
What Are You Reading This Summer? Part Two

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Reverend Sam G. Candler**

In Praise of Slowness, by Carl Honore. That is another favorite book of mine this summer (I covered other books last week). In fact, I read *In Praise of Slowness* on one of the slowest days of the year, the day of the summer solstice, June 21, 2010. The longest day of the year, to my mind, should be the slowest.

However, as I honestly admitted to my wife, I read the book too fast! The book reviews many of the movements toward "slowness" in recent years: slow food, slow medicine, slow reading, and even slow sex. Maybe the book is a bit quick and ragged, but it captures a wonderful antidote to our present culture's infatuation with speed. We appreciate life and the world much more acutely, when we slow down. And, we actually read better, when we slow down. The other day was the birthday of Marcel Proust (*Remembrance of Things Past*); several critics noted that one of Proust's greatest writing achievements was requiring his readers to slow down and savor as they read. His sentences, long and highly structured and complex, force us to focus and to pay attention. They are good for us.

I always try to read a science book during the summer, and last month I tackled *The Quantum World*, by Kenneth W. Ford. I am still fascinated by quantum mechanics, but I am also still stymied by it. One thing I do know, and which I appreciate in modern physics, is that light rules. It was the puzzling dual nature of light (particle or wave?) that led physicist to quantum theory, and it is still the speed of light which functions as a constant when almost everything else is relative. Thus, Jesus's comparison of himself to light still stands above both science and religion ("I am the light of the world.").

I found a book in a little local book store in south Georgia that I bet no one else has read this summer: *The Story of Georgia's Boundaries: A Meeting of History and Geography*, by William J. Morton. I was fascinated by the theme of the book, how the various boundaries of Georgia—"north, south, east, and west"—were negotiated and established; but the fascinating features of the book are the actual historical reviews that accompany each boundary decision. I was able to cover almost an entire history of the United States while reading this concise book, especially the various wars of the nineteenth century (from 1812 onwards, with the British, the French, the Spanish), many of which affected Georgia boundaries.

Two other books, each fine and insightful: At a Rotary meeting one Monday last Spring, I heard the conservative writer, Ian Bremmer; and I immediately purchased his new study of the current world economy called, *The End of the Free Market: Who Wins the War Between States and Corporations?* He rightly acknowledges the power of "State Capitalism" in our era. States themselves are functioning as private corporations in our new form of world capitalism. It is interesting that Bremmer has greater trust in the lasting resilience of the truly free market, but his book is actually more focused on the rise of nation-state capitalists.

Finally, an odd one: *The Jesus Sutras: Rediscovering the Lost Scrolls of Taoist Christianity*, by Martin Palmer. Palmer's book is a dual study, first of his discovery and review of some lost documents, and, second, his publication and analysis of the documents themselves. I believe him. Christianity travelled eastward in the first five centuries of its life; it did not simply stay at Rome. Palmer relates the fascinating story of his discovery of a lost pagoda, built in the seventh century in China but which was a Christian monastery. Sutras were written there, holy documents, which related the words of Jesus to a Chinese culture. I enjoyed this book as both a mystery thriller and as a truly spiritual document. Great fun!

Again, tell me what YOU are reading this summer!

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