

There Is a Land of Pure Delight

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

There is a Land of pure Delight,
Where Saints immortal reign,
Infinite Day excludes the Night,
And Pleasures banish Pain.

There everlasting Spring abides,
And never with'ring Flowers:
Death like a narrow Sea, divides
This heavenly Land from ours.

Sweet Fields beyond the swelling Flood,
Stand dress'd in living green:
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan roll'd between.

But tim'rous Mortals start and shrink,
To cross the narrow Sea,
And linger, shiv'ring on the Brink,
And fear to launch away.

Oh! could we make our Doubts remove,
Those gloomy Doubts that rise,
And see the Canaan that we love,
With unbecloved Eyes!

Could we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the Landscape o'er,
Not Jordan's stream nor Death's cold flood,
Should fright us from the Shore.

ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Here and There

Kevin T. Bauder

Plenty has happened over the past ten days. Some of it is personal. Some of it is national or even global. Here are a few reminisces and reflections on events that have occupied my attention.

At the personal level, I was invited to deliver a pair of lectures at the Baptist Mid-Missions Family Conference in Elyria, Ohio, last week. I did not address the entire meeting. Rather, I spoke for a new mission team called *Strategic Theological Education Partnerships* (STEP). The team facilitates biblical and theological training in the fields that Mid-Missions serves.

I was asked to speak about scholarship on the mission field. My task for the first address was simply to define scholarship and to assess the condition of scholarship within Baptist Fundamentalism. The second address focused on the levels of training that various mission fields require. The lectures seemed to be well received, and I received a good introduction to the work of STEP.

Baptist Mid-Missions is one of the legacy missions within Baptist Fundamentalism. It was founded in an era when pioneer missionary work was the order of the day. As the various fields have matured, biblical and theological training has become a greater concern. I believe that STEP represents a necessary advance toward the indigenization of many mission fields.

I also had the privilege of attending the conference sessions. For senior missionaries, Mid-Missions presents the "William C. Haas Lifetime Service Award," named in honor of the mission's founder. This year it was presented to Roger and Noreen Russ, missionaries to Ghana. This couple settled with a people group that had no written language. Besides evangelizing them, the Russes learned their language, reduced it to writing, taught them to read it, and translated the New Testament for them. If Christianity is a religion of the written word, then this kind of work is irreplaceable.

When my obligations with BMM were complete, my wife and I drove to eastern Ontario to visit our daughter and son-in-law. They live about half-way between Toronto and Ottawa. We had not driven down to see them since before the COVID panic. In fact, they lived in two homes that we never



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got to visit, and they are just settling into another. It was a long drive but worth every mile.

While we were traveling, word came that John MacArthur had died. At 86, MacArthur had been in failing health for some time, so his death came as no surprise. It did, however, prompt some reflection.

I first became aware of MacArthur's ministry during the late 1970s. He was making a name for himself both as a biblical expositor and as an opponent of the charismatic movement. Over the years his influence increased until he became one of the most widely recognized voices in evangelicalism. He was known for his advocacy of multiple-elder rule, his actual practice of single-elder rule, his defense of Lordship Salvation, and, most recently, his opposition to government shutdowns of public church meetings during the COVID panic.

During the 1980s, MacArthur was attacked by some on the Fundamentalist Right for (as they put it) denying the blood of Christ. This was always a demonstrably false accusation: MacArthur always defended the notion that Christ redeemed His people by shedding His blood. As it turned out, some of MacArthur's critics were motivated by a genuinely heretical theory that redemption was not complete until the Ascension, when Jesus carried His (divine) blood into the heavenly tabernacle, where it remains as a perpetual memorial before the Father.

MacArthur never seemed to lack confidence in his opinions, and he did not change them often. One of his virtues is that when he did, he did it publicly. An example is his view on the eternal sonship of Christ. Earlier in his ministry, MacArthur held the view that the Second Person of the Trinity only became the Son at the incarnation. He was challenged over his view, and to his credit studied and rethought it. He eventually changed his mind, accepting the (correct) view that sonship describes an eternal relationship of the Second Person to the First Person. Furthermore, having changed his view, MacArthur issued a paper explaining both how his mind had changed and why. He was willing to acknowledge publicly that he had been wrong, and that willingness earned him great respect.

Only a few days later came word of another death, that of Ozzy Osbourne. Organizer of the band *Black Sabbath* and pioneer of the heavy metal genre, Osbourne frequently employed satanic and demonic imagery in his performances. He was notorious for biting the head off a bat on stage. The event occurred in Des Moines in 1982, and it earned Osbourne a course of rabies shots. The stunt was not the only one of its kind, however, as Osbourne became notorious for various vile acts.

Later in life he seemed to mellow. He became a star of reality TV. He claimed that he was not and never had been a Satanist, that he believed in

God, that he recognized his own wrongdoing, and that he hoped God could forgive him.

The cultural damage done by Osbourne and his ilk is immeasurable. The world is not a better place for being taught that the devil is a form of amusement. The occult and the obscene naturally belong together, and Osbourne became a purveyor of both. The musical idiom that he helped to invent was the perfect medium for conveying his message. Songs like *Paranoid*, *War Pigs*, *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*, and even *Iron Man* blazed a trail that led away from hope, away from grace, and away from God. On my view, the idiom that Osbourne helped to develop cannot be turned toward any wholesome use. It will debase whatever it touches.

That leaves the question of Osbourne's own destiny. There is good reason to think that he heard the gospel during his lifetime, yet he never publicly repented or professed faith. Still, the example of the thief on the cross means something. Could Osbourne have believed the gospel and trusted Christ before his death? He certainly could, and if he did, then his transgressions are removed as far as the east is from the west. But we have no assurance that he did, and if he did not, then he is now experiencing the reality of the things he mocked for so many decades.



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.
