

**Strait the Gate***Benjamin Beddome (1717–1795)*

Strait the gate, the way is narrow,  
 To the realms of endless bliss;  
 Sinful men and vain professors,  
 Self-deceived, the passage miss;  
 Rushing headlong,  
 Down they sink the dread abyss.

Sins and follies unforsaken,  
 All will end in deep despair;  
 Formal prayers are unavailing,  
 Fruitless is the worlding's tear;  
 Small the number  
 Who to wisdom's path repair.

Thou who art Thy people's guardian,  
 Condescend my guide to be;  
 By Thy Spirit's light unerring,  
 Let me Thy salvation see:  
 May I never  
 Miss the way that leads to Thee.

**ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ***In the Nick of Time***Growing Up Fundamentalist, Part Five: Adolescence***Kevin T. Bauder*

During my childhood my father was a rising manager with a national airline. When I was thirteen, however, he moved us from Michigan to Iowa so he could attend Bible college. He continued to work for the airline, but he had to take a demotion to do it. It didn't matter to him. He was convinced that God was calling him into pastoral ministry. When we left Michigan, our church presented both of my parents with leather-bound New Scofield Reference Bibles.

We moved into a home right across the street from the college my father would attend. We immediately joined the fundamental Baptist church in that college town. This church was much larger than our old one, and it had an entirely different atmosphere. Quite a few of the young people seemed uninterested in spiritual things. This was the heyday of the counterculture, and several of the church's youth were more fascinated by the symbols and slogans of that generation than by spiritual priorities. I should add, however, that several of them did go on to serve the Lord as adults.

For a while my father taught the junior high boys' Sunday school class. One Saturday he took us to the airport and let us more-or-less run wild in a Boeing 727. The seat cushions were attached with Velcro, which none of us had ever seen (or heard) before. We were fascinated by the ripping sound it made when we pulled the cushions off. For a while a dozen young teens ran down the aisle tearing off every seat cushion. Then Dad started the engines and taxied the plane around a bit. Needless to say, the airline industry has changed since then.

This congregation also gave me my first taste of church politics. There was a faction that wanted to fire the pastor. For a while things were pretty brittle. They contrived to get a vote of confidence, but a sizable majority voted for the pastor to stay. The minority left the church. Some of their children were among the least interested in the Bible or the things of God.

Overall, this church was not a happy experience for me. I was not a cool kid—in fact, I was a bit odd. I certainly didn't fit in with the other teenagers in the church. Most of them were indifferent toward me and some were



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 900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

overtly hostile. For the first time, I found that I really hated going to church and especially to youth meetings.

Then my father took the pastorate of a tiny church in a nearby village. We moved from a suburban community to a country town of fewer than a thousand. The church was actually Presbyterian, but it could not find a Reformed pastor and so the people and elders promised to let my father preach Baptist doctrine. Over the next three years the church withdrew from its Presbyterian denomination, first becoming an independent Bible church, then a Baptist church. It also began to grow.

Now a sophomore in high school, I became (regrettably) more interested in extracurricular activities than in the things of the Lord. I wouldn't have been judged a bad kid: I never drank, smoked, or did drugs, never got involved in promiscuity, never got into fights or vandalism, never shoplifted or drove recklessly. But my heart wandered from God. I knew that I was living to please myself and not Him. Band, chorus, journalism, football, and especially theater were what really mattered to me—those, and an unsaved girlfriend.

Still, having a father who was both a pastor and a Bible college student kept me close to the Bible and its teachings. What he learned in the classroom was discussed around the dinner table. It also became fodder for his preaching and teaching. Both church and family learned what he was learning.

During these years I also started to become aware of the broader fundamentalist and evangelical world. When my father accepted his first pastorate, the congregation was part of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod. This group had broken away from Carl McIntire during the 1950s. It was also the denomination of Francis Schaeffer and J. Oliver Buswell. In 1970 McIntire tried to take over the American Council of Christian Churches by forcing an illegal vote. News of McIntire's antics was still reverberating when my father became a pastor.

Though it seems strange in retrospect, I had never thought of either myself or the churches in which I'd grown up as fundamentalist. McIntire gave me my first real impression of the fundamentalist movement—and he did not create a good one. The second impression, which wasn't much better, was created when our church's mail brought a pair of life-size cardboard cutouts of a balding man in a black suit. The accompanying letter gave his name as Lester Roloff. He ran a girls' home in Texas, where he was fighting with the state. He sent the cutouts to remind us to pray for him and to send him money. I thought he looked frightening, and when I finally heard him on the radio my auditory assessment matched the visual impression.

While I was still a sophomore in high school, one of the big churches in Des Moines invited Frank Garlock to speak to a youth rally. Garlock taught music at Bob Jones University, and he wanted to convince us that rock and

roll was bad. I had never listened to much music of any kind, so his lecture was probably my first real exposure to rock (he played Dylan, among others—and I don't mean Dylan Thomas). Garlock also did something more: he took the time to explain what Tchaikovsky was doing musically in the last movement of his Fifth Symphony. If most of Garlock's lecture was lost on me, I came away fascinated with the idea that music was a medium of communication. I wanted to hear more of that kind of music. I also wanted to hear more rock.

It was in my public high school rather than in my church that I began to hear rumors of still other fundamentalists. I heard about schools where young men and women weren't allowed to touch or even converse. The word was that these colleges even built separate men's and women's sidewalks. Courting couples were required to be chaperoned. These institutions were supposed to be highly authoritarian, using demerit systems to expel students for even minor infractions of their numerous rules.

My dad's school wasn't like that. I was in a position to know. I delivered newspapers for two of the college's presidents. One of the professors lived across the street from us for a while; another professor became one of my father's closest friends. My mother ran the campus bookstore. I was on speaking terms with most of the faculty and administration. While I judged many of the students to be a bit odd, I never saw the kind of extremes that I heard rumored of other colleges. And that was good, because my options for colleges were pretty narrow. But more on that later.



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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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