

**from Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice***Martin Luther (1483–1546); tr. Richard Massie (1800–1887)*

My good works could avail me naught,  
 For they with sin were stained;  
 Free-will against God's judgment fought,  
 And dead to good remained;  
 Grief drove me to despair, and I  
 Had nothing left me but to die,  
 To hell I fast was sinking.

Then God beheld my wretched state  
 With deep commiseration;  
 He thought upon His mercy great,  
 And willed my soul's salvation;  
 He turned to me a Father's heart—  
 Not small the cost!—to heal my smart,  
 He gave His best and dearest.

The Son His Father did obey,  
 And, born of virgin-mother,  
 He came a while on earth to stay,  
 That He might be my brother.  
 His mighty power He hidden bore,  
 A servant's form like mine He wore,  
 To lead the Devil captive.

He spake to me: "Hold fast by me,  
 I am thy Rock and Castle;  
 I wholly give myself for thee,  
 For thee I strive and wrestle;  
 For I am thine, and thou art mine,  
 Henceforth my place is also thine;  
 The Foe shall never part us.

"The Foe shall shed my precious blood,  
 Me of my life bereaving;  
 All this I suffer for thy good;  
 Be steadfast and believing.  
 Life shall from death the victory win,  
 Mine innocence shall bear thy sin,  
 So art thou blest forever."



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

**ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ***In the Nick of Time***Most Interesting Reading of 2024: Part Two***Kevin T. Bauder*

Last week I gave you the first part of my listing of the "most interesting books" that I read during 2024. Again, I emphasize that my selection is subjective: what was interesting to me may not be interesting to you. Nevertheless, here is the rest of my list.

**Heller, Anne C.** *Hannah Arendt: A Life in Dark Times*. New York: Open Road, 2015. 148pp.

Hannah Arendt was a German Jew who fled to France and then America during the Second World War. She had been a student and mistress of Nazi philosopher Martin Heidegger. After the war, she and Heidegger renewed a friendship, and Arendt went on to become an important philosophical critic of totalitarianism. Heller's book not only tells Arendt's story but also focuses on the interplay of philosophical ideas between the two thinkers.

**Kilpatrick, James J.** *The Writer's Art*. Kansas City: Andrews McNeel, 1984. 262pp.

Every year I try to read at least one book on the craft of writing. This year I chose Kilpatrick, since his work came with a recommendation from William F. Buckley. It turned out to be more than just a book. It was as if Kilpatrick put his arm around my shoulders and said, "Son, let me show you how to do this." I only wish that I could learn the lesson as well as he taught it.

**Kim, Swee Hong and Lester Ruth.** *Lovin' on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2017. 192pp.

What is contemporary worship and where does it come from? The authors of this book try to answer that question, defining contemporary worship much more broadly than the current "worship wars." They trace its beginnings to the effort to update worship language, including updating the translation of Scripture. They identify various strands within contemporary worship and outline the philosophy and theology of each. I found the work illuminating.

**McGrath, Alistair.** *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2017. 528pp.

This volume presents itself as an introduction to theology, but it might better be described as a survey. While it does deal with introductory matters

(the prolegomena of theology), it devotes most of its space to surveying the various approaches to the main questions within each discipline of systematic theology. It seems to be written more as a textbook for university students than as a study for seminarians or pastors. The discussion is not advanced, but the survey is useful.

**Morgan, Christopher and Robert A. Peterson.** *Christian Theology: The Biblical Story and Our Faith.* Nashville: B&H, 2020. 620pp.

This theology is written from a conservative, more-or-less Baptist approach, but it aims to present a range of options for many theological questions. It is less detailed than I would prefer in a seminary textbook, but it is charitable in tone and fairly comprehensive. It would make a useful refresher for pastors.

**Nickson, Elizabeth.** *Eco-Fascists: How Radical Conservationists Are Destroying Our Natural Heritage.* New York: Broadside, 2012. 384pp.

Broadside Books is supposed to be a conservative imprint under Harper Publishing, but Nickson is not noticeably conservative. She is a liberal environmentalist and journalist who is upset at the way the environmental movement has been highjacked. Some of her claims are difficult to verify (e.g., that the government is importing “cadaver wolves”). Overall, however, she makes a convincing case that contemporary environmentalism and governments are using each other as vehicles for radical social engineering.

**Sacco, Jack.** *Where the Birds Never Sing: The True Story of the 92<sup>nd</sup> Signal Battalion and the Liberation of Dachau.* New York: ReganBooks, 2003. 336pp.

Warning: this volume is written about military service from the perspective of a soldier. It contains offensive language. And it isn't quite a first-person narrative. While written in the soldier's voice, it was authored by his son. Qualifications aside, the book is a gripping story of one GI who served under Patton and who participated in the liberation of Dachau. Given the increasing penchant for Holocaust denial, direct accounts such as this one are needed.

**Shenvi, Neil and Pat Sawyer.** *Critical Dilemma: The Rise of Critical Theories and Social Justice Ideology—Implications for the Church and Society.* Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2023. 528pp.

This work does a better job of describing the origins and ideas of critical theory than any other book I've read. It deals with difficult ideas in an understandable way. If you are a pastor who wants to understand critical theory and social justice, I can't think of a better work to recommend.

**Shippey, Tom. J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century.** New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000. 384pp.

Too much is being published about the Inklings for a non-specialist like me to keep up with it all. Still, I try to read a few books each year about Lewis, Tolkien, Barfield, or Williams. This book by Shippey is just a nice rehearsal of Tolkien's importance. It includes responses to many of Tolkien's critics.

**Sowell, Thomas.** *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?* New York: William Morrow, 1984. 168pp.

Thomas Sowell is another author who deserves his own shelf in your library. I've never read anything by him that wasn't worthwhile. This is one of his earlier works. He argues that many of the putative successes of the Civil Rights Movement would have happened anyway, while the movement itself has hindered civil rights in important ways. He also responds to the accusation that his personal rise is due to the very things that he critiques.

**Spink, Kenneth, ed.** *First Timothy: Church Charter.* Cleveland: Hebron Association, 2024. 200pp.

The pastors of the Hebron Baptist Association near Cleveland have produced this little commentary. Of course, some chapters are more detailed, and others are more devotional, but I love the idea of pastors cooperating to study, understand, and comment on a book of Scripture. May they produce more in years to come.

**Van Drunen, David.** *Natural Law: A Short Companion. Essentials in Christian Ethics.* Brentwood, TN: B&H, 2024. 160pp.

According to this author, Reformed theology and some version of natural law are compatible perspectives. The book is a brief introduction to the kind of natural law that just might work in a Reformed context. The author is not unmindful of the noetic effects of the fall, and his discussion includes several important qualifications. This is a helpful book.

**Witherington, Ben III.** *What Have They Done with Jesus? Beyond Strange Theories and Bad History—Why We Can Trust the Bible.* New York: HarperCollins, 2006. 352pp.

Bad theorizing abounds about the Jesus of History, the composition of the Gospels, and the early development of Christianity. In this book, Witherington attempts to distill and simplify the arguments for popular consumption. He defends a responsible, understandable, conservative defense of the biblical record.

So those are the books that I enjoyed most in 2024. Lord willing, I'll be back in a twelvemonth with a list of the books I enjoyed most during 2025. Until then, happy reading.



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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.

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