

## Sinner, Where Is Room for Doubting?

*Albert Midlane (1825–1909)*

Sinner, where is room for doubting?  
Has not Jesus died for sin?  
Did He not in resurrection  
Victory over Satan win?

Hear Him on the cross exclaiming—  
“It is finish’d,” ere He died;  
See Him in his mercy saving  
One there hanging by His side.

‘Twas for sinners that He suffer’d  
Agonies unspeakable;  
Canst thou doubt thou art a sinner?  
If thou canst—then hope farewell.

But, believing what is written—  
“All are guilty”—“dead in sin,”  
Looking to the Crucified One  
Hope shall rise thy soul within.

Hope and peace, and joy unfailing,  
Through the Savior’s precious blood,  
All thy crimson sins forgiven,  
And thy soul brought nigh to God.

## ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

### *In the Nick of Time*

#### **Growing Up Fundamentalist, Part Four: Special Meetings**

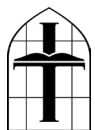
*Kevin T. Bauder*

When I was growing up our church held at least four public meetings every week. During Sunday school the children would be taken to graded classes for instruction while adults remained in the church auditorium for a Bible lesson. Sunday school was followed by the morning service, which featured singing, prayers, giving, and the exposition of a biblical text. The Sunday evening service was similar to the morning, only a bit more relaxed with more gospel songs and choruses and fewer hymns. Sunday evening services could also feature a variety of diversions such as personal testimonies or the selection of favorite songs by members of the congregation. Wednesday evening was for prayer meeting, which also included biblical teaching. Once each quarter the Wednesday meeting became the church’s business meeting, and it often went long.

Besides these regular services the church also participated in an array of special meetings. These were of different sorts. Three merit particular mention.

During the school year, fellowshipping churches in our area sponsored monthly youth rallies. These meetings were held on Saturday evening and were open to young people from seventh to twelfth grade. They were typically held in the auditoriums of some of the larger churches. An energetic song leader would wave his arms through a mix of Singspiration and Wyrten choruses, with some John W. Peterson thrown in. Each church would select some of its brightest young people to participate in Bible quizzing, where contestants would compete to be the first to answer questions about particular biblical passages. Usually the church that sent the largest delegation would receive an attendance trophy. Every rally also included something to eat and drink.

The central feature of these youth rallies was the preaching. The preachers tended to be younger and more energetic than usual. Their preaching was more exhortation than exposition. Typically the sermons focused on evangelism, dedication, or Christian service. Occasionally one of the preachers would take the opportunity to challenge “worldliness,” which meant the sins to which he thought young people were particularly susceptible. Sometimes (especially after about 1968) this sort of sermon could degenerate into



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a rant against boys wearing long hair, girls wearing short skirts, or either wearing bellbottomed jeans. These were among the symbols of an American youth counterculture that was perceived as hostile to biblical Christianity. As with camp, these youth rallies sometimes combined different sorts of fundamentalists who held different values, and those differences left me a bit confused.

Besides youth rallies, our church participated in week-long missionary conferences every year. We were too small to hold our own conference, so we would team with neighboring churches to host several missionaries in a “round robin” conference. Each missionary would speak at a different church every night; by the end of the week each church would hear all of the missionaries.

While the most exciting missionaries were those who ministered in strange and far-away places, our pastor always made sure that we gave an equal hearing to “home missionaries.” These were the people who were planting churches in the United States. We were convinced that their work was just as important as planting churches in Africa or Asia. Since the home missionaries lacked the exotic appeal of many foreign missionaries, their presentations tended to be a bit plainer—but there were exceptions to this rule.

One outstanding exception was Ezell Wiggins, who was planting True Bible Baptist Church in Des Moines. Wiggins was one of the most electric speakers I can remember. He brought personal grace and a sense of situational humor into his presentation, employing his considerable rhetorical skills to emphasize the gravity of the work he was doing. That work was ministering in the African-American community; he himself was one of a cadre of Black fundamentalist ministers who (I learned decades later) were at that time being rejected by the leadership of the Regular Baptist movement. Wiggins had reason for resentment, but he never expressed a shred of it. He was as utterly committed to the cause of Christ as anyone I ever heard. Because of his presence in our pulpit, it never occurred to me that a church ought to be anything but racially integrated or that race should have anything to do with spiritual leadership. I was shocked later on when I discovered that some fundamentalists felt differently.

In addition to youth rallies and missionary conferences our church enjoyed evangelistic meetings every year or two. I can remember two evangelists that we hosted on multiple occasions. One was C. Leroy Shevland, a gospel-preaching artist. Typically the crowd would gather an hour before the service began. We would watch Shevland paint a complete picture—usually an outdoor scene—in less than an hour’s time. During the service he would preach an evangelistic message, then he would do a “chalk talk” during which he would reemphasize the gospel message while doing a chalk sketch. At the end of the talk he would switch off the auditorium lights and

shine an ultraviolet light on his canvas, revealing a hidden picture. This was great entertainment and I loved it.

The other noteworthy evangelist was cowboy singer Redd Harper, also known as “Mr Texas.” Harper coordinated a media and publicity campaign that the church had to implement weeks in advance. He would arrive in full cowboy regalia, which made quite a sensation in rural Michigan. He put on a complete show: he would sing and play the cowboy guitar, then he would tell stories about Roy Rogers and other Hollywood figures of his acquaintance, then he would talk about movies in which he had appeared (including *Oil Town USA*, *Mr. Texas*, and *The Strawberry Roan*). Some nights he would play the steel slide guitar, and it seemed that he could almost make it talk.

During Harper’s meetings the auditorium was packed. Many people walked down the aisle to profess faith after his preaching. Few of those people, however, wanted to be baptized, become church members, or even to be instructed in the faith. While many in our church (including me) had great fun at his meetings, our pastor became less and less comfortable with Harper’s methods. After the second year he was never invited back.

All of these special meetings stood in contrast to Preacher Weckle’s normal method of patient, biblical preaching and teaching. While I looked forward to the youth rallies and to the week-long missions and evangelistic meetings, Preacher Weckle’s exposition is what really taught me the Bible and challenged me toward Christian living and Christian service. His example also taught me that pastors must take responsibility for the right instruction of the flock, even when others are doing the speaking. That was a good example.



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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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