

Lord of Beauty, Thine the Splendor
Cyril Argentine Alington (1872–1955)

Lord of beauty, thine the splendour
 shewn in earth and sky and sea,
 burning sun and moonlight tender,
 hill and river, flower and tree:
 lest we fail our praise to render
 touch our eyes that they may see.

Lord of wisdom, whom obeying
 mighty waters ebb and flow,
 while unhasting, undelaying,
 planets on their courses go:
 in thy laws thyself displaying,
 teach our minds thyself to know.

Lord of life, alone sustaining
 all below and all above,
 Lord of love, by whose ordaining
 sun and stars sublimely move:
 in our earthly spirits reigning,
 lift our hearts that we may love.

Lord of beauty, bid us own thee,
 Lord of truth, our footsteps guide,
 till as Love our hearts enthrone thee,
 and, with vision purified,
 Lord of all, when all have known thee,
 thou in all art glorified.

ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Favorite Places: North American Edition

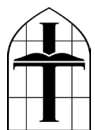
Kevin T. Bauder

I've already written about my favorite places to visit in Europe, Asia, and South America. The list is limited because I've never been to most places. I've visited none at all as a tourist. Anywhere I've traveled, I've gone because some responsibility took me there. I could wish to visit many other world-class cities. I could wish to visit many historical sites. I could wish to visit many natural and cultural wonders. But in the dispositions of God, my days of international travel seem to be at an end, and one cannot have a favorite place that one has never seen. Except, of course, the New Jerusalem.

But what about my favorite places in North America? These will not be cities, with one exception. Most American cities hold little appeal for me. I've lived in several metro areas: Des Moines, Denver, Dallas–Fort Worth, Minneapolis–Saint Paul. I've visited most of the others, from Halifax to San Diego, from Miami to Seattle, with Honolulu and Anchorage thrown in. Each has features worth seeing (or hearing, in the case of great orchestras). None of them draws me.

The exception is Toronto. The big negative about Toronto is its traffic, but once you're in the city, public transportation is good. Toronto is surprisingly safe for its size. It offers interesting architecture, including its bay-and-gable homes, the collegiate gothic of the University of Toronto, and the remarkable late modernism of the CN Tower. It also offers natural beauty along its lakefront. One of the best features of Toronto is its cultural diversity, glimpsed as you pass through neighborhoods of Chinese, Italians, Greeks, Indians, Koreans, Poles, and other ethnicities. It's fascinating to see the street signs switch from one language to another throughout the city. And the culinary opportunities are phenomenal.

Toronto, however, is the exception when it comes to cities. Smaller towns offer varying degrees of charm, but they do not rise to the level of favorite places. Perhaps I should also add that I do not enjoy reenactments, whether military or historical. They always strike me as artificial and contrived. I can't suspend disbelief. I've been to Colonial Williamsburg, among others, and I couldn't care less. What is true of historical reenactment is even more true of biblical reenactment. I have less than no desire to look at, say,



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

Permission is granted to duplicate for personal and church use.

www.centalseminary.edu | info@centalseminary.edu
 900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

a reconstruction of Noah's ark or a rebuilt tower of Babel. Truthfully, I can't even understand why people seem so enthused about these things.

What I most enjoy about North America is its abundance of natural wonder. I particularly love the American West and Southwest. When I was a younger man, I would backpack into the Flat Tops Wilderness near Burns, Colorado to hunt mule deer and elk every November. At my age and in my physical condition, I'll probably never make that trip again. But that valley along Turret Creek remains one of my favorite places on earth.

During the years that I lived in Colorado, I learned to love the high plains as much as the mountains. On the plains, buffalo grass, prickly pear, and yucca played host to jackrabbits, rattlesnakes, coyotes, and pronghorn. In those days, almost nobody traveled into the Pawnee National Grasslands, but I used to roam them. My favorite place was Pawnee Buttes, where the grassland drops away in a series of chalky escarpments, and a pair of steep prominences rises 300 feet from the valley floor. It used to be a breathtaking sight. Sadly, the north rim is now occupied by windmills, and the government has built walkways where nobody ever used to walk. I never, ever saw another person at Pawnee Buttes, but the wildness of the place has now been destroyed. Incidentally, the biggest deer I ever saw were in the little ravines in those escarpments.

The national parks of the West and Southwest are great places. I haven't been to all of them, but the ones I've visited are amazing. Everybody talks about Yellowstone, Arches, and Grand Canyon. They are all wonderful, but they are all crowded. Canyonlands is less crowded and just as amazing. The Painted Desert and the Petrified Forest feature scenery that can't be duplicated—although some of the Badlands in South Dakota is reminiscent of some of the Painted Desert.

One state park deserves special mention. It is Palo Duro Canyon, located near Amarillo, Texas. Palo Duro, an old Comanche stronghold, is the second largest canyon system in the United States. Its scenery is as spectacular as anything in a national park. The rock formation known as the Spanish Skirts is well worth seeing.

For rock formations, nothing with easy access can top the Garden of the Gods near Colorado Springs. Located just off Interstate 25, the park contains leaping spires and balanced formations of red stone. The color of the rocks really pops against a blue sky, and the sky is almost always blue. It can all be viewed by car.

Just as amazing is the Chiricahua National Monument in southern New Mexico, but it is much harder to reach—especially if you go by way of Fort Bowie. The monument is a little oasis in the desert. The rock formations aren't red, but they are remarkable. Chiricahua is one of the few places in the United States where you can find coati (hog-nosed raccoons).

Some years ago, a friend introduced me to the pleasures of exploring abandoned cliff dwellings. There are a surprising number of these with public access. Among others, I've visited the Casa Grande (which is now located in the Arizona city of that name), Montezuma Castle (not far from Interstate 17), the Tonto National Monument, Betatakin Navajo National Monument, and Walnut Canyon (near Flagstaff). These sites are memorable for their great natural beauty as well as for the mysterious civilizations that occupied them.

This discussion wouldn't be complete without mentioning two other places. One is Monument Valley, which looks even grander in person than it does in the movies. The other is Canyon de Chelle in New Mexico. It isn't as big as the Grand Canyon or even Palo Duro Canyon, but in my judgment the scenery is even more eye-popping. Like Monument Valley, it has been used as a set for movies, and with good reason.

There are other places I'd love to mention. Peggy's Cove in Nova Scotia. Denali National Park around Mount McKinley. Devil's Tower in northeastern Wyoming. The waterfalls along the Black River in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Copper Falls State Park in Wisconsin. The Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. Voyageurs National Park. But I have to stop at some point.

Odd, isn't it? On other continents, my favorite places are cities. In North America, my favorite places are away from cities. Some of the American sites are bound to be close to your home. We Americans really do live in a country that has a surplus of amazing natural beauty. And I love seeing it.



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.
