

**In One Fraternal Bond of Love***James Montgomery (1771–1854)*

In one fraternal bond of love,  
 One fellowship of mind,  
 The saints below and saints above  
 Their bliss and glory find.

Here, in their house of pilgrimage,  
 Thy statutes are their song;  
 There, through one bright, eternal age,  
 Thy praises they prolong.

Lord, may our union form a part  
 Of that thrice happy whole,  
 Derive its pulse from Thee, the heart,  
 Its life from Thee, the soul.

**ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ***In the Nick of Time***Growing Up Fundamentalist, Part Two: Pastors and Church***Kevin T. Bauder*

During the years following my parents' conversion, our little church went through a series of pastors. Some were more qualified and some less so. The congregation finally called a church planter from the Fellowship of Baptists for Home Missions. He is the pastor who baptized me and who began to instruct me in the faith. His name was Robert Weckle, but the first time I met him he told me, "Kevin, just call me *preacher!*"

In the meanwhile the church secured new facilities, moving out of its store front into a decaying building that had been the home of a Congregationalist church. The men of the church did their best to refurbish this facility. None did more than my father, who had skills as a builder. I have a particular memory of these men knocking the decrepit steeple off the belfry, then putting shingles on the remaining flat roof. The result looked odd: a belfry rising above the building but ending suddenly as a square stub. The bell still worked, though, and as I grew up I often got to ring it at the beginning of the Sunday morning service.

The city built a fire station right next door to the church building. Every Sunday the fire whistle would blow exactly at noon, loudly enough to drown out the speaker if he went overtime. We became used to just waiting for the preacher to continue after the whistle.

Preacher Weckle was not a great pulpiteer. The main thing that I remember about his sermons is that they tended to be long and dry. His presentation emphasized biblical content. In those days, just about every preacher used a King James Bible. Preacher Weckle's was a Scofield Reference Bible. He would sometimes announce texts by giving the page number in his Scofield Bible. His goal was to have everybody in the church studying Scofield's notes.

Of course Preacher Weckle was a dispensationalist. He had a big, canvas dispensational chart that would stretch all the way across the front of our auditorium. Every couple of years he would hang it from a wire and teach through the dispensations, usually on Sunday nights. I was fascinated with that chart, its pictures, and its intricacies. I loved to hear him teach as I kept one eye on the chart and the other eye on the notes in Dad's Scofield Bible.



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When I was in seventh grade I was finally given my own Scofield Bible. This turned out to be a problem: it was a *New Scofield Reference Bible*. Nobody had ever seen one before. The page numbers weren't the same. Some of the notes were quite different (better, in retrospect). Most alarmingly, the editors had updated some of the most obscure terms in the King James, inserting their changes between straight-line brackets. As the popularity of this new Bible grew, it created a problem during the public reading of the Scriptures. You could hear part of the church reading straight King James English, while the other part read the edits from the New Scofield.

Though he was not a powerful orator, I found Preacher Weckle fascinating. He had more books than anybody I'd ever met. He knew so much about the Bible that I assumed he had a doctor's degree (years later I learned that he had only a three-year diploma from the Bible institute). He was one of the few people who could correct my father—an impressive feat in my childish eyes. Most of all, he cared deeply about his people and looked for opportunities to help them grow.

He would sometimes take me fishing along with his son (who was a bit older). Not only did he talk continuously about spiritual things, but I got to see his reaction when his son locked the car keys in the trunk. He passed this test of character.

Our church bought a little bus that the Preacher would drive to pick up people from the community. He would invite me along on this bus route. I'd sit on the front step and work the door as people got on. Here, too, he would talk to me about spiritual things.

I was often in Preacher Weckle's home and he was often in ours. He created occasions for conversation, whether one-on-one or in groups. He taught me far more in those informal moments than I ever learned in a church service.

The church had its share of services. We had a graded Sunday school on Sunday morning, followed by a morning service that hardly ever ended at noon. There was also an evening service on Sundays, and another evening prayer meeting on Wednesdays. On top of those, there were programs for children and adolescents.

These included a youth hour that met before the Sunday evening service. We never seemed to settle into a regular curriculum. I remember a military-aviation themed program called Jet Cadets, and a different one called Space Cadets. Younger children had a program called Eager Beavers. These programs emphasized Bible memorization and featured frequent "sword drills" to see who could find a given passage of Scripture most quickly. An adult would always teach a Bible lesson. Some emphasis on witnessing or missions was often included.

One afternoon during the week the children would attend "Joy Club." Every child earned a beanie and a patch that said "Joy." We would wear these as we sang songs, learned a Bible verse, and engaged in other activities before hearing a Bible presentation. Joy Club had a distinctively evangelistic emphasis.

During the summers our church hosted a Vacation Bible School for children. This program consumed mornings for an entire week or sometimes two. VBS kept a kid moving. An opening assembly with lots of singing was followed by a missionary time, a craft time, a refreshment time, a recreational activity, and a Bible lesson. Every year brought a different contest in which teams would compete over attendance, Bible memorization, and sometimes missionary offerings.

Speaking of contests, every year or so our church would compete against other area churches in an attendance contest for Sunday school. These contests had different themes, but they typically began with a rally day during which every attendee would release a helium-filled balloon into the air. I always loved to see the mass of color as it rose and floated away.

Between regular church services and special youth times, I could expect to be involved in some church activity at least six hours every week—and my parents made sure I was in every one. This level of participation was good for me in several ways. For one thing, I was bound to learn something just by dint of repetition. Most of the theology that I now hold was in place by the time I began high school. For another, it inculcated habits that are still part of my life. Perhaps most importantly, it provided a ready-made, trans-generational social network within which I always knew that I was accepted, which is no small matter for a shy kid who was not popular at school.



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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.

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