BOOKS I HAVE READ: JANUARY VARIA

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This month's miscellany includes a weighty history book, a fascinating scientific introduction, some science fiction stories a book about missional living and a murder mystery.
Category: Observations

Max Hastings'Â Catastrophe: Europe Goes to War 1914Â is a massive hardback which has exercised my arm muscles almost as much as my brain and imagination over the last few weeks. That being said, it is an excellent book, easy to read, engaging and enlightening. The book basically covers the events of 1914; the way in which the famous assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand led to war and the subsequent events up to the famous Christmas truces on the western front. The book is rich in human stories rather than detailed explanations of military manoeuvresÂ and such like. This is a big book and it takes a serious investment of time to read it all, but it is very good and relatively cheap on Kindle.

Life on the Edge: The Coming of Age of Quantum BiologyÂ by Jim Al-Khalili and Johnjoe McFadden is a fascinating account of a new area of science. It looks at the way that biological processes, from the ability of birds to navigate, to photosynthesis and enzyme action are actually governed by quantum phenomena. Complex issues are presented in a way that is accessible to the non-specialist - which is just as well. If you are interested in science, this one should be on your reading list.



Of less interest to the scientific purist isÂ The Tenth Golden Age of Science Fiction MEGAPACK. I have to admit that I've read a good number of theseÂ *megapacks* from Amazon on my Kindle. Each one consists of a good number of SF stories and novellas, all for a very low price. I have always loved classic science fiction and these downloads are perfect for me. The quality of the stories is variable, but as they cost something like 2P each, you can live with that. It is amusing to see the way in which writers got the future so wrong. Almost all of them assume that people in the future would be great smokers, but none of them anticipated the degree to which computers and phones would impact our lives.

I expectedÂ Flesh: Bringing the Incarnation Down to EarthÂ to be a theological exploration of the Incarnation, but it's actually a guide to missional living. It's ok, but doesn't say anything I've not read many times before. I bought it because it was cheap on Amazon and was happy enough. Not sure I'd pay full price for it though.

Another book I bought at a reduced price for my Kindle wasÂ Sleepyhead (Tom Thorne Novels Book 1). It's a murder mystery with a bit of a twist; diverting enough at the time, but I'm unlikely to remember it in a couple of weeks. This is another book that I was happy enough to buy at a reduced price, but which I'd findÂ hard to recommend at the full cost.

Really good writers of fiction are able to provide the background information you need for a story without every appearing to pause or to lecture the reader. Unfortunately, I don't think that the author ofÂ A Skeleton in God's ClosetÂ has quite managed that skill.Â This Christian attempt at a DaVinci Code type thriller is rather spoiled by too much dull exposition of things which should have been better woven into the narrative. I really can't recommend you splashing out your hard earned cash to buy this one, but if you are interested in a mystery novel built around the origins of Christianity, you

may well enjoyÂ The Sea Walker: A Bible Mystery StoryÂ which I read last year.