

Winter 2016

**CLIS** Christians *in*  
Library *and*  
Information  
Services



# ***CHRISTIAN LIBRARIAN***

## **CONTENTS INCLUDE**

- ***ANNIVERSARIES ABOUND***
- ***SILENCE IN THE LIBRARY***
- ***CHRISTIAN LIBRARIANS SENT TO COVENTRY***
  - ***POET WITH CLAY FEET***
  - ***DOING GOD: TEN YEARS AND COUNTING***
- ***WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN IN  
THE WORKPLACE?***

## **EVENTS AT A GLANCE**

### **●ANNUAL CONFERENCE: SATURDAY 8 APRIL 2017**

*Carrs Lane Church Centre, Carrs Lane, Birmingham, B4 7SX. Includes seminar on "The Future of the Library and Information Professions" with speakers Karen Hans, Michael Gale, Paula Renouf, and Susan Bates.*

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### **●VISIT TO TYNDALE HOUSE, 36 SELWYN GARDENS, CAMBRIDGE, CB3 9BA: WEDNESDAY 10 MAY 2017**

Details: p. 9.

### **●VISIT TO LAMBETH PALACE LIBRARY, LONDON, SE1 7JU: MONDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2017.**

Details: p. 9.

## **PRAYER NOTES FOR WINTER 2016**

### **PLEASE PRAY FOR**

●Forthcoming CIS activities including next year's annual conference and visits to *Tyndale House* and *Lambeth Palace*.

●The work of the executive committee as it plans for 2017 and beyond and deliberates on the best use for an unexpected legacy.

●. Our contributors **Nick Spencer** and the Rev. **Will Morris** and their work at *Theos* and *St. Martin-in-the-Fields* Church and elsewhere.

● The work of the *London School of Theology* and its library.

●The *Speaking Volumes* scheme and its new policy of providing 100% funding for Christian books for libraries.

● The work of the *Evangelical Alliance* as it celebrates its one hundred and seventieth anniversary in 2016.

●Our recent lecturer **Nick Page** and his work as a writer, speaker, and unlicensed historian.



## **FOUNDED IN 1976 AS THE LIBRARIANS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP**

An organisation 'in liaison' with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals.  
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## THE FIRST WORD

**EDDIE OLLIFFE** learns some lessons from a recent illness and reaches a conclusion that has taken him “several months to write”

# ***GOOD HEALTH***

*‘I pray that you may enjoy **good health** and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well’. 3 John 1:2 (NIV)*

Is ‘**good health**’ the most important aspect of our lives?

If you had asked me this at the beginning of 2016, I would have smiled. I was far too busy with work to be concerned about my health. *Christian Literature Crusade Wholesale* had just moved its warehouse from Alresford up to Sandycroft, near Chester. We then had a good Christmas period. When we reached January, I felt that I would move into CLC’s retail management.

If only I had known!

In February, we went on holiday. I came back keen to get on with the shops. The Trustees had asked me to spend some time looking at all of our shops in the UK - CLC UK have nineteen shops based across the country. Obviously this is a hard time in retail, and we recognised that certain aspects of the trade would need to be changed. On 3 March, I had a good meeting with our finance director in Alresford, followed by a forty minutes ‘phone conversation with a manager in Chester. I then went to the loo

Ouch - whatever was that! The most extraordinary head pain I have ever had hit me. It was awful. I have never had anything quite as serious. I quickly went back to my office. By the time I sat down, I could not move at all. A colleague came in to see me. He realised I could not speak, and phoned the ambulance straightaway. They were there very quickly. I was taken into *Winchester Hospital*, and immediately thrombolysed. Fortunately, this burst the clot in my head. The stroke was not as severe as it might have been. Physically I was fine, but was left with aphasia which is gradually improving.

What did I learn from all this? God is definitely in control - He is really our creator. Secondly, I want to do to the will of God. What does that actually mean? Did this stroke come from God, was it '*me*' or did it come from '*the devil*'? I thought about this for several weeks, and came to the conclusion that I honestly do not know. But - what I do know is that God is the Lord, and regardless of what happens, I could always trust Him. **That's a big sentence** - and it has taken several months to write.

In terms of attitude, my life has changed somewhat. Now I look at every day as being '*the day*'. Tomorrow may never come. Yesterday has gone. Jesus was right - today is the '*best*' day. So I pray **good health** just for you!

**Eddie Olliffe** is Interim General Manager for *CLC International (UK)* and President of *Christians in Library and Information Services*. Eddie blogs at [eddieolliffe.wordpress.com](http://eddieolliffe.wordpress.com) and tweets from [@eddieolliffe](https://twitter.com/eddieolliffe)

## THE SECOND WORD

**ROBERT FOSTER** reflects at the closing of a milestone year in the life of *Christians in Library and Information Services*

# ***ANNIVERSARIES ABOUND***

It can scarcely have escaped the attention of readers of *Christian Librarian* that this is our fortieth anniversary. Anniversaries abound - it so happened that our first speaker at this year's CLIS annual conference was Nick Spencer (see the transcript in this issue) representing *Theos*, an organisation celebrating its tenth anniversary. And there have been a number of national anniversaries: in 1016, or thereabouts, Canute (or Cnut) became King of England, ending the years of Saxon reign, and then in 1066 it was the turn of the Normans; it's also been a four hundredth commemorative year for William Shakespeare; London has marked three hundred and fifty years since the Great Fire; the Battle of the Somme has been remembered one hundred years on; and Queen Elizabeth II has turned ninety.

Anniversaries are just about anywhere you look, or want to look. We've been reminded that fifty years ago England won the FIFA World Cup. Not interested? Well, you might be intrigued by a local radio DJ who devoted a whole show to the *Beatles* 1966 album *Revolver*, because in his view (and no doubt many others) it was a milestone in popular music. More into classical music? Radio 3 has celebrated seventy years.

As a Christian librarian, I think the year 1516 has a special significance, being the year when the first printed Greek New Testament, compiled by Erasmus, was published and circulated in Europe. The historians tell us it was done in something of a hurry, to beat a rival publication, but it was nevertheless a 'first'. As a result Luther and Tyndale were able to make translations into the vernacular from the Greek, rather than the Latin Vulgate. Today we take it for granted that our New Testament is translated from the best Greek sources, the commentators are either Greek experts or at least know Greek and that theological colleges furnish students with the opportunity to learn the original New Testament language.

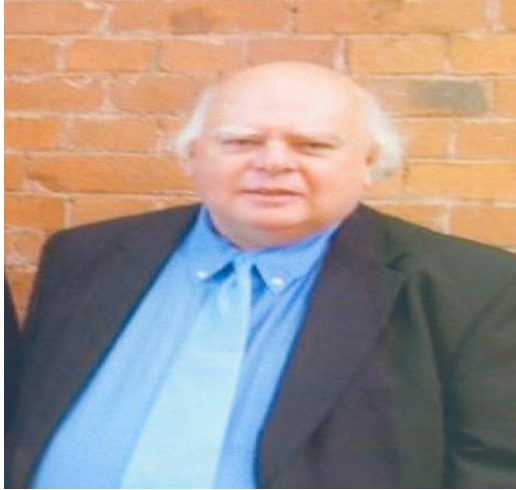
But perhaps an anniversary is made more special if it sees the subject moving on in some way. An anniversary can re-launch an area of interest which has been neglected or in need of reappraisal. I recall that the C.S. Lewis anniversary in 2013 saw not only numerous celebrations but fresh studies of his life and work. Two years before, and with countless other Christian groups, our events in 2011 highlighted the four hundred years of the King James Bible, which not only drew attention to the historical and literary impact of the KJB but also provided a springboard for outreach in the twenty-first century: one speaker described a KJB roadshow going all over the country; people wrote about how the Bible was important to them and others had their picture taken holding a board saying '*I used to be ... but now ...*' (the gaps being filled with their own words about what had changed in their life). Anniversaries can have added value. As we celebrate forty years of CLIS, I hope that, like me, you will have many good memories, whether recent or long years past. I'm sure it's right to reflect with some gratitude. We've heard some superb talks, often both informative and entertaining; we have visited libraries and similar places of interest; we've hosted a service of worship at CILIP's national conference; and we've had our own stand at the *Library and information Show*.

Sadly, the latter two activities are no longer available to us in the same way, and we will have to look for new and perhaps different openings in the future. I think it's fair to say that whatever challenges we face we won't be the only ones dealing with them. My first CLIS (then LCF) conference was in 1997 when we considered the concept of post-modernity. A number of the themes we looked at that day have gone from being trends to being commonplace. I've been helped in many ways by being part of the fellowship, and look forward to more good things.



**Robert Foster**, *BA, DipIM, MCLIP*, is Chair of *Christians in Library and Information Services* and works as an Assistant Librarian at the *Royal College of Music*.





## **CLIS NEWSLETTER**

**From Graham Hedges,  
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### **EVENTS IN 2017**

Next year's Annual Conference is to be held on **Saturday 8 April 2017** at the **Carrs Lane Church Centre, Carrs Lane, Birmingham, B4 7SX**, from 10.30. a.m.

In the morning session we will have a speaker from *Scripture Union* who will talk about SU's popular interactive computer game ***Guardians of Ancora***,

designed to introduce Bible stories to technically aware young people.

The afternoon session will include a presentation on **The Future of the Library and Information Professions** and the speakers will include **Karen Hans** (school librarian), **Michael Gale** (Librarian, *The Queen's Foundation*, Birmingham), **Susan Bates** (Patent Analyst, *Shell International*), and **Paula Renouf** (Director, *Speaking Volumes*).

On **Wednesday afternoon 10 May 2017** there will be an opportunity to visit the Library of **Tyndale House**, the biblical research library at **36 Selwyn Gardens, Cambridge, CBD 9BA**. where our member Dr. Rachel Johnson is currently working as an Assistant Librarian.

We are also planning a return visit to the Library of **Lambeth Palace**, the London home of the Archbishop of Canterbury, on **Monday afternoon 11 September 2017**.

More details will follow but please note the dates and plan to join us in 2017.

## **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL NEWS**

- We were sorry to hear of the recent death of **Anthony J. Ashcroft**.

Tony Ashcroft worked until his retirement as a local history officer for the *Metropolitan Borough of Wigan* and served as the Assistant Secretary of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* (as we were) from 1991 – 1993.

Members will wish to pray for Tony's wife, Pat, and other members of his family in this time of bereavement.

- Our past speaker **Jonathan Bartley** has been elected as joint leader of the *Green Party of England and Wales*.

Jonathan, who gave our annual lecture on Christians and politics in Reading in 2004, is the founder and former co-director of *Ekklesia*, an independent think tank looking at the role of religion in public life. He stood as a candidate for the *Green Party* in the 2015 General Election and also plays drums in the blues/rock band *The Mustangs*.

Jonathan was interviewed for **Reform** magazine in September 2016 and you can

read the interview at [www.reform-magazine.co.uk/2016/08/interview-going-for-green](http://www.reform-magazine.co.uk/2016/08/interview-going-for-green)

- We are pleased to announce that our Crowborough, East Sussex, member, **Sarah Etheridge**, has been co-opted onto our executive committee in the new role of Recruitment Secretary.

In this role Sarah has already carried out an extensive publicity mailing to university departments of library and information studies. Please pray that we will get a good response from Christian students in these institutions.

Sarah is currently working as a Library Assistant and Acting Collection Librarian at *Lambeth Palace* in London.

- Our past speaker actor and writer **Tony Jasper** continues to be active. ***A Man called 'Billy'***, his tribute to the evangelist Dr. Billy Graham, was performed at the *Westminster Central Hall* on Sunday evening 31 July 2016.

Tony publishes a regular arts magazine, ***Crisis***, which appears on his web site at [www.jasperian.org](http://www.jasperian.org) ***Crisis 42*** includes the text of his talk *Author Minefield* from our London conference in April 2010.

## **JOIN US ON-LINE**

LCF/CLIS has had an on-line presence for some years and you can visit our web site at [www.christianlis.org.uk](http://www.christianlis.org.uk) In addition to describing the aims and objectives of the organisation, the web site includes details of forthcoming activities, reports of past meetings including photographs, and sample issues of the **E-Newsletter** and **Christian Librarian**.

We have also had our own **Facebook** and **Linkedin** groups for some time, and thanks to our new committee member Sarah Etheridge we now have our own **Twitter** account which can be found at [https://twitter.com/CLIS\\_UK](https://twitter.com/CLIS_UK) I would encourage members and supporters to make greater use of these social media, perhaps to raise issues from working life or to respond to articles that appear in the **E-Newsletter** or **Christian Librarian**,

Do you receive our **E-Newsletter** published between issues of our printed magazine? This provides us with a useful way of sending out information at short notice and we would encourage all members with e-mail facilities to sign up. If you would like to join the mailing list please contact [webmaster@christianlis.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@christianlis.org.uk)

Back in April 2016 Robert

Foster (CLIS Chair) and I recorded an interview for Andy Peck's programme *The Leadership File* on *Premier Christian Radio* You can still listen to this interview on-line at <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/the-leadership-file/id267142111?mt=2>

## **CHRISTIAN RESOURCES TOGETHER**

After one year's absence I was pleased to attend this year's *Christian Resources Together* retreat at *The Hayes Conference Centre*, Swanwick, between 15-16 September 2016. This major event brought several hundred Christian booksellers and publishers together and included addresses by Rico Tice from *All Soul's Church*, Langham Place, London, and Rachel Turner, author of ***Parenting Children for a Life of Faith*** and other books.

One highlight of the event was the evening awards ceremony which recognised achievements in the fields of publishing and bookselling. Andrew White's ***My Journey So Far*** was announced as the Book of the Year while Billy Graham's ***Where I Am*** was awarded as the biography of the year. The *Christian Literature Crusade* bookshops were revealed as the

Retail Group of the year and the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* was recognised as the publisher of the year. The Community Impact award, sponsored by *Speaking Volumes*, went to the *Southend Christian Bookshop* who have donated books to libraries all over the world.

Paula Renouf, Director of the Christian Book Promotion Trust's *Speaking Volumes* scheme, led seminars explaining the workings of the scheme. There has been a recent change in the *Speaking Volumes* method of working and the scheme is now willing to provide one hundred per cent funding for collections of Christian books for libraries of all kinds. This funding can be made available to churches, bookshops etc. wishing to donate books but could also be paid directly to libraries if requested.

A sad moment came when a representative of the *Bible Society* reported that, having failed to find a viable buyer for the *Christian Resources Exhibition*, there were no plans for further exhibitions after a regional event planned for Maidstone in October 2016.

You can obtain more information about *Christian Resources Together* events at [www.christianresourcestogether.co.uk](http://www.christianresourcestogether.co.uk) and find information about

*Speaking Volumes* at [www.speakingvolumes.org.uk](http://www.speakingvolumes.org.uk)

## **170 YEARS AND COUNTING**

19 August 2016 marked the one hundred and seventieth anniversary of the *Evangelical Alliance*, founded in 1846.

The Alliance is the largest and oldest British organisation uniting and representing evangelical Christians and making their views known to the public, the media and the wider Church.

The organisation is active in expressing a Christian viewpoint in Parliament and the public sphere generally and in carrying out research into current issues of concern to evangelicals. It is fully involved in the social media, including *Facebook* and *Twitter*, and produces printed and on-line publications to keep supporters up to date with developments. In the past it has given birth to the *Arts Centre Group*, *Global Connections*, *Home for Good*, and *Tearfund*.

LCF/CLIS has been an affiliated society for many years but I would encourage individual members to become members or

supporters of the Alliance in their own right. Perhaps your local church might also consider becoming a member church if it is not already in membership.

You can find more information at [www.eauk.org](http://www.eauk.org) or by contacting the EA at 176, Copenhagen Street, London, N1 0ST. E mail [info@eauk.org](mailto:info@eauk.org) Tel. 020 7520 3830.

### **FIVE YEARS A VOLUNTEER**

In September 2016 I celebrated five years since I arrived at the *Evangelical Alliance* as a volunteer working mainly with the media and communications team.

I already had long standing links with the Alliance as a personal member, local church rep., and as the Secretary of LCF/CLIS. However, following my early retirement from the public library service I was keen to find a new context in which I could utilise my experience in library and information work. Since then I have indexed past issues of *idea* and *Crusade* magazines, written book reviews, catalogued books for the library, and helped to organise the archives going back to 1846. I was absent from the office for much of 2015 due to illness but was able to carry out some duties

from home. It has been good to be back in a working environment, and to get to know some of the staff, and I would recommend volunteering to anyone with time and expertise to offer.

At the moment I am engaged in the mammoth task of indexing the journal *Evangelical Christendom*, which was published from 1847 until the 1950s. Most of the century remains to be indexed, so I hope to be around for some time to come.

During the same period I have made occasional visits to the *Westminster Central Hall* to catalogue stock for the *Epworth Library*, consisting of books from the former *Methodist Publishing House*.

I am sure that other retired members have found volunteering opportunities in which to use their talents. Please send me your experiences and I will include them in a future issue.

### **SPEAKING UP**

What can I say about my faith at work? Can I pray for a colleague? What do I do if I become aware of an issue between me and my employer? Is

it OK to talk about Jesus even if it offends someone? What can I say on social media?

These are some of the questions raised in ***Speak Up: a brief guide to the law and your gospel freedoms*** produced by the *Evangelical Alliance* and the *Lawyers' Christian Fellowship*.

The booklet contains brief guidance on how to legally and sensitively share faith in a working environment and answers such questions as What can I say at Church, What can I say at home or in someone else's home, and What can I say in the street?

The booklet notes that the freedom to talk about religion is enshrined in common law, in domestic legislation and in European legislation.

***Speak Up*** is available as a printed booklet from the *Evangelical Alliance* but can also be found on-line at [www.eauk.org/speakup](http://www.eauk.org/speakup) where you will find additional links and information.

## **TOWARDS A THOUSAND GROUPS**

Members of Christian workplace and professional groups

assembled at the *Emmanuel Centre*, Marsham Street, London, on Saturday 22 October 2016 for the annual general meeting and conference of *Transform Work UK*. Several of the professional groups – including our own – provided displays of their activities and the day provided plenty of opportunities for networking and finding out about the work of the various groups.

The stimulating line-up of speakers included Ros Turner and Michael Coveney, leading lights in TWUK and past speakers at our own events.

Ros conducted interviews with representatives of several enterprising groups while Michael gave advice on how to witness to the faith at work without seeming weird! Basing his talk in part on the biblical story of Daniel, Michael recommended meeting and praying with other Christians in the workplace, getting recognition for groups as official staff networks, and identifying areas where a Christian group could make an impact.

Richard O'Dare, a specialist in employment law, gave advice on how Christians could use the law to their own advantage. He recognised that equality and diversity policies could create problems for Christians but believed that, on the whole, Christians should embrace these

policies and the relevant legislation. Freedom of speech was sometimes under threat, however, under workplace regimes of “*intolerant liberalism*”.

There would be occasions when Christians would find themselves in conflict with employers, but they should choose their battles carefully and avoid a combative and confrontational approach. Christian groups should also try to break stereotypes: for example, the assumption that Christians are fixated on sexual ethics.

Believing that Christian groups have the potential to transform the wider society the conference announced ambitious plans for working towards a thousand groups in the workplaces of the nation.

I would be interested to hear from members who belong to workplace Christian groups, whether they exist solely for library staff or have a wider membership.

Guidance on ***Starting a Christian Workplace Group*** is available in a new booklet available, price £5.00, from *Transform Work UK* at 1 Christie Drive, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 6JD. Is this a way in which *you* could contribute to Christian witness in the working environment?

## **BEYOND THE WARDROBE**

A large crowd assembled at the *London Institute for Contemporary Christianity* on Tuesday 4 October 2016 to hear Professor **Robert Banks** speak on **C.S. Lewis** and the reasons for his appeal as a Christian apologist.

Lewis’ appeal may derive from his emphasis on the central beliefs of Christianity – the things that most Christians believe – rather than narrow denominational concerns. His approach was to appeal to the deepest longings of human beings.

Lewis was interested in people and readers of his books often feel that they are on the other end of a personal conversation. His books frequently stress everyday experiences and objects and provide analogies from everyday life.

Lewis aimed to create a space for God in people’s imaginations while building a cosmic vision of the Christian faith.

Despite his elevated academic standing Lewis regarded himself as an ordinary person and made friends with

other ordinary people such as cab drivers. These figures often found their way into his works of fiction. He had a remarkable talent for friendship.

Questions raised from the floor after the lecture touched on such matters as Lewis' relevance to non-British readers and the lack of a belief in absolute values in current society. A member of the audience bore testimony that Lewis' children's books had "*baptised*" his imagination as a nine year old, even though he had not become a Christian until many years later.

## **JESUS DRAMATISED**

Our past speaker **Tony Jasper** has sent me a copy of a talk that he gave to the *Dorothy L. Sayers Society* at *Exeter University* in August 2013.

Although best remembered for her series of detective novels featuring Lord Peter Wimsey, **Dorothy L. Sayers** (1893 – 1957) also wrote plays and books on Christian apologetics and theology. She may be regarded as a member of a mid-twentieth century literary movement, mainly from the Anglican and Catholic traditions,

which included T.S. Eliot, Christopher Fry, John Masefield, Graham Greene, and Charles Williams.

Tony's talk recalls the controversies that surrounded Sayers' play cycle ***The Man Born to be King*** (Gollancz, 1946) broadcast by BBC Radio in 1941. Although intended to commend the Christian faith to a wider audience, the plays were attacked by Christian organisations like the *Lord's Day Observance Society* and the *Protestant Truth Society*. Some individual listeners described the plays as "*blasphemous*" and "*vulgar*" because the author had given regional accents to the biblical characters and used American slang. Some could not understand the need to depart from the hallowed language of the ***King James Bible*** or the ***Book of Common Prayer***

Tony draws comparisons with the criticisms that were made of later, and much less orthodox, dramatic productions such as ***Jesus Christ Superstar*** and ***Jerry Springer: the Opera***.

He expresses "*despair at how some Christians, some churches, react to plays and films about Jesus. They come with pre-conceived ideas or wants, do not listen to what is given ... and desire to hear the platitudes they know and have grown to love in*



*their lazy spiritual stagnation”.*

Drama and language are not the servants of dogma and as one writer expressed it, “*Good sermons are written by people who are sure they are right ... good plays by people who are not*”.

These comments may be applicable to Christian responses to other art forms, such as fiction, music, poetry and the visual arts. Do you agree with Tony’s assessment? Send me your comments please.

## **UNDERWATER PILGRIM’S PROGRESS**

The BBC4 series ***The Secret Life of Children’s Books*** highlighted Charles Kingsley’s 1862 classic ***The Water Babies*** (William Collins, £2.50, ISBN 978-0007449460) on Monday 11 July 2016.

Presented by the Rev. Richard Coles, the programme explored the life and times of the author, a *Church of England* clergyman at Eversley, Hampshire, and a member of the *Christian Socialist* movement.

Described by Coles as “*an underwater pilgrim’s progress*”,

the novel is partly a parable of Christian redemption, partly a defence of Charles Darwin’s theories on evolution (disputed by many scientists at the time), and partly a satire on child labour in nineteenth century England.

***The Water Babies*** tells the story of Tom, a young chimney sweep, who drowns after falling into a river. In his post-mortem state he experiences various underwater adventures in river, lake, and ocean, before being restored to life and becoming an eminent man of science in Victorian Britain.

The novel is credited with changing contemporary views on child labour and helping to inspire new legislation. It was very influential in its day but is less highly regarded now due to the author’s politically incorrect opinions especially on racial matters.

## **CURRENT AWARENESS**

- ***Christian History***, Issue 113, 2016, is devoted to the work of “*Seven Literary Sages*” and we are told “*why we still need their wisdom today*”.

The issue includes articles

on the lives and works of C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, J.R.R. Tolkien, Owen Barfield, Dorothy L. Sayers, G.K. Chesterton and George MacDonald.

Contributors to the magazine include our past speaker Michael Ward who writes on *Learning What No One Meant to Teach: the educational experiences of C.S. Lewis* (pp. 30-33).

- Stephen Brown's *The Bit-Part Saviour and That Chariot Race* recalls the literary and screen history of **Ben-Hur**, taking in a silent movie version, the Charlton Heston epic, and the 2016 re-make.

Lew Wallace, the writer of the original 1880 novel, began as a nominal Christian and was unconventional in regard to regular worship. He wrote the book after being challenged by a prominent atheist to defend his religious beliefs. Wallace's descendant Carol Wallace has now re-written the story for a contemporary readership (Lion Fiction, £8.99, ISBN 978-1782642244)

The article appears in the **Church Times** for 9 September 2016, pp. 22-23.

- CLIS member Kim Walker

contributes an article to the September/October 2016 issue of **idea** magazine describing her work as *Senior Information and Research Officer* at the *Evangelical Alliance* (p. 12 )

Kim's article also mentions my own role as the Alliance's Information Volunteer.

Other articles in this EA one hundred and seventieth anniversary edition raise the questions *Does Evangelicalism Have a Bright Future?* (Gavin Calver, pp. 30-31) and *Should We Scrap the Term 'Evangelical'?* (Chine McDonald, pp. 16-17.) The last named writer's *That Vicar off Gogglebox* (pp. 32-33) is a profile of TV Vicar Kate Bottley.

You can read this issue as a whole on-line at [www.eauk.org/idea/sep-oct-2016-issuu.cfm](http://www.eauk.org/idea/sep-oct-2016-issuu.cfm)

- David Parish argues that God is concerned with our everyday working lives and that we should resist the temptation to separate our lives into '*spiritual*' and '*secular*' compartments.

The early Church Father Eusebius encouraged lay Christians to seek the common good in everything they did. The Protestant Reformers broke with Catholic tradition and maintained (in the words of Martin Luther)

that the office of pastor and cobbler were both of spiritual value.

The workplace is a major arena for Christian service and witness. Compartmentalising faith and life can have disastrous consequences. There have been instances in which Christians have been guilty of fraud or the exploitation of workers because they have failed to integrate their beliefs and their working lives.

Quaker business pioneers such as George Cadbury contributed much to society by starting companies that manufactured healthy products and provided for the material well being of their employees.

*God of the Nine-to-Five* appears in **Premier Christianity**, August 2016, pp. 48-49, 50, 53, 55.

- Malcolm Guite defends the decision to give the Nobel Prize for Literature to Bob Dylan in his article *He That Hath Ears to Hear*

Some have objected that the prize should have been given to a writer rather than a musician and singer/songwriter. However Dylan may be regarded as a lyric poet and the term “*lyric*” refers to the lyre, the stringed instrument with which early Greek poets accompanied their work. Dylan’s work often alludes back to past literary figures, including Keats

and Blake (the latter in his Christian masterpiece *Every Grain of Sand*).

Dylan is of interest to Christians because of his frequent references to the Bible. These are not restricted to songs from his Christian conversion period (1979-82). His best known song *Blowing in the Wind* may include echoes of Ezekiel 12:2 and John 3:8.

The article appears in the **Church Times** for 21 October 2016, p. 15.

- A further assessment of Bob Dylan as a literary and religious figure appears in Derek Walker’s article *Did Faith Help Dylan Win a Nobel Prize?* which appears in the **Church of England Newspaper**, 21 October 2016, p. 15.

- The **Church Times** published its eight thousandth issue in July and marked the occasion by publishing extracts from news stories and comments included in the newspaper in the years since 1863.

Topics covered in the feature included: The death of General Gordon; the relief of Mafeking; the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima; the partition of India; the Billy

Graham campaign of 1954; the wedding of Charles and Diana; the 9/11 attacks; and the removal of Saddam Hussein.

Glyn Pafin's *Have We Got News for You* appears in the **Church Times** for 15 July 2016, pp. 21-26, 31-32.

- Kiera O'Brien's *Holy Impressive Religion Surges* reports that books on religion have shared in the growth of the printed book market in 2015 as revealed in sales data from *Nielsen BookScan*.

Religious books achieved a 10.4% rise in volume and a 12.3% increase in value terms. However, the *Nielsen Bookscan* category of *Religion: Comparative, General and Reference* includes titles on all religions as well as works of anti-religious polemic such as Richard Dawkins' ***The God Delusion*** and Christopher Hitchen's ***God is Not Great***.

Pope Francis' ***The Name of God is Mercy*** appears at no. 3 in the specifically Christian best-seller list and C.S. Lewis makes two appearances in the top ten with combined sales of ***Mere Christianity*** and ***A Grief Observed***.

In the same issue Sue Baker's *Religion and Spirituality*

*Spotlight* highlights some future titles. Film director Martin Scorsese gets an unexpected mention in this feature due to his forthcoming screen adaptation of the novel ***Silence*** by the Japanese Catholic author Shusaku Endo telling the story of Jesuit missionaries to Japan in the seventeenth century. The novel has appeared in a new hardback edition from SPCK's *Marylebone House*, price £14.99, ISBN 978-1910674277.

These articles appear in ***The Bookseller*** for 15 July 2016, pp. 30-34.

- Mary Hammond's *The Book of Kells: a silent labour of love for the Gospels* tells the story of a very special book written around 800 A.D.

Housed in *Trinity College* Dublin's Old Library, the ***Book of Kells*** is a precious and lavishly illustrated manuscript of the four gospels in Latin. It is now the centrepiece in the exhibition *Turning Darkness into Light* and attracts over half a million visitors each year. It has long been regarded as Ireland's finest national treasure.

The story of the ***Book of Kells*** goes back to St. Columba (St. Colm Cille), an Irish monk and missionary who founded the monastic community at Iona in

Scotland. According to a widely accepted theory the manuscript was produced by Columban monks at Iona but, following a Viking raid, was taken to a new monastery at Kells in County Meath, Ireland, where it was kept as a treasured reminder of St. Columba.

The manuscript is written on vellum (calf or goat skin) parchment which guaranteed over a thousand years of life for the book. The **Book of Kells** can now be viewed on an iPad app. developed by *Trinity College*.

The article appears in **The Plain Truth** for Spring/Summer 2016, pp. 9-11.

- David Bryant's *A Sermon For Our Own Time* considers the contemporary relevance of Geoffrey Chaucer's **Canterbury Tales** and especially the figure of the Parson.

Chaucer's narrative poem lampoons many figures from the Church of his day. The Prioress, for example, worships rank and etiquette and has no regard for the Christian virtues of poverty supposedly embraced by monasticism.

The Parson, however, is a saintly, Christ-like figure who teaches his parishioners the gospel and is diligent, patient and

prayerful.

The Parson's address to his fellow pilgrims has many themes relevant to a twenty-first century readership. Chaucer's writing pre-figures modern slavery, the misuse and worship of money, and a sexual revolution that has taken the beauty and glory out of sexuality.

The article appears in the **Church Times** for 27 May 2016, p. 27.

*Please let me know if you would like to read any of the articles mentioned in this feature.*

## **EBSCO PUBLISHING**

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# ***SILENCE IN THE LIBRARY***

## **GRAHAM HEDGES reports on a recent visit to the Library of the *London School of Theology***

Despite the popular caricature that librarians spent all their time telling people to “Ssshhh” I can only recall seeing “*Silence*” notices in two libraries. This may be because my background is mainly in public rather than academic libraries, but it is interesting that the only libraries where I can recall seeing silence notices are both theological collections: the libraries of *Spurgeon’s College* and the *London School of Theology*.

On Thursday 8 September 2016 four members of CLIS took part in a visit to the Library of the *London School of Theology*, in Northwood, Middlesex where we were the guests of the Librarian, Keith Lang.

LST has an extensive library of some 50,000 volumes,

not to mention pamphlets, tapes and back runs of periodicals, some of the latter dating back a hundred years. There is also an extensive collection of dissertations written by former students. The library is catalogued on the *Capita* (formerly *Talis*) library management system and can be accessed on a variety of computers and mobile devices.

LST was originally founded in the 1940s as the *London Bible College* and was intended to provide a counterweight to the prevailing liberal theology of the day. After some years based in central London in 1970 the college acquired the site vacated by the *London College of Divinity* (which had moved to Nottingham and become *St. John’s College*).

LBC/LST has played a major role in re-establishing evangelical scholarship and has many distinguished past students, teaching staff and principals. As we were escorted along corridors to the library we were able to admire the many portraits of leading figures who have taught at the college or been awarded regular or honorary degrees by the institution. These include such diverse figures as John Stott, Graham Kendrick, and Gilbert Kirby.

The library has fully embraced technology and, at the time of our visit, was about to implement self-service equipment using the RFID system. These days many of the students own their own laptops or mobile devices but the library also provides a print room in which students without their own equipment can use PCs and print out documents.

The library contains special collections of materials in various subject areas. There is a growing collection of books on psychology and counselling and on ethical questions such as homosexuality. Keith Lang believes that, although the biblical teaching is clear on many of these issues it needs to be re-interpreted and re-applied in every generation.

At one time the college housed a study centre on Islamic studies and although this is no longer operating, the library still has much material on the Christian response to the Muslim faith.

Keith made an interesting observation on the treatment of the Koran in libraries. When I worked for the public library service in Wandsworth we were instructed at one point not to place the Muslim holy book on

bottom shelves in order not to give offence to Muslims. However, Keith pointed out that, according to strict Islamic thought, the Koran is really only the Koran in the original Arabic text. English versions are translations, not the real thing.

Keith is also interested in building up a collection of materials on Pentecostalism including resources not immediately available elsewhere.

The books are classified by the college's own unique classification system and are housed on metal shelving said to be worth £15,000 which Keith was able to acquire for nothing from a library that was closing down.

One highlight of the afternoon was a visit to the archive room which includes an edition of the ***Book of Common Prayer*** dating from 1666, the year of the Great Fire of London. This is said to be worth in the region of £3000. Other intriguing items held in this room include the last surviving LST Christmas hat! The personal papers of the leading evangelical scholar, Donald Guthrie, are also stored here.

Keith suggested that the

musty smell of old books may have an addictive quality and this may be caused by unseen microbes lodged within their page. Part of the library is housed in the former chapel of the *London College of Divinity*. There is some concern that some of the images that decorate the wall may be masonic symbols. This suggests to me that there may have been a time when evangelical Christians were less hostile to freemasonry than they often are at present. I am reminded that the first great conference of the *Evangelical Alliance*, back in 1846, took place in London's *Freemasons Hall*, a choice of venue that might raise a few eyebrows if repeated today.

The former chapel has a chapel bell and there is a student tradition that the bell is rung each summer at the end of examinations.

Keith Lang, the Librarian, has a varied background with a university degree in engineering and a past history as a primary school teacher before entering the library profession.

It is encouraging that many Christian colleges now employ professional librarians. I can recall enquiring about a possible job at the *London Bible College*,

back in the 1980s, and being told by the then principal that the College couldn't possibly afford to hire someone just to look after the library. Their library was an additional responsibility for one of the teaching staff.

Despite this, many theological colleges are struggling and *St. John's College*, Nottingham, no longer offers residential courses. LST, however, had 50-60 students graduating last year, twenty of them with first degrees.

Our visit to the LST concluded with refreshments in a common room and the opportunity to ask further questions. We are grateful to Keith Lang for his time and attention and to Robert Foster who handled much of the administration for the visit and for the preceding lunch in a local Italian restaurant.

**Graham Hedges**, *Hon. FCLIP, MCLIP*, is Secretary of *Christians in Library and Information Services*.



# **CHRISTIAN LIBRARIANS SENT TO COVENTRY**

**DIANA GUTHRIE enjoys an “Art and Architecture” tour of Coventry Cathedral followed by the CLIS Annual Lecture on Saturday 15 October 2016**

For some of us, the day's activities began with a morning tour of Coventry Cathedral. Our guide led us first to the area west of the new building to give us an idea of where the original buildings (a monastery) had stood; we then moved into the atmospheric ruins of the old Cathedral and learnt something about its original incarnation as the parish church of Coventry, before its elevation to Cathedral status in 1918.

The guide gave us a brief insight into the firestorm that engulfed the Cathedral building in November 1940 (although the western tower remained and still

remains standing) and told us about some of the people who were key in ensuring that morale in the city remained undented. The story is well known of the Cathedral stonemason who saw two wooden beams lying at right angles to one another in the rubble and bound them together to form a cross which was put up in front of the ruins of the east window (that cross has now been placed within the new Cathedral, whilst a replica stands in the original position).

We then moved into the new Cathedral, designed by Sir Basil Spence (his was the only design that retained the ruins of the old building). It is a stunning building, very 1950s in design and full of wonderful works of art. It must have astonished people when it was first opened in 1962, and indeed some elements such as Graham Sutherland's *'Christ in Glory'* tapestry behind the high altar caused much controversy at the time. Especially noteworthy are the windows – the wonderful colours of those in the side walls, and the spectacular south wall of glass, the *'Screen of Saints and Angels'*.

Last of all we shed the extra people that our group had attracted and were taken down into the archives to meet the archivist, who had got out for us

some of the original drawings of the old and new cathedral buildings; we also got to handle the heavy hammer that had belonged to the Cathedral stonemason. All in all, a wonderful visit to Coventry Cathedral.

Our group then dashed over to the *Methodist Central Hall* to join others for a sandwich lunch.

In the afternoon, Eddie Olliffe, CLIS President, introduced well-known author Nick Page, who had been invited to talk on "*Martin Luther and Mass Media*".

Nick began by filling us in on some background to the Reformation, which wasn't the first attempt to reform Western Christendom, but succeeded mainly because of one vital factor: the advent of printing.

In the mid-fifteenth century Johannes Gutenberg introduced printing to Europe – this was an enormous development (akin to the development of the Internet today), as it meant that books were no longer the prerogative of the very wealthy – until then the written word had been laboriously copied out by hand on vellum or parchment, usually in monasteries; this produced some marvellous works, such as the

*Lindisfarne Gospels*, but restricted literacy and therefore political power to the extremely wealthy and the Church. Gutenberg combined movable type, the printing press and oil-based ink, thus enabling the mass production of text.

He printed two Bibles, but they retained the format of their written predecessors, as he wanted to show that printing could match the quality of manuscript. However, this standard of printing was still beyond the reach of all but the very rich, and what most people wanted was something less handcrafted and cheaper. Other printers were quick to take up his invention but started to use paper, a much cheaper and more accessible alternative to vellum and parchment. By 1500 there were about a thousand printing presses in Europe.

This was a disruptive technology. At first most publications were in Latin, but this soon changed, as short publications in the vernacular became economically profitable; pamphlets were cheap to print and buy, so new ideas could be spread very rapidly and learning decentralised. Intellectual wealth gained importance, and boundaries between disciplines became porous. Publishers such

as Aldus Manutius became centres of discussion, and their names began to appear on the title pages of books. There were risks in publishing controversial ideas, but also great financial rewards.

Art had a great influence on the Reformation. About 1500 there was great popular interest in the Apocalypse, and Albrecht Dürer was one of the people who capitalised on this, commercially astute and with his own printing works, he created an illustrated version of the *Book of Revelation* and sold it direct to the public.

The medieval church knew the power of images in a predominantly illiterate world – they formed the decoration in most churches - and up to this point the church had been able to control them. But as cheap prints now became affordable for many more people (portraits of the Reformers were especially popular), the authorities became concerned that they were losing control of what people were reading. Women were deemed especially susceptible to disruptive ideas, and as a consequence moves were made to restrict literacy to men.

By 1517, when Luther allegedly pinned his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the door of the church

in Wittenberg (there is no reliable evidence for this incident!), political and social changes were preparing the ground for reform. When a printer got hold of the *Theses*, translated them from Latin into German and published them, the publication '*went viral*'. Luther later wished he'd written the *Theses* in more populist language. His (partial) translation of the Bible used a more accessible form of German which did a lot to standardise the language. His various pamphlets sold about two million copies.

He called on the rulers of Europe to cleanse the church of its endemic corruption; he knew the value of controversy, and that the only thing that would silence a publication was a lack of readers. He wrote hymns and the words to popular melodies, all part of spreading the message. He wanted '*God invited to sit round the family table*'.

He wasn't above using invective and sensationalism. Political cartoons emerged and flourished during the Reformation (Nick showed some entertaining slides of these), and Luther used illustrations to get his message across to those without a tradition of literacy. The church's attempts to silence Luther and other radicals became pointless, as banning created demand.

Could the Reformation have happened without the advent of printing? Probably not. Printing showed that the most dangerous thing in the world is the idea. Unfortunately Luther's later years were clouded by ill-health, bitterness and some unpleasant ideas. But he remains a hero for Nick, as he stood up for the individual and opened people's minds to new ideas about their faith. Writers, publishers, booksellers and librarians have inherited this responsibility offering people the opportunity to learn and think in a fresh way.

### Questions and Comments

Luther didn't like the *Book of Revelation*, because he didn't understand it. But when someone suggested that much of it was about the Pope, he looked at it anew.

In reply to a question about book-burning, Nick commented that one of the books that the Roman Catholic Church tried to burn was ***Foxe's Book of Martyrs***, which became a best-seller, in great part due to its lurid illustrations.

Asked about his book ***Revelation Road***, Nick replied that he'd wanted to write on Revelation for the common man;

Nick believes it is a book with great relevance for today.

In reply to a comment that Tom Wright is now questioning the interpretation of *'justification by faith'*, Nick replied that many Protestants disagreed with Luther at the time; he'd added *'alone'* to the original Greek text of the verse in Romans about *'justification by faith'* and then had to justify this addition.

A member of the audience commented that it was becoming rare to hear a sermon about *'justification by faith'*; Nick replied that Luther did tend to overstate things in order to win an argument, and perhaps people were now feeling there'd been a lack of emphasis on works.

Another listener pointed out that Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses* are rather a disappointment, as if he hadn't fully worked out his theology. Nick replied that the theses don't include *'justification by faith'*, but at the Disputation of Leipzig in 1519 he made his position much clearer and was soon branded a heretic.

**Diana Guthrie, MA**, serves on the executive committee of *Christians in Library and Information Services* as Treasurer

**News from the Membership Secretary:  
Janice Paine, MCLIP, 22 Queensgate Gardens, 396  
Upper Richmond Road, Putney, London, SW15 6JN.  
Tel. 020 8785 2174**

Listed below are those who have renewed their membership since July, and those who have changed their details. Please inform the Membership Secretary of any *changes of address, job etc.*

### **OMITTED FROM DIRECTORY**

BURGESS, Mr Vernon W., 29 Wallorton Gardens, East Sheen, London, SW14 8DX - Tel: 020 8876 2950 - Email: quiverb@tiscali.co.uk

BUTT, Mrs Hilary M., 53 Westwood Road, East Peckham, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 5DB - Email: hilary@buttfam.co.uk

### **LATE RENEWALS**

BISHOP, Mrs Judith H., 112 Brickley Lane, , , Devizes, Wilts SN10 3BT - Info. & Archives Officer, Barnabas Fund. Tel: 01380 500868 - Email: judithhsmith@hotmail.co.uk

CLARKE, Mrs Gloria J., 94 Salisbury Road, Reading, Berks RG30 1BN - Open Learning Centre Manager, Gillotts School. Tel: 0118 9613069 - Email: gloria.clarke@talk21.com

GREENSTREET, Mr Martin P., 'Arcadia', 14 Heath Rise, Cadbury Heath, Bristol, BS30 8DD - Tel: 0117 9604943

ISAKSEN, Miss Karen, 37 Sandon Close, Ashingdon Gardens, Rochford, Essex SS4 1TT - Tel: 0777 6025374 - Email: karen.isaksen@hotmail.co.uk

MATSVERU, Mr David, P.O.Box 1144, Helao Nafidi, , Ohangwena, Namibia - Chief Librarian, Ohangwena Region, Directorate of Education, Arts and Culture. Tel: +264813235680 - Email: dmatsveru@gmail.com

VOYSEY, Miss Joan P., 27 Angus Road, Goring-by-Sea, , Worthing, West Sussex BN12 4BL - Tel: 01903 504827

### **CHANGES TO ADDRESS, JOB ETC.**

HAYCRAFT, Miss Annabel, Flat 3, The Old Rectory, Rectory Close, Ashted, Surrey KT21 2AZ - Libn., Spurgeon's College. Tel: 07852354020 - Email: annabelhaycraft@yahoo.co.uk

## ANNUAL REPORT

**ROBERT FOSTER reports on a year that was marked by the illness of active members but which saw the work of CLIS making progress in many respects**

### ***PLENTY OF CHALLENGES***

*The Annual Report for the year 2015-2016 first presented at the annual general meeting of Christians in Library and Information Services held in London on Saturday 23 April 2016.*

2015 began with the concerning news of our Secretary, Graham Hedges being admitted to hospital. It was a great answer to prayer that he was able to resume his pivotal role from home in the following months, but his absence from events and meetings during the year was very much felt.

#### **Major events of the year**

Our 2015 Annual Conference was entitled “*Challenges at home and overseas*”, and took place on Saturday 19 April 2015 in the Y Theatre, YMCA, Leicester. Though sparsely attended, the venue turned out to be a highly suitable one, and the central location gave scope for other activities such as seeing the Richard III Visitor Centre. The conference talks were highly topical both for CLIS itself and the profession at large. Diana Edmonds, Head of Libraries for *Greenwich Leisure and Libraries* spoke on “*The outsourcing and privatisation of library services*” and Emmanuel Oladipo (formerly *Scripture Union’s* International Secretary) on “*Famine in the African Church: books, libraries and information services*”. The event as a whole was chaired by Eddie Olliffe, and our time of worship led by Richard Waller. In the light of Graham Hedges’ enforced absence, there was a discussion in the AGM about how the various facets of Graham’s role might be divided for others to take on.

Our other main event of the year, the Annual Public Lecture, took us to Salisbury, where on Saturday 17 October 2015 in the central public library, Kevin Carey, Chair of the *Royal National Institute for Blind People* spoke on “*The Role of the Christian librarian in a theologically turbulent age*”. In some ways this was a controversial lecture (did God speak through the serpent in the Genesis story?) it was nevertheless described by CLIS President Eddie Olliffe as “*very good ... hard to listen to and take it all in as it was so deep in content ... no one could go away saying they hadn’t had to think – hard!*”

## Visits

There were three advertised visits organised by CLIS in 2015. On 13 May there was a tour of the premises of *Book Aid*, an organisation which sends Christian books to African countries and to Palestine. It’s worth noting that they have a keen interest in promoting libraries and librarianship as part of their work (see their web-site for further information).

Our member, Annabel Haycraft, kindly invited us to visit her place of work, *Spurgeon’s College* Library (the Baptist training college in London) on Tuesday 18 August 2015.

Finally, prior to our Annual Lecture on 17 October 2015, there was a visit to the Library of *Sarum College*, the Christian ecumenical and research training centre in *Salisbury Cathedral* Close. The visit was hosted by the Librarian there, Jayne Downey.

## Publications

Three issues of ***Christian Librarian*** have been produced since the 2015 conference including a bumper Summer/Autumn 2015 issue. As usual there have been the very detailed news items on various topics likely to interest librarians. Articles in these issues included the reports of CLIS meetings and visits as noted already, a feature on SPCK’s *Marylebone House* fiction imprint, a CLIS member’s experience in turning her PhD

thesis (on George MacDonald and G.A. Henty) into a book, the late Dr. Donald Drew's 1981 lecture on literary criticism and the purpose of literature, plus transcripts of the talks by Diana Edmonds and Emmanuel Oladipo from the annual conference. There have also been a number of contributions from our President, Eddie Olliffe, which have invariably provided insights on the Christian book trade.

Seven issues of the ***E-Newsletter*** have been produced. Topics covered in these issues included the *CILIP/Amnesty International* children's book award; issues surrounding CILIP Professional Re-validation; the CILIP Liverpool Conference (with CLIS and *Speaking Volumes* involvement) ; Arts and Entertainment Sunday ; National Libraries Day ; a review of the film ***Risen*** ; a reflection on Christmas carols ; the *Bloxham Festival of Faith and Literature*; the Jack Clemo centenary; Philip Pullman's ***His Dark Materials*** - and a good deal else.

## **Outside publicity for CLIS**

The work of CLIS continued to attract attention in outside publications. Relevant items (news items, diary entries, letters) appeared in ***CILIP Update***, ***CILIP Public & Mobile Libraries Group Newsletter***, ***Together*** (Christian book trade magazine), ***Evangelical Times***, ***Arts Centre Group e-news***, ***idea*** (*Evangelical Alliance* magazine), and the ***Bulletin of the Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries***.

We have enjoyed some Radio publicity. Graham and Robert were interviewed by Andy Peck for the 'Leadership File' programme on *Premier Radio*. Graham was also interviewed on library cuts and closures for *United Christian Broadcasters* and there was a radio interview on *BBC London*. The LCF/CLIS fortieth anniversary was mentioned on *Premier Radio's "Saturday Quiet Time"* and on *BBC Radio Two's "The Sunday Hour"*.



## Membership

The total number of personal members for 2015 was one hundred and forty five (with one hundred and twenty paid up), eleven institutional subscribers, and we circulated thirty-four free copies of ***Christian Librarian***. One hundred and twenty three members received the ***E-Newsletter***, and there were fifty three members of the *Facebook* group.

## Membership Survey

A survey of members was carried out in 2015 with the results summarised by Karen Hans in the Summer/Autumn 2015 issue of ***Christian Librarian***.

## Outside Involvement

Graham Hedges, John Wickenden and Janice Paine attended meetings of Christian professional group leaders arranged by *Transform Work UK*, and held at the *Evangelical Alliance*.

## Committee and Officers

Three meetings of the executive committee have been held since the last Annual General Meeting, As indicated above, CLIS Secretary Graham Hedges was semi-housebound for much of the year due to illness. Graham wished to thank other officers for taking responsibility for aspects of CLIS work: Eddie Olliffe and colleagues at the *Christian Literature Crusade* for organising the mailing of two issues of ***Christian Librarian***; Janice Paine and Mary Wood for some of the 2015 conference arrangements; Karen Hans for the *Book Aid* visit; Janice Paine for the *Spurgeon's College* and *Sarum College* visits and liaison with the *Regent Hall* for the 2016 conference; and Robert Foster for supervising the annual lecture. We should thank Graham too as, in spite of his illness and hospitalisation, he has been working for CLIS wherever and whenever

possible. We wish him continuing good progress with his recovery.

It should be noted that our President Eddie Olliffe suffered a stroke during the year. The fellowship has felt his absence, and we have been remembering him in our prayers.

### **Long Standing Member**

Long standing member Pamela Jackson (nee Cripps) died in February 2016. She was formerly Special Services Manager for *Berkshire Library and Information Services*. We give thanks for her life and work.

### **Conclusion**

It has been a year with plenty of challenges. Our membership is smaller than it has been for many years, with some low attendances at certain events and there have been the health issues already mentioned. We will have to adapt. However, as it apparent from this report, there is plenty happening which is good. We have a full agenda for 2016 and we can continue to look for new openings and expressions for what we do. Moreover, CLIS isn't just about events: we are, after all, about being a Christian in the workplace. Much of what members and people connected with CLIS do at work is hidden from us (relevant articles in our publications would always be welcome, of course) but it is still part of who we are. As CLIS celebrates forty years, we have much to look forward to.

**Robert Foster**, BA, DipIM, MCLIP, is Chair of *Christians in Library and Information Services* and works as an Assistant Librarian at the *Royal College of Music*.

## REVIEWS

**LOUIS HEMMING** is disturbed by a new biography of Jack Clemo (1916 – 1994) but finds inspiration in a new compilation of the deaf and blind writer's verse

# ***POET WITH CLAY FEET***

## **Clay Phoenix: a biography of Jack Clemo**

Luke Thompson

Ally Press, 2016, Pbk., £15.00, 605p., ISBN 978-6933473494

## **Selected Poems**

Jack Clemo

Enitharmon Press, 2015, Pbk., £9.99, 80p., ISBN 978-1910392065

I first heard about Clemo from the Norman Stone *Different Drummer* BBC *Everyman* programme. Having been a close friend of Jack since 1980, I long anticipated this block of a book of six hundred and five pages. It is truly magisterial but after a few chapters I stopped reading, for many weeks, regretting that I had asked to review *Clay Phoenix*.

Thompson's forensic, finely detailed research made me despair of Clemo the Christian. Where do I start? The possibility of mild paedophilia, the solopistic obsessive, the near contempt of the many who helped this inverted spiritual snob, the ever-present chip on the shoulder.

The paedophilia suggestion might be put down to a rural isolation and Clemo's need for feminine attentions, local children being the only ones to tolerate this awkward, cranky, disabled, burgeoning poet.

The solopistic nature, where all events have to somehow involve Clemo: no event too great or small, local events or World War Two. Pathetic! Clemo's apparent near contempt towards many well-meaning, well-known literary figures, to say nothing of the ingratitude towards lesser-known, earnest evangelical facilitators, is hard to swallow. I count myself modestly as sometime-facilitator.

Clema talks of needing to be purged in many of his poems. Well, on reading about Clema's supremely self-centred attitudes, I sure needed to be purged too. I soberly burned over ninety-five per cent of our hundred plus exchanged letters, bar half a dozen, to stand as examples, for the time being.

Having read most of Clema's output, bar the unappealing dialect stories, I was pretty familiar with a lot of the detail. However the private back stories to his public narrative make fascinating reading.

We read of his wife Ruth's extensive meddling with diaries and giving false information to many about pivotal moments in the Clema narrative. In particular are the mixed motives concerning their marriage bureau introduction. So much for the public trumpeting of God, Calvinistically-introducing them to each other.

Clema moans in his diary entries about selling five hundred copies of one of his books. Where's the praise for the patient publishers from the nit-picking mystic? Where's the praise for Charles Causley and Lionel Miskin? Where are the opportunities for evangelical witness now? Any contemporary Christian poet would be ecstatic at such sales figures today! And yes, two thousand copies of a couple of his books were also pulped - but that is merely modern book market reality. Clema is hardly alone in that unfortunate and frustrating position.

His poetry was reviewed in *TLS*, *Morning Star*, *The Times* and many other culturally respectable, large circulation broadsheets, as well as in numerous overly-sympathetic Christian magazines. Lucky man! - but you never get the impression that God be blessed.

Clema hopelessly harped on about getting healed from his blindness and deafness until 1978. Why such persistence? After much prayer in a variety

of denominational settings, over many decades, surely it is pure folly to persist in such a (vain?) quest.

The author rightly points out Clemo's over-reliance on writing poems that "*blend events from biographies with personal events, biblical allusions, diverse poetic references and old clay symbols, while constructing a statement of his own uncommon beliefs and experiences.*" It became a stylistic cliché, usually in an unsympathetic and contra-mundum way.

This thoroughly researched book concludes with Clemo's possibly-justified fears of a move to Weymouth. Though, after so many decades of living in a rather grim location, and so many poems written about the symbols of Cornwall, surely he had metaphorically mined the '*spirit of place*' fully?

What particularly interested me was the troubling duality of victorious public Christian and poetic pronouncements set against private diary doubts. Yes, Christ does have the victory through all our ups and downs - but to me, this dual approach is biblically conflicting and indeed, misleading. Clemo, and his mother, and then his wife, seemingly frequently sought the Browning Pattern and schematically manipulated, nagging both God and man.

The conclusion about Clemo's overall personal motives and his many publishing and broadcasting accomplishments makes for interesting albeit sobering reading. His recurring religious exceptionalism, vaunting his "*unique*" perspective, without trying to meet people half-way, embarrassingly reminded me about my own earlier evangelical and literary life. As did his rush to print controversial and challenging letters to editors. That probably did not really enhance his literary life. His primary evangelical sense of "*mission*" led to an over-exalted, self-regarding approach in his writing and correspondence.

Regardless of the "*clay feet*" of Clemo, as evidenced in this critical literary biography, we are left amazed that Clemo was offered, and took on, so many opportunities, in such unpromising circumstances.

Who will be this book's readers, outside of academic circles and some hard-core Clemo fans? The writing of this tome by Thompson, long-standing academic and spiritual sceptic, is an amazing testimony to Clemo's tenacious Christian faith and still-enduring literary vision. God bless the brave publisher also!

Now to the new selected poems, the first offering since Bloodaxe's ***Selected Poems*** in 1988. Over against the Bloodaxe selection, we have useful editorial notes by editor, Luke Thompson. These poems are between 1951 - 1986, from Clemo's well-known *Calvinist in Love* to his trademark biographical poems and concluding with last poems, about Venice.

We also have a bestowed blessing by Anglican ex-Archbishop, Rowan Williams, a most sympathetic introduction. He admits to Clemo's "*self-referential arrogance*" and his "*lack of apology*" concluding that the poet "*needs to find in his interlocutors the question to which his poetry and his experience are in some sense an answer*". I trust that this theologically-famous name commendation will "*oil*" a few "*stiff doors*" and broaden Clemo's audience somewhat more.

It will be interesting to see what religious and secular reviews both these noble publishing ventures may get. I will be watching in hope, to see which, if any, Christian magazines give Clemo the long-overdue respect that he is due. I salute his dogged literary pilgrimage, this rhyming, Cornish, Don Quixote-type visionary poet.

**Louis Hemmings** is a poet and bookseller and the founder and proprietor of *Samovar Books*.

How has the spiritual landscape changed over the past ten years? What lessons can be learned from recent trends? What are the challenges and chances for Christianity in public life today? NICK SPENCER reflects on the first ten years in the life of the think-tank *Theos*

## ***DOING GOD: TEN YEARS AND COUNTING***

*An Address to the Christians in Library and Information Services Conference "Forty Years and Counting" held at the Regent Hall, 275 Oxford Street, London, W1C 2DJ on Saturday 23 April 2016 and transcribed for **Christian Librarian** by Robert Foster.*

I understand this is your fortieth anniversary, and this also happens to be the tenth anniversary for *Theos*, so with this happy symbiosis I thought it too good an opportunity to miss, not least because it allowed me an opportunity to reflect on what *Theos* has been doing over time, particularly with regard to how society has moved on in its attitudes to God and religion to use the generic term which includes Christianity.

We were founded in November 2006, and originally called the *Public Theology Thinktank*. That name was at least accurate - we were doing theology in public. The disadvantage was that nobody outside a relatively small circle of Christians knew what it meant. Invariably we were introduced on radio or television as the *Religion and Society Thinktank*, so eventually we gave in and called ourselves that instead.

I want to give you a brief introduction of where we started, then think though the last ten years, and then conclude with where we have come to, looking forward to what we can expect and hope for, and what we can do, with regard to Christianity specifically in contemporary public life. We are a Christian thinktank, although we invariably end up talking about religion in public life. Religion is the word people often use, or worse,

faith. (Faith is a worse term, I believe, because it tends to smuggle in the idea that there are people who have faith, and there are those that don't. It suggests that there are those who operate their lives by faith, and others who work by pure reason, and you don't have to look very hard to realise that this is something of a caricature. Most people have faith, the question is really faith in what, and how much.)

Our inaugural report, ***Doing God : future for faith in the public square*** was published at the same time as Richard Dawkins's ***God Delusion*** - a quirk of divine humour, I suspect! It gives you some kind of indication of the choppy waters into which we were launched: a new atheist phenomenon was getting into its stride. Dawkins's title was a term which had been coined a few years earlier, but by the time Richard Dawkins's magnum opus was published there was a very visible, vocal and hostile group who you could describe as anti-theists rather than atheists. It wasn't just that they didn't believe in God, it was as Chris Hitchens memorably put it "*Religion poisons everything*". So for quite a while we spent much of our efforts justifying the very presence of religion in public life.

A few years after the publication of ***God Delusion***, the Emeritus Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, Nicholas Lash, published a paper aimed at explaining the popularity of Richard Dawkins's book. He asked why a book which contained such poor arguments and evidences was so widely welcomed with so much sympathy by so many intelligent and reasonable people. As any good academic paper would, Lash's article teased out the subtle and nuanced arguments about the definitions of science and wissenschaft.

However, one question which Lash didn't address was the time when ***God Delusion*** was published - October 2006. 2006 was six years into the Republican Presidency of George W. Bush, an evangelical Christian who allegedly claimed that God wanted him to be President, and who had become a hate figure for so many ; it was five years after 9/11; it was three years after the enormously divisive war in Iraq, steered by the apparent Christian convictions of two heads of state; it was two years after the start of the nuclear programme of Iran, which had generated such concern; and it was a year after the Islamic group *Hamas* had unexpectedly won elections in Palestine. All in all then, it was an inauspicious moment for the role of religion in public life, or politics at any



rate. The new atheist philosophy was a lightning rod for a great deal of unease and distrust and anger about that.

***God Delusion*** was also published shortly after the famous quotation, when Tony Blair was asked a question on the way home on a plane about religion, and his press secretary Alastair Campbell took the microphone and said “*We don’t do God*”. I have heard Alastair Campbell speak about this since, and has pointed out that he was not making a personal or theoretical statement. It wasn’t even a policy statement. It was merely a response to a particular question. However, it was picked up and used more broadly not least because most people knew that Tony Blair was a sincere convert to Christianity, but after 1994-95 he never spoke about it. (You will have to read Alastair Campbell’s diaries to understand why.) The words “*We don’t do God*” became a popular leitmotif of our time. Atheist philosopher Julian Baggini made the point that when Alastair Campbell said that, it went without saying that politicians don’t overtly discuss religion. The need to rule God-talk out, Baggini said, was a symptom that it was coming back in. That is a perceptive statement and is an indicator of why there was this fierce hostility amongst this atheist movement. In 1968, an eminent sociologist Peter Berger predicted in the ***New York Times*** that in the twenty-first century “*religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a worldwide culture*”.

Even as the predictions of sociologists go, that one proved to be some way off the mark. Interestingly, three decades later he recanted, so to speak, and wrote in a book called ***The Desecularization of the World*** “*I think what I and most sociologists of religion wrote about secularisation was a mistake. One underlying argument was that secularisation and modernity go hand in hand: with more modernisation comes more secularisation. It wasn’t a crazy theory. There was some evidence for it. But I think it’s basically wrong. Most of the world today is not secular – it’s very religious.*” And this, in 1997 – nearly twenty years ago – was before we had any real indication of what was happening with Christianity in China, which has to be one of the most significant de-secularisations of our time. I should point out that these stories are complex. It’s not all one way. It’s not all secularisation or all de-secularisation. There are still secular arguments in the academic sphere. But the straightforward idea that as society is modernised, and therefore secularised, doesn’t seem to hold true. And you only have to look at the ongoing interest in issues of religion, secularisation, atheism and faith to notice this. Look at the

**Guardian** website for instance. When I wrote *Doing God*, the readers' editor Ian Jack was responding to some angry letters from people who said they bought the **Guardian** because it was a secular newspaper and they wanted to know why religion was being given so much prominence, and increasingly so. So Ian Jack went back over previous years to see whether this was actually true, and indeed it was. It turned out there was twice as much coverage of religious issues in 2005 than in 1995, and twice as much in 1995 as in 1985. The coverage wasn't necessarily all positive, but nevertheless the mentioning of religion in public life was growing, and continues to do so.

Our report included some major demographic trends – who outbreeds who. It has been shown conclusively by demographers that religious people have more children than non-religious people. And conservative religious people have more children than liberal religious people. So there is a kind of demographic tilting of the ground. There is not much that can be done about that: there are interesting questions about why that should be the case. Are there attitudes about children which are tied in with religious belief? Globalisation and immigration self-evidently even in secular corners of the world –and one would have to say that the UK is one of the more secular parts of the world – mean that it is impossible to shut this phenomenon out. There are also issues with liberal humanism, such as the belief that you can operate in public life without reference to why certain ideas are good: you just talk about fairness, which in itself is problematic. Our report also talked about other issues such as the return of civil society and the politics of well-being, but what I would like to focus on in this talk is how the narrative has changed over the past ten years and then unpack that in terms of what it means for Christians living in the twenty-first century.

One change which we read about regularly in the newspapers is an uncomfortable one: the trend in religious affiliation. How do people in Great Britain call themselves? The BSA survey tracks whether people affiliate themselves with Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism, non-religiosity, non-Christianity (which is an aggregate of other religious identities) and other Christian identities). The big change has been the number of people who would call themselves *Church of England* and those of no religious affiliation. In 1983 there were substantially more in the former category, and substantially less in the later. Sociologists have analysed this, and without going into too much detail, there are three strands to the trend, which are the age trend (how old you are), the period trend (the period of

time in which you live), and the cohort trend (what you do because you are born or brought up in it). All three trends inter-react, but if you look at the third category in particular, you will notice there is a slow but significant growth in those who call themselves '*no religion*'. It becomes increasingly the case as time goes by that if you were born in the 1980s and then 1990s, you are more likely to be of no religious affiliation. We can be even more definite about this if we look at the '*stickiness*' statistics. So if you are born into an Anglican background, there is a 49% likelihood that you will stay with that; with Roman Catholicism the '*stickiness*' rises to 62%; with non-Christian religions that rises further to 87%; but it becomes 94% from non-religious backgrounds. In other words, according to this data, that where a person is born in a non-religious household, there is only a 6% likelihood of that person changing to a religious affiliation of any kind. They are sobering statistics, but we do ourselves no service by ignoring the statistical reality.

If we were to examine these figures further we would discover that the shift in affiliation has effectively been from nominal Anglicanism to non-religiosity. The change between 1983 and 2010 is that 20% fewer people are likely to call themselves Anglican and approximately 20% more are likely to call themselves non-religious. Some Christians would actually say this is good in one respect, and that is because we are talking about affiliation, not attendance or even belief. I'm not personally from the school which says that the kind of nominalism we have been discussing is insignificant. Some years ago I did some qualitative research in focus groups with people who were not believing Christians at all, half of whom who had called themselves Christian in the 2001 census, and half of whom hadn't. I found that the half who hadn't were much more hostile to Christianity than the others. They believed the same things and did (or didn't do) the same things, but their form of self-identification did make a difference. So that kind of nominalism isn't irrelevant, but it is still nominalism. They are happy to call themselves Christian, but they are at best hazy about what that means.

What about attendance? I'm writing a report at the moment, ***Ten years on from 'Doing God'***, looking at some of these changes and trends, and one of the very difficult tasks is how to get accurate statistics for church attendance. So here are some best guesses. In the Sunday after our first report was published in November 2006 there would have been approximately – and I cannot stress that word too much – 4.5 million people in church in the UK. By my best calculations it is now about 4.2

million. Please note that there is quite a bit of guesswork in this.

The story of the decline of church attendance is often tied up with affiliation. They are not the same thing. Then the story is mixed up with the decline in Anglican attendance, because the Anglicans are good at measuring. There are approximately one million in Anglican churches on Sundays, which isn't very encouraging for the established church, but what happens is that because we can measure it, people then project what is happening there to elsewhere. One of the reasons why the *Church of England* attendance is declining is the emergence of a much stronger '*market of independent providers*' – to give it an American-style name. And these churches do not measure or publish their measurements, and even if they did, it is such a mixed market, you would still not get a very good idea of what the non-mainline Christian denomination church attendance is. Attendance has declined but not as much as church affiliation has, and perhaps more important, the whole form of attendance and belonging is changing. More people going midweek, more people going two or three times a month; far fewer people going every single Sunday, or even twice on a Sunday.

Another, particularly obvious point, is that Islam has been a regular news story over the last ten years or so. According to the 2001 census there were 1.6 million Muslims in England and Wales, which comprised 3% of the population. According to the 2011 census there were 2.7 million, comprising about 4.5% of the population. Interestingly, MORI conducted an opinion poll a while ago, to find out what were the greatest misconceptions about life in Britain, and whilst the biggest was for teenage pregnancies (ten, twenty or thirty times the actual figure was usually given), another major misconception was the number of Muslims in the UK. The average (mean) estimate which respondents gave was 25% - five times the actual figure. It is a great example of how media coverage translates reality into your brain, and the two aren't always identical. Notice that the average age of Muslims is much lower than other categories, and that the affiliation '*stickiness*' figure is 87% for non-Christian religious groups. So this group will continue to grow significantly both in relative terms and absolute terms in the next thirty to fifty years or so.

We have noticed that there is a broader issue of regionalisation. The statistician Peter Brierley is someone who has been able to find

something approaching reliable data for church attendance, and he has looked into spiritual and religious Christian growth in London. Sunday church attendance increased from around 623,000 in 2005 to 722,000 in 2012. The number of churches increased from a figure of 4087 in 2005, to 4791 in 2012. Similar signs, though not as pronounced, have been detected by some in other urban areas. The increase is due in no small part to immigration, and therefore represents the kind of Christianity we are going to see more of in the twenty-first century as a whole and that is non-denominational and much more '*pastor-preneurial*' (not my word!).

There was an interesting article in the *Economist* earlier this year which highlighted the example of a former Congregational chapel in Islington, where the building had been bought by a Pentecostal Ethiopian church and where 'the congregation raises its hands in worship in un-English ecstasy to praise God ... a few hours later something unexpected happens, when a group of mainly white individuals start their service. This group known as *King's Cross Church* has grown from a handful to over five hundred. These then are counter-narratives, or sub-plots. The overall picture of decline is as we have seen, but we must not look for complete decline or complete resurgence. Neither is true. Another minor subplot, which we ought to mention, is with Anglican cathedrals. Cathedrals saw attendance increase by 35% in the 2000s, while weekday attendance has more than doubled. These are quite small numbers in the overall picture – there are only forty two cathedrals. Another subplot is the global story of continued growth. The *Pew Forum for Religion*, which is an extraordinary resource in the US, have done demographic studies and they have pointed to the fact that all the major worldwide religions will grow in numbers over the next two generations, Christianity will remain the largest single religion, Islam will grow faster than the others, and as a proportion though not necessarily numerically, non-religiosity will decline. The extent that this will affect London or Lincoln or wherever else in the UK is debatable.

What all this shows is this: the default identification with the established church is a thing of the past. I was brought up in a non-Christian home, and once, as a ten year-old, I was completing an NHS form had to ask my mother what to put in the box for religion. She told me to tick Church of England. I said: "*But we don't go to church.*" She replied: "*Everyone puts that*". That was how it was in 1982. That has changed, but it is important to recognise – and this is a rhetorical trick which is sometimes played on Christians – that moving from nominal Anglicanism or nominal

Christianity does not mean embracing new atheism. In the most part it means moving from nominal Anglicanism to nominal non-religiosity. People who didn't care much beforehand and ticked the Christian box, are now people who tick the non-religion box, but still don't care any more for it than they did for Christianity. We are not moving to a more absolutely secularist culture in the ideological sense, except perhaps for a more plural culture. That in itself raises significant challenges for Christians, but it is not the story of apocalyptic decline that it is sometimes made out to be. It is also important to distinguish affiliation from attendance.

There is a slight problem in working through these figures in that you see Christianity or '*faith*' in an isolated way. We can see it as something which people do: they go to worship, they pray, they sing. But they are somehow sealed off from the rest of life. It is a belief system with practices but its practices are narrowly conceived. But it isn't really Christianity. So if you want to understand the future of Christianity in Britain, and trends relating to it, it is a good idea to get a picture of general social trends across the country. What else is going on in people's lives? About eight years ago, Charles Taylor, who was an eminent Canadian academic, wrote a blockbuster of a book – about eight hundred pages long – in which he noted that our age is very far from settling into comfortable unbelief. He builds up to this, making the point that intellectually twenty-first century society is plural – there are a lot of "*cross-pressures*" as he puts it, which mean people believe different things, do different things, even in themselves at different points in their lives. The extent to which we have settled into comfortable unbelief is very important, because if all those downward trends in affiliation and attendance were matters of supreme indifference to other people, if people were going on with their lives in perfect contentment, that would be problematic.

It is worth asking, going back to my initial point about people not being wholly faith-based or wholly reason-based, what a completely secular nation would look like. That is a society where no-one believes in God, no-one attended church, no-one prayed, no-one believed in life after death, no-one called themselves a Christian, no-one read the Bible, and no-one had any interest in religion. This is evidently not the society we live in. The question of how many people actually believe in God is constantly being fought over. It depends on what you mean by '*believe*'. A number of surveys disambiguate that, going from '*I know God really exists and I've no doubt about it*' to '*I believe in God some of the time*' to '*Not God but a higher power*' through to agnosticism and atheism. It has

been the case that the level of atheism and non-belief has risen in last ten years but it's still roughly fifty/fifty. And there are large differences in the strength of faith that people have.

Then if we look at the more esoteric spiritual beliefs, what you notice is that if anything these have actually increased in the last decade. Statistics show that belief in a soul, some sort of life after death, or power of deceased ancestors is quite prevalent. The proportion of people who say humans are simply material is 15%. So no longer calling oneself a Christian, no longer going to church, even no longer believing in God, does not make you a fully paid-up member of the rationalist association. In actual fact, the data tends to show that people are believing in more exotic and esoteric spiritual beliefs. People still pray; again it's difficult to get hard data on this kind of thing, yet nevertheless, just because people don't affiliate it doesn't mean they don't yearn.

So I think Alastair Cambell's quotation was a very apposite one. But not quite for the reasons it is picked up on. It is the word 'God' which is emphasised in '*we don't do God*'. We should probably be more accurate to pick up the word 'do'. In other words, we might occasionally believe, and we might occasionally pray, read or think about such things, but actually getting up and doing them, particularly as a group, is not something we are inclined to do. We are less of a corporate, group-acting society. Quotations from various interviews that I've done over the years include the following: "*I don't think you have to go to church to relate to him – if you believe in him he's always there for you*"; "*you can talk, pray, all the time, anywhere, it doesn't matter - you can go to church, but I believe anyone can pray to God – I don't go to church every week – I've got God anyway.*" I like that quotation, although it's not as good as this metaphor which a respondent a while ago gave me. He said: "*Being spiritual is a bit like playing football, going to church is like joining the team*". It's a brilliant metaphor because the point he's making is that when I'm having a spiritual kick-around in the park, so to speak, I can play for as long as I like, with whom I like, where I like, according to the rules I want, and it's tailored to my own enjoyment. Whereas joining the team means turning up week-in, week-out, it means doing training, it means playing to someone else's rules, according to the position that I am assigned; it becomes burdensome. So people don't miss church, except that the respondents I spoke to said they did miss the community aspect, the sense of belonging and relationships. That is what you get when you join the team. You have a goal or an objective in mind. You train, you get better. You have a sense of camaraderie. That I think is genuinely

missing. So in terms of those particular trends, we shouldn't confuse belief, or indeed yearning, with the more formalised forms of religious attendance.

If you put that whole area of discussion in the category '*love of God*', the following could be called '*love of neighbour*'. It is very easy to get into the mindset that says there is no community now, and years ago everyone knew their neighbours, you could leave your door open and no-one stole anything, and there was no crime. It wasn't true then, nor is it true now. The *Office of National Statistics* records that two-thirds of people in the UK thought their neighbours could be trusted, four in ten exchanged favours with their neighbours, and nearly three quarters thought their neighbourhood got along with each other. It's difficult to interpret this kind of statistic. Is it positive that two-thirds of people think that their neighbours can be trusted, or is it worrying that one third can't trust their neighbours. Having said that, 7.7 million people live alone, 11% of people report feeling lonely most or all of the time; in a different survey from the *Cabinet Office* 18% of people admitted to feeling lonely often or always; according to the *Local Government Association* loneliness is '*major public health issue*'; according to *Age UK* it's an issue which '*blights the lives of over a million people*'. So however you interpret that love of neighbour (i.e. immediate neighbour) there are certainly issues there. Love of neighbour doesn't just extend to those proximate to you. Any healthy, functioning society depends fundamentally on trust, and particularly on trust of institutions. It's interesting how the word 'institution' has become almost an insult in our society today. Being racist is bad enough, for example, but to be 'institutionally racist' is really bad. If you ask people what they think about institutions, by and large they are pretty critical. We have to take some of the responses with a pinch of salt, and there are reasons why we should question whether people actually do what they say.

In the Reith Lectures of 2002, Onora O'Neill made the point that if people have as little trust as they say they have, they would never leave their homes. Nonetheless, survey after survey shows that levels of trust in British institutions (e.g. BBC, NHS, trades unions, the press, the church, banks etc) have been falling and in some cases quite precipitously, for thirty-plus years. In some ways that is a good thing: people don't necessarily want a deferential society, a society where you shouldn't be sceptical about those in power. But there is a difference between being sceptical and having an institutionalised distrust. Research data shows



that on an international plane we don't fare well in terms of our trust in institutions. So in terms of 'love of neighbour' we are not in the state like Damascus, with society crumbling about our ears, but nevertheless there are many examples of loneliness, lack of neighbourliness and distrust that should be a cause of concern.

What about 'love of self'? When you do a survey about levels of happiness, the outcome is fair. In terms of EU countries we are about mid-table. By and large we are reasonably happy with our own lives in the same way that we are reasonably happy with our neighbourhoods. However, this overall picture masks, I believe some genuinely worrying subplots.

One of the areas of concern is our attitude to alcohol. According to the *Nuffield Trust*, A&E attendance rates due to alcohol poisoning more than doubled between 2008 and 2013; in-patient admissions specific to alcohol increased by two-thirds between 2005 and 2013; According to the *Lancet*, mortality rates from liver disease have increased 400% since the 1970s, and the level is particularly high amongst young people.

There are issues with obesity and eating-disorders. It is estimated that around 725,000 people in the UK are affected by an eating disorder, and according to Dame Sally Davies, the Chief Medical Officer, the prevalence of obesity is over 25%, and at a level of national risk.

The use of anti-depressants is very high: according to the *Calculations of Adult Psychiatric Morbidity 2007* in England, it was estimated that one in four people experience a mental health problem in a given year; according to the ONS, one in ten adults are diagnosed with depression in a given year; the levels of anti-depressant prescriptions have gone up massively in the last generation or so. There are reasons for this. One of them is that we are more willing to talk about depression. We also have a more medicalised attitude to these things. And there is greater capacity to respond to mental illness. So there is a positive side. But the statistics do not suggest a society of contentment and well-being.

Pornography is a further issue, and not one we will dwell on, except to say that it has become normalised, particularly amongst young people. You occasionally read debates, such as one like that in the *Economist*, about whether this is a good thing or not! I have sided with the 'not' category.

To me it is an archetypal example of prioritising sex over love.

Another cause for concern is illegal drug use. According to the *Home Office*, one in twelve adults take illegal drugs in any given year; the figure rises to one in five amongst sixteen to twenty-four year-olds; over a third of adults take illegal drugs during their lifetime.

Further issues concern family break-ups (these have decreased slightly, but a disproportionate number of children – about one in four – grow up without their mother or father), and debt (the levels of household debt is staggering (according to the *Citizens' Advice Bureau*, twenty-one million people do not have £500 in case of an emergency)).

Children are disproportionately affected by all these issues. Children are being prescribed anti-depressants, and suffer from eating disorders and obesity. Whilst surveys of adults show the UK to be moderately happy, surveys of teenagers show a more worrying trend, as this group tends to have more problems with stress and feeling miserable than is the case elsewhere.

There are two wrong ways of interpreting this data. The first is to say things are dreadful. They are not. If you are born into the UK today you can still consider yourself one of the history's and the world's luckiest people. The other wrong way of looking at this is to say that it's dreadful but Christianity provides us with a magic wand which will make everything fine again. What I am trying to do is to embed the story of Christianity in the UK today in the wider story of our lives.

If you understand Christianity as an element of our lives, I believe we are being true to the Gospel. If you understand it as a narrowly cerebral, propositional, or even narrowly behavioural thing, then who cares if people aren't going to church, or going to the golf club? It has to be about the whole of life. I liken it to being a farrier. Farriers still exist, and they matter to people who go horse-riding. Horse-riding is a nice, personalised form of entertainment. It's like the church – some people like it, so you need vicars. It can look like a type of entertainment available at weekends. It can also be like newspapers. I wonder how many people under thirty-five read a daily newspaper? Not very many perhaps. So does this mean

young people aren't interested in the news? Not at all. What it means is that the means of consumption has changed. We shouldn't confuse the future of newspapers with the future of news.

Or perhaps it is like the NHS. If you ask people what they think of the NHS, you will hear things like '*They are always on strike*'. '*hospitals are dirty*', '*long waiting lists*'. Ask the same people what their last experience of going to hospital, or seeing their GP, and their rating will be much higher. Institutionally it appears to be going downhill, but the individual experience is better. I haven't tested this scientifically, except in qualitative research, but you could say it is like this with the church. Word-association with the church is not pretty. Yet, my focus group participants, thirty minutes after the unhappy word-association, were saying things like "*My neighbour is a Christian and they are quite friendly*", or similar. The personal experience is often a different thing to the view of the institution. Indeed, I would prefer it this way than that they looked up to the church as a fine institution, but thought that the vicar was a scoundrel, or thought their Christian neighbour was a monster. In marketing terms it is a branding issue, and one to which responses are amenable.

I came across an article in the **Guardian** yesterday. It reads:

*"One Friday afternoon in late summer of 2014, I walked into a church that I had never entered, even though it is just around the corner from my home of 17 years, in Clapham, south London. I approached a man I had met just once and asked if I could shadow him with my camera for the next year. Quite some ask. He was about to go on holiday and, not unreasonably, said he would like some time to think about it. The Rev Kit Gunasekera returned from holiday with a yes, which has resulted, for me, in two outcomes.*

*"First, it produced my first photo-essay 'Of things not seen', which has just been exhibited in the Oxo Gallery, on London's South Bank, and attracted thousands of visitors. The work tells the story of a year of Kit's ministry here in Clapham. That so many have seen for themselves the wonderful thing that ministry is, and the profound difference ministry and the church can make in a local community, has been hugely rewarding for me. One of my objectives for this whole venture was to show what is, for most, "unseen" – beyond those things we typically associate with clergy, such as Sunday services, weddings and funerals."*

The other difference for him is that it brought him back to church and the

Christian faith. He hadn't done the photography in order to become a Christian, but his experience transformed him. I'd rather people were exposed to what Christians do in their lives, in their communities amongst people that are lonely, or hurting or needy, because then they are coming into contact with Christ.

Let me conclude with six responses, drawn from our experiences at *Theos*, looking at the future in contemporary Britain. They are all based on *Theos* published reports.

## Empirical

We need to have hard data, about things like church attendance, and not just that but about the role that religion plays in public life. Time and again we hear about the religious right-wing emerging. So we asked the question – is this true? The answer is no. You can see why people might think that, because of the changing theo-political language. But what is happening in Britain now is not what happened in America thirty-five to forty years ago. We owe it to ourselves to know what is happening.

## Historical

It seems strange to me how Christianity is being written out of our corporate history. An example is Magna Carta. It is often treated as though it was something which just appeared in the medieval mind. In actual fact the roots of **Magna Carta** are profoundly Christian and biblical. It was shaped not only by the thought-world of the church at the time, and in particular by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, and one of the University of Paris's greatest biblical scholars, who glossed certain texts about the king being under law – from Deuteronomy – which is what Magna Carta is about. Similarly, there was a lot of attention on the **King James Bible** five years ago, with much made of its impact on our language and culture. But when it comes to the serious matter of politics, the argument is that the Bible was the most influential document in our political history – not always on the side of the angels, by any means - but utterly significant.

## Normative

Sometimes we think our deeply held values, those virtues and practices which matter, are obvious and common sense. Anthropologists will tell you that is not so. In so far as there are human virtues and practices which seem to be deeply rooted in our biology, there are also some ugly practices which are rooted in our biology. Our reports argue that our conceptions about what is good, our valuing and appreciation of the weak for example, of human dignity, our commitment to human rationality, all these core humanistic trends are deeply rooted in Christianity. (I would hope that everybody in this audience is a humanist: it is only lately that the term has come to mean atheist.) '*Humanist*' simply means valuing the human, and if you value the human you need to have reasons for that.

## Legal

We are a plural society, and there are more people with whom we share a physical, social and legal space with, but need different things from one another. That is why we are seeing more of a juridification of our life, with more matters going to court, and more debates about rights. Sometimes Christians get a persecution complex about this. Remember we are not living in Syria. These are nonetheless complex issues that we haven't had to negotiate before. I think we should think about them carefully from a theological point of view. Hence we published a report about religious freedom. Sometimes that involves fighting a battle in court, sometimes it will call for humility.

## Theology

This is a slight misnomer because everything we do should be theological. In other words all issues should be informed by what we think of God, and what God thinks of us. But here it specifically means that when we engage in public life, in our plural public sphere, it is not incumbent on us to leave our faith at the front door, and then to talk and engage as if we are secular humanists. We do what we do because of the beliefs that we have. It doesn't mean that we have to shove things down people's throats, but it

does mean that you can be authentic to yourself. A good example is the world of education. *'Doing God in education'* does not mean getting religious education right, or rather simply of getting a set of neutral facts across. It is a relationship and it comes heavily imbued with personal commitments. There should be something different about religious education teaching. I've been very impressed with a paper from *Christ Church University, Canterbury*, which argues that you can do God in education perfectly legitimately.

## Practically

Finally, our work doesn't imply there isn't a future for apologetics – there is. It doesn't mean there isn't a future for prayer – there is. It doesn't mean there isn't a future for straightforward missionary work – there is. But, in our society we can't assume any longer that people will know anything about Christianity, still less think it is a good thing. The *lingua franca* is action. The answer to the question that is invariably posed to Christians, and which will be posed more and more - what right do you have to speak into public debate when only a certain percent of you go to church each week? – is to use the example of the *Salvation Army* and say look what we are doing, look where we are, look how much we are investing. This is the source of legitimacy, because we transparently care. It is on the back of showing that transparent care that you might get questioned *'Why are you doing this?'*

**Nick Spencer** is the Research Director of *Theos*. Nick has written books on a number of subjects relating to religion and public life, including ***Atheists: The Origin of the Species*** (Bloomsbury Continuum, £16.99, ISBN 978-1472902962) and ***The Evolution of the West: How Christianity Has Shaped Our Values*** (SPCK, £9.99, ISBN 9780281075201). He has written for the *Telegraph* and the *Guardian* and various Christian publications, and has been named as one of the UK's hundred 'top' Christians for his work for *Theos*.

**WILLIAM MORRIS** describes his workplace ministry at the Church of *St. Martin-in-the-Fields* and suggests some principles to aid Christians in working life

## ***WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN IN THE WORKPLACE?***

*An Address to the Christians in Library and Information Services Conference "Forty Years and Counting" held at the Regent Hall, 275 Oxford Street, London, W1C 2DJ on Saturday 23 April 2016 and transcribed for **Christian Librarian** by Janice Paine.*

This is very much a personal talk, how I over thirty years, have dealt with being a Christian in the workplace. I was born and brought up a Christian, attending church and school chapel. I've never had a blinding moment, and yet this has been the constant of my life, at the very centre of what I do and think about, and yet the question of how I can be a Christian at work is really important to me.

When I was at college I thought very strongly about getting ordained, but my college chaplains discouraged me from this. Firstly, they had some insight into my character and ambition at that time; secondly, it was thought better to go out and experience the world and to test calling rather than to go in with no experience. I felt then and even more strongly now that that

was the right advice. I trained as a lawyer, then went to the US for fifteen years. I always went to church, getting more involved in a church in Connecticut and becoming a Reader in the *Episcopal Church* (which, however, only involved reading the prayers).

When I returned I became a Reader in the *Church of England* but discovered this involved a lot more, including preaching and leading worship. After further advice from my former college chaplain, now my vicar in north London, I went for ordination training without really knowing why except that no-one had said no! Towards the beginning of my second year, someone from *St. Paul's* came and talked about '*Faith in the workplace*' – how do we integrate our lives with our faith? How as ordained people do we help other people connect faith and work? As I went home I thought – that's it! That's why I'm doing this – to look at issues of faith and work and to try and bring them together. This is what I pursued in the rest of my training.

I talked to others about their experience of faith and work. My theology and churchmanship are middle of the road. I talked to Mark Greene at LICC and others, including Nick Holtam, Vicar of *St. Martin in the Fields*. We talked about how this could make sense in the context of *St. Martin's*. He said it would be great to have someone on the staff who could deal with this. At that point I thought that in five years' time I would be transitioning from full-time work to full-time ministry, but six years later I'm still doing full-time work and working at *St. Martin's*.

We all respond in different ways to the call we get; but I feel very strongly that I can be most useful, most effective, most supportive by staying in the workplace while also being a public Christian. I do tax work – not an obvious place for a Christian –



or a priest - to be, and yet many of us work in workplaces which are relatively ambiguous; maybe the work we're called to do, people we work with, or the organisation as a whole is ambiguous; and yet by being there we can stand alongside very good people who are also questioning the worth of what they're doing. It's this process of ourselves as Christians, showing that we don't think of ourselves as better than anyone else but acknowledging that our own lives are ambiguous, that's really important.

For many people there is a feeling that there is something antithetical about being a Christian and working for money, for a profit-making organisation. Here is my theological approach to this. At the beginning of the story I tell is a God who, Genesis tells us, created the world and saw it as good. A God who is interested in all of his creation. As a worker, God is interested in the world of work. At the end of my story is that at the end of time, there will be perfection – a new heaven and earth, a new Jerusalem, a perfection of everything we see; the world which God created will be perfected. Why would God squeeze into the middle a little bit that only says church and worship? God is interested in work, in life, everything that goes on, imperfect though it is. What we as Christians are called to do is not just to worship, but to work with God, be his hands and feet, to help work towards the end time by helping to perfect creation in all of its aspects, including the world of work. This explains why I feel called to remain in the workplace while remaining a public Christian to make sense of it.

I don't think there is an antithesis between work and faith, but what we're sometimes called on to do is to compartmentalise our lives. There's a "*good*" chunk on Sunday, a potentially "*bad*" chunk from nine-to-five Monday to Friday, and different chunks spent with family and friends which can be good or bad. That's a terrible way to lead your life, I don't think it's a life God calls us

to lead. I say I am both a lawyer and a priest at the same time – the stuff I do during the week has to make sense to me as a Christian; I need to find something in my work which is godly – something which however small is contributing towards the healing of creation; moving towards the time when everything will be perfected. It is very hard to always keep that in mind.

To use the analogy of a diet, there is a temptation, if you slip up once and eat to excess, to say “*I give up*”. But that is wrong. And the same is true of life – one small setback should not make you think it can’t be done; it should encourage you to try harder to make sense of your life. And in this respect having a proper support network really helps. People may have friends both on social media and real friends, but they don’t have groups like this [CLIS] which are really valuable. In the same way the churches are really valuable. Within that intermediate community you can find those strengthening conversations that you need. Failing that we will have to find other ways of doing it.

At *St Martin’s* I tried to reach out to the community through a series of twenty-five talks on faith in the workplace, addressing questions which I was interested in but thought others would be interested in as well. Firstly, structural questions – e.g. how might God be in the workplace; secondly, how to deal with real situations in a distinctively Christian way; thirdly, looking at what the Bible, especially the parable of the talents, might tell you about God in the workplace. In the first series we also looked at topics Mark Greene dealt with.<sup>i</sup> In particular, that the church is really bad at dealing with work – we pray for Sunday School teachers but not bankers - focussing on the form of the service but excluding what goes on outside church during the week. Secondly a view that paid-for work is incompatible with faith. I disagree strongly with both of those. The God of my story, of the beginning the middle and the end, wants us to work with him in the workplace, and the fact that our workplace, and the whole

economy, may have ambiguous or grey zones, is not a reason to step away from the task of working there with God to make it better.

So, the first story I refer to in my book<sup>ii</sup> is Jacob's ladder, which I use to explore aspects of the workplace. You're in a dreadful place, but it might be where heaven touches earth; so be prepared to be surprised! For example, a good boss can create space for you to be creative, rather than being in a place of great competitiveness. Always look for where the godly potential might be, and then build on that. Another example: in the case of team member, look at the parable of the sheep and the goats. We see this literally as a call to social work, but look at this metaphorically; e.g. someone can be stripped naked metaphorically by gossip in the workplace; you can help "*re-clothe*" them by putting your arm around them; opportunities to do small acts of kindness are always present. I also talk about the office gossip, open plan, the new arrival, retirement, and the P45.

In the next set of talks I looked at how do we, as Christians, respond to things which happen in the office. Firstly, ethical dilemmas; secondly if we're asked to do something contrary to our faith - taking up our cross doesn't mean we start arguing with somebody, we have to decide what will promote healing in this situation. You need to distinguish between your core beliefs and peripheral beliefs which are not fundamental to who you are. Is wearing a cross or going to court a fundamental part of who you are? We can show grace under pressure, by saying, these are my fundamental beliefs, but I'm not going to sue. We can witness as Christians by absorbing the pettiness of other people. People at work know that I'm a Christian. I don't have to preach. It's the association of the acts that you do with what people know is absolutely fundamental to you, and that is as powerful as it can

be; being who you are and at the same time letting people know in the most inoffensive way what your beliefs are and how they motivate your life. That is witnessing – and witnessing effectively – to our faith, in the workplace.

The Rev. **William Morris**, is the author of ***Where is God at Work?*** (Monarch, £8.99, ISBN 978-0857216281) which tackles such questions as: Is it enough to be a “*silent Christian*”?; Is being a Christian in the workplace just about personal honesty? Can we -and should we - try to change our workplace? Does God care about work anyway?

In addition to being a member of the clergy team of *St. Martin-in-the Fields*, William is currently Director, Global Tax Policy, in *General Electric’s* corporate tax department. He also chairs the CBI and BIAC Tax Committees.

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<sup>i</sup> Mark Greene, Thank God it’s Monday (ISBN: 9781859995037)

<sup>ii</sup> William Morris, Where is God at work? (ISBN-13: 9780857216281)