

Supreme in Wisdom as in Power

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

Supreme in wisdom as in power
The Rock of Ages stands;
Though canst not search His mind, nor trace
The working of His hands.

He gives the conquest to the weak,
Supports the fainting heart;
And courage in the evil hour
His heavenly aids impart.

Mere human energy shall faint,
And youthful vigor cease;
But those who wait upon the Lord
In strength shall still increase.

They, with unwearied step, shall tread
The path of life divine:
With growing ardour onward move,
With growing brightness shine.

On eagles' wings they mount, they soar
On wings of faith and love;
Till, past the sphere of earth and sin,
They rise to heaven above.

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ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Favorite Authors, Part One

Kevin T. Bauder

Let me give fair notice. I intend to begin a series, written only now and then, naming my favorite things. Some of these things are directly religious in nature: my favorite theologians, for example. With others, the connection may not be as obvious (my favorite mystery writers or my favorite calibers). But it is always a mistake—a bad one, too!—to segregate “spiritual” from merely “secular” loves. We live life as a whole, and all of life should be lived as devotion to God. This is just as true of favorite calibers and pasta dishes as it is of favorite commentaries or Bible versions.

I begin the series with a listing of my favorite authors. These authors are my favorites for a variety of reasons, but two reasons top the list. To be one of my favorites, an author must write well. And to be one of my favorites, an author must teach me something. Perhaps I should add that neither of those criteria requires agreement—I enjoy reading certain authors with whom I disagree sharply. But I also learn from them, if only by arguing against them. Be that as it may, here are several of my favorite authors. I list them in alphabetical order.

Mortimer Adler is best known as the author of *How To Read a Book*, a volume that every college freshman should be required to study. He also prepared the *Syntopicon* in the Britannica Great Books Series. No other reference tool is like it. But some of Adler's best work was as a popularizer of Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophy. In this capacity he became known as the “philosopher for everyman.” His works include several volumes dealing with the existence of God, but he remained an agnostic until late in his life. The story of his conversion is included in *Philosophers Who Believe*, edited by Kelly Clark.

Jacques Barzun was at one time provost of Columbia University, but he is best known as an intellectual and cultural historian. Barzun valued the life of the mind, and his writings could take a polemical edge. His theory of culture (*The Culture We Deserve*) resembled that of Matthew Arnold, and he was sharply critical of contemporary cultural decay. He was a thorough scholar, and his work *The Modern Researcher* is required reading in many graduate programs. Barzun's magnum opus was a history of Western culture entitled *From Dawn to Decadence*.



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Peter L. Berger had an exceptionally long career as a sociologist. His writings helped me to understand the disciplines of sociology of knowledge and sociology of religion. If you're interested, read the following books in order. *Invitation to Sociology* is exactly what it sounds like: a brief description of what sociology is and how sociologists work. *The Social Construction of Reality*, co-written with Thomas Luckmann, builds upon the first book and introduces the sociology of knowledge. In *The Sacred Canopy*, Berger articulates a sociology of religion that evaluates religious phenomena in purely (social) scientific terms. Then, in *A Rumor of Angels*, Berger tries to explain how one can continue to be religious after one has explained religion away. Berger's writings on modernity (such as *Pyramids of Sacrifice*) offer considerable help in understanding our present intellectual location.

G. K. Chesterton's works can be picked up free on Kindle, if you have the patience to look for them. Chesterton wrote at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Some of his works, like *Orthodoxy* and *Heretics* are polemical. Others (*The Club of Queer Trades*), are spoofs with a point. A widely-acclaimed series of mystery stories features a priestly detective named Father Brown as protagonist. Chesterton uses the mystery form to argue for a universe that is ordered, moral, and transcendent. Both the quantity and the variety of Chesterton's writings are baffling, but his prose is not.

Friedrich von Hayek represents the full flowering of Austrian economics. He is one of the three pillars upon which modern conservatism stands. Hayek always insisted that he was not a conservative, but his sharp criticism of socialism and all forms of "planned economy" made him a ready ally. His work, *The Road to Serfdom*, nailed down the economic plank in the conservative platform. While not as widely influential, other works such as *The Constitution of Liberty* and *The Fatal Conceit* are equally important. If you watch the sales, you can pick up Hayek's writings fairly inexpensively on Kindle.

Russell Kirk was another pillar of modern American conservatism. His book, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*, laid the historical plank for the conservative platform. Other influential works include *The Roots of the American Order* and *The Politics of Prudence*. His *Enemies of the Permanent Things* is an exceptional volume, as is *Eliot and His Age*. Kirk also produced an autobiography, *The Sword of Imagination*, and a volume of ghost stories, *Ancestral Shadows*.

This completes the first five of my favorite authors. They are first in alphabetical order, and not necessarily as I favor them in comparison to my other favorite authors. Each deserves his own shelf in your library. The list will continue and concludes with the next *In the Nick of Time*.



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.
