

One There Is, Above All Others

John Newton (1725–1807)

One there is, above all others,
well deserves the name of Friend;
His is love beyond a brother's,
costly, free, and knows no end;
they who once His kindness prove,
find it everlasting love!

Which of all our friends to save us,
could or would have shed their blood?
But our Jesus died to have us
reconciled in Him to God;
this was boundless love indeed!
Jesus is a Friend in need.

When He lived on earth abased,
Friend of sinners was His name;
now, above all glory raised,
He rejoices in the same;
still He calls them brethren, friends,
and to all their wants attends.

Could we bear from one another
what He daily bears from us?
Yet this glorious Friend and Brother
loves us though we treat Him thus;
though for good we render ill,
He accounts us brethren still.

O for grace our hearts to soften!
Teach us, Lord, at length to love;
we, alas! forget too often
what a Friend we have above;
but when home our souls are brought,
we will love Thee as we ought.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

A Shift In Reading

Kevin T. Bauder

My friend Dave was ordained in the mid-1980s. The offering for his ordination was supposed to go toward his library. To make the most of it, he decided that he wanted to visit the Christian publishing houses and used bookstores in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He invited me to go along. We lived in Iowa, which placed Grand Rapids within a reasonable drive. It turned out to be a good trip from which both of us returned laden with books.

Dave brought along a new toy for the trip. Somebody had given him a Radio Shack TRS80 Model 100 computer. At about two inches thick, this model featured a small screen inset just above the keyboard. I'm pretty sure the computer would qualify as the very first affordable laptop and perhaps even as the first tablet. What fascinated me was that Dave could read electronic books off that small screen. I remember thinking, "Wouldn't it be great if somebody could design a way to carry a library in a little computer like that?"

Fast forward three and a half decades. As I type, I am sitting in my study, where I am surrounded by between two and three thousand books. They occupy shelf space around all the walls of the room. I've even added a bank of bookshelves down the middle of the floor. They take lots of space. They've also cost lots of money. Over the years I have invested well into five figures to accumulate these volumes.

From a financial point of view, these books are now nearly worthless. A small handful may appeal to collectors, but I can hardly give most of them away to today's seminarians. An entire shift has taken place in the way that we read.

Two study tools have propelled this shift. The first is Logos, an electronic library from Faithlife company. I received Logos 2 at a demonstration seminar for free many years ago. The price was right, but I hardly used it because the interface was opaque to me. With subsequent releases, however, the Logos design became much more intuitive. I began to employ it for my serious study, starting with its Greek and Hebrew tools. Its main competitor was BibleWorks, which was more powerful for working in the original languages. I had both programs, but I ended up using Logos for two reasons.



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

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First, it was just easier to navigate. Second, it offered many more auxiliary tools such as commentaries, dictionaries, and biblical and theological tools of all sorts.

Consequently, my Logos library began to grow. I bought commentary sets, scholarly journals, and systematic theologies. At one point Faithlife introduced a parallel line of publications for the humanities called *Noet*; I began to accumulate works of philosophy, literature, and history. While Faithlife eventually stopped producing *Noet*, some of the same volumes are still marketed under Faithlife Ebooks. Most of my “serious” library is now stored in Logos, and my collection is approaching 7,000 volumes.

The main problem with Logos ebooks is that they are often as expensive as, and sometimes more expensive than, their print equivalents. Even so, given a choice between a print book and a Logos book, I will choose Logos. For one thing, the book travels with me wherever I can take my computer. For another, I like the ability to cut and paste the text. Furthermore, every Logos book is tagged and cross-referenced with every other Logos book. To give Logos credit, they do give away free books every month, and they put even more on sale cheaply. Overall, I spend less using Logos than I would spend on print.

When I was in seminary, our dean once told us, “If you haven’t bought a typewriter yet, you haven’t prayed about it.” Now I would say the same thing about Logos. It is an indispensable tool for anyone who wishes to study, teach, and preach the Word of God and the system of faith. But it is not the only one.

Almost as useful is the second tool, Amazon’s Kindle. I was introduced to Kindle by one of our students about ten years ago. At first I was skeptical; software platforms come and go. Kindle, however, now dominates the ebook market, and it appears to be here to stay.

I don’t use an actual Kindle device, though I hear that they are quite good. I simply run the Kindle software on my personal computers. The program is free, as are many, many good books. In fact, one of the selling points for Kindle books has been that, in the past, they have been substantially less expensive than their print equivalents. That’s changing and prices are rising, but Kindle books are usually still a bit cheaper.

The software is not as versatile as Logos. For example, many books come with “Kindle locations” instead of real page numbers, which can be annoying. I find that sometimes I will read a book in Kindle, and then need to hunt for pages that I wish to cite from the print version. Nevertheless, Amazon offers books on Kindle that Logos does not, and the portability of an electronic library makes the inconveniences worthwhile. My Kindle library now numbers into five digits. Plenty of those are free books that are nothing but junk reading, but thousands of them are substantial volumes. Some

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Some people cannot read comfortably from a computer screen. That has never been my problem. As my eyes grow older and dimmer, I have come to appreciate the brightness of the computer. I’m now using a Microsoft Surface, and I love knowing that I have access to my library and study tools any time I wish. I can study at my desk, in the car, or even from a park bench. I can now carry tens of thousands of books with me as easily as I used to carry a single paperback. I could not have imagined in 1987 that I would be able to use tools like these on every single working day.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of 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.
