

Summertime assortment: Reading suggestions

by [John Buchanan](#) in the [September 9, 2008](#) issue

There are always far more books than there are hours for reading, so I try to strike a balance between what I think I need to read and what I know I'll simply enjoy. In the former category this summer is Lamin Sanneh's *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity*. This thoughtful, scholarly book will help Western and Northern Hemisphere Christians better understand the enormous geographical, theological and ecclesiastical shifts in the current chapter of Christian history.

Hans Küng enters the science-theology conversation with *The Beginning of All Things: Science and Religion*. With his customary wide-ranging scholarship, he argues that the big bang and divine creation are not incompatible.

I was an admirer of Shirley Guthrie, a true Presbyterian saint who taught theology at Columbia Theological Seminary, so I picked up his *Always Being Reformed*, which includes essays by Daniel Migliore, Amy Plantinga Pauw and George Stroup. Guthrie reflects on the most important question on the church's agenda today: Can Christians confess that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and that there is no other avenue to salvation in a way that also conveys grace-filled inclusivity?

Frederick Buechner's *The Yellow Leaves: A Miscellany* is so good that I portioned it out, a chapter at a time, to prolong the pleasure. Buechner begins by confessing that at 80 he is not feeling up to writing a book, and then proceeds to produce 123 pages of lovely, touching, wise and witty prose. He continues to be our mentor, inspiration and pastor.

I was pleasantly surprised by Allan Cox's *Your Inner CEO*. Cox knows corporate jargon but surrounds it with thoughtful and penetrating analysis of the human condition.

As 2009 will mark the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin, I revisited T. H. L. Parker's *John Calvin: A Biography*, in a new paperback edition. Parker's description

of the reformer's irascibility and penchant for conflict with almost everybody will correct romantic notions about Calvin's career. But Parker also reminds modern readers about Calvin's devotion to the unity of the church.

Finally, Scott Simon, a National Public Radio journalist, has written *Windy City: A Novel of Politics*, an engaging yarn about the unexpected death of a Chicago mayor and the machinations of the city council in electing a successor.