

Just As Thou Art—How Wondrous Fair

Joseph Denham Smith (1817–1889)

Just as Thou art—how wondrous fair,
Lord Jesus, all Thy members are!
A life divine to them is given—
A long inheritance in heaven.

Just as I was I came to Thee,
An heir of wrath and misery;
Just as Thou art before the throne,
I stand in righteousness Thine own.

Just as Thou art—how wondrous free:
Loosed by the sorrows of the tree:
Jesus! the curse, the wrath were Thine
To give Thy saints this life divine.

Just as Thou art—Thou Lamb divine!
Life, light, and holiness are Thine:
Thyself their endless source I see,
And they, the life of God, in me.

Just as Thou art—oh blissful ray
That turn'd my darkness into day!
That woke me from my death of sin,
To know my perfectness in Him.

Oh teach me, Lord, this grace to own,
That self and sin no more are known:
That love—Thy love—in wondrous right,
Hath placed me in its spotless light!

Soon, soon, 'mid joys on joys untold,
Thou wilt this grace and love unfold,
Till worlds on worlds adoring see
The part Thy members have in Thee.

February 9, 2019

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Growing Up Fundamentalist, Part One: Salvation and Baptism

Kevin T. Bauder

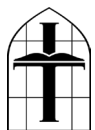
My parents were not Christians when I was born. As far as I know, my mother's parents never went to church and had no Christian commitments. The only religious text in their house was a copy of Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. My father grew up being taken to a liberal Methodist church. By the time I was born, he was a faithful attendee—twice a year at Christmas and Easter. Both of my grandfathers were profane men, though faithful to their marriage vows and moral by the standards of their times.

It was the twice-a-year business that finally got to my father. As he was exiting the liberal Methodist church one Easter, the minister shook his hand and said, "Merry Christmas, Tom, because I know that's the next time I'll see you." The remark chafed my father, and he decided that he would *not* be back next Christmas.

That left the problem of where to go. I was three or four at the time, and my sister was a year younger. My parents wanted us to have *some* exposure to church. So they started looking for a new congregation to which they could repair twice each year. As it happened, there was a little Baptist church plant meeting in a store front in our small town. Next Sunday we visited that little church.

Later in the week the Baptist preacher stopped by our home to visit. My father was at work, but the pastor led my mother to the Lord. Though it was probably the first time she had ever heard the gospel, she understood that she was a sinner who needed to be saved. She believed that Jesus had died and risen again to save her. That day she became a child of God.

When my father learned what had happened, he was dumbfounded. He had an aunt who claimed to be saved, and (as he later put it) everybody thought that she was a religious nut. What could it mean that his wife was now saved? He determined to find out, and the sooner the better. The next service of the church was supposed to be a prayer meeting on Wednesday night, so he took my mother on a fact-finding expedition.



In the Nick of Time is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

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Attendance at prayer meeting that Wednesday consisted of my parents, the pastor, and his wife and son. The pastor's planned sermon went right out the window as he shared the gospel with my father. By the end of the evening, my father had grasped the truth for the first time. He too trusted Christ for forgiveness and was saved.

Even though I was a very small child, I knew that our lives had changed. Suddenly we were in church, not only on Sunday mornings but every time the door was open. Old habits began to disappear. The interests of our house changed. My father quit smoking. A different circle of friends now sat around our table. Our home became a stopping place for traveling ministers and missionaries, whom my parents would interrogate with questions about the Bible.

Missionaries were especially treasured guests in our home. I knew that missionaries and other visiting preachers must be important people because they always got my bedroom when they came to stay. Listening to missionaries in church fascinated me. I can still remember Dr. and Mrs. Paul Fredricksen with their stories of internment in a Japanese prison camp in the Philippines. I was fascinated with "Uncle Walt" Kronemeyer, who brought a big snake skin from Africa. Then there was Stephen Nischik from the Ukraine, who had a ministry behind the Iron Curtain. When he was preaching one evening, two men in suits walked into the auditorium. They marched straight down the aisle and sat in the front row taking notes. At the end of the service they marched back down the aisle and exited the door, not even pausing to shake the proffered hands. Nischik was convinced that they were KGB. That was our first direct experience with Communism, and it certainly made an impression.

By the time I was seven, I had decided that I wanted to become a missionary. One evening I disclosed this information to my father. He asked me whether I knew what missionaries did. I'd never thought of that. I had to admit that I didn't know. "They tell people how to be saved," Dad said. "Do you think you could tell someone how to be saved?" I couldn't. So Dad asked, "Have you ever been saved?" As many times as I had heard the gospel, I had never actually considered that it might be for me. My father laid aside his tools (he was remodeling the second story of our old farmhouse) and explained the way of salvation. That night I knelt beside a pile of two by fours and trusted Jesus as my savior.

In our new church I regularly witnessed baptisms. Some three years passed, however, before it occurred to me that baptism was something I ought to do. The church was hosting special meetings with an evangelist from Scotland. I was fascinated by his dialect. As far as I can recall, he did not preach about baptism, but as I listened I put together three truths: first, all believers are

commanded to be baptized; second, I was a believer; and third, I had not been baptized. When he gave the invitation at the end of the service, I went forward to ask for baptism.

Perhaps I should say a word about invitations. Most services at our church closed with some sort of invitation. By publicly going forward to meet the pastor at the end of the service you could let people know that the Lord was dealing with you. You would receive counsel according to your need. The invitations were never long and never pressured, though I learned that some churches did them differently. I can remember responding to an invitation and going forward on three distinct occasions. If there were more, I've forgotten them.

On this occasion, I declared my desire to be baptized. Apparently that started a trend, and several others, mainly children, requested baptism as well. A few were younger than me, but most were my age (ten) or a bit older. The pastor held classes with us once a week for a couple of months. He taught us what baptism was, who should be baptized, and how baptism worked. He stressed that baptism did not save. Most importantly, we all shared our testimony of salvation with the pastor. Later we would share it with all the church's deacons. In that class, several of the testimonies were not especially clear, and either the pastor or the deacons chose to withhold baptism pending a more definite conversion. Having received my pastor's instruction, however, I was immersed upon my profession of faith.

I was now a church member. While I did not realize all that meant, it was an important turning point in my spiritual development. That, however, is a story for a different occasion.



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.
