

Now Let Our Mourning Hearts Revive

Philip Doddridge (1702–1751)

Now let our mourning hearts revive,
And all our tears be dry;
Why should those eyes be drowned in grief
Which view a Savior nigh?

What though the arm of conquering death
Does God's own house invade?
What though the prophet and the priest
Be numbered with the dead?

Though earthly shepherds dwell in dust,
The aged and the young,
The watchful eye, in darkness closed,
And mute th'instructive tongue;

The Eternal Shepherd still survives,
New comfort to impart;
His eye still guides us, and His voice
Still animates our heart.

"Lo! I am with you," saith the Lord,
"My Church shall safe abide;
For I will ne'er forsake My own,
Whose souls in Me confide."

Through every scene of life and death,
This promise is our trust;
And this shall be our children's song,
When we are cold in dust.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

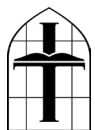
Rolland D. McCune (1934–2019): Gathered to His People

Jeff Straub

Monday night, June 17th, in the presence of his family, Dr. Rolland McCune entered into his eternal rest. He had recently turned 85. After having survived two previous bouts with cancer, he was diagnosed with inoperable pancreatic cancer several weeks ago. The end came peacefully. There was little pain and he died with full assurance of his eternal hope. I last spoke with him soon after his final diagnosis and he was matter-of-fact about his coming death. He was preparing "to be gathered to his people." I would have expected nothing less of my esteemed professor of Systematic Theology, under whose tutelage I had the joy of sitting during the early 1990s. He knew what awaited him and he was prepared to meet his Lord.

Dr. McCune, who had studied at Taylor University (BA) and Grace Theological Seminary (BD, ThM, and ThD) in Winona Lake, Indiana, spent fourteen years on the faculty here at Central. He moved to the Detroit area and finished his academic career as professor of Systematic Theology, dean of the faculty, and finally president of the seminary, retiring in 2009. He was heavily influenced by Homer Kent, Jr. at Grace and by Richard Volley Clearwaters, long-time pastor of the Fourth Baptist Church, in whose building our seminary is housed. I "knew" Clearwaters from McCune's teaching long before I came under his shadow as a professor here in 2004.

Dr. McCune was noted for a number of pithy sayings or wry comments with which he peppered his classroom lectures. One of my personal favorites was his encouragement for us to learn to "think in straight lines." I must say that this was a problem of mine when I entered Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary in the fall of 1991. My personal theology was what McCune would call "brush-pile" theology: a heap of disorganized ideas without much system to them. It was no secret where Dr. McCune stood theologically (this was one reason why I chose Detroit) and he helped me to arrange my own theological understanding in a more coherent fashion. When it came to thinking in straight lines, students often avoided the struggle with the hard issues of theology and would merely side-step or go around a difficult problem without thinking through the problem in the text. Dr. McCune thought through the issues and forced us to do the same. He also opposed "glandular religion," religious ideas driven more by one's emotions than by the text of Scripture.



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

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In class, he was a no-nonsense theologian who viewed his job as inculcating biblical truths into the minds of his eager students. It was dangerous to disagree with him, in class or in a paper. He knew his stuff and there was hardly an objection that a student could raise in class that Dr. McCune hadn't considered and couldn't give a reasoned answer to. After a McCune class on any topic, we knew what he thought the Bible taught and I nearly always agreed with him!

Students, of course, were free to disagree with him, but they did so at their own academic peril. The red ink would flow as he critiqued the content and argument of the paper. I once had a new student ask me if he had to believe all that the seminary taught to graduate. I said, "No, but you have to be able to defend your views." He had a hard time with that when he faced the faculty and Dr. McCune in particular. Dr. McCune knew his stuff.

I also had the privilege of knowing Dr. McCune a bit outside of the classroom. His brother-in-law Wendell Heller, former pastor of the Colonial Hills Baptist Church of Indianapolis, held several meetings at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, when I was pastor. He would travel with his wife Betty doing itinerant ministry and we would always have the McCunes over for dinner when the Hellers were in town. Daisy is Wendell's sister. Watching the four of them interact was a hoot! "Rollie" "let his hair down" (he was bald) in my home in a way I seldom saw as a student. The four of them laughed and joked. He had a less cerebral side that students seldom saw.

As I reflect back on the nearly thirty years I knew Dr. McCune, there are a number of things I owe him. My final call to him was another effort to express my deep gratitude for his impact on my life and ministry. Most recently I owe to Dr. McCune the permission to use his systematic theology notes in my early classes here at Central. I had finished my PhD in 2004 and was hired in July to begin teaching that fall. I taught Church History and half of the Systematic Theology classes. After nearly twenty years in mission and pastoral work, I needed good teaching material for students. Dr. McCune cheerily gave me permission to use his material which was so formative in my own thinking. I unapologetically used his theology notes in my early years as I worked to build my church history notes. It was fitting that I do this anyway. As a student, I was pastoring and I would periodically tell Dr. McCune on Mondays that "we" preached a great sermon the previous Sunday. With his content and my delivery, we knocked it out of the park! His thinking was clear and concise and eminently preachable. My church was well-fed whenever I used his content to help me discuss theological concepts.

He was a great teacher, a clear thinker, and I am glad to say, a personal friend. During his retirement, I would periodically call him to "talk shop." Even after his retirement, he stayed active and enjoyed his family, and he

always found time for a conversation. I appreciated his abiding influence in my life and I told him that I "took him with me" as I traveled the world teaching. Professors leave hidden marks on the lives of their students, especially professors from whom students take multiple classes. I took every "McCune class" DBTS had to offer. I wanted to know what he thought and was glad for the exercise of another course with him. When new students came to seminary, I would counsel them to "take all the McCune classes you can. Who knows when he will retire!" He was then in his sixties and would teach until he was seventy-five, but I didn't want my friends to miss out on Dr. McCune.

I am grateful that in the providence of God I was directed to Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary during the apex of the McCune years. He was in his prime having taught seminary classes for over twenty years. He knew his material and he knew his God. That which he passed to me has stood me in good stead during my fifteen years here at Central. I thank God for Rolland D. McCune. Congratulations, Dr. McCune, on a race well run. We will miss you. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15). *Soli Deo Gloria*.



This essay is by Jeff Straub, 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.
