

Spring 2018

CLIS Christians in
Library and
Information
Services



CHRISTIAN LIBRARIAN

CONTENTS INCLUDE

- ***LIBRARY BOOK SPENDING***
 - ***UNPACKING BELIEF***
- ***“FREEDOM AND TRUTH” CONFERENCE: LONDON:
SATURDAY 14 APRIL 2018***
 - ***MARY JONES WORLD***
- ***BIBLE SOCIETY DIGITISATION PROJECT***
 - ***A BRUSH WITH THE COLD WAR***
 - ***FILMS AND FAITH***

EVENTS AT A GLANCE

●UCCF ARCHIVES WORKING PARTY, OXFORD, MARCH 2018

Dates to be arranged. Details: p. 11.

●ANNUAL CONFERENCE: FREEDOM AND FAITH: SATURDAY 14 APRIL 2018

Salvation Army's *Regent Hall*, Oxford Street, London, from 10.30. a.m. Speakers: **Mark Jones**, *Lawyers' Christian Fellowship*, and **Malcolm Martin**, *Christian People's Alliance*. Details: p. 8.

●CHRISTIAN LONDON WALKING TOUR: WEDNESDAY 23 MAY 2018

Details: p. 11.

●VISIT TO BIBLE SOCIETY LIBRARY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY:

Wednesday 12 September 2018. Details: p. 12.

PREMIER RADIO DIGITAL CONFERENCE: SATURDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2018

The Brewery, Chiswell Street, London, EC1Y 4SD. Details: p. 17.

PRAYER NOTES FOR SPRING 2018

PLEASE PRAY FOR

●Forthcoming CLIS activities including our 2018 annual conference. Pray that there will be a good attendance at this and other events.

● Candidates willing to serve on our executive committee and in other roles.

●Public librarians in a climate of spending cuts and closures.

● The work of the *Universities' and Colleges' Christian Fellowship* and especially for the current library and archives project.

●Greater participation in the CLIS social media groups.

● The *Bible Society* Library and its current digitisation projects and *Mary Jones World* in North Wales

●The work of the *Evangelical Alliance* and *Premier Christian Radio*

●Give thanks for the ministry of *Christians at Work* which came to an end at the close of 2017 after more than seventy years supporting and encouraging Christians in the workplace.



FOUNDED IN 1976 AS THE LIBRARIANS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

An organisation 'in liaison' with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. Affiliated to: Christian Research Association; Evangelical Alliance; Transform Work UK; Universities' & Colleges' Christian Fellowship. Web Site: www.christianlis.org.uk

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THE FIRST WORD

EDDIE OLLIFFE highlights the continuing problem of cuts in the public library service

LIBRARY BOOK SPENDING DROPS BY FIFTY PER CENT IN TEN YEARS

Serious issues – on books, property and staffing - continue to persist across the UK Library Service. This has affected libraries across the country, due to government and local council cuts. It's quite appalling what is happening, and over such a long period of time. People do say that they 'care' and that libraries are important, but nevertheless every year there are closures upon closures across many local libraries.

I remain unconvinced that the *Conservative* government is really concerned about all of this, and the *Labour Party* is not really in a position to do anything about it either. Sadly, there is no law against closing libraries. Local councils view straightforward library closures as a clear signal by which to gain money for other necessary expenditures. This is all bad news, and has been happening for so many years now. Where will this stop?

CIPFA (*Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy*) revealed in January 2018 that the amount of money spent on print books for public libraries in England had fallen from £75.8m in 2007 to £36.3m in 2017. In Great Britain overall, spending on books has fallen £45.8m in that time to £44.7m.

The Bookseller reported in January that one hundred and five libraries closed in the UK in the year to April 2017, but then it also came to light that twenty-eight out of one hundred and fifty one local authorities did not provide figures to CIPFA; and all these

were in areas where library services have been threatened with cuts. These shocking figures are a very real concern for everyone involved in libraries.

Figures show that expenditure on professional librarians also continues to fall. The Library Service works effectively via volunteers and helpers, and far less so on professional librarians. This is a very poor way for the library service to go about its work for the future. All governments should be worried about this grim fact, including the present *Conservative* government under their PM, Theresa May.

In 2017, total expenditure on public libraries was £793m in England. Library campaigner, Tim Coates (former *Waterstones* MD) said, *'£800 million is enough money to run 3,000 libraries in England. The problem is that £300m of the £800m is spent on management costs and not on the libraries themselves'*.

However, in January 2018, Andrea Leadsom, the Leader of the Commons, visited the *Bracknell Library* in Northamptonshire which was due to make £115m worth of savings. She was invited by a nine-year-old user who wrote a letter to her explaining all about the library.

To Ms Leadsom's credit, she has agreed to campaign for the *'sustainable future'* of libraries as a result of this one visit. She said, *'Many people have written to me and I am absolutely representing their interest in making sure we can keep our valuable libraries'*.

Well, we shall see!

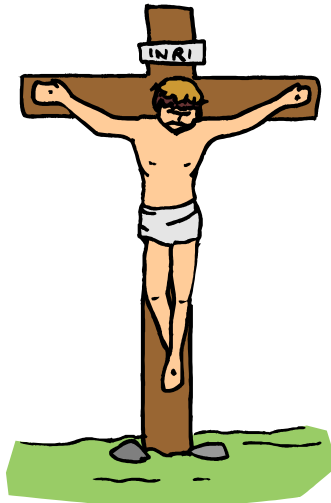
Appendix: www.publiclibrariesnews.com/2017/12/english-public-libraries-in-2017-the-key-trends.html

Eddie Olliffe is the President of *Christians in Library and Information Services* and a Trustee of the *Christian Book Promotion Trust*.

THE SECOND WORD

ROBERT FOSTER recalls a conversation about Handel's *Messiah* and suggests that there may be opportunities for explaining the Christian faith even while carrying out everyday library duties

UNPACKING BELIEF



During the last College term, I was taken by surprise when a student from the vocal faculty, who was in the library collecting scores for his forthcoming studies, expressed some indifference towards Handel's *Messiah*. "I don't get it" he said, "it doesn't make sense". *Messiah* happens to be a particular favourite of mine and I wanted to say "Well, Mozart thought it was pretty good" (Mozart re-worked it in a German version). I trust that I summoned up some suitable professional response to the student; anyhow, the conversation moved on to other more mundane matters.

Several days later I remembered this conversation and realised the student had a point. **Messiah** is an unusual oratorio because there are no *dramatis personae*. Aspects of the Jesus story (Angels singing "*Glory to God*", the angry crowd chanting "*He trusted in God*" for example) are evoked but it's different to the other biblical oratorios, which use Old Testament narratives. Instead, carefully selected verses from both Testaments were woven together by librettist Charles Jennens, and then set to music by Handel. There is no re-telling of the story, no expansion. It remains an extraordinary work of genius, perhaps for this very reason, but for anyone with limited previous exposure to the Christian gospel, it might well need a bit of explanation. Take the opening words: "*Comfort ye my people*". Those with some Bible knowledge will take it for granted that God is speaking through a prophet of ancient Israel, but without the background how would you know that?

Great works of art, music and literature are usually allowed to speak for themselves. I am sure thousands of people have been moved by Handel's **Messiah** with only sketchy Bible knowledge or less. Yet it occurs to me that if I was ever asked again what **Messiah** was about, could I do it justice? No doubt the same sort of question could crop up elsewhere. You might be an enthusiast for G. A. Studdert Kennedy's poetry, or Rembrandt's biblical scenes. It seems to me that if we have some insight into a Christian creator's work, we might one day have the privilege of unpacking something of Christian belief, even as information.

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

Christians in
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FREEDOM AND TRUTH

DON'T MISS OUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SATURDAY 14 APRIL 2018

From 10.30. a.m. – 4.45. p.m.



***in the Princes Street Room at the
Salvation Army's REGENT HALL,
OXFORD STREET, LONDON, W1C 2DJ***

CONFERENCE DETAILS

“Freedom and Truth” is the theme of the *Christians in Library and Information Services* Conference to be held on **Saturday 14 April 2018** in the **Princes Street Room** at the *Salvation Army’s Regent Hall, 275, Oxford Street, London, W1C 2DJ*, from 10.30. a.m. - 4.45. p.m.

Mark Jones will be speaking on the subject **“Gospel Freedom and the Workplace”** and will look at how the law impacts Christians at work, in particular the ability to speak openly about their faith in Jesus.

Malcolm Martin will be speaking on the subject **“What is Truth? - and how do we tell it”** and will be addressing some of the issues in the current debates about post-truth and fake news. His talk will provide a (very) brief history of fake news from the beginning of humanity to the current date; consider the current dissemination of fake news, with particular reference to the use of social media; look at the identification of fake news and fake news purveyors and difficulties with these approaches; and make suggestions on the role of the Christian librarian and information specialist.

Mark Jones is head of employment law at *MW* solicitors and chairman of the *Lawyers’ Christian Fellowship*.

Malcolm Martin is a Chartered Surveyor and the deputy leader of the *Christian People’s Alliance*. He is passionate about social justice and has stood as a parliamentary candidate for the *Lewisham Deptford* constituency. He has been an unpaid church leader in inner city London for many years.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our annual general meeting is to be held on **Saturday 14 April 2018** at the **Regent Hall**, from 11.20. a.m., as part of the annual conference proceedings.

Please let The Secretary – Graham Hedges, 34 Thurlestone Avenue, Ilford, Essex, IG3 9SU - have any motions for discussion, or nominations for office, in writing not later than one calendar month before the annual general meeting.

Nominations are invited for the following executive committee positions: Publications Editor, Membership Secretary, Scottish Secretary, and Member Without Portfolio.

Each nomination needs a proposer and seconder and the candidate also needs to indicate his or her willingness to serve.

Some present committee members may be willing to stand for re-election but we are always pleased to hear from additional members who may be interested in serving on the executive committee.

HOW TO BOOK

The booking fee is £30.00 (£25.00 for unwaged delegates) with free attendance for students. These prices include lunch and refreshments during the day. Bookings for the conference should be sent to the treasurer, **Diana Guthrie**, 5 Arden Mead, 4 Staveley Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 7LH. Telephone 01323 419181. E mail treasurer@christianlis.org.uk

Cheques should be made payable to *Christians in Library and Information Services*. Payment can also be made by *PayPal* via a the CLIS web site at www.christianlis.org.uk/event/clis-conference-agm-2018/ If paying by *PayPal* we would still appreciate a completed booking form or e-mail sent to Diana.

Please join us for a day of inspiring speakers, worship and opportunities to meet and enjoy fellowship with other Christians from a library and information background.

The Regent Hall ("*the only church on Oxford Street*") should provide a convenient venue located as it is in the heart of London's West End and close to Oxford Circus underground station (Bakerloo, Central and Victoria Lines)

Please note that, although the postal address of the conference venue is in London's Oxford Street, access to the Princes Street Room is via a separate entrance in Princes Street, a turning off Regent Street. Travel directions and a conference programme will be sent to registered delegates nearer the time.

CLIS NEWSLETTER

From Graham Hedges, The Secretary, 34 Thurlestone Avenue, Ilford, Essex, IG3 9DU. Tel. + 44 (0)20 8599 1310. Mobile 07465 429996. E mail secretary@christianlis.org.uk Web site www.christianlis.org.uk

UCCF WORKING PARTY

Members of CLIS are currently involved in a project to organise and catalogue the book library and archives of the *Universities' and Colleges' Christian Fellowship* in their Oxford premises.

A second working party is planned to continue the task of organising the UCCF archives. started last November.

At the time of writing the dates have not been finalised but are likely to be either the weeks beginning **Monday 12 March** or **Monday 19 March 2018**.

Previous experience of archive work is not necessarily required and accommodation, meals and travel expenses will be provided by UCCF. If you would like to volunteer for all or part of the working party period please contact Richard Waller whose telephone number is 01942 205843 and who can be contacted by e-mail at randnwaller@blueyonder.co.uk

Please give any preference for dates, although we may not be able to accommodate everyone's choices.

CHRISTIAN LONDON

Members and friends of CLIS will be taking part in a guided walking tour of the City of London arranged for us by *Christian Heritage London*. This is to be held on **Wednesday 23 May 2018**, beginning 2.00.p.m.

Those who can arrive in time will be having lunch together in a local restaurant, probably from 12.00. noon.

The tour will take in many places of Christian historical interest associated with such figures as John Wesley, John Bunyan, John Newton, Elizabeth Fry, William Tyndale, William Wilberforce and many others.

The cost of the tour is £10.00 per head. If you would like to book a place or places please let me know, enclosing the required payment made payable to *Christians in Library and Information Services*. Further details will be supplied nearer the time to those who book places.

Please note that the walking tour is likely to take 2/3 hours, though members could drop out along the way if they not up to the complete walk. Please plan to join us for what should prove to be a fascinating overview of the Christian history of our capital city.

AUTUMN PROGRAMME

We have not arranged an annual lecture for autumn 2018 but we are hoping to arrange two visits to places of interest to librarians during September and October. If possible this will include a weekday visit and a Saturday visit.

Our first visit will be to the *Bible Society Library* at the *University of Cambridge* on **Wednesday afternoon 12 September 2018**, to be preceded by lunch in a local restaurant for those who can get to Cambridge in time.

For our second visit we are exploring a possible visit to the proposed London centre of the *Museum of the Bible* at the church of *St. Mary le Strand* in London.

Details are to be arranged but will be included in future issues of ***Christian Librarian*** and the ***E-Newsletter***. In the meantime, if you would like to be kept informed, please let me know.

PARALLEL CAREER

Spring 2018 marks my fortieth anniversary as Publications Editor of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* and *Christians in Library and Information Services*.

For many years the Fellowship published two separate publications: the thrice-yearly **Newsletter** and the annual **Christian Librarian**. Following an appeal for a volunteer to serve as Editor, I took over as **Newsletter** Editor in early 1978 before being asked to take over **Christian Librarian** as well during the following year.

In those days the publications were produced by old-fashioned stencil duplicator and the pages needed to be collated and stapled by hand, which created problems when we published a larger issue than usual. On a number of occasions I had to lay out the sheets on an old table tennis table in my father's garage, and walk round the table gathering up the pages as I went.

Change came in 1983 when we were able to switch to a commercially printed A5 format using a daisy wheel typewriter (remember them?) to produce the text. This continued until our twentieth anniversary year of 1996 when we purchased a Canon StarWriter word processor.

The computer age finally arrived in 2002 when we started to produce the magazine on the first of several PCs. We finally merged the two printed publications into one in 2015, having launched an e-mail **Newsletter** several years previously.

My first couple of years' service as Editor led to an invitation to become Secretary of the Fellowship, taking up that additional role in April 1980. I should have known that the reward for work is always to be given more work!

In an address to our Scottish Conference in 1982 our second President, Dr. John Andrews, said "*I hope that we are not going to lose Graham Hedges to journalism*". John would have been unaware that my earliest ambition had been to pursue a career in journalism and I had only decided to become a librarian at a later date. No doubt this was the right career choice, but I have enjoyed my parallel career as an amateur journalist and hope that my efforts have been helpful to members and friends of LCF/CLIS.

PARADISE LOST

In our last issue we mentioned the musical *Heaven on Earth*, a re-telling of the story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. Services This production was promoted at the *Movement Day* conference at *Westminster Central Hall* last November and was due to begin an arena tour of the country in December 2017 ending with performances at Wembley in May 2018.

We were sorry to hear that the arena tour had been cancelled at a late stage in the year following the demise of the organisers, *Eden International Productions Ltd.*, who have gone into liquidation.

BRUCE REMEMBERED

Long standing members with good memories may remember our 1982 annual lecture in Loughborough given by the eminent biblical scholar **F.F. Bruce**. Services

The late Professor Bruce, Emeritus Professor of New Testament Criticism and Exegesis at the *University of Manchester*, spoke on the subject *Two Centuries of New Testament Criticism*, describing many of the leading figures and movements in New Testament scholarship from the eighteenth through to the twentieth centuries.

Despite 'competition' from the annual Loughborough Fair, held in the town centre on the same day, the lecture attracted around eighty people, from our own membership and local churches, which for some years remained our best ever attendance.

Professor Bruce's lecture has now been re-printed as part of a Kindle book ***Understanding Biblical Criticism: What it is, what it does, why it matters*** (Kingsley Books, £5.96, US price \$7.99, ISBN 978-191249124). This is available from *Amazon.co.uk* as well as other suppliers.

David Capes, Associate Dean of *Wheaton College*, Illinois, contributes an introduction to the essay collection as a whole while the present writer provides an introduction to the Loughborough lecture itself. On the strength

of this I am now listed as co-author with Professor Bruce and David Capes on *Amazon!*

This volume is part of a planned series of electronic versions of books by F.F. Bruce planned by *F.F. Bruce Copyright International Inc.*, of Nashville, USA. You can obtain more information from Larry Stone at larryRHP@aol.com

LIBRARIES TO DIGITAL

Our past speaker the Rev. **Alec Gilmore** is the author of the on-line book ***Feed the Minds: from literacy to literature, from libraries to digital*** which you can find as a PDF file on the web site <http://www.feedtheminds.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/From-Literacy-to-Literature-pdf.pdf>

This tells the story of *Feed the Minds*, a Christian-based charity working since the early 1960s to promote literacy and literature work in the Caribbean, Africa, India, South-East Asia and Eastern Europe

Motivated by the need for education the pioneers concentrated on literacy and the provision of books for basic education and new readers alongside a programme for supplying biblical and theological books for overseas clergy and the creation of libraries. More recently the emphasis has changed from supplying books to enabling churches overseas to produce their own.

Alec Gilmore is a Baptist minister who led churches in Northampton and Worthing before joining the *Lutterworth Press* as an editor and then spending ten years as Director of *Feed the Minds*. In his retirement he continues to write and lecture on biblical studies. He is a past contributor to ***Christian Librarian*** and served as guest preacher at our services of thanksgiving in 1984 and 1987.

You can find more information about *Feed the Minds* at www.feedtheminds.org

ABSENT FRIENDS

- We are sorry to report the death in August 2017 of our long standing member **Sally-An Services ne Fairall** who worked until her retirement as a Library Assistant in the *Lord Louis Library* in Newport, Isle of Wight. Please remember her husband and other family members and friends in prayer in the months following this time of bereavement.
- We were sorry to hear of the death of one of our past Conference speakers in November 2017.

Along with a colleague from the *Christian Literature Crusade*, **Roger Page** spoke on choosing Christian books at our Conference in April 1980, which happened to be the Conference at which I was first elected as Secretary of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship*.

Roger worked for the CLC from 1969 until his retirement in 2012. His first job was as Manager of the CLC bookshop in London. Later he became Warehouse Manager before taking up the role (with his wife) of UK Leader. In this capacity he was also responsible for overseeing the work in Belarus, Poland, Sierra Leone and Tanzania.

When his tenure as UK Leader came to an end he returned to the role of Warehouse Manager and was involved in the recent move from Alresford to Chester.

Neil Wardrope's article *A True Christian Gentleman: a tribute to Roger Page (1947 – 2017)* appears in **CLC World Magazine**, Issue 1, 2018, pp. 24-25.

- We were also sorry to hear of the passing of **Ada Hiley** in September 2017. Along with her husband Bob, Ada was one of the founders of *Book Aid* which distributes Christian books to developing countries. Bob and Ada originally worked for the *Christian Literature Crusade* and *Book Aid* developed out of that organisation. It was Ada who took a group of CLIS members round the *Book Aid* HQ in South London back in 2015.

SAVED FOR THE NATION

The ***Mostyn Psalter-Hours*** has been acquired by the *British Library* thanks to a £390,000 grant from the *National Heritage Memorial Fund* and contributions from other sources including the *Friends of the British Library* and the *Friends of the National Libraries*.

The manuscript, a rare and beautiful collection of the Psalms produced in thirteenth century London, is one of relatively few surviving examples of luxury books known to have been made in London during the medieval period. This original patron is unknown, but its high quality illumination indicates that it was made for an important individual, possibly a bishop.

The manuscript has been digitised and is available to view on the Library's *Digitised Manuscripts* web site at www.bl.uk/manuscripts

The Psalter will be available to read in the *British Library's Manuscripts Reading Room*, at 96 Euston Road, London, NW1 2DB, following a period on display in the *Sir John Ritblat Treasures* gallery.

MUSEUM OF THE BIBLE

The ambitious *Museum of the Bible* opened its doors to members of the public in Washington D.C. in November 2017.

The Museum is said to have cost \$500 million to establish and occupies an entire city block in the American capital city. Attractions include items from the Dead Sea Scrolls, a bronze gate inscribed with text from the Gutenberg Bible, and a re-creation of the ten plagues of Egypt from Exodus.

Plans have also been announced to open the church of *St. Mary le Strand*, in central London, as a London base for the Museum, housing travelling exhibitions from the main Museum's collections.

The project has not been without controversy however. Some have questioned the political affiliations of the Museum's main financial backers, the Green family, owners of a major retail chain. The decision to hold a fundraising event in a hotel owned by President Donald Trump also drew criticism while, in London, some of the members of the parochial church

council at *St. Mary le Strand*, have questioned plans to turn the church into a museum according to a report in the ***Church Times*** for 8 December 2017.

You can obtain more information about the *Museum of the Bible* from the web site <https://www.museumofthebible.org> or by e-mailing uk@mbible.org

DIGITAL AWARDS

I was in hospital in November 2017 and had to miss the *Premier Christian Radio Digital Conference* but I was pleased to learn that my friends and colleagues at the *Evangelical Alliance* had won the award for the best new web site for their *Great Commission* site.

The *Great Commission* web site contains resources for evangelism and video testimonies of people who have come to faith. You can visit the site at www.greatcommission.co.uk

Other categories recognised in the award ceremony were the Best use of digital media in youth work, the Best on-line campaign, the Best use of video, and the Most engaging church website. *Guardians of Ancora*, the interactive game from *Scripture Union*, featured at last year's CLIS Conference, was recognised as the app of the year. Bishop Sarah Mullally, since appointed as the first female Bishop of London, was the runner up as Tweeter of the year.

You can consult the complete list of award winners at <https://www.premierdigital.info/award-winners-2017>

This year's *Digital Conference* is planned for **Saturday 3 November 2018** at *The Brewery*, Chiswell Street, London, EC1Y 4SD and you can find information at <https://www.premierdigital.info/conference>
Services

THE MATTER OF BRITAIN

Thirty eight years ago I wrote an article entitled *King Arthur and the Inklings* which appeared in ***Christian Librarian***, No. 4, 1980. This looked at the

influence of the Arthurian legends on the works of the various Christian writers who belonged to the literary group known as the Inklings.

My article was not intended as a work of serious scholarship, but I was pleased to discover a recent book that covers the same subject area in a much more in-depth and academic fashion.

The Inklings and King Arthur: J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis and Owen Barfield on the Matter of Britain, edited by Sorina Higgins (Apocryphile Press, £39.99, ISBN 978-1944769865) is a collection of essays by leading scholars in the field of Inklings studies. Running to some five hundred and fifty-five pages, this is not a book for the casual reader but it will be welcomed by those with a serious interest in Arthurian literature or the works of Lewis, Tolkien, Williams, Barfield and their circle.

There is a particular emphasis on the works of the poet and novelist Charles Williams who wrote two volumes of verse on Arthurian themes and also included the Holy Grail in one of his *“supernatural thrillers”*. Chapters on C. S. Lewis look at his science fiction trilogy, in which Merlin returns to twentieth century Britain, but also trace Arthurian influences and references in his other works.

Background information is provided in an essay on the medieval sources behind the works of the Inklings.

The essays look beyond the Inklings as a narrowly defined group and there are contributions on Arthurian ideas and themes in the works of George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, and T. S. Eliot.

This volume has been welcomed by our past speaker Dr. Michael Ward who says that it deals with *“a complex subject that scholars have for too long overlooked”*.

CURRENT AWARENESS

- According to Professor Stephen Hawking *“The development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race”*.

Richard Woodall's article *Rise of the Robots* considers some of the ethical and theological issues which are raised by the emergence of artificial intelligence and robot technology. The writer questions whether it is possible

that advanced computer systems could one day count as “*self-aware conscious beings with their own emotions, desires and moral rights*”.

The article also raises the question of whether emerging robot technology might lead to the loss of jobs, especially those carried out by a manual labour force, leading to social unrest and a new generation of Luddites.

Some writers have suggested that it might in the future be possible to upload the memory content of our brains into a computer before we die allowing us to “*live forever*” in a “*digital version of heaven*”. This debate raises the question of whether we are simply biological machines or made in the image of God with souls that transcend our physical nature.

The article looks at films that have dealt with some of these issues – such as the recent ***Blade Runner 2049*** – and includes an interview with “*tech-expert*” Nigel Cameron on the future of robotics.

The article appears in ***Premier Christianity***, for December 2017, pp. 18 – 21, 23.

- Simon Cook’s article *Like it or not, the digital world is the real world* acknowledges the role of the Internet and social media in contemporary society but expresses concern that the ethical and theological issues raised by communications technology are rarely discussed in church.

Many Christians seem to believe that the digital world is fine for e-mails and shopping but Christianity is about “*real relationships and community*” and we should not dilute it with the latest “*worldly fashions*”.

This is to ignore the fact that the digital world is increasingly the “*real world*”. Most Christian books on the subject either emphasise “*tech as threat*” or “*tech as opportunity*”. We need considered reflective teaching and study material at local church level for those who are technologically able and those who are not. We need to address the subject of “*digital poverty*” as more and more information and services move on-line and also the challenge of reaching the unchurched in an age of data protection.

The article appears in the ***Church Times*** for 24 November 2017, p. 14.

- Keith Hooper's article *The Simple Faith of Charles Dickens* looks at the religious beliefs of the famous novelist. Dickens had a high regard for Jesus Christ and for the New Testament regarding it as "*the best book that ever was or will ever be known*". However he had little time for the finer points of doctrine or theological controversies and for some years, was a regular attender at Unitarian services.

Dickens also had lifelong links with the *Church of England* where his sympathies were with the Broad Church party rather than the Evangelical or High Church movements of his day. He attended various parish churches at different times in his life and was on friendly terms with many clergymen.

Dickens wrote *The Life of Our Lord* for his children and urged them to read the New Testament and follow the example of Christ. He also encouraged them to adopt his own practice of daily prayer.

The article appears in the ***Church Times*** for 22/29 December 2017, pp. 36-37.

- **Harry Blamires**, writer and lay theologian, died on 21 November 2017 at the advanced age of one hundred and one.

Blamires had been a student of C.S. Lewis before the Second World War and later became a personal friend. Like Lewis he wrote works of Christian apologetics and theology and critical works on English literature. His best known book *The Christian Mind* (SPCK, 1963) argued that secular thinking had infiltrated the Christian Church.

An obituary by Brian Davis appears in the ***Church Times*** for 8 December 2017, p. 28.

EBSCO PUBLISHING

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Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 8 April 2017 in the Bertha Wright Room at the Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham, B4 7SX

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The meeting was chaired by Eddie Olliffe, CLIS President, and apologies for absence were received from Mary Chibnall, Janet Danels, Gordon Harris, Rachel Johnson, Derek Jowett, Margaret Keeling, Anne MacRitchie, Louise Manners, Elizabeth Pool, Kirsty Robinson and John Wickenden.

Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 23 April 2016 at the *Regent's Hall*, London, were approved as a correct record. Graham Hedges remains in hope that someone will come forward to take over as Secretary; however some of his former responsibilities, such as the visits, are now being organised by other members of the committee.

Annual Report from the Chair and Secretary

This was presented by Robert Foster, Chair of CLIS. The 2016 Annual Conference was a lively and interesting affair, with Nick Spencer (from *Theos*) and Will Morris (from *St. Martin-in-the-Fields*)

as thought-provoking speakers. We were also privileged to have Elizabeth Barber, a founder member of LCF, with us.

The Annual Lecture took place in Coventry in October, preceded by the opportunity of a morning tour of *Coventry Cathedral* and its archives.

There had been two other visits, to the UCCF (in Oxford), and the *London School of Theology*.

Three issues of ***Christian Librarian*** were published during 2016, and the issues from Spring 2013 to Spring 2016 were put on-line. Eight ***E-Newsletters*** were published, plus a reviews feature.

CLIS has *Facebook* and *Twitter* accounts , but there is plenty of scope for further involvement. Sarah Etheridge, the new Recruitment Secretary, has taken on liaison with library schools, and we are now offering free e-membership to students for the duration of their courses.

At the end of 2016, we had one hundred and forty one members and ten subscribers. The committee has met three times, Mary Barker has had to step down, but two other people will be joining the committee.

The meeting stood for a prayer of remembrance for several people: Tony Ashcroft, Gillian Bakewell, Edwin Fleming, Rosalind Holmes, and Nigel Tilly.

Treasurer's Report for January – December 2016

This was presented by Diana Guthrie. Copies of the 2016 accounts and the Treasurer's notes had been printed for all present.

Income and expenditure had remained broadly the same as in 2015, except for a most generous legacy of £5,000 from the late

John Andrews, a former President. This saved CLIS from reporting another annual deficit.

The main expenses were publishing ***Christian Librarian***, and running the Annual Conference and Lecture. Holding a Conference in London (as was done in 2016) was always more expensive than holding it in the provinces, but the 2016 one was judged to be a particular success, with excellent speakers and atmosphere.

Finding the reason for the discrepancy between the 2015 accounts and the actual (greater) amount known to be held in various bank accounts (*Barclays, Nationwide, and PayPal*) at the end of that year had proved an intractable problem. The Treasurer had therefore taken the decision to base the 2016 figures on the assets known to be held at the end of 2015, and this had been noted on the balance sheet.

Eddie Olliffe proposed that this alteration in the baseline for the accounts be agreed by this meeting; this was accepted without dissent.

Election of Officers

Candidates:

President: **Eddie Olliffe**

Proposed by the Executive Committee

Secretary: **Graham Hedges**

Proposed by Kim Walker and Janet Danels

Treasurer: **Diana Guthrie**

Proposed by Gordon Harris and Kirsty Robinson

Recruitment Secretary: **Sarah Etheridge**

Proposed by Karen Hans and Diana Guthrie

Webmaster: **John Wickenden**

Proposed by Susan Bates and Mary Wood

Overseas Secretary: **Eleanor Neil**

Proposed by Janice Paine and Graham Hedges

Library Assistance Manager: **Rachel Johnson**,

Proposed by Graham Hedges and Christine Gagan

Members Without Portfolio:

Annabel Haycraft

Proposed by Janice Paine and Diana Guthrie

,
Andrew Parker

Proposed by Janice Paine and Diana Guthrie.

No nominations had been received for the position of a third Member Without Portfolio. The proposed candidates were elected en bloc.

Any Other Business

Graham Hedges announced visits to *Tyndale House*, Cambridge, on 10 May, and *Lambeth Palace* on 11 September. The 2017 Annual Lecture would take place on 14 October in St. Albans and the 2018 Annual Conference on 14 April was returning to *Regent's Hall* in central London. There was more information about these on the CLIS web site.

One of the participants asked why CLIS meetings always took place in the south of the UK – only two people had come from the North to this meeting. Graham Hedges replied that attendance at CLIS meetings was markedly better in the south – even when they were held in the Midlands (e.g. recent Annual Conferences in Leicester and Birmingham) most participants came from the South. Susan Bates added that the *Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals* had similar experiences when arranging meetings. Eddie Olliffe promised that the CLIS committee would have another look at this. The Annual General Meeting closed at 12.00 noon.

REVIEW

DIANA GUTHRIE recommends a book by our 2016 guest lecturer as a “good read”

LUTHER ANNIVERSARY REMEMBERED

**A NEARLY INFALLIBLE HISTORY OF THE REFORMATION:
COMMEMORATING FIVE HUNDRED YEARS OF POPES,
PROTESTANTS, REFORMERS, RADICALS AND ASSORTED
IRRITANTS**

Nick Page

**Hodder and Stoughton, 2017, £18.99, Hardback, 444p.; ISBN
978-14474969**

I offered to review this book for CLIS, having heard Nick Page’s 2016 Annual Lecture which gave his CLIS audience a preview of the book. If you’ve read his ***A nearly infallible history of Christianity***, you’ll have a flavour of his approach in this new book.

If you thought the Reformation began with Martin Luther nailing his Ninety-Five ‘theses’ (questions and complaints) to the door of Wittenberg church on 31 October 2017, you’d be very wrong. It’s almost certain that this never actually happened; Luther was a self-dramatist, always ready to fan the flames of self-publicity, but he never referred to the incident. It was Philip Melanchthon who wrote the story down, and he didn’t arrive in Wittenberg till 2018, a year after the alleged event; and he didn’t write about it until nearly thirty years later, after Luther’s death. But whatever the truth of the story, it was a case of: right man, right place, right time.

The '*Reformation*' had been brewing for some time, and the first section of Nick's book deals with the background to the movement; it's an extensive survey of social, economic, political and religious Europe in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, where enormous changes were boiling up. The medieval church dominated every aspect of life to an extent almost unimaginable to most of us, and one of its tools was illiteracy; the illiterate are always vulnerable to manipulation, and in medieval Europe most people couldn't read or write; those who could were faced with a church culture that operated in Latin, adding another level of illiteracy.

What many people see as the hinge between medieval and post-medieval Europe was Gutenberg's development in 1454 of a printing press which used moveable type; and his first book was a printed Bible. Gutenberg's innovation meant that Bibles could be printed in almost limitless numbers at a fraction of the cost of the manuscript version. Ironically, his Bible retained the appearance of the hand-written Bible and was printed on expensive parchment, as he wanted to demonstrate that printing could replicate the carefully written manuscript. It was other, more far-seeing, printers who realised the potential of printing and used it to provide cheap and cheerful publications; amongst these were Bibles in not only Latin but many other European languages (though not in English, as Bible translations into English were banned until well into the sixteenth century).

The movement for religious reform understood and exploited the enormous potential of printing; thousands of pamphlets were produced, often illustrated by well-known artists such as Cranach and Dürer, which made them more appealing. Copyright was an undeveloped concept, and as travelling salesmen distributed books and pamphlets, these were then reprinted locally and re-distributed, creating a ripple effect in the European pond.

All this created the combustible timber which was lit by Luther's spark, or rather sparks, as the Ninety-Five Theses were only the beginning of his attempts to reform the *Roman Catholic*

Church. The theses concentrated on penance, pardon and indulgences (the practice of buying your way out of Purgatory). Although written in Latin, the theses achieved almost instant notoriety, but it was his later writings that launched the ideas which became key to Protestantism (a title coined in the 1530s).

One key idea was '*Sola fide*': justification by faith in Christ's sacrifice. This is how Nick puts it: '*Medieval Christianity emphasised the idea of man, through works and sacraments, climbing the staircase towards God. But Luther claimed it all worked the other way round. God was sliding down the bannisters towards us!*' The issue of justification became the major point of difference between the *Roman Catholic Church* and the Reformers. Something that I hadn't known before listening to and reading Nick Page was that it was Luther who added the word '*alone*' to the text of Romans 3:28 in his translation of the New Testament from Greek into German, to add emphasis to the concept of justification by faith, not works; he was widely criticised for this but stuck to his guns, and the concept has come down to us in the twenty-first century.

Luther's other key principle was '*Sola scriptura*': the Bible should be the final authority in matters of faith and practice; this was another major sticking-point, as it undermined the authority of the Papal system, unleashing a major confrontation that would last for centuries.

Luther is famous for '*starting the Reformation*', but the Reformation depended on much more than his polemical ideas for reforming the Church; one of his major contributions to the movement was his translation of the Bible into vernacular German; it wasn't the first German Bible, but it was the first that the literate man in the street could read easily for himself. His New Testament was published in 1522 and became an instant best-seller. This had major implications as it encouraged independent thinking, which led people to begin questioning the church's teachings. Combined with the concepts of *sola fide* and *sola scriptura*, Luther's translation was encouraging Europe into perilous territory.

A large chunk of Nick's book deals with Luther, but his contribution was only part of the story, and much of the book deals with many of the people who took up the new thinking and proclaimed it publicly. There's a section on Zwingli, the man who summed up Reformation thought in his sixty-seven theses of 1523, proposing a programme of reform of the *Roman Catholic Church*. And there was Melanchthon, who tried to systematise Luther's teaching and was prepared to make some compromises with the Roman Catholics. German-speaking Europe wasn't the only area simmering with change – there was Calvin in French-speaking Geneva, and several prominent churchmen in Britain (such as Cranmer and Coverdale) who were caught up in the new thinking. Nick gives Britain a section to itself and shows that England (in the person of its king, Henry VIII) was the first country to declare itself free of the Pope, in 1534 (though that was a political rather than a religious decision).

Nick's book encompasses an enormous amount of research into a movement that turned sixteenth century Europe upside-down and that continues to influence Christian belief today. The treatment is largely chronological, with locational sub-chronologies. It's written in a conversational style, with lots of asides and truly terrible puns – but I like puns! The illustrations consist of simple maps and a lot of prints of the time, mostly annotated with cartoon-like speech bubbles. The text is also broken up with light-hearted mini-biographies of '*top reformers*'. On the minus side there are a lot of topical references which are entertaining but will date the book, and a few printing errors (e.g. the year of Luther's death is given as both 1541 and 1546 in different places). There is a good index and a useful chronology of the Reformation from 1304 to 1660.

Would I recommend this book as a good read? **YES!**

Diana Guthrie, MA, serves on the Executive Committee of *Christians in Library and Information Services* as Treasurer.

GRAHAM RAND visits an exhibition that tells the story of two remarkable Christians and looks at the impact of the Bible in Wales and in the wider world

MARY JONES WORLD



A year ago, I had the opportunity, at last, to visit *Mary Jones World* in Bala, North Wales. I had been aware of the Mary Jones story as a child and, being very involved with the *Bible Society* committee in Lancaster, when the exhibition opened in 2014 I was determined to visit it. It took two years! It was well worth the wait.

The story of Mary Jones will be familiar to many, but perhaps not to all. Mary Jones, a fifteen year old Welsh girl, walked twenty six miles barefoot, from Llanfhlangel-y-Pennant to Bala in 1800 to buy a Bible from the Rev. Thomas Charles. It so happens that I visited with a friend who had retraced her walk many years ago. Rev. Thomas Charles, inspired by her commitment to having her own copy of the Bible, proposed to the *Religious Tract Society* that it set up a new organisation to supply Wales with Bibles. This led

directly to the creation of the *British and Foreign Bible Society*, now the *Bible Society*, in 1804.

Mary Jones World is housed in *St. Bueno's Church*, Llanycil, a short distance south of Bala on the edge of Llyn Tegid (Bala Lake), where Thomas Charles is buried. It tells the story of Mary Jones and Thomas Charles, and the impact of the Bible in Wales and throughout the world. There are impressive multimedia and interactive displays, and artefacts, including Thomas Charles' ink well. It could have been called *Thomas Charles World*, but that may not have been so appealing. His gravestone says that "*By his indefatigable endeavours when in London (AD 1804) to Procure a supply of the Holy Scriptures for the use of his native countrymen he became the means of establishing the British and Foreign Bible Society*".

But that is not all to the Thomas Charles story. As his epitaph continues "*He was the Reviver of the Welsh Circulating Charity Schools, and a most active Promoter of Sunday Schools for children and adults*". It concludes "*North Wales (the more immediate field of his ministerial labours for thirty years) will probably retain traces of his various and strenuous exertions to promote the kingdom of Christ till time shall be no more*". The exhibition will probably ensure that more than traces are retained.

His statue, dating from 1875, is outside Capel Tegid, Bala. Apparently, the intention of the sculptor is to represent him in his preaching robes, as though uttering the following sentence: "*From my heart I wish all men to have the Bible*".

Graham Rand has recently retired from the Management School at the *University of Lancaster*. He has served as an elder of the *Moorland Evangelical Church* and as chairman of the University chaplaincy team.

Dr. RACHEL JOHNSON reports progress on current projects to digitise Chinese translations of the New Testament and missionary correspondence

BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY LIBRARY DIGITISATION PROJECT



Many of you will be aware that the *British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) Library* is involved in one or more digitisation projects and perhaps might be interested in reading a short piece relating what exactly they are up to in the depths of the *Cambridge University Library*.

On this premise I ambushed the BFBS Librarian, Onesimus Ngundu, on one of his regular visits to study at *Tyndale House* and discovered the following information:

The Present

The first major project concerns digitisation of Chinese New Testaments in languages other than the official Mandarin. These

translations were banned, are not available in China and are in great demand especially in academic research circles. The BFBS Library contains a large number of the translations needed for this project. The process begins as a BFBS staff member from Swindon (the BFBS Headquarters) arrives at the *Cambridge University Library* to identify which language editions of the New Testament should take priority. The work is then carried out by the *Cambridge University Library* in-house digitisation unit and the resulting digitised item is made available via the on-line University Library catalogue.

The Need

As you can imagine this availability is achieved at a cost which has to be met by funding external to the University Library. Over and above the cost of the actual digitisation, is the need for the Library catalogue to indicate which New Testaments are in which language. Currently the catalogue record is in English. There is a great need for funding to employ a person able to work on the catalogue to include the relevant language information on the catalogue record.

If this specific project is something your church or any of your contacts might feel a call to support, please contact Onesimus Ngundu, curator/keeper of the *Bible Society Library* on204@cam.ac.uk

The Future

Over and above the provision of Chinese language New Testaments, there is a high demand for missionary letters. Currently the Librarian responds to each request individually by scanning the record, at a cost to the enquirer. He is more than aware that the greatest demand is for letters relating to well-known missionaries

such as David Livingstone, or Henry Martyn, but the collection of letters is large and a great resource for anyone interested in, or researching, any aspect of the history of mission.

Finally and this is where volunteers come in ...

The *Bible Society* has its own digitisation equipment based at the University Library which can be used by volunteers under the supervision of the person in charge of it, Dr. Martin Reynolds. Training is given by Dr Reynolds who oversees this aspect of the project.

If anyone is able to give time or funding support for the digitisation project, do contact

Martin Reynolds (martin@reynolds2.karoo.co.uk), or Neil Studge Rees (neil.rees@biblesociety.org.uk)

Martin serves with *MissionServe* as a volunteer. Neil Studge Rees receives requests for Bible reprints from different parts of the world. Once Martin and his team scan them they are sent electronically to the respective Bible societies for reproduction. Neil Studge Rees is a co-coordinator of such *Bible Society* projects.

Dr. **Rachel E. Johnson** works as Assistant Librarian at *Tyndale House* Library, Cambridge and serves on the Executive Committee of *Christians in Library and Information Services* as Library Assistance Manager and Volunteer Co-ordinator. Rachel can be contacted at wanderinglibrarian56@gmail.com

Dr. DONALD G. DAVIS, Jr., recalls an undercover mission in the former Soviet Union on behalf of a noted Christian poet and her husband

A BRUSH WITH THE COLD WAR



REMEMBERING IRINA RATUSHINSKAYA

A noted poet died this past summer in Moscow at the comparatively young age of sixty-three. The death of Irina Ratushinskaya on 5 July 2017 was the subject of obituary essays by Michael Bordeaux in *The Guardian* (9 July 2017) and by Sam Roberts in *The New York Times* (15 July 2017) — as well as many other organs, including *Christian Librarian* (Autumn 2017). This passing caused me to think back several decades to a minor involvement in the story.

More than thirty years ago an adventure engulfed me that would change me forever. About 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, 19 March 1986, a man with a topcoat and hat eyed me in the midst of

a crowd, and after we identified each other, he handed me a small envelope. We were at the top of the escalator going down to the trains at Birmingham New Street Station. He disappeared into the crowd and my wife Avis and I caught our train to Euston Station in London. Little did I realize at the time the small part I would play in an intriguing international drama, involving the Cold War super powers, a network of public and secret activists, and religious faith and witness. Some background is in order; it resembles something like a three-legged stool.

In the mid 1980s plans were being laid for an international conference on library history to be held at the old university in Wrocław, Poland, at which I (a professor of library history at the *University of Texas at Austin*) was invited to present a scholarly paper. So, Avis accepted an invitation to spend two weeks in Nowa Huta (near Krakow) with a Polish family we had met in Austin. Meanwhile, the conference was postponed for a year, so my younger brother, who was serving with *World Vision* in Chad, arranged to meet me in Moscow for a week-long *Intourist* trip that included Moscow, Leningrad, and Tallinn. After that he would return to Africa and I would take the train back to rendezvous with my wife in Prague and go on to another conference in Wolfenbüttel, West Germany, before returning to Birmingham. Our youngest daughter Caroline had come with us to Birmingham to stay with a family with twin girls her age that we knew from *St. Martin's in the Bullring*—where we had worshiped during our exchange teaching year of 1980-1981. This all required some complex travel arrangements, needless to say.

The Sunday before the platform encounter mentioned above we had worshiped and greeted friends at *St. Martin's*. While there we saw a man in a cage near the church entrance. We discovered that he (Rev. Richard “Dick” Rogers) was spending all of Lent engaged living in conditions that simulated those of the incarcerated Russian poet Irina Ratushinskaya — who was described by Michael Bordeaux as a “*gifted poet with firm Christian convictions.*” This

protest, dramatically drawing attention to her unjust sentence and cruel gulag-style punishment, was attracting attention all over Britain, Western Europe, and North America. The protest was quite effective, and when I said something about taking the train to Moscow in a few days, one of the aides accompanying Rogers asked if I would be willing to carry a coded message to Irina's husband, Igor Gerashenko. He was suffering from heart problems and needed medical information, but hindered as he was under house arrest. I thought for a moment, but agreed to do so—suspecting an adventure coming.

A final factor in the background was the request, by a graduate student couple back in Austin, to deliver two books to a Jewish dissident couple, living in a flat near *Moscow State University*. These books were not available in the Soviet Union. Given appropriate contact information and coached on protocol, I agreed to do what they asked. This provided the potential link that might prove critical to my mission.

Finally, on Sunday, 22 March, my journey began with my hosts—June Osborne (now Bishop of Llandaff, *Church in Wales*) and husband Paul Goulding—getting me to the boat train to the Dover Docks. From Ostende in Belgium I began my exotic rail journey to Moscow, changing trains in Aachen to a Russian train from Paris with high security, utilised primarily by diplomats and others on business. In Moscow, I arrived at the Byelorussian Station and was conveyed to a large *Intourist* hotel on Gorky Prospect to await my brother, who arrived in a couple of hours.

After several days of sightseeing, visits to libraries and other sites, my brother Jim and I set out on the Metro to University Station, where by pre-arrangement we met up with Asya, an older woman with a coat of a distinctive colour. She led us through some back streets to her high rise apartment house, where we met her husband Isya. She had been a teacher of English and had tutored

such noteworthy emigres as Andrei Sakharov and Natan Sharansky. He had been a professor of Arabic literature, but had endured two sentences in gulag-style camps and had seen valuable reference materials removed from their apartment by the authorities.

This couple was most gracious and approachable. After tea and some other refreshments, I learned that Asya had managed to get copies of *Time* magazine through the American embassy and that they were quite knowledgeable and conversant in world affairs. We talked about life in the Soviet Union and in the United States. Meanwhile, I delivered the books I had passed through Soviet customs. They were most grateful. When I asked if they could accept a note for Irina Ratushinskaya's husband Igor, ill and under house arrest, and do their best to get it to him, they readily agreed and implied that they had networks through which they could accomplish this. They seemed rather pleased to be able to help. This was a great relief and joy to me—to think that I had accomplished my mission. I think Asya walked us back to the Metro station and my brother and I continued our Moscow sightseeing. As a postscript, in August 1991, when the *International Federation of Library Associations & Institutions* (IFLA) convened in Moscow in what turned out to be the week of the attempted Putsch, I was able to renew contact with Asya and Isya. They were astonished that the funeral rites for the young Jewish man who was killed in a demonstration that week was broadcast live on state television.)

After several days of the *Intourist* trip in Moscow, Leningrad, and Tallinn, my brother and I parted — he back to Chad via Paris, and I by train through Ukraine (a month before passing near the site of the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl) to Bucharest, then Budapest, and on to Prague where I met my wife Avis on a railroad platform. But that's another story. From there we went to Leipzig and on to West Germany to Wolfenbüttel for the conference. At its conclusion we went by train to Braunschweig, Hannover, and the train connecting with the ferry to Britain. Arriving at Liverpool Street

Station in London, we felt like we were home again. We collected our daughter in Birmingham before heading back to Austin, Texas—where we resumed our daily life, though changed forever.

I confess that I do not know if this mission was ultimately successful, but in any case things moved quickly. Because of Dick Rogers' protests and their aftermath, a lot of publicity was generated in the Western press about Ratushinskaya's case. Both Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan were aware of the cause celebre she had become — a symbol of divergence in Soviet and American dealing with social dissent. Just before the Reykjavik super-power summit in October 1976, six months after my slight encounter, and before Reagan himself raised the issue—Gorbachev announced that Irina, reported to have been near death, had been released. Her husband soon confirmed her release through *Keston College* (Kent, UK). The story of her life in captivity is told in her ***Grey is the Colour of Hope*** (1988). After initial visits to Britain and a longer time in the United States, the two of them returned to Moscow in 1998. Though told she would not be able to have children, they had two sons five years before their return. Gorbachev's gesture of goodwill signified a gesture that played a part in the thawing of the Cold War. Was it possible that I had played a very minor part in the process?

This was one of the two or three adventures in my lifetime, when a routine-bound cultural historian in a professional school was able to break out of the ordinary and do something unique and exciting. When engaged in global travel, one never knows what might happen and how one's perspective may be changed forever. Thus, when I read of Irina Ratushinskaya's passing and her husband and sons left behind, I felt as though I had had a minute involvement in her family's story — just a brush with high profile Cold War politics.

Donald G. Davis, Jr., BA, MA, MLIS, MATS, PhD, is Emeritus Professor in the *School of Information, University of Texas at Austin*, and a Life Vice-President of *Christians in Library and Information Services*.

SIMON CARVER looks at the way in which the film industry tells the Christian story, how it borrows from the Christian story, and how films can help us to understand our faith

FILMS AND FAITH: FRIENDS OR FOES?

*The Christians in Library and Information Services Annual Public Lecture held on Saturday 14 October 2017 at the Dagnall Street Baptist Church, 1, Cross Street, St. Albans, AL3 5EE. The lecture included a number of film clips which have been summarised for **Christian Librarian** by Janice Paine.*

I would like to address this topic by looking at How Hollywood tells the Christian story (with Hollywood a shorthand for the film industry), how Hollywood borrows from the Christian story, and how film can help us understand our faith.

Friends or Foes?

Some Christians believe that the film industry is not sympathetic towards the Christian faith. **But:** Hollywood is a money-making industry and if money can be made from films of interest to Christians, Hollywood will make those films.

The Passion of the Christ is in the top hundred most successful films of all time and has led to Hollywood producing a number of faith-based films, such as the three ***Narnia*** films and, most recently, ***Hawksaw Ridge*** which, like the ***Passion of the Christ***, is directed by Mel Gibson.

However, a production company, called ***Pureflix***, which is modelled on ***Netflix***, is now producing films made very specifically for the Christian market. They are designed to reinforce the Christian base, but are also intended to be an evangelistic tool.

God is Not Dead 2 is a recent Pureflix production. *A trailer from the film depicts persecution, Christians on trial, and the theme of protecting Christians from the “war” that they are in.*

While some Christians might say that Hollywood subtly undermines Christian values, ***The Invention of Lying*** is an example of a film that is very openly atheist. The setting is a fantasy world in which there is only truth. There is no fiction and no one is able to lie. This changes when the mother of the main character is close to death. *A clip from the film shows a hospital scene of a son comforting his mother as she is dying. He invents the existence of heaven to comfort her.* Ricky Gervais directs as well as stars in this film and he is quite open about how he views faith. Hollywood is generally more circumspect as in American society it is probably not good business to alienate one's customers.

Certainly in the past, films with religious themes were quite common and were very respectful. It was often the case that the face of Jesus was not shown.

How Hollywood Tells the Christian Story

Hollywood is above all else a storyteller and so it isn't surprising that it has chosen to tell the best story.

*In a clip from **The Ten Commandments** the narrator summarises the biblical account of creation and man's rebellion resulting in fear and oppression; God then raised up a man to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. In **Exodus: of Gods and Kings**, in contrast to the **Ten Commandments**, the film begins by setting the story of Moses in the context of human history.*

You'll notice that God, the Bible and ancient texts are heavily referenced in the 1956 Cecil B. DeMille film, whereas Ridley Scott's version is more of a psychological study of an historical figure. It is not a story of God's work of salvation. Another example of the difference is in the naturalistic way that the 2014 film portrays the Hebrew people crossing the Red Sea.

Ridley Scott is an atheist and yet, in some ways, the less overtly Christian of the two films is the one that I believe has the most interesting things to say about the Red Sea crossing. His Moses has to have faith that the lowering of the water level is of God and so he must trust that God has

enabled him and his people to cross over. Charlton Heston's Moses needed to have no such doubts before he set out.

I believe that a film does not need to be made by a Christian believer in order to be Christian. Similarly I don't believe that a film needs to have a biblical subject in order to tell something of the Christian story.

How Hollywood 'Borrows' the Christian Story

I'll look at Arnie and his *Terminator* character a bit later, but in various clips from the *Terminator* films, as well as his TV series, "*Come with me if you want to live!*" is a persistent message.

First I'm going to give you a personal testimony of how I became interested in the interface between films and the message of the Gospel.

Like many boys, I wasn't much of a reader in my early teens, but I used to like *Superman* comics. It seemed to me that this story of the outsider who had come to save the world sounded very much like Jesus. At that early age I had a loose grasp of Christology and so overlooked that while Superman looked like a man, he wasn't actually a man. I was a twelve year old Docetic heretic.

It was no accident that I saw these connections, because the creators of *Superman* had put them there. Or rather they had made similar connections themselves. The connections that Superman's creators had made were not with Jesus, but with Moses. As Moses was placed in a basket and set afloat to be found and saved and who would become a saviour, so Superman was placed in a space capsule to be saved from a dying planet and the saved became a saviour.

Many of the early twentieth century superheroes were created by young Jewish artists and writers. Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster were the sons of Jewish immigrants. Like Moses, they had to conform to their surroundings – to fit in as American boys just as Moses was brought up as an Egyptian. Any sense of alienation they might have felt would surely have been reinforced by what was happening in central Europe at the same time and they intended Superman to be a Jewish hero, perhaps in the line of David or Judas Macabaeus.

There is a book that investigates the link between Judaism and superheroes and it has a great title: *Up, Up and Oy Vey*.

Some of the **Superman** films have deliberately emphasised the Christ comparison. *In a clip from **Superman Returns**, Superman is sent to help humanity – he is to be the “light of the world”.*

You will notice the strong echoes of the prologue in John chapter 1 together with a healthy dose of the belief in the innate goodness of humanity which was a part of Rousseau’s philosophy which had an impact on the American Founding Fathers. Superman is nothing if not an American hero.

I’ve looked at how Hollywood borrows from the Christian story, let’s look at how film can help us better understand our faith.

How Film Can Help Us Understand our Faith

One of my favourite genres in fiction is where there is time travel. Part of the reason is that it has its rules - as breaking them could mean that you cease to exist in the present. Apart from being escapist fun, time travel also explores ideas about fate and destiny. A clip from a TV show called **Timeless** actually takes place in a church where a time traveller asks questions about God. *The time traveller wants to save his wife from being murdered. He asks: What if you have the power to change the course of history? Will it mean God’s not there?*

Science fiction is well placed to help us articulate questions about faith. I said I would return to the **Terminator** story and here we go.

Terminator Theology

Explaining the **Terminator** story isn’t easy because like most time travel stories it involves a loop where the future affects the past. There are three main characters who appear in most of the films. Sarah Connor is an ordinary young woman who meets Kyle Reese and together they have a son, John Connor.. So far, so straightforward. Now it gets complicated. John Connor grows up to be the leader of a resistance movement dedicated to overthrowing the rule of the machines who have taken over the world. John Connor’s trusty lieutenant is Kyle Reese and John Connor sends Reese back in time to protect Sarah so that she will be able to fulfil her destiny and have the baby who will grow up to be the saviour of the world. In the process of protecting Sarah, Kyle Reese also fathered a child who when he grew up would be like an older brother to him.

That's a rough plot outline of the first film. **Terminator 2** has an added layer of confusion in that the Terminator in the first film that was sent to kill Sarah Connor has been remodelled by the resistance in the future and sent back in time once again. But now, the Terminator's mission is to protect Sarah Connor and her now teenage son.

In one scene from the film Sarah Connor recoils in horror as the monster that had tried to kill her now reached down to save her as he uttered those words that run as a theme throughout the series of films: *Come with me if you want to live*. It took a while for Sarah Connor to accept that *this* Terminator was a saviour, but later she came to see that this was so.

The Terminator asks Sarah Connor "Why do you cry?" She understands that the Terminator is a fatherly protector of her son John.

Science fiction can be the lens through which we see what is truly real. For example, we can see something of what it means to be human in the story of Pinocchio, or in its modern science fiction equivalent, **Artificial Intelligence, A.I.**, the story of a robot child that wanted to become human. Perhaps there is something similar here in a rather more explicit fashion in Sarah Connor's thoughts on the nature of fatherhood. When we think of divine fatherhood we are in something of a chicken and egg situation : do our ideas about the fatherhood of God come from our understanding of human fatherhood, or is how we behave as human parents derived from our understanding of divine fatherhood?

It is likely that our understanding of God as Father is influenced by the relationship that we have or have had with our own father. Some people will never have known their father and so will perhaps have created an idealised picture of what a father *should* be. Is Sarah's picture just a human idealisation?

If we change the pronouns from neuter to masculine, Sarah Connor's soliloquy would sound like this: *"He would never stop, he would never leave him ... he would always be there. He would never hurt him, never shout at him or get drunk and hit him, or say he couldn't spend time with him because he was too busy. And he would die to protect him"*. In an unlikely setting, there emerges here a shadowy picture of the God who is revealed to us through Jesus Christ - always, eternally there. Having promised always to be with us, he is eternally faithful to the people he has made, and he would die to save them.

I've written a chapter on various aspects of the *Terminator* story in a book called *Flickering Images* if you are interested in going further into these time travel loops and how faith, fate and the future come together.

Flickering Images

But we must also remember that this Terminator is a cyborg – a sophisticated machine with the appearance of humanity. He is not one of us – although he *has “pitched his tent among us”*, as John writes in the first chapter of his Gospel account.

However, the Terminator's time among us is a learning experience and while he never becomes human, his knowledge of humanity increases. He may not *know* our life, but he does begin to understand it, as we see in a later scene from the film.

This scene comes near the end of *Terminator 2*. The killer cyborg has been defeated, but to try to break the time travel loop and prevent the rise of the machines against humanity, it is necessary to destroy all the future computer technology that has come back into the present.

Sometime in the Fourth Century Gregory of Nazianzus was writing some of the most important works on the two natures – human and divine – of Jesus Christ. This is his most famous saying:

“For what has not been assumed has not been healed, it is what is united to his divinity that is saved ... Let them not grudge us our total salvation, or endue the Saviour with only the bones and nerves and mere appearance of humanity”.

Jesus must have been both fully God and fully man in order to save humanity. If he was not God, he couldn't save, and if he was not fully human there would be parts of the human body, mind and soul that would be untouched by his act of redemption.

So, going back to my childhood Superman heresy, it is the same with the Terminator – he only seems to be human. Just as a side issue, I'm guessing that you sing a version of this heresy every Christmas in a carol written by none other than one of the ever-so-sound Wesley brothers, '*Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see*', sounds awfully like someone not human having been covered with a veneer of humanity.

A final **Terminator** illustration comes when the Terminator insists that the only way that humanity could be saved was if he was himself utterly destroyed. There was no easy way out. It was necessary for God's Son to be fully human in order to save all of our humanity, and it was necessary for him to die. Likewise, it was necessary for every scrap of the Terminator's technology – his very self – to die, in order for humankind to be saved.

John cries and tries to stop the Terminator from offering himself for destruction, to save humanity. The Terminator understands what it means to be human but – unlike the Christ – does not himself become human.

If science fiction is not your thing, then how about an illustration that comes from a film that was at the cinema seventy-five years ago.

Just as the Superman story spoke to me when I first saw it, so also did a black and white Hollywood film from the 1940s – the sort I associate with Sunday afternoons in winter in front of a fire. The film is called **Random Harvest** and stars Greer Garson and Ronald Colman. It tells the story of a First World War officer who is in a psychiatric hospital having suffered from shell shock. He has no memory of his past and goes by the name John Smith. One evening he leaves the hospital and meets a music hall singer called Paula. They fall in love, get married and move into the sort of idyllic country cottage that only really exists in a studio in Hollywood. However one day Smithy, as Paula calls him, goes off in a business trip and falls and bangs his head. In so doing he forgets all about Paula and their baby son, but he *does* now remember his past life and that he comes from a well-to-do family.

To cut a long story short, Paula after many years finds Smithy, but she is told by a psychiatrist that it could be dangerous to reveal their past life together. Paula decides to get a job as Smithy's secretary, having reverted to her pre-stage name, Margaret. Still he doesn't remember his and Paula's life together. One day his business takes him to the part of the country where they lived and this begins to trigger his memory. He finds an old key in his pocket and makes his way to the cottage that he and Paula shared. *Smith goes into the cottage. Paula calls his name: "Smithy" and he remembers who she is and their life together.*

It was in the calling of his name that Smithy remembers who he is and who Paula is. Does that remind you of anything?

There are a number of people who have written study material based around film. The *Bible Society* had a series called *Reel Images*, which can still be accessed and *Damaris* produces resources for contemporary films. Some of the churches in St. Albans used a book that was written around the story of Stephen Hawking as told in the film *The Theory of Everything*. The book was called *The Mystery of Everything* and it went down well here.

Film as Critical Friend

You may be familiar with *Starry Night*, a painting by Vincent Van Gogh. I was at a conference recently and one of the speakers used this picture as an example of what art can say to us. I'm not sure I would have noticed it until it was pointed out, but the church in the picture is the only building in which the windows are dark. We were told that this represents the unhelpful role that the church played in Van Gogh's childhood.

Film can also remind us of what life is like for some people. *Up* is a *Disney Pixar* film about a grumpy old man who goes on a journey with a small boy. A clip from the beginning of the film reminds us that most people are not born old and how they are in later years can be a function of their life experiences. *The clip shows scenes of the man's life, from childhood, through marriage, setting up home, to widowhood.*

Two further clips connect with that Van Gogh painting because they come from a *Doctor Who* story in which the Doctor and his companion Amy meet the great painter. One clip introduces us to some of Van Gogh's paintings in a gallery in Paris with Bill Nighy reminding us of the artist's great standing. *The art curator explains how Van Gogh was a failure during his lifetime but his works are so much more valuable today.*

Amy is sure that if only Vincent could know how much his work was valued this could positively affect his mental health. *In the second clip the Doctor and Amy take Van Gogh through time to the art gallery and show him people admiring his work and the art curator extolling him as a great painter. However they cannot stop him from committing suicide.*

I guess this speaks most to those who preach and pastor and it says something about our own power to save. There is a saviour, but it's not me.

One of my favourite film clips comes from the film *Love Actually*. Sarah is a young woman who has a crush on a work colleague, but she also has a brother who suffers from mental health problems and who leans heavily on

her. *Her brother keeps on 'phoning her during her date. His mental state is clearly important to her and she puts looking after him before her own happiness.*

It Has to Speak to You

There is one last thing to say and one last clip that I would like to mention. The film clips that I have mentioned in this lecture are all personal in that they have spoken to me. They may not all have spoken to all of you, but I hope that some will have spoken to some of you. If you want to use illustrations from films or TV, I think that like any illustration it must say something to you, if you are going to be able to use it to speak to someone else.

The last clip that I would like to mention comes from a film that you might think is an unusual source. I came late to this film series, but I have enjoyed the last three. They are the ***Fast and Furious*** films which are really just extended car chases.

In the first film of these films that I saw, I thought it was a rather surprising ending. The gang of Robin Hood style outlaws were gathered together at the end after they had successfully defeated the bad guys. *The gang says a prayer of thanks for friends, choices made, loved ones lost, and fast cars.* ***Fast and Furious 7*** includes an image of the cross..You see, if you look, you'll find Christ and his cross in some unexpected places.

Thank you for the youngest in our families and in our congregations. Thank you for those we have lost along the way, who are now with you. Thank you that we all have a home with you and, last of all, we thank you for good films.

The Rev. **Simon Carver** has been a regular broadcaster on faith and contemporary culture on *BBC Radio Oxford* and *Three Counties Radio*. He currently reviews films for *Premier Christian Radio* and on *Radio Verulam*, a local community radio station. Simon has written on films and faith for the *Bible Society*, ***Christianity*** magazine and contributed a chapter on the ***Terminator*** films in ***Flickering Images*** (Smyth & Helwys, 2005).

Since 1994 Simon has been pastor of two churches – *New Road Baptist Church*, Oxford, and now *Dagnall Street Baptist Church*, St. Albans. Simon is married to Catriona and they have three adult children and two grandchildren.