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The Kindle Experience — A Personal Report

Tuesday, December 8, 2009

Books are a major part of my daily life. As I write this, I am surrounded by many thousands of books, each with its own feel, appearance, and meaning. Many of these books have played crucial roles in my thinking and understanding. Even as Christianity requires a certain level of literacy for its transmission and understanding, the book (whether scroll or codex) is rightly cherished by Christ's people.



There is something special about most books and the experience of reading them. The physical reality of the book, including its cover, paper, typeface, and design are part of its charm. Books are wonderful to behold, to sense, to hold, and ultimately to read. As a technology, books have survived the test of time. They do not need batteries, they hold up well with a minimum of maintenance, and, unlike a computer, they never crash. Books are almost perfect as a combination of design and purpose. Who could ask for more?

I do. The printed book is superior to almost every imaginable technology in any number of respects, but not in all. The digital revolution has reached the world of books, and things are forever changed. I was an early adopter of the Kindle, Amazon.com's almost iconic electronic reader. My first Kindle was bought soon after the technology became available. I purchased a few books and intended the Kindle to operate as a supplement to my library of printed books. I did not expect to spend much time with it, but I saw the advantage of instantly-available books that could be carried in my briefcase by the hundreds.

Now, I travel with an unreasonable number of books inserted throughout my luggage, but I cannot stash more than a few. The Kindle allows me to carry hundreds, and eventually thousands. Even as Nicholas Negroponte of MIT predicted the shift of all information from atoms to bits, the Kindle allows this transformation for the book. Writing in *The New Republic*, Anthony T. Grafton predicts that "electronic reading will move from being one of the ways we access and consume texts to the dominant mode."

I am not sure of that when it comes to books, but it is already true for any number of other published formats, ranging from newspapers to academic journals. I cannot imagine that the Kindle (or any similar technology) will replace the printed book in affection or aspiration, but it has already become a means of transcending the material barrier when it comes to books.

Put bluntly, I seldom leave home without my Kindle. It rides in my briefcase, holding more books than I could ever carry and ready for more.

I started with the original Kindle, then switched to the [Kindle 2](#), and upgraded to the [Kindle DX](#). I eagerly recommend the [Kindle DX](#) as the state-of-the-art Kindle. Amazon now also offers a Kindle that can be used to purchase books internationally.

Some thoughts:

1. Do not think of the Kindle as replacing the book. Bury that thought. Bury it deep. Then go and hold a favorite book in your hand. Enjoy. Then pile 50 of your favorite books and carry them with you all day, through airports, onto airplanes, checking into hotels, sitting in meetings, reading in bed at night. You get the point. You sit (gloriously) in a library. You take a Kindle in your briefcase.

2. Yes, you really can read books with this thing. The experience is not identical to reading a printed book, but it is very satisfactory for most books, magazines, and newspapers. The screen technology makes the Kindle look much like a printed book with type on a page. You will gain a feel for reading on the Kindle quite quickly.

3. The ability to purchase and receive books almost instantaneously is nothing short of amazing. I recently needed a couple of books for an article I was urgently writing in a New York City hotel room at 2:00 AM. No worries. I had both books on my Kindle within five minutes.

4. My Kindle holds dozens of theological classics, Bible translations, and seminal works of theology, history, and philosophy. It also holds a great deal of literature, including novels. I find reading fiction particularly profitable on the Kindle. I tend to forget the technology and just get lost in the book. I also have dozens of biographies, books on current events, and books by favorite authors on my Kindle.



5. I purchase and read some books on the Kindle, knowing full well that I probably do not want to maintain them in my permanent library collection. The Kindle is glad to hold them for me. You can often request a sample chapter to see if you want to purchase the book. I generally find myself hooked.

6. I really like the ability of the Kindle DX to receive and display PDF files and the ability of all Kindles to receive my own files as books. I can send a manuscript to my Kindle by email and it is there for the reading whenever I need it. That is extremely helpful.

Will the Kindle and its digital competitors replace the printed book? I think not. Indeed I hope not. I think most of us will reserve a special pride of place for printed books. Think not of replacement, but of supplement. Amazon.com CEO Jeff Bazo recently told *The New York Times Magazine*: "For every 100 copies of a physical book we sell, where we have the Kindle edition, we will sell 48 copies of the Kindle edition."

That stunning figure tells the story. Digital books are here to stay, and sales will only grow. You are probably reading these very words on a screen. That ought to tell you something.

I am always glad to hear from readers and listeners. Write me at mail@albertmohler.com. Follow regular updates on Twitter at www.twitter.com/AlbertMohler.

I will be trying out the Barnes & Noble e-reader, the "Nook," in coming days. I'll let you know what I think.

