

## Let Zion's Watchmen All Awake

*John Newton (1725–1807)*

Let Zion's watchmen all awake,  
And take the alarm they give;  
Now let them from the mouth of God  
Their solemn charge receive.

'Tis not a cause of small import  
The pastor's care demands;  
but what might fill and angel's heart,  
And filled a Savior's hands.

They watch for souls, for which the Lord  
Did heavenly bliss forgo;  
For souls, which must forever live  
In raptures, or in woe.

All to the great tribunal haste,  
Th' account to render there;  
And should'st thou strictly mark our faults,  
Lord, how should we appear?

May they that Jesus, whom they preach,  
Their own Redeemer see;  
And watch thou daily o'er their souls,  
That they may watch for thee.

## ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

### *In the Nick of Time*

#### **Growing Up Fundamentalist, Part Eight: Seminary**

*Kevin T. Bauder*

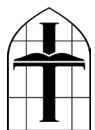
At the time my father enrolled in Bible college, few fundamentalist pastors went to seminary. That was beginning to change a decade later as I approached my senior year. Some of my professors were encouraging me toward seminary. One evening our church hosted a seminary president at a special event, and he took the time to talk to me about the process. He invited me to come visit his school. He also suggested that I think about a one-year Master of Arts program if I was uncertain about the three-year Master of Divinity. He was a sly old fox.

Debbie and I drove to Denver with her parents to visit the seminary. It was a small school, and classes weren't in session. I had a chance to meet several professors, though, and was impressed by the personal interest they took in me. I was also impressed by their credentials and reputations.

Days after graduation Debbie and I left for Denver pulling all our goods behind my Chevy Nova in a twelve-foot trailer. The temperature was in the 90s, and the little 250 straight-six constantly threatened to overheat. That night we stopped west of Omaha and a cold front blew over us. The morning was chilly and rainy, and we had no more trouble. We pulled into our apartment in Denver (actually Thornton) that night, and the next morning we awoke to snow.

We quickly adjusted to life in Denver. That summer, three things happened to solidify my direction. First, I got a job with a security company, which left me time to read at work. I set myself to work through A. H. Strong's *Systematic Theology*. It was an imposing work, over a thousand large pages of fine print supplemented by even finer print. It was the first serious theology with which I had tried to grapple. I found myself in a constant argument with Strong, underlining passages and looking up references. Sometimes he would convince me; other times not. By the end of the summer, however, I had begun to love the work of systematic theology.

Second, my father gave me a copy of Francis Schaeffer's *The God Who Is There* as a graduation gift. While Schaeffer's work has its weaknesses, I am indebted to him for two reasons. One was that he provided me with my first overview of Western intellectual history. The other was that his obvious in-



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terest in art, music, and philosophy gave me what I can only call *permission*. I'd always been drawn to the arts and humanities, but I had the impression that they were beneath the interests of serious Christians. I should be clear at this point—neither my parents, my churches, nor my college ever told me that. Numbers of my college professors would have been horrified at the suggestion. It was an inchoate impression that I'd picked up somehow, and Schaeffer dispelled it entirely.

Third, I struck up an acquaintance with two old college classmates who had gone on to get philosophy degrees from a state university. They brought me into a whole world of questions and discussions that I'd hardly known to exist. They fired my intellectual curiosity and furthered my resolve to take the life of the mind seriously.

One might think that a small, fundamentalist seminary would be a poor place for genuine intellectual growth, but it was exactly what I needed. Students and professors enjoyed more of a peer relationship than I had experienced in college. I was able to study both their intellectual intensity and their personal devotion. They did not all share the same intellectual interests, of course, but each set an example that challenged me to pursue his discipline to the best of my ability. Among them were individuals who read widely and thought deeply about the permanent questions, and they provided both stimulus and guidance.

Seminary also brought a widening circle of friendships. Not all seminary students have the same interests and abilities, so those friendships developed in different directions. Most important to me were the friends who, besides sharing exegetical and theological progress, stoked my interest in art, music, and philosophy.

More important than the intellectual growth of those years was the spiritual deepening. This progress came not so much from study as from the relationships that I enjoyed with my professors. The president, William Fusco, may have been the kindest man I have ever met, even though his wife was dying (and eventually did die) of a terrible disease. Faculty salaries were months in arrears; most of the professors had to work outside jobs, often doing menial work. I never heard them complain, but I did hear them cry out to God in moments of need. They always took time to give personal attention to their students. I was challenged by these examples and understood that God might well ask the same of me someday.

After earning my MDiv I stayed an additional year to work on a ThM. I was also given my first opportunity to teach—an experience that changed my direction in ministry. Two years later, the seminary closed its doors and the faculty was scattered. My diplomas may as well be made of rubber, and one school to which I applied for doctoral studies stated as much. For years I wondered whether I had really received a credible education.

Eventually I went on to complete both a DMin and a PhD from large, accredited seminaries. In those institutions I sat in class with graduates of most of the important seminaries and schools of divinity in this country. That was when I discovered that I was as well prepared for doctoral studies as any of my peers, no matter what schools they had attended. In fact, I was better prepared than most. Evidently it was possible to get a decent education at my little Bible college and seminary.

I graduated with my ThM in 1983, exactly ten years after leaving high school and nearly forty years ago. Now, decades later, I am still growing up. I am also still a fundamentalist. Completion of seminary, however, seems like a reasonable place to end this narrative. It is also the place to say a word about why I have written it, but that must wait for the next installment.



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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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