

The Windows

George Herbert (1593–1633)

Lord, how can man preach thy eternal word?
He is a brittle crazy glass;
Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford
This glorious and transcendent place,
To be a window, through thy grace.

But when thou dost anneal in glass thy story,
Making thy life to shine within
The holy preachers, then the light and glory
More reverend grows, and more doth win;
Which else shows waterish, bleak, and thin.

Doctrine and life, colors and light, in one
When they combine and mingle, bring
A strong regard and awe; but speech alone
Doth vanish like a flaring thing,
And in the ear, not conscience, ring.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Most Interesting Reading of 2020: Part Two

Kevin T. Bauder

Last week I began listing the “most interesting books” that I read last year. As you can tell, the list is eclectic. While I read mostly in my discipline, much of the reading that I find interesting is outside it. Here’s the rest of my list.

Lansing, Alfred. *Endurance: Shackleton’s Incredible Voyage.* New York: Basic Books, 2015. 357pp.

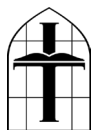
In September 1914 Ernest Shackleton set sail to lead an expedition across Antarctica. Before he reached the continent, ice trapped and sank his ship. The crew camped on ice floes, not touching land for 497 days. After reaching the inhospitable Elephant Island, Shackleton and five companions from the crew took a twenty-foot boat across more than 800 (land) miles of open sea to South Georgia Island. They climbed and then descended from the island’s unexplored mountain range using only fifty feet of rope and a carpenter’s adze. From there, Shackleton tried three times to lead rescuers to Elephant Island. He finally reached his crew at the end of August 1916. Every member of his expedition survived. This story, told in very readable prose by Alfred Lansing, is a testimony to the possibilities of human endurance.

Leslie, Edward E. *The Devil Knows How to Ride: The True Story of William Clark Quantrill and His Confederate Raiders.* Boston: Da Capo Press, 1998. 516pp.

Before reading this book I’d heard about Quantrill, but I’d never read much about him. The book provides considerable biographical detail but its chief value is its depiction of the “border warfare” between Missouri and Kansas. This warfare was producing atrocities on both sides long before the South seceded from the Union. The resulting scars were part of what Abraham Lincoln had in mind when he spoke of the need to “bind up the nation’s wounds.” Leslie’s depiction of Quantrill helps the reader understand both why this healing was necessary and why it was so hard.

Michener, James A. *Tales of the South Pacific.* West Bloomfield, MI: Franklin Library, 1986 repr. 415pp.

_____. *The Novel: A Novel.* New York: Random House, 1991. 446pp.



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

Permission is granted to duplicate for personal and church use.

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

Last year I read two works by James A. Michener. The first, *Tales of the South Pacific*, is his memoir of the Pacific Campaign of the Second World War. The book won a Pulitzer Prize and became the basis for the musical *South Pacific*. It was my first introduction to Michener's writing, and I read it partly because he served in the same theater of war as some of my family members. Of the volumes that I've read about the war in the Pacific, this was by far the most engaging.

Because I enjoyed the first volume so much, I decided that I'd like to try another work by Michener. I picked up *The Novel* because I assumed that a book with that title must be about writing novels—after all, Michener's written a bunch of them. On the contrary, the book is a novel about a novel, or more particularly, about a novelist. It does provide an inside look at the publishing industry as it stood immediately before the Internet changed everything. In a backhanded way, it also provides a glimpse into Michener's own literary theory.

Murray, Douglas. *The Madness of Crowds: Gender, Race, and Identity*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2019/2020. 384pp.

This book was good enough that I read it twice. Murray could hardly be called a conservative, but he does several things well. First, he explains the theoretical roots of contemporary identity politics as embodied in Critical Theory and the “woke” movement. Second, he surveys the movement itself. Third, he draws attention to the excesses and internal contradictions of “wokeness.” Murray also prescribes an agenda for responding to the madness of this movement. This is not a book for the faint of heart: Murray deals with his subject matter thoroughly and even graphically. It is a book that every pastor ought to read.

Peterson, Jordan B. *Maps of Meaning: The Architecture of Belief*. Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 1999. 564pp.

If you've ever wondered whether Jordan Peterson is a Christian, this book ought to answer that question for you. Peterson believes that myth is unavoidable, that it is built into the very structure of both knowing and being. He also believes that myth is essential for making sense of the world. He believes that Christianity is myth. This volume is probably his most theoretical, but reading it provides valuable background for understanding his more practical works.

Rumsfeld, Donald. *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*. New York: Sentinel, 2011. 883pp.

Rumsfeld served three terms as a congressional representative, as Secretary of Defense under both Gerald Ford and George W. Bush, and as an adviser to Richard Nixon. Here he offers his memoirs, including a fairly extensive look into the administrations with which he served. He depicts the rivalries,

both interpersonal and interdepartmental, that shaped government policy. He is hardest on the press, but not unfairly so. Unlike most memoirs, this is not an exercise in self-justification. Instead, Rumsfeld tries to acknowledge his mistakes and to explain why things happened as they did.

Sowell, Thomas. *A Personal Odyssey*. New York: Free Press, 2000. 320pp.

I'll read anything that I can get my hands on by Thomas Sowell. This book is different than most of his work, however. It is his autobiography. It details his rise from poverty to scholarship in some of the nation's most prestigious universities while at the same time telling the story of his shift from Marxism to a species of conservatism. As usual, the book contains valuable advice for those readers who are clearheaded enough to heed it.

Waymeyer, Matt. *Amillennialism and the Age to Come*. The Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources, 2016. 326pp.

Matt Waymeyer writes this book to defend premillennialism against a new generation of amillennialists. His primary target is Kim Riddlebarger's *A Case for Amillennialism*. Waymeyer argues that biblical prophecies cannot adequately be explained on a simple two-age theory (the present age and the age to come). Prophecies about the age to come cannot be read coherently without inserting some intermediate form of the kingdom before the final and everlasting form of the kingdom. This book is now the state of the art for premillennialism.

Wiesel, Elie. *Dawn*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2006. 64pp.

Dawn is a very short work of historical fiction. The setting is Palestine during the closing years of the British Mandate. Zionists have been fighting the British for Israeli independence. Wiesel depicts them as terrorists. The British are threatening to execute a captured Jewish fighter. The Zionists in turn capture a British officer and threaten retaliation if the execution takes place. *Dawn* is the story of the final night as seen through the eyes of the young Israeli who has been ordered to carry out the execution. This book is a remarkable piece of writing from a remarkable perspective.

That's my list of “most interesting books” from 2020. My tastes are admittedly odd. You may like some of these books, but you might hate others. In any event, I wish you happy reading during 2021.



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.
