



## Annual Book Review 2004

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**Ecclesiastes 12:12 - But beyond this, my son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body.**

I love those words from Solomon. "Excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body." Those words are true; however, books are also invigorating to the mind.

I offer to you this second annual installment of "Recommended Reading." I have selected five excellent books from my list of recent readings. If you are looking for some brain food to take with you on a trip/vacation this summer, you might enjoy one of these.

I have listed them in ascending order of "difficulty." ***The Murder of Jesus*** by John MacArthur (Word Publishing, 243 pgs). MacArthur offers a very complete and compelling presentation of what happened in the final days of our Lord's life. All the details of the four gospels are brought together and explained in light of their cultural and historical contexts.

As you well know, the death of our Lord was no martyrdom and no accident. It was the plan of God to purchase our salvation with His own blood (**Acts 20:28**). ***The Murder of Jesus*** shows how the greatest injustice ever carried out (the death of the pure Son of God) was actually ultimate justice as "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." (**1 Peter 2:24**)

***Spurgeon v. Hyper-Calvinism*** by Iain H. Murray (Banner of Truth Trust, 164 pgs). If you like theology, history, and biography, you'll love this book. Charles

Spurgeon is known for his preaching. He is called the 'Prince of Preachers' and he held thousands spellbound every week in London.

Spurgeon was also a warrior. He fought the good fight against two destructive movements which ravaged Christianity in his day: hyper-Calvinism and the "down grade" controversy.

What happens when men try to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable truths of divine sovereignty and human responsibility? Either we over-emphasize human responsibility of man and do harm to the doctrine of divine sovereignty or we overemphasize divine sovereignty and do harm to human responsibility.

The first error leaves us with a "Roman Catholic" style of Christianity that views man as somehow cooperating with God in salvation. We end up with a faith that hinges not on the grace of God which sovereignly regenerates a person dead in their sins, but with a grace that is unable to accomplish anything without the work and cooperation of fallen man.

The second error leaves us with a God who does not love all men and does not offer salvation to all men indiscriminately. Spurgeon fought both of those errors in his day. Murray's book will explain the four errors of Hyper-Calvinism and demonstrate how Spurgeon fought them.

***Church History in Plain Language*** by Bruce L. Shelley (Nelson, 520 pgs). This is not for the timid reader! If you don't like history, don't even bother reading the title of this book.

Shelley divides 2000 years of Church History into

eight different ages including, "The age of Jesus and the Apostles," "The age of the Christian Roman Empire," and "The age of the Reformation."

The book explains the politics, culture, and people that have shaped the church over the last two millennia. The strength of the book lies in its brief and straightforward treatment of history. However, the book is not without its weaknesses. Since so much material is covered in only 520 pages, the reader finds himself wanting to know more about some of the most influential men and women in the history of the church including Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Spurgeon. These men and their accomplishments are only afforded a few pages and in some cases, a few paragraphs.

You'll have to pick up other good books like Murray's book on Spurgeon!

***Politically Correct Death: Answering Arguments for Abortion Rights*** by Francis J. Beckwith (Baker, 256 pgs). This book is not for the squeamish! After thoroughly describing what abortion is and what it does from the medical, religious, and legal perspectives, Beckwith demonstrates how to logically and lovingly answer those who argue for abortion rights.

Did you know there are 68 different arguments which are used for abortion? Beckwith systematically shows the logical fallacies and flaws in the reasoning of each of these 68 arguments.

This book accomplishes two things. First, it informs as to the nature of the pro-choice movement and the practice of abortion itself. Second, it shows the reader how to think logically and present sound arguments to those we may encounter who try to defend infanticide.

***Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*** by Michael J. Behe (Free Press, 307 pgs).

The theory of Darwinian Evolution is crumbling. In search of some explanation as to how life could arise by chance and natural processes, Evolutionists send telescopes to the far reaches of our solar system and microscopes to the human cell.

The more that is learned, the more ridiculous evolution appears. Behe is an unbeliever, but he can see from "the things that are made" (Romans 1:20) that there is an intelligence behind the universe.

As one of the architects of the Intelligent Design movement, Behe challenges his fellow scientists to finally recognize the elephant in the living room that everyone knows is there, but nobody wants to talk about. Of course, they don't want to talk about it, for they are afraid that once they get around to the other side of the elephant they will see that it is labeled "God." That would really mess up their lives.

I hope you enjoy these books as much as I did. So many books, so little time. Remember, you are a product of the books you read, and in all your reading, don't neglect The Book.

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