

God of My Childhood, and My Youth*Isaac Watts (1674–1748)*

God of my childhood, and my youth,
 The Guide of all my days,
 I have declar'd Thy heav'nly truth,
 And told Thy wond'rous ways.

Wilt Thou forsake my hoary hairs,
 And leave my fainting heart?
 Who shall sustain my sinking years,
 If God my Strength depart?

Let me Thy pow'r and truth proclaim
 To the rising age,
 And leave a savour of Thy name
 When I shall quit the stage.

By long experience I have known
 Thy sov'reign pow'r to save;
 At Thy command I venture down
 Securely to the grave.

When I lie buried deep in dust,
 My flesh shall be Thy care;
 These wither'd limbs with Thee I trust
 To raise them strong and fair.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***Age Brings Choices***Kevin T. Bauder*

Late this summer I will turn 70 years old. I've always said that I wanted to work at least until I was 70. Now I'm knocking on that door, but I'm not ready to retire yet. In fact, I want to work harder than ever. Granted, I'm slower at some things, and neither my memory nor my vision is what it used to be. Writing longhand has become difficult. But experience counts for something, and I feel like I can still do a decent job.

It is a bit challenging to try to teach at the seminary while pastoring a church. In theory, my pastorate is part-time, but anyone who has tried knows that part-time pastoring is a myth. From the beginning, however, I determined not to pastor at the expense of my seminary students. So far, I love pouring myself into both responsibilities.

The distance between the seminary and the church poses the biggest challenge. To spend more time at the church, I purchased a second, much smaller home, near its vicinity. The second home has not worked out as well as I hoped. Much of the extra time that I have gained goes into maintenance. Still, I now have a presence in the community, if a small one.

My prayer is that the Lord will grow the church enough to call a full-time pastor. I would love to turn this work over to a qualified, gifted man. Barring a full-time pastor, someone with an outside source of income could be an option.

When that happens, my wife and I expect to remain in the community, though we plan not to attend the church. I want the new pastor to be able to lead without having to compete with me for the hearts of the people. The area is large enough for us to live there without a new pastor tripping over us. At some point we'll sell our current home and move completely.

When we do, we'll have to downsize. Our church home is much smaller than our seminary home. We've lived in our present home for over a quarter of a century. During that time, we've accumulated a lot of stuff. Now we're selling it, giving it away, or hauling it to the thrift store. In a few cases, we're tossing it. Nobody wanted my old instruments for adjusting the points in a car's ignition.



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My library presents a problem. I started buying theological books in about 1973. By the 2010s I had accumulated around ten thousand print volumes. Then my students introduced me to two electronic library formats: Logos and Kindle. Since then, I have purchased electronic books whenever I could. I have also given away my print copies when I had the same book in digital format. I tried taking some duplicates to Half Price Books, but what they paid didn't cover the cost of my gasoline.

I still have five or six thousand print books. If I surrender my study at the seminary, I will have too many books to move. I must make choices about what I will keep and what I will give away.

Losing these books will be a disappointment. Every book I purchase represents an aspiration. I only buy books that I want to read. When I give away a book without reading it, that aspiration has failed. But at some point, realism sets in. I will never get to read that ornate three-volume collection of Van Gogh's complete letters. I can see it on the shelf as I write. If you want it, you can stop by my study and pick it up.

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For that matter, most older books are available as PDF files. I download them regularly from Internet Archive and Google Books. I have tens of thousands of volumes in PDF format, including (e.g.) the whole *Migne Patrologiae*. These books take up no physical space. I don't have to worry about disposing of them. Anybody who wants them can get them from the same sources I did.

I know that I must downsize. Still, I would like to take as many real books into retirement with me as I can. But which ones? Age brings choices.



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.
