

# ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

## “In the Nick of Time”

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Occasional Essays  
and Other Stuff  
for Christian  
Students

Presented by the  
President of  
Central Baptist  
Theological  
Seminary of  
Minneapolis

American Christianity needs leaders. American Christianity needs *Christian* leaders. Christian leaders explain the Scriptures, bringing them to bear upon life's urgent questions. Christian leaders exemplify the life of faith, finding their ultimate satisfaction in God alone. They unite intellectual discipline with ordinate affection, turning their entire being toward the love of God. These essays are dedicated to the task of inviting today's Christian students to become tomorrow's Christian leaders.

—Kevin T. Bauder

“...Be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

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## The Well and the Water: an Allegory

Kevin T. Bauder

Once upon a time, a band of vigorous tribesmen occupied a high and arid plain. They were surrounded by snow-covered peaks, and what little water they had trickled down from the glaciers and snowfields above. Water was precious to them, for their lives depended upon it. They took care not to waste a drop.

One day, a mighty man rose up among them and asked, “Why do we wait for such water as the mountains are willing to share? Why do we not dig a well?” So he began to dig. But there were in that land certain men who had been given authority to distribute the water. These men knew that if people could drink at will, then their power would end. And so these Authorities sought to defeat the welldigger. When the welldigger died, they stopped up his well and resumed their authority.

In spite of the Authorities, however, water continued to seep from the welldigger's well. Eventually, other mighty welldiggers arose. The Authorities killed some of these. They stopped up the wells of others. But with each new well, the Authorities grew weaker. Soon, many wells dotted the plain. People were at last able to drink freely, to water their herds and flocks, and to grow their crops. The Authorities lapsed into oblivion, for water was free to all.

After these things, a new king began to reign. He hired the best welldiggers to dig a deep well. “This well,” he proclaimed, “is the Authorized Well. Let all drink freely from it!”

Soon, it became prestigious to be seen drinking from the King's Well. People flocked to the Authorized Well, and the older wells began to languish. Without caretakers, they were soon overgrown. Some were completely lost. That seemed unimportant, however, for the Authorized Well offered abundant water to all the inhabitants of the plain. Indeed, drinking from the King's well became almost a mark of a true plainsman.

The people of the plain, who were now the people of the Well, became so prosperous that they began to leave the plain for new lands. They found other plains to settle. Here they faced a problem, for these other plains were distant from the Authorized Well. Transporting water from the King's Well was not difficult while the colonists remained few and close at hand, but when they began to multiply and to travel further, they required more and more water. Because few could journey to the Authorized Well, certain individuals were given the task of transporting its water to the masses. Soon, these haulers of water thought of themselves as Authorities—but theirs was a false authority.

Again mighty men arose. Remembering the work of the first welldigger, they asked, "Why do we transport water from the distant Authorized Well? Why do we not dig wells in our own plains?" And so they did. New wells were dug across the landscape, all of which drew from the same rich aquifers deeply sourced within the earth. Water became abundant throughout the land. Each man could find water in his own plain, and none was required to seek the Pseudo-Authorities in order to quench his thirst.

The Pseudo-Authorities, however, were mightily displeased. Their prestige depended upon the exclusive use of the Authorized Well. More than that, they had convinced themselves that the newer wells all mixed poison into the water. They went to great lengths to persuade people that they must abandon the new wells and drink only from the Authorized Well.

"Look," they proclaimed, "the water in these new wells flows down from the snows of different mountain peaks than the water in the King's Well. It dissolves many poisonous minerals. It will not quench your thirst as will the pure water from the Authorized Well."

"Beware!" they cried. "Many of the new welldiggers are men who drink milk, coffee, and tea. They do not know what makes good water. Their wells cannot be trusted!"

"Take heed!" they implored. "The digging of many wells creates confusion. With so many wells in the land, people will become unable to recognize real water when they drink it."

"Calamity!" they lamented. "Many diggers of the new wells have been paid for their digging. Their wells were dug only for money. Such scoundrels can never provide pure water."

"And alas," they wailed, "their welldigging arts were not taught by our artisans nor their wells dug with our tools!"

The more the Authorities clamored, however, the more foolish they seemed to those who drank from the wells. The plainsmen drank, and their thirst was quenched. Their herds and their crops flourished. None was poisoned. Eventually, people simply stopped listening to the Pseudo-Authorities.

For their part, the Pseudo-Authorities gathered around the Authorized Well. They spent most of their time contemning the water from other wells and congratulating themselves upon possessing the only true and pure well. Oddly, however, they rarely drank, even from the Authorized Well. They shouted at each other about the virtues of their water, and sweated, and

grew red in the face—but only occasionally would they sip the water. They never, ever took deep draughts.

Because they were dissatisfied with being ignored, they began to steal into neighboring countries, where they would try to poison the waters. They began to whisper false and unflattering tales about the new diggers and the new wells. If one of the newer welldiggers happened to be near the Authorized Well, they would cast him out into the desert, driving him into the arid waste without so much as a trickle of mercy.

Every lover of water was grateful for the Authorized Well, and many continued to enjoy its waters. But true lovers of water were also grateful for every well from which water flowed. They rejoiced in the abundance of water. But they grew exceedingly weary of the Pseudo-Authorities. Only, they could not decide what to do about them.

The problem was not whether water from the Authorized Well would slake thirst, for it was cool and refreshing to those who could get it.

The problem was not whether water from the other wells was quenching, for many people drank from these wells with great satisfaction.

The problem was not the existence of many wells or the presence of many welldiggers.

The problem was the Pseudo-Authorities, who wished to be acknowledged as the Great Guardians of Water, and yet who despised the water from other wells. Should they be revered? Should they be placated—and if so, how? Should they be tolerated? Or should they be rebuked and set down from their false authority?

What would a true lover of water do?✘

This essay is by [Kevin T. Bauder](#), president of Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

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## View Mee, Lord

Thomas Campion (1567-1620)

View mee, Lord, a worke of thine:  
Shall I then lye drown'd in night?  
Might thy grace in mee but shine,  
I should seeme made all of light.

But my soule still surfets so  
On the poysoned baytes of sinne,  
That I strange and ugly growe,  
All is darke and foule within.

Clense mee, Lord, that I may kneele  
At thine Altar, pure and white:  
They that once thy Mercies feele,  
Gaze no more on earths delight.

Worldly joyes like shadowes fade,  
When the heav'nly light appeares;  
But the cov'nants thou hast made,  
Endlesse, know nor dayes, nor yeares.

In thy word, Lord, is my trust,  
To thy mercies fast I flye;  
Though I am but clay and dust,  
Yet thy grace can lift me high.✠

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