

Life Is the Time to Serve the Lord*Isaac Watts (1674–1748)*

Life is the Time to serve the Lord,
 The Time t'insure the great Reward;
 And while the Lamp holds out to burn,
 The vilest Sinner may return.

Life is the Hour that God has giv'n
 To 'scape from Hell, and fly to Heav'n;
 The Day of Grace, and Mortals may
 Secure the Blessings of the Day.

The Living know that they must die,
 But all the Dead forgotten lie;
 Their Mem'ry and their Sense is gone,
 Alike unknowing and unknown.

Their Hatred and their Love is lost,
 Their Envy buried in the Dust;
 They have no Share in all that's done
 Beneath the Circuit of the Sun.

Then what my Thoughts design to do,
 My Hands, with all your Might pursue;
 Since no Device, nor Work is found,
 Nor Faith, nor Hope, beneath the Ground.

There are no Acts of Pardon pass'd
 In the cold Grave, to which we haste;
 But Darkness, Death, and long Despair,
 Reign in eternal Silence there.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***Why That Name?***Kevin T. Bauder*

A respected colleague writes to ask why this electronic bulletin is named *In the Nick of Time*, or, to give its proper name, ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ. He claims that he has often wondered about this question. Furthermore, he is sure that others would like to hear the answer.

Of course, a publication has to be named something. Whoever went to the library and asked to see an untitled book or periodical? If someone did publish such a document, it would be indistinguishable from other untitled books or periodicals. Readers would be forced to resort to some sort of *ad hoc* titling, such as “I’d like to see the untitled *blue* book,” or “Where can I find the untitled magazine from the National Forum?” Titles, whether formal or informal, are unavoidable.

The *Nick* (which is the—ahem—*nickname* we use) is one in a series of publications that I have produced in successive ministries. Long ago, when I was still in college, I was learning under a pastor in a small-town church that was located on that city’s Wall Street. The church needed a periodic informational mailing for upcoming events, and we called it the *Wall Street Eternal*. Later, as a pastor, I published a monthly paper printed on gold-colored paper. In a nod to Archer Weniger’s *Blu Print*, I called my publication the *Gold Leaf*.

While pursuing PhD studies I edited a bimonthly publication that was sent out by the Iowa Association of Regular Baptist Churches. Bob Humrickhouse was the association representative in those days, and we called the paper *Ruminations*. It included a hint of pungency that not everyone appreciated. I’m told that those who didn’t like it referred to the publication as *Bauder’s Barf*. The IARBC stopped printing it shortly after I made a comment about being an “unregistered” regular Baptist, then opining that it was not only possible but perfectly acceptable to be a regular Baptist without joining a fellowship like the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. Incidentally, I stand by that thesis.

In the Nick of Time had its origins about twenty years ago. I was the relatively new president of Central Seminary, and I hoped to achieve a couple of goals through the new publication. First, I thought that we needed increased ex-



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posure among potential constituents, particularly students and pastors. Second, I wanted to experiment with a digital publication that could be distributed widely for minimal cost. Third, I wanted something more than a blog: I wanted a piece that would go directly to readers' inboxes, and I wanted something that would be reviewed by the Central Seminary faculty before it went out. Fourth, I wanted a publication that would not be mine alone, but that other professors and friends of Central Seminary could write for.

Beneath all these goals, however, lay a deeper concern. I sensed that certain great ideas that had once been widely accepted within my circles were losing their hold on the imagination of the coming generation. Fundamentalism, with its emphasis on primary and secondary separation, was one of those ideas. Cessationism—the insistence that God is not granting miraculous gifts today—was another. Dispensationalism and its implied eschatology was another. Conservatism (both religious and political) rightly understood was still another. Liberal learning was another of the great ideas that I hoped to foster. Surrounding all these concerns was yet another great idea: the commitment to reasoned discourse.

By 2005, I suspected that all these ideas were poorly understood, even among the most Rightward evangelicals. The time was ripe for them to be re-articulated and defended. I wanted the new publication to do just that.

Because the hour was late and the ideas were slipping away, I felt a sense of urgency about the new publication. Barely enough time remained to make the case for these ideas, to reassure the wavering, and perhaps even to retrieve some who had already given up on the ideas. That was when my reading brought me across the happy expression, ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ.

Literally, the translation would be “In the of time time.” The phrase, however, uses two different words for time. The word *kairos* views time as opportunity, while the word *chronos* views time as measurable. The first involves the quality of time, while the second measures its quantity. Thirty minutes is always thirty minutes: that is *chronos*. But thirty minutes spent getting a root canal does not feel the same as thirty minutes watching the Super Bowl. That is *kairos*. (In fairness I should note that my wife might view the root canal and the Super Bowl as nearly equivalent.)

So, what does ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ mean? It means doing something at the most opportune (*kairos*) moment (*chronos*). The equivalent English idiom is *in the nick of time*, and it describes exactly what I wanted the new publication to be. ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ is a last-moment plea to cling to or return to the great ideas.

If the situation seemed dire in 2005, it appears almost desperate now. The last vestiges of civil discourse are waning. Conservatism has been invaded by demagogues who despise genuinely conservative principles. Liberal learning has been canceled, to be displaced by indoctrination and bullying

in the very centers that were supposed to maintain a commitment to education. Fundamentalism, cessationism, and dispensationalism have become nearly insignificant within the evangelical world. Allegiance to these and other great ideas continues to dwindle.

So, is it time to stop publishing *In the Nick of Time*? Or is it time to modify its stance and approach? Quite the contrary. In his essay on “Francis Herbert Bradley” in *Selected Essays*, T. S. Eliot writes that we sometimes defend lost causes, not because we can win, but because we are trying to keep something alive. If the great ideas are true—and I believe they are—then it is time to explain them, model them, and defend them better than ever before, so that they will remain available when a future generation again takes interest in them.



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.
