed unto him. And the LoRD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LoRD had called the child.

1 SAMUEL 3:7-8

His Birth

What youthful mind has not wistfully daydreamed of old England? With its colorful lore of castles and knights, kings and queens, its empire could make nations quake. England's scepter stretched across the globe, its Royal Navy ruled the seas, and nations' leaders bowed to her throne.

So it was to England that Alice Baxter returned, without her unfaithful husband, John, leaving behind in Australia the turbulent memories of her troubled marriage and taking

with her three small children and her faith in God. Little Sid was two at the time.

Although James Sidlow Baxter was born February 25, 1903, in Sydney, Australia, it would be the green hills and rolling countryside of England he would remember. The Pennine Hills of Ashton-under-Lyne in Lancashire, England, welcomed the Baxter family with smiling peaks. He would grow up to treasure the memory of those Pennine Hills, for they represented the delights of his youth. He grew up playing in their valleys, he sought refuge in their majesty, and as he grew up in their shadow he discovered the beauty of love and the discouragements of life.

He and sisters Daisy and Eunice would frolic in the flower-speckled meadows unaware of the poverty and hardship of a single mother raising three children in a mill town. Life was hard for most people in those earlier times in England. The workday began well before dawn and ended after sunset. People labored in fields and factories earning their bread with the sweat from their brow. It was a time before world wars. It was a time before televisions and computers. It was a time now forgotten. But it was also a time that J. Sidlow Baxter would fondly recall for the rest of his life.

His Mother

And extol God above for the gift of her love!
The debt that I owe I can never know
There's no one just like her, that mother of mine.

JSB

Alice Baxter was a hardworking Christian woman who loved her Lord as much as she loved her three young children. Daisy, Eunice, and Sidlow were the joy that sustained



The Baxter Family. B (sister); James Sidlow (mother); John Baxter (courtesy of Mrs. M. Baxter.)

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Family. Back row: Oswald Baines and Eunice Isabella Baines (brother-in-law and sister); James Sidlow Baxter; Margaret Alice Baxter (Daisy; sister); Front row: Alice Baxter (Daisy); John Baxter (father). Taken around 1922. (Photos and captions in this chapter are the property of Mrs. Muriel Catt, daughter of Oswald and Eunice Baines and niece of J. Sidlow Baxter.)

It was during those difficult early years. It was Alice's faith in the Lord Jesus and her devoted service to him that made her a well-respected citizen in that little town in Lancashire County.

For twenty years she was the police court missionary. She was the one who gave a hand up to the down-and-out. Her work in the rescue missions was hard, and at times discouraging, although the children never heard her complain. Her efforts in the rescue missions so impressed young Sidlow that when he died almost a hundred years later he bequeathed all his clothing to the local rescue mission in the city of Santa Barbara, California.

Alice canvassed the environs of Manchester. She walked everywhere wearing her blue uniform and blue bonnet, visiting the women prisoners at the jail, then going door-to-door in the slum areas of town to hand out gospel tracts. She trusted in the power of Christ to transform a person's

Explore a heart so fully stirred by the Spirit of God

The author of such well-known books as *Awake My Heart*, *Growing Deeper*, and *Explore the Book*, J. Sidlow Baxter lived life on the doorstep of heaven.



Born in Australia and raised in England, Baxter was dramatically impacted by his mother's faithful witness and Charles Spurgeon's printed sermons. After being converted at an evangelistic meeting conducted by the founders of the National Young Life Campaign in Britain, Baxter soon realized he was being called into the ministry. Sixty years later, his preaching and teaching had brought him to pastorates in Northampton, Sutherland, and Edinburgh, as well as to America and around the world. Even today, the life and works of this great theologian, preacher, and musician touch the lives of millions across the globe.

"To hear J. Sidlow Baxter expound God's Word was an Emmaus experience. You saw your Lord in glory, and your heart burned within you. The Bible became a new book as he related one Scripture portion to another. He greatly influenced my own ministry, and I gratefully acknowledge it."

—WARREN W. WIERSBE

"This biography gives us a fine portrait of a multi-gifted servant of Christ. It introduces us to a word craftsman whether in prose or poetry, in praise or in prayer. We realize how the Lord sanctified both his tongue and his pen. We are enriched by his life of devotion and dedication. He modeled Jesus well. Be sure to read *J. Sidlow Baxter: A Heart Awake*."

—WILLIAM MACDONALD