

Summer 2010

CHRISTIAN LIBRARIAN



The Journal of the
Librarians' Christian Fellowship

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●SATURDAY 2 APRIL 2011: ANNUAL CONFERENCE: 2011: THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham. Speakers: Rev. **Bob Cotton**, *Bible Society* and *Evangelical Alliance*, and Rev. Dr. **Pete Wilcox**, Canon Chancellor, *Lichfield Cathedral*. Details: p. 11

●SATURDAY 1 OCTOBER 2011: ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE

RISC Centre, Reading. Speaker: **Dave Roberts**, author of *The Twilight Gospel*. Details: p. 11

PRAYER NOTES FOR SUMMER 2010

PLEASE PRAY FOR

●The *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* and its forthcoming activities including the 23 October 2010 *Public Lecture* in Bath.

●The members of LCF's executive committee as they plan the work of the Fellowship and consider possible future directions.

●Past and present staff in the public library service in the *London Borough of Camden*. Pray for those who are still employed in a radically revised management structure and those who have taken redundancy or early retirement.

●The officers and staff of CILIP as they conduct their "*Big Conversation*" on the future shape of our leading professional association.

●The work of our recent Conference speakers, **Tony Jasper** and **Eddie Olliffe**. Pray that publishers will be interested in Tony's proposals for books and that there will be a good response to future productions of his *Jasperian Theatre Company*.

●Our friends in the Christian book trade as they face a difficult future following the collapse of the SPCK bookshops and IBS-STL. Pray for bookshop staff whose future employment is still uncertain.



LIBRARIANS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

CHRISTIANS IN LIBRARY, INFORMATION AND ARCHIVE WORK

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

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THE FIRST WORD

What are CILIP's six priorities for the new Government and how likely are they to be implemented? What will be the shape of the library and information sector in ten years time and how can our professional association prepare for this future? GORDON HARRIS reflects on

PREPARING FOR 2020

By the time you read this, a new Government will have been in power in the UK for some weeks.

The *Manifesto* prepared by CILIP for this new Government is laid out in six priorities. As such it is a bold and clear trumpet-call for not only the continuation and development of good practice but also for the answering of needs e.g. libraries mandatory in schools, relaxation of digital copyright and tightening up of digital legal deposit.

There is surprisingly little coverage of information and learning needs in further and higher education, and in organisations and companies. Academic library and learning resource strategists may have expected more support, especially when cuts in higher education spending are to be made. The most that is said (or implied) is that user entitlements in public libraries should be defined, and should also be applied in other sectors.

Response from the three main political parties contains of course a lot of motherhood statements, but is discouraging for those who campaign for school libraries to be made mandatory.

Running parallel has been CILIP's programme ***Defining Our Professional Future***. In the first few months of 2010 members have been feeding in their predictions of the nature of the knowledge and information sector in 2020. They have also been suggesting ways in which a professional association should adapt to the predicted scenario.

The results of this consultation (the "Big Conversation") are being considered by trustees in July at CILIP's Council meeting. CILIP's subsequent Vision will be plotted out as a roadmap in the autumn, for implementation in December.

As Christians within the library and information sector, we have the privilege of praying intelligently for this process.

Gordon A. Harris, *BSocSc MPhil FCLIP DipKM* is President of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* and until recently was Senior Corporate Information Officer for *Tearfund*.

ANNUAL REPORT

The last year's activities have included talks on Adam and Dewey and literature outreach to Asians, visits to the Westminster Central Hall and St. Paul's Cathedral Library and unaccompanied singing under CILIP's Umbrella. LOUISE MANNERS and GRAHAM HEDGES report on

WORTHWHILE EVENTS AND REGULAR PUBLICATIONS



The Annual Report of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship for the year April 2009 – March 2010. Presented to the Fellowship's Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 24 April 2010 at the Hughes Parry Hall, Cartwright Gardens, London.

Major events

Several worthwhile events were held during the year, although attendance was smaller than usual at all three main events. We hope this was just a blip.

Our **Annual Conference – Nottingham 2009** was held at *St. Nicholas' Church*, Nottingham, on Saturday 25 April 2009. The speakers were: Rev. Andii Bowsher, from *St. John's College*, Nottingham, on “*Adam and Dewey*” and Rev. Rhona Floate, a former librarian now working in the Anglican ministry, on “*Desert Island Texts: resources for integrating occupation and vocation*”. The AGM presented the opportunity to overhaul the LCF Constitution including creating several new committee posts.

On Tuesday 14 July 2009 we held our **Service of Thanksgiving** at CILIP's *Umbrella 2009* Conference at the *University of Hertfordshire*. The

speaker was the Rev. David Ronco, a locally based Baptist minister. CILIP's Chief Executive Bob McKee read the Bible lesson. It was a good service, though numbers were affected by a 'clash' with the exhibitors' reception. Due to technical problems with our electric keyboard the unaccompanied singing went very well!

The **Annual Lecture** was held on Saturday 17 October 2009 at the *Church of Christ the Cornerstone*, Milton Keynes. The speaker was: Alan Howell, from KITAB Bookshop, which provides Christian materials for the Asian and Muslim communities. His subject: was "*Changes and Challenges in Literature Outreach*". Our publicity played down the 'Muslim' aspect of the lecture, which may have affected numbers.

Visits

On Tuesday 19 May 2009 we arranged a visit to the *Westminster Central Hall* for a general tour of the Hall plus a chance to see the archives from the "*Wesleyan Methodist 20th Century Fund*", set up to raise funds at the beginning of the last century. Our hosts for the visit included Richard Ratcliffe, the former WCH Archivist and a guest speaker at our 2008 conference.

On Saturday 1 August 2009 our Scottish members' organised a visit to the *Bible World Experience* and the *Royal Botanic Gardens*, Edinburgh.

On Saturday 22 September 2009 we arranged a visit to *St. Paul's Cathedral Library* where items of interest included one of only three extant copies of William Tyndale's New Testament translation in its first edition.

Publications

Four issues of ***Christian Librarian*** were published. These included news of the Fellowship and outside matters of interest to Christian librarians, transcripts of conference and lecture talks, and articles on such topics as *Victorian public libraries and Darwin's books on evolution*, and *Darwinism and Creationism*, both published to mark the Darwin anniversaries in 2009. Also included were articles on *Issues in NHS Libraries* and the *Sunday working dilemma*. The regular series "*Eye on the Profession*", surveying the librarianship press and highlighting matters of concern to Christians, has received favourable comment. Topics raised included the future of e-books and training for careers in librarianship

Four issues of the **E-Newsletter** were sent out including news items and short articles on such topics as the 400th anniversary of the **King James Bible** in 2011, the 400th anniversary of *Lambeth Palace Library* in 2010, the Christian book trade, public library policies on the display of 'religious' notices, biblical fiction and drama, and books and music for Christmas and Easter.

Christian Librarian and **E-Newsletter** both often include a “*Current Awareness*” feature which provides abstracts of articles in the religious and general press which are likely to be of interest to Christian librarians.

The **E-Newsletter** has now joined **Christian Librarian** and is included in our licensing agreement with *EBSCO Publishing*.

Our Scottish members also receive their own occasional newsletter from Anne MacRitchie, our Scottish rep.

Outside Publicity

The work of the Fellowship was mentioned in the usual wide range of library, Christian and other periodicals – e.g. **Library and Information Gazette**, **The Bookseller**, **CILIP London**, and **Christian Marketplace**. We appeared on various web sites, for example those of CILIP, *Premier Christian Radio*, and **Inspire** magazine, and in the e-mail newsletters of such organisations as the *Arts Centre Group* and the *Association of Christian Writers*. The Service of Thanksgiving was mentioned by two radio presenters – Lizzie Crowe on Premier Christian Radio's “**Big Breakfast**” and Aled Jones on BBC Radio 2's “**Good Morning Sunday**”. The latter mention came just before a live performance by the New Seekers!

Involvement in outside organisations

LCF continued its relationship with other organisations to which we are affiliated – CILIP, *Christian Research Association*, *Christians at Work*, *Evangelical Alliance*, *Transform Work UK*, and the *Universities' & Colleges' Christian Fellowship*. Graham Hedges and Mary Wood attended TWUK's first national conference in Birmingham, in November 2009, and a report later appeared in **Christian Librarian**. We were very sorry to hear of the redundancy of Ros Turner – TWUK's Groups Support Manager and a past LCF speaker - in March 2009 due to financial pressures. We maintain informal relations with other Christian organisations – for example, the *Christian Book Promotion Trust* and its “*Speaking Volumes*” library project.

Library Assistance

Enquiries have been received from various Christian organisations – for example the *London City Mission* and the *Westminster Central Hall*, which may lead to library projects in the months to come. Mary Barker reported on her work for the *Wycliffe Bible Translators* in Aix-en-Provence in our Autumn 2009 issue of ***Christian Librarian***. Malcolm Walker, our former Overseas Secretary, highlighted other library projects worthy of support by LCF members in India and Paraguay, just before he departed to teach English to students in China. His article also appeared in the Autumn 2009 issue.

Individual LCF members undertook other library projects in a personal capacity, among them LCF's Dartford member Janet White, whose voluntary work at the *Belgrade Bible School*, Serbia, was reported in the Spring 2010 ***Christian Librarian***.

Internet

LCF's web site remains available at www.librarianscf.org.uk - thanks to Mary Wood who updates the site and sends out the ***E-Newsletter***. Between 1 May 2009 and 30 April 2010 there were 1,371 visits to the web site and 4,943 page views. Of the visits 79.5% were new visits. An average of 3.61 pages per visit were viewed. 329 of the visits were from the USA and ten were from Russia! The current issue of the ***E-Newsletter*** appears as a PDF file in the "Publications" section of the web site. Christian books and other materials ordered from *St. Andrew's Bookshops*, via a link from the "Bookshelf" section of the LCF web site, earn a small commission for the LCF funds. Photographs of members and speakers taken at past LCF events appear in the "Events" section of the web site.

Committees

LCF's executive committee met four times in the year ending April 2010. Our thanks are due to Janet Danels, who is retiring as a member without portfolio, and also to other committee members and officers of the Fellowship who are continuing in office.

This year's conference marks the Secretary's thirtieth anniversary in the post!

We need to appoint additional committee members. Regional rep. posts for Ireland, Eastern, Welsh and Western regions are currently vacant. Vacancies also exist for an Overseas Secretary and the new position of Students/New Graduates Officer. Volunteers, please come forward!

The Secretary is still interested in recruiting an editorial sub-committee to contribute ideas and research and write articles for the publications, plus a panel of book reviewers willing to review books on particular topics. If you are interested, please get in touch!

Membership

At the time of writing, our membership consists of some one hundred and sixty four paid up members plus an additional thirty-one who have not yet paid their subscriptions. We have nine additional subscribers to ***Christian Librarian***, five of whom have not yet paid. The most recent issue of the ***E-Newsletter*** was delivered to one hundred and fifty people. We need to maintain and expand our membership and we will be grateful if existing members could pass on membership information to friends and colleagues or ask us to send publicity material on their behalf.

Absent Friends

We were sorry to hear of the death, in early 2010, of **Cynthia Clare-Grant** after a period of illness. Cynthia lived in Inchtute, Perthshire and worked in recent years as an indexer and registered member of the *Society of Indexers*. She joined the LCF in the early years of the Fellowship and took part in library working parties at the former *South Wales Bible College*.

We were also sorry to learn of the death in 2008 of our past member the Rev. **Kenneth Shafee**, a former librarian who left the library profession to serve in the Anglican ministry. In his library days he lived in Exmouth, Devon, and worked as Assistant Librarian at the *Rolle College*, Exmouth.

Readers are asked to give thanks for the lives of these former members and to remember their relatives and friends in their prayers.

Louise Manners, *DipLib, MA, MCLIP*, and **Graham Hedges**, *Hon. FCLIP, MCLIP*, serve on the Executive Committee of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* as Chair and Secretary respectively.

NEWS

LIBRARIANS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER



From The Secretary: Graham Hedges, Hon. FCLIP, MCLIP, 34 Thurlestone Avenue, Ilford, Essex, IG3 9DU. Home tel. 020 8599 1310; Work tel. 020 8871 7467. E mail secretary@librarianscf.org.uk; Web site www.librarianscf.org.uk

TUESDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2010: EVANGELICAL LIBRARY VISIT

We are arranging a visit to the *Evangelical Library* in its new premises at **Units 5 and 6, Gateway Mews, Ring Way, Bounds Green, London, N11 2UT** on **Tuesday 21 September 2010**, beginning 2.30.p.m.

After several decades in central London, the **Evangelical Library** moved into its new premises in December 2009.

The Library is home to more than 80,000 evangelical books as well as an archive for many Christian periodicals. The Library offers "*the very best in written evangelical*

spirituality" and includes sections on church history, doctrine and devotional reading, to name but a few subject areas. The Library was originally the vision of the late **Geoffrey Williams** who, back in the 1930s, created a private collection of Reformed and Puritan evangelical classics, which eventually formed the basis of the present Library.

You can find more information on the Library's web site at <http://www.evangelical-library.org.uk>

Bounds Green has good transport links with its own tube station on the Piccadilly Line. Bowes Park mainline station, on the line into King's Cross, and Moorgate are short distances away. There are also a number of bus services connecting Bounds Green to the surrounding areas. Bounds Green is bordered by the A406 North Circular to the north.

Please let me know if you would like to book a place or places on the visit. It may not be possible to follow our usual custom of arranging lunch before the main visit, as we have been advised that there is a shortage of restaurants in the Bounds Green area. However, if it does prove possible to arrange lunch, we will let participants know in good time.

ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE

This year's Annual Public Lecture will be held on **Saturday 23 October 2010** at **Manvers Street Baptist Church, Bath**, from 2.30.p.m. Our guest speaker will be the **Rev. Dr.**

Alan Garrow, who is Vicar Theologian at *Bath Abbey*, and an authority on the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke.

For those who are able to get to Bath in time we are arranging an informal visit to *Bath Abbey*, from 11.00.a.m., and lunch in a local restaurant, from 12.15. p.m.

There is no need to book for the afternoon lecture but please let me know if you would like to join us for the Bath Abbey visit and lunch.

LCF DATES FOR 2011

- **2011: The Year of the Bible** is the theme of next year's Annual Conference which is to be held at the **Carrs Lane Church Centre, Carrs Lane, Birmingham** on **Saturday 2 April 2011**, from 10.30.a.m.

Our speakers will be the Rev. Dr. **Rob Cotton**, who works for the *Bible Society* as their Campaigns Manager and also co-ordinates the *Biblefresh* project for the *Evangelical Alliance*, and the Rev. Dr. **Pete Wilcox**, Canon Chancellor of *Lichfield Cathedral*. Rob Cotton will be speaking about the *Biblefresh* programme and the contemporary application of the Bible, possibly including the application of the Bible in the contemporary workplace. Pete Wilcox will be speaking about Lichfield Cathedral Library, with special reference to the history of the Bible in English.

- **Dave Roberts**, author of *The Twilight Gospel*, will be giving our Annual Public Lecture on **Saturday 1 October 2011**, from 2.30.p.m. The venue will be the **RISC Centre, 35-39 London Street, Reading**.

Please put these dates in your 2011 diary and plan to attend!

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL NEWS

- Our member Dr. **Peter Terence Crosby** is the editor of *C.H. Spurgeon's Forgotten Early Sermons* (Day One, Autumn 2010, £15.00, ISBN 978-1846252020), a new collection of some twenty-eight sermons from the early years of the famous Baptist preacher of the nineteenth century.

- We are pleased to report that, following our recent Annual General Meeting, our Epsom member **Annabel Haycraft** has agreed to be co-opted onto the executive committee as a Member Without Portfolio.

Annabel works for *Merton College* as Deputy Librarian and Learning Centre Manager.

We are also pleased to welcome our Eastbourne member **Diana Guthrie** back onto the committee in the new role of Southern Regional Rep following an earlier stint, some years ago, as our Treasurer.

- We were sorry to hear of the recent passing of two of our past

Conference speakers.

Maurice Hobbs, who died on 15 April 2010, was a retired teacher, who worked for some years in Tanzania. He later served as the Chair of *Evangelical Christians for Racial Justice*. His book ***Teaching in a Multi Racial Society*** became a classic.

Maurice was the brother-in-law of LCF's Northern Regional Representative, Philip Hayworth.

Maurice spoke on the theme *Christian Librarians in Multicultural Britain* at LCF's Conference in Coventry in April 1987.

- **Edward England**, who died on 16 May 2010, served for many years as head of religious publishing at *Hodder and Stoughton*. His achievements in that role included publishing best-sellers such as Richard Wurmbrand's ***Tortured for Christ*** and J.B. Phillips' ***Ring of Truth*** and bringing the ***New International Version*** translation of the Bible to a British readership.

He had previously worked as a journalist and bookshop manager. After leaving Hodder and Stoughton he became a literary agent, representing Christian writers, and launched his own publishing imprint, *Highland Books*.

Edward spoke on *Christian Publishing Today* at LCF's Annual Conference in Coventry in April 1983 and returned to preach at our Service of Thanksgiving, held during the *Library Association* Brighton conference, in September 1989.

An obituary of Edward England by Tony Collins appears in the

Church Times for 4 June 2010, p. 30.

LCF readers will wish to give thanks for the lives and Christian witness of these friends of the Fellowship and remember their family and friends in this time of bereavement.

SITUATION VACANT

Come and join a team with a vision! *WEC International* has 1,800 staff around the world serving unreached peoples. A Librarian is required for the UK headquarters at Bulstrode. A new library is being planned in the main building together with seminar rooms to create a "*Centre of Influence in Missions*" for churches, researchers and leaders. The Library has a computer catalogue, the stock is classified by Dewey and good IT skills are needed. The stock of 10,000 includes periodicals and archives. WEC is a faith mission. Anyone interested should write to John and Pauline Bagg, WEC International UK Directors, Bulstrode, Gerrards Cross, Slough, Bucks., SL9 8SZ, or to LCF member Gillian Bakewell, 3 Firs Court, Chesham Road, Amersham, Bucks., HP6 5HY.

THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

2011 will be the four hundredth anniversary of the **King James Bible** and plans are being made to highlight the contribution of this

major English translation of the Old and New Testaments to the spiritual, cultural and literary life of Britain and other nations. Various events are being planned in different parts of the country. These will include academic conferences, events in the nation's Cathedrals and Parish Churches, exhibitions relevant to the King James Bible and lectures in the translation centres of Oxford, Cambridge and London.

The celebrations are being co-ordinated by the **2011 Trust** which has the Prince of Wales as its Patron and whose eighteen trustees include Neil MacGregor, the Director of the *British Museum*. You can find more information on the web site www.2011trust.org

The anniversary of the KJB should provide an excellent opportunity for drawing attention to the importance of the Bible in our national life.

LCF readers may wish to be aware of **Biblefresh**, a new movement of churches and agencies seeking to help Christians gain confidence in and appetite for the Scriptures. This initiative was formally launched at a number of regional events arranged during March 2010, and you can sign up to receive more information at www.biblefresh.com

The ***Biblefresh*** book (Authentic, £5.00, ISBN 978-1860248023) is "*jam packed with inspiring stories, thoughtful articles, and creative suggestions for engaging with the word of God*". Contributors include John Stott, Rob Bell, Bob Hartman and Krish

Kandiah.

For more information about **Biblefresh** please see my report *Ancient Shock* elsewhere in this issue.

CHRISTIAN RESOURCES EXHIBITION

This year's CRE (dubbed *International Christian Resources Exhibition* for the first time) was held at the Sandown Park Exhibition Centre, Esher, Surrey, from 11 – 14 May 2010. As usual the Exhibition included display stands and seminars catering for a wide range of interests, including many that would have been relevant to Christians involved in library and information work.

Tuesday was retailers' day at CRE with special displays and talks for people involved in the religious publishing and bookselling trades. A number of writers were signing complimentary copies of their books and I was pleased to renew acquaintance with the popular children's writer G.P. Taylor, who told me how much he had enjoyed his afternoon with LCF members when he gave our annual lecture back in October 2007.

The Evangelical Alliance's *Biblefresh* project was much in evidence and historic copies of the Bible were on display in the *Museum of the Bible*. These included a copy of the King James translation signed by Elvis Presley, C.H. Spurgeon's pulpit Bible from circa 1850, and a

Coronation Bible from 1953, number fifteen of only twenty-five printed.

The extensive seminar programme included talks by a number of well known Christian writers including past **Christian Librarian** contributor Adrian Plass who spoke on the provocative topic *Jesus – A Very Bad Role Model*.

Our friends from the Christian Book Promotion Trust's *Speaking Volumes* project sponsored a talk by Richard Taylor, author of **To Catch A Thief** (New Wine Press, £6.99, ISBN 978-1903725573), which won a book award at CRE two years ago. A former drug addict and prison inmate, Richard gave a compelling account of his Christian conversion and current work as the director of rehabilitation centres for drug users.

The Tuesday programme concluded with an evening dinner during which fifteen awards were presented to writers and producers of media products.

Speaking Volumes sponsored an award for the *Ultimate Christian Library Book*. Visitors to the SV web site had been asked to choose the recent book, from a shortlist of five titles, that they would most like to see on their shelves of their local public libraries. The award went to Gram Seed's **One Step Beyond** (CWR, £7.99, ISBN 978-1853454622), which tells the story of the author's progress from homelessness, crime and near death to new life in Christ.

Other awards included **Christianity** magazine's Book of the Year award which went to Mark Stibbe's **Breakout** (Authentic, £8.99,

ISBN 978-1860245961) The Reference Book of the Year award, sponsored by *CLC Wholesale*, went to **The World of the Bible** (Lion, £25.00, ISBN 978-0745952505) by another past LCF speaker, John Drane.

The Contemporary Album of the Year award, sponsored by CRE itself, went to **History Makers** (Survivor Records, £8.83) by Delirious? This was a fitting tribute to the work of the veteran Christian rock band who finally disbanded towards the end of 2009 and then achieved a Top Ten hit single at Easter 2010 following a successful campaign by their supporters on the social networking site *Facebook*.

CURRENT AWARENESS

- A recent article reports that British Methodism held its second annual *Business Sunday* on 2 May 2010. This brought with it a challenge for the churches to do more to bridge the gap between work and faith.

Business Sunday was a much needed reminder that the primary mission field, for a significant number of churchgoers, is the workplace. However, the workplace can be a lonely place for Christians, and many believers find it difficult to reconcile their faith with their professional duties.

Many Christians find it helpful to join a Christian professional group which will put them in contact with

others with a similar work background. Our own *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* is mentioned as a well-established example of such groups.

The article emphasises many of the advantages of belonging to a Christian professional group while stressing that they should not be used as an excuse to retreat into a "holy huddle" or "Christian ghetto". Many groups encourage and empower their members to make a positive impact on the professional world in which they operate.

Faith in our Professions appears in the **Methodist Recorder** for 13 May 2010, p. 19.

- Philip Pullman's controversial novel ***The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ*** (Canongate £14.99, ISBN 978-1847678256) has met with a mixed response from Christian reviewers.

Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, commends Pullman for his "*familiar and passionate fury at corrupt religious systems of control*" and for achieving a "*pitch-perfect*" rendering in modern language of the original Gospel text. However, he believes that Pullman's re-writing of the story of Jesus rests in part on "*easy point scoring*" and is undone by a false reading of history and theology in the New Testament.

Dr. Williams' verdict appears in his review *Gospel Truths* in **The Guardian** for 3 April 2010, p. 6.

Past LCF magazine contributor Steve Tomkins notes that "*while the book is certainly anti-*

Christian, it is remarkably pro-Jesus. Readers unfamiliar with the original will hear a great deal of Jesus's message from the synoptic gospels, mediated only by Pullman's colloquialism which often reads like the latest trendy youth translation".

Steve Tomkins' review appears in **Third Way** for May 2010, p. 38.

Martin Saunders is unconvinced by Pullman's attempts to find naturalistic explanations for the miracles of Jesus: "*There is a repeated feeling that he is forcing the story in an unnatural direction in order to make it unmiraculous. If Pullman himself can't come up with a plausible alternative, even in the medium of fiction, it rather dents his theory that it simply must have happened a different way*".

Martin Saunders' article *The Gospel According to Pullman* appears in **Christianity** for June 2010, pp. 64-65.

Writing from a Catholic viewpoint, John Battle takes issue with Pullman's explaining away of the resurrection and concludes: "*It is our own Easter faith in the resurrection expressed in the Eucharist that is now being challenged. We now need to be able to better express 'the hope that is in us'*"

John Battle's *Pullman's Retelling a Novel Twist on the Resurrection* appears in **The Universe** for 1 April 2010, p. 14.

- Past LCF speaker G.P. Taylor introduces his latest book **YHWH:**

The Flood, the Fish and the Giant (Authentic, £6.99, ISBN 978-1860248009) in Paul Hobson's article *Taylor goes head to head with Pullman over the truth behind Bible stories*.

The book re-tells stories from the Old Testament for the Harry Potter generation and is intended as a counterweight to Philip Pullman's ***The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ***.

G.P. Taylor quotes recent research that suggests that 90% of children and young people in this country are biblically illiterate. He hopes that his book will play a part in reintroducing the Bible in a way that seeks neither to proselytise nor convert but is accessible to all.

The article appears in the ***Baptist Times*** for 9 April 2010, pp. 2-3.

- Simon Barrington-Ward, former Bishop of Coventry, recalls his friendship with C.S. Lewis in the article *My Friend Jack Lewis*.

Barrington-Ward first met Lewis when he was chaplain at *Magdalene College*, Cambridge, and Lewis had recently been appointed as Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at the *University of Cambridge*. He recalls: "My first impression was rather a shock. His bluff manner, his red, bucolic face, his earthy geniality (like meeting a farmer in a pub) was somehow surprising. He seemed determined to keep the personal and the intimate entirely at bay".

These first impressions were later modified and Barrington-Ward

feels that he became closer to the real Lewis after walks in the country and visits to his rooms at Magdalene College.

Barrington-Ward was much impressed by Lewis's formidable learning and wide reading and recalls many evenings of stimulating conversation with him. He remembers a final visit to Lewis, during which Lewis spoke about his marriage to Joy Davidman and his own readiness to face death.

This article appears in Holy Trinity Brompton's ***UK Focus*** for February 2010, pp. 1-3.

- A recent news item reports that the first ever comprehensive survey of the UK's religious archives is underway.

Funded by the *Pilgrim Trust*, the survey aims to build an overall picture of the UK's historical records of religious institutions and to discover how well this cultural heritage is cared for, while also encouraging best practice where appropriate.

This survey is an initiative of the *Religious Archives Group* and results will be used to enrich the on-line *National Register of Archives* managed by the *National Archives*.

Religious Archives Survey appears in the ***Methodist Recorder*** for 29 April 2010, p. 16.

- There has been extensive press coverage of the recent troubles in the Christian book trade following the collapse of the former SPCK bookshops and of IBS-STL which owned *STL Distribution*,

Wesley Owen bookshops, and *Authentic Media*.

The SPCK bookshop chain ceased trading as a result of mismanagement by its new owners, the American *St. Stephen the Great* charitable trust. IBS-STL went into administration with debts of more than £9 million, of which figure £350,000 was owed to *Scripture Union* alone.

However, despite a difficult trading environment, there is now a cautious optimism about the future of the Christian bookselling trade. Much of the IBS-STL empire has been taken over by three separate owners. The *Nationwide Christian Trust*, who have taken over twenty of the former Wesley Owen stores, plan to re-develop them as resource centres, with coffee shops, lounge areas and “child friendly” zones alongside the traditional bookselling areas.

Some bookshops have re-opened under independent local ownership. The former SPCK bookshop in Chichester re-opened in December and the former SPCK branch in Durham Cathedral has re-opened under the Cathedral's own management. The former Wesley Owen branch in Walsall has re-opened as *The Hub*.

Relevant articles include Roger Tagholm's *A Test of Faith*, in *The Bookseller*, 12 March 2010, pp. 25-26, and Clem Jackson's *Bookshops: a new chapter*, in the *Church Times*, 19 March 2010, pp. 20-21.

EVANGELICALS AND POST-EVANGELICALS

Although evangelicalism is arguably the most influential movement within the Christian churches today, in recent years there has been a certain amount of disquiet among some of its present and former members. Back in the 1990s **Dave Tomlinson**, a former charismatic house church leader turned Anglican clergyman, threw down the gauntlet with his influential book *The Post-Evangelical* (SPCK, £7.99, ISBN 978-0281048144) Tomlinson seemed to be speaking on behalf of a generation of Christians who had grown up within evangelical churches, still accepted many of the assumptions of evangelicalism, but had reservations about other aspects of the movement and its theology.

The book suggested that evangelicals were often guilty of anti-intellectualism and that there was a need for a less dogmatic approach to such matters as biblical criticism. Readers were urged to take greater notice of contemporary scholarship. Tomlinson also suggested that there was a need for new thinking on moral issues. For example, he believed that the Church needed a genuinely open debate on homosexuality in which the conclusions had not been decided in advance.

Tomlinson has recently followed up his original book with *Re-enchanting Christianity: faith*

in an emerging culture (Canterbury Press, £9.99, ISBN 978-1853118579) in which he outlines his current thinking on the Bible, the atonement, the resurrection, the Holy Spirit, and non-Christian religions. I found much of this material interesting but did wonder whether there is really much difference between Tomlinson's 'post-evangelical' thinking and some of the middle of the road liberal theology of earlier generations.

The argument has recently been taken one stage further by **Cole Moreton** in *Is God Still An Englishman?* (Little, Brown, £20.00, ISBN 978-1408701805) which chronicles the decline in traditional Christian belief and influence but claims to find new grounds for hope in the pick 'n' mix spirituality of contemporary England.

Back in the 1960s and 1970s the American theologian and evangelist Dr. **Francis Schaeffer** gave evangelicalism a certain intellectual respectability with his books *The God Who is There* (Inter-Varsity Press, £8.99, ISBN 978-0830819478) and *Escape From Reason* (Inter-Varsity Press, £5.99, ISBN 978-0830834051) *L'Abri Fellowship*, Schaeffer's study centre in the Swiss Alps, helped many seekers from the 1960s counter culture and hippy generation to discover and embrace the Christian faith. **Francis Schaeffer: an authentic life** by past LCF speaker **Colin Duriez** (Inter-Varsity Press, £12.99, ISBN 978-1844743100) recalls the life of this

influential apologist and evangelist and notes his contribution to the church in the second half of the twentieth century.

In his later years, Francis Schaeffer became active in the anti-abortion movement and had a wide-ranging influence on the so-called 'Religious Right' in the United States. Although initially active in the same movement, Schaeffer's son, **Frank Schaeffer**, has more recently become disillusioned with evangelicalism and become a member of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Frank Schaeffer's *Crazy for God* (Da Capo Press, £9.99., ISBN 978-0306817502) describes his early life and chronicles his spiritual movement away from an evangelical understanding of the Christian faith. Schaeffer has also written a trilogy of satirical novels – concluding with *Zermatt* (Black Swan, £6.99, ISBN 978-0552772716) - which provide an entertaining though controversial account of a teenage boy growing up in a missionary family of evangelical and fundamentalist persuasion in the 1960s.

Evangelicals and Post-Evangelicals was originally published in the *Barking Baptist Times*, monthly magazine of the *Barking Baptist Church*.

Graham Hedges, *Hon. FCLIP, MCLIP*, is the Secretary of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* and works for the public library service in the *London Borough of Wandsworth*.

ANCIENT SHOCK

GRAHAM HEDGES reports on the official launch of an innovative project designed to raise the level of biblical literacy across the United Kingdom

Along with the leaders of other Christian organisations and churches I was pleased to attend the London launch of the **Biblefresh** project which took place at the *London Institute for Contemporary Christianity* on Tuesday 30 March 2010.

Dr. **Krish Kandiah**, the Churches in Mission Executive Director at the *Evangelical Alliance*, began the proceedings with a reading from 2 Timothy 3. He explained that Biblefresh was a project launched by the EA in co-operation with nearly fifty other agencies concerned with encouraging Bible reading and promoting a greater confidence in the Scriptures among the churches. This initiative will reach its climax during 2011's high profile celebrations of the four hundredth anniversary of the **King James Bible** when there is likely to be a special emphasis on the Bible in the wider culture.

Biblefresh aims to help the churches to be more effective in engaging with the Bible and encouraging their members to live their lives in tune with the Word of

God. A recent survey conducted by the Evangelical Alliance has revealed that many sections of the Church are disaffected with the Bible and lack confidence in the Scriptures. There seems to be a particular lack of confidence in the Old Testament. Some of this can be explained by the recent attacks on religion mounted by Professor Richard Dawkins and the "new atheists".

Krish Kandiah suggested that it is ironic that, in an age in which the Bible is more readily available than ever before, Bible reading seems to be on the wane, even among professing Christians. Recent research has suggested that only one in seven Christians are likely to read the Bible outside of a church meeting. Biblefresh aims to raise the level of biblical literacy across the UK, through four distinct tracks.

The first track will seek to inspire Christians to read the Bible individually, in groups and as whole churches, making use of digital technology and creative publishing when appropriate.

The second track will emphasise Bible training and will aim to give church leaders, house group leaders, Sunday School teachers and others instruction in interpreting and applying the Bible. Teaching materials will be available for downloading from the Biblefresh web site, there will be teaching sessions at major Christian events such as *Spring Harvest* and *Keswick*, and there will be special courses and seminars at Bible colleges, churches and institutes in various parts of the

country.

The third track will emphasise Bible translation and the organisers will be asking churches to give support to a translation project in Burkina Faso arranged jointly by the *Bible Society* and *Wycliffe Bible Translators*. It is suggested that supporters should donate £1.00 for every copy of the Bible in their possession.

The fourth and final track will emphasise Bible experiences with the aim of drawing people back to reading and living the Bible. This track will place special emphasise on the arts, including film, music and theatre.

The second speaker of the day, the Rev. Dr. **Peter Philips**, Director of the *Research Centre for Biblical Literacy* at *St. John's College, Durham*, turned his attention to the challenges to the Bible posed by the recent attacks on religion. Richard Dawkins, in his best-selling book ***The God Delusion***, has described the Bible as “*A chaotically cobbled-together anthology of disjointed documents*” and has spoken of “*the sado-masochism of the Cross*”. The end result is that many people, even within the churches, have concluded that the Bible is a book of horrors or not really relevant to today. What can we do to restore confidence in the Bible?

The speaker acknowledged that many readers were turned against the Bible by the “texts of terror” that they found within its pages. The Israelites' slaughter of the inhabitants of Canaan was cited

as an example of this problem. To some extent the difficulty is caused by people having a partial knowledge of the biblical text and an inadequate understanding of how particular stories may fit into the overall structure of Scripture.

However, Christians should acknowledge that there **are** texts of terror in the Bible and not minimise them or try to explain them away. These stories are there for a purpose. We should avoid creating a “*Marcionite Disneyfication*” of the Word of God which leaves out those passages that do not fit in with our own pre-conceived theological notions. A full Bible can speak into situations like Rwanda where genocide has taken place. Christians need to ask such questions as: Was it *really* God who ordered the destruction of the Canaanites, or the Israelites who were *interpreting* God?

We were shown a video extract from a performance by a Christian theatre company in the United States who have bravely created an entire stage show based on the terror texts of the Bible. The speaker warned us against creating a “*buddy Jesus*”, who has nothing to say to us in the face of evil. He called for a creative interpretation of Scripture which has theological depth and opens up the mystery of the biblical text.

Perhaps surprisingly, Richard Dawkins has recently given his support to the *2011 Trust*, the umbrella organisation set up to co-ordinate next year's four hundredth anniversary celebrations of the **King**

James Bible. He is quoted on the Trust's web site as saying. "*You can't appreciate English literature unless you are steeped to some extent in the King James Bible. People don't know that proverbial phrases which make echoes in their minds come from this Bible. We are a Christian culture, we come from a Christian culture and not to know the King James Bible, is to be in some small way, barbarian*"

This same web site also quotes the former Poet Laureate, Andrew Motion, as saying of the KJB that "*to read it is to feel simultaneously, at home, a citizen of the world, and a traveller through eternity*".

The diminishing level of biblical knowledge in the United Kingdom is recognised as a problem even by educators who are not necessarily practising Christians. Durham University has, for example, recently launched a course on the Bible for students of *English literature*.

Mark Meynell, of *All Souls Church, Langham Place*, was our final speaker of the morning and addressed some of the problems that readers encounter in applying texts that are two or three thousand years old to the problems of the contemporary world.

In the early 1970s Alvin Toffler's best-seller ***Future Shock*** highlighted the problems of a society in which change was happening at an ever-increasing rate. Readers of the Bible, however, are likely to face the opposite problem of "*Ancient Shock*". How do we relate to texts that were written in cultures and

societies far removed from our own?

Mark suggested that we should welcome rather than reject the strangeness of the Bible and "*embrace particularity in order to embrace the universality of the Bible*". Echoing C.S. Lewis, he suggested that we should expose the fallacy of "*chronological snobbery*", the belief that new and up-to-date ideas are always superior to old and established ones. Why should we assume that our own generation is right about everything?

At the same time, the ancient origins of the Bible may prove to be an advantage in reaching certain people with the gospel just as New Age ideas are often popular because they are marketed as being ancient in their origins.

Readers should expect to experience ancient shock when reading the Bible. The message of the Scriptures comes to us from outside our familiar world. Its teachings were often shocking to their original readers, and we should expect to be challenged by the Bible today.

I was only able to stay for the morning session of the Biblefresh launch but the afternoon and evening sessions included further speakers on using the Bible with children and young people, reading the Bible politically, and praying with the Bible.

Graham Hedges, *Hon. FCLIP, MCLIP*, is Secretary of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* and works for the public library service in the *London Borough of Wandsworth*.

OF MAKING OF BOOKS THERE IS NO END



MARY BARKER and DIANA GUTHRIE report from LCF's Annual Conference held in London on Saturday 24 April 2010.

London and Bloomsbury looked really good for the LCF annual conference. Trees were coming into leaf and blossoming against the blue sky scattered with traditional puffy white clouds above the stately, academic surrounds of Cartwright Gardens! Hughes Parry Hall was a new venue for the conference but is located even closer to Euston, King's Cross and St. Pancras than previous meeting places and more than twenty delegates 'from every shire's end of England' wended their way to the venue. News, comment and opinion were exchanged over coffee and then we moved into the short worship session ably arranged and led by Louise Manners with Robert Foster providing the musical accompaniment. The AGM followed

smoothly – a small increase in subscriptions, some discussion of the doctrinal basis and nature of the association, elections and news of our future events which are repeated elsewhere.

Then we sat back to enjoy the input from Tony Jasper, writer, broadcaster, actor, playwright and man of many talents and even wider interests. He gave us a rollicking ride through his varied experiences and his thoughts on multifarious topics loosely connected to books and libraries.

Identifying a well known Library problem Tony Jasper mentioned the recently revealed sin of George Washington to whom the *New York Society Library* lent two books, *Laws of Nations* and a volume of *House of Commons Debates* which were never returned! (Should we be checking out our political leaders' borrowing histories?)

Tony then discoursed on changes in libraries mentioning 'prayer machines' which dispense prayers (in the USA of course). He reminded us of the undisputed silence of libraries in earlier times. Silence only broken by the sound of the date stamp and people moving as quietly as possible across the floor as he sought out the books of his childhood, Enid Blyton, Biggles, Durrell (Lawrence or Gerald) and Dickens.

Talking of his own publications, a biography of Cliff Richard and his best known title *Jesus in a Pop Culture* as well as innumerable articles, hymn collections and plays

led into the world of publishing.

Tony bemoaned the fact that rejection letters now come from the Marketing Department rather than an editor, although he has obviously received plenty of acceptances given his Publications list. The Editor's lunch is apparently a thing of the past. Tony has affectionate anecdotes about Priscilla Collins (erstwhile editor of *Collins'* Religious List) and Peg's Bag (brown and battered but containing smelly cheese and wee drams) which were produced by an editor at the BBC to seal contracts. No longer the province of the 'scholar and gentleman' the publishing trade has changed. The influence of the commercial media – (will the Americans like it?) is very noticeable according to Tony Jasper. Bookshops, which largely mean *Waterstone's* and *W.H. Smith*, influence publishers to produce what those two chains will sell. Christian bookshops seem to be in retreat with the virtual demise of Wesley Owen, but, as our speaker from KITAB suggested in the autumn, there are alternative opportunities in the new media.

Tony Jasper is not afraid of different ways of talking about Christianity in his dramatic presentations, hymns and articles, so it was no surprise to hear him advocating 'alternatives'. He mentioned self-publishing as a useful tool. Did not G.P. Taylor (an earlier speaker for LCF) self-publish the initial run of *Shadowmancer*? Billy Graham showed us communication and marketing skills

in his presentations of the gospel earlier last century. The US presidential election and the recent British election demonstrated the power of communication via the media and we do well to remember it.

The cult of celebrity is with us but as Christians we have the all time greatest celebrity in Jesus Christ and need to exploit this. Christ is celebrated in stage musicals like *Godspell*, by Johnny Cash in country style and at *Greenbelt* in Pop style – we must embrace all these alternatives and as Tony Jasper concluded '*We live in exciting times: His word will be heard so shout it!*'

This talk seemed to have interesting resonances for LCF where we are considering what changes we need to make so that members are helped by the Fellowship to continue their Christian mission in our profession. In addition **next** year's annual lecture speaker is to be Dave Roberts, author of *The Twilight Gospel* which draws attention to the Zeitgeist which has given rise to Stephenie Meyer's very successful Vampire novels which vaunt 'appearance' rather than 'substance'.

Eddie Olliffe, our afternoon speaker, spoke for a sister profession whose fortunes are even more heavily dependent on the prevailing economic climate than are those of the library world. Bookselling is a volatile market at the best of times, and Eddie has seen some of the worst of times.

The first Christian bookshop in

the UK opened in Derby two hundred years ago, and was soon followed by another one in Bristol, but it wasn't until the 20th century that Christian bookselling really took off in a big way, aided in part by the significant growth of SPCK bookshops in the 1930s. From 1976 to 1996 some new organisations came on the scene, and names like *Wesley Owen* began to trip off our tongues. They and SPCK stayed in the lead in the 1990s, but in the last decade their dominance of the market has been taken over by the initially much more low-key *Christian Literature Crusade* (CLC), which had been established as a missionary organisation in 1941 with the aim of proclaiming the gospel through the distribution of Christian literature, both in the UK and abroad.

The last few years have seen a revolution in UK Christian bookselling. SPCK was taken over in 2006 by an American company, but continued to labour under chronic mismanagement and didn't last long under the new regime. Wesley Owen's problems can be boiled down to bad IT decisions and financial difficulties, and it went under in 2009. The turbulence of the recession has brought CLC to the fore, partly because of the transfer of some Wesley Owen bookshops to the CLC fold.

CLC took over six of the Wesley Owen shops. Unlike most other Christian booksellers CLC is a faith mission, which doesn't pay its workers a regular salary; their income rises and falls in line with the mission's income. Integrating the

staff of a faith mission and those of a commercial concern is one of the problems that CLC is having to face, along with its ageing staff profile.

Another seventeen Wesley Owen shops were taken over by the *Nationwide Christian Trust*, with a further eight taken on by *Koorong*, a respected Australian company that has been buying up other bookshops as well and is likely to be the overall front-runner when the dust of the recession has settled. It is however very US-centric for British tastes.

Most secular retailers reckon they need over six hundred outlets to be counted as a major UK retailer. Not surprisingly, Christian retailers have never come near this figure, and nowadays their number is declining, with about one hundred and fifty doing a viable trade. (The Achilles' heel of any retail outlet – Christian or secular – is its lease; rents only ever go up, never down, even in a recession). Northern Ireland has the strongest market (per head of population), but in Wales there are almost no Christian bookshops outside Cardiff. However, all is not lost in more general Christian book reading terms, as there is encouraging growth in Internet sales (eg. the eden.co.uk site).

Even commercial Christian bookselling can have a missional nature – a Christian witness in the high street, offering a weekday focus not provided by the church, but Eddie has long wondered if specialist Christian bookshops have been a blind alley – should Christian bookselling have been part of

mainstream bookselling? Does missionary activity prejudice bookselling activity? More interaction between the church and Christian bookshops is needed, plus a greater Christian presence in the mass media.

Looking more widely, there seems to have been a decline in reading and book-buying in general, not just in the Christian context; traditional forms of bookselling are declining; *Hughes & Hughes*, *Borders* and *Woolworths* have all gone to the wall. However the figures need to be read carefully. There has been only a marginal 0.5% decline in the 2009 sales figures. The average price of a book was £7.43, with one in five books bought in the UK being sold by a supermarket; but apart from that, the independent bookshops are doing much better than the big chains, as they have the flexibility to cater for a specific market. The 2010 figures haven't begun well, and the pattern is the same in the US, although electronic books are bucking the trend.

Paper and printing costs are rising inexorably, and the physical process of book-making is gradually being transferred away from China, because of rising costs there, with India and Malta becoming major book-making centres. However, the difficulty of predicting the cost of future print-runs remains a constant. The enormous number of titles published each year (in 2009 the UK had more new titles than ever before) means there are fewer customers per title, and enormous

problems for booksellers, who have to choose what to stock. This has encouraged print-on-demand and digital publishing, with an increase in Internet retailing (now the norm for many people), digital downloading, and a growing market in e-book readers.

So what's the future for Christian bookshops? What they can offer that supermarkets and websites can't is an 'experience', which if done well, can be a winner; it's not just about selling books, but a sense of community and a spirit of inclusion. Faith shouldn't be a barrier but a door. Bookselling chains have limited flexibility and high central costs, whereas the independents can tailor their shops to the local customer.

Questions after Eddie's talk ranged over the stocking of Christian books in secular bookshops (this is common in the US and Singapore, but has never taken off in the UK); hymn book publishing (this used to be a mainstay of Christian book publishing and selling, but the advent of the overhead projector and Power Point have eaten greatly into this market); the sale of Bibles (still a huge percentage of total Christian retailing); and the growing market for e-books.

Mary E. Barker, BA, MCLIP and **Diana Guthrie**, MA, serve on the executive committee of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* as Library Assistance Manager and Southern Regional Representative respectively.

MAIN ARTICLES

ROBERT FOSTER surveys recent library building projects, as reported in the professional press, and suggests that academic and public libraries now have a role to play in fostering a positive sense of 'place'

EYE ON THE PROFESSION



BRAVE NEW LIBRARIES

In spite of the recession, there still appears to be a significant amount of building development happening in the library world. CILIP's *Update* and *Gazette* regularly report on new buildings or major refurbishments. April's *Update* for example, announced the re-opening of the public library at Clapton, Hackney (p.12) and also featured the projected Sammy Ofer Wing at the National Maritime Museum (p.18-19). Meanwhile, the *Gazette* for April 8-21 contained pictures on Kingston University's new learning resources centre at Roehampton Vale. As for work that is about to start, there is the new Birmingham Central Library and the Henry Watson Music Library in Manchester, both of which will take three years to complete; Aberdeen University is to have a completely new library on the site of the old one, which is currently being demolished; my employer, King's College London is due to begin a full refurbishment of one of its information services centres, and there are probably a number of other library or information centres all over the UK which are doing the same.

One imagines that much if not all the planning for these works was

done long before the phrase 'credit crunch' was coined, such is the length of time required to put a new project into place. Needless to say, no new building work is ever cheap. The Clapton revamp cost £3m, Kingston's project was £1.3m, the NMM wing will cost £35m and Aberdeen's library a staggering £57m. This is not to say any of the above works are unnecessary or extravagant, for the end results will probably be improved services and new opportunities, perhaps even income generation. Even so, there are bound to be savings required to make a large project viable, and there must be very considerable risks involved for some institutions as they proceed. Major building works (particularly in academic libraries) often require the support of benefactors and one-off donations to get off the ground at all, but major loans, interest rates, overrunning work, the possibility of contracted firms going out of business must all give cause for concern. Have there been any recent cases of library building works put on hold, I wonder? Either way, it is quite probable that over the next ten years there will be significantly fewer large projects being initiated.

But the fact that new buildings have been attempted so recently makes one ask what it was that prompted them. Small-scale refurbishments will be necessary to stop a place falling to pieces, and there will always be the need to upgrade things like network connection and cables or make a building work more efficiently. But brave new libraries are something different. The Aberdeen University website gives the following reasons (among others) for its new library:

- an exciting embodiment of the library of the future, in which new media and technology enhance a magnificent collection of books.
- a secure, controlled environment for the protection and showcasing of our historic collections, and the opportunity to acquire further treasures.
- open to all, with public spaces, exhibitions and events widening access for the public and the academic community nationally and internationally. (1)

The Library of Birmingham has some similar themes in its promotional literature:

- "An open air amphitheatre at the lower ground floor will be an exciting feature in Centenary Square for live performances ... bringing the library out into the public realm"

- "The new building has been designed to function flexibly around developing new digital technologies, creating new opportunities for learning and access.
- "New exhibition galleries will showcase for the first time the city's outstanding and internationally important archives and collections."
- "Two outdoor terraces at the upper levels will create new public green open spaces, with quiet places to read, study or relax ..."

Looking at these descriptions, there seems to be a need firstly to provide a proper home for special or heritage collections; secondly some better integrated IT; and thirdly a space.

There is a recognition then that certain types of library - the public and academic perhaps most of all - have a role to play in terms of being a 'place'. **College and Research Libraries** for January 2010 included an article entitled "*The Physical and the Virtual: The Relationship between Library as Place and Electronic Collections*" in which the authors found that "*The factors significantly related to users' satisfaction with electronic collections were the frequency with which they used the Libraries' Web site, and, most interestingly, the physical library they most often visited.*"(2)

Getting the layout and balance of services right can make for a good library experience. The academic library now needs to have different types of space available: some still needs to be for silent study, but it also now needs to have group study rooms, and some social space, with a cafe preferably. It is tempting to think that this is trying to do too much, that providing study space as well as materials should be the only remit, and that anything more is a form of dumbing down. But research into continuing education done nearly thirty years ago found that a coffee-shop or lounge had a positive effect on the learning culture in what was otherwise a dedicated educational establishment. (3) Could it be that that academic libraries are doing well if they provide something similar to what adult or continuing education places provided back in the 1980s?

The value of the public library being a place was noted in another article in April's **Update**, which looked at services for the elderly in Australia. Its author reported that having the library to go to can combat social isolation, provide coaches for those struggling with the digital age, offer collaborative learning and so on. The article also mentions the possibility of the library being "*part of a community complex including,*

for instance, a cafe, and swimming and bowling opportunities". (4) But the important point here is that the place and the services together are what makes the experience valuable. CILIP itself is currently running a masterclass series which recognises this. Entitled "*The library as place - space, service and technology*" it is designed to "*appeal to anyone involved in, or about to embark on, library design, planning and building improvement projects.*" (5)

Space and services projects may or may not involve us individually. One hopes that the views of as many employees as possible are gathered when they are being planned, though; and because of the very serious sums of money usually attached, they ought probably to interest us, especially if they can help tackle matters such as social isolation. John V. Taylor, a former Bishop of Winchester, recalled how a Christian in a snack-bar company had an insight into the design of tables which improved interaction and thus made it a place where lonely people could find company. (6) Taylor felt that such flashes of inspiration had to come from the Holy Spirit. Could it be that one of us has made or will make such a contribution at some stage?

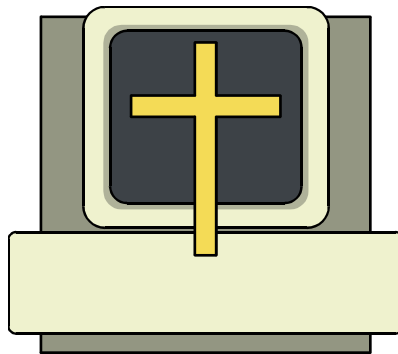
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SARA BATTS is undertaking a PhD looking in particular at the way that churches use web-sites. Although her research is at an early stage, some interesting information is beginning to emerge. Sara took the time to answer a few questions about the project in the following interview with **DAVE WALKER** of the *Church Times*

ON-LINE CHURCH



Can you say a bit about the subject of your research?

The project aims to understand how English Christian churches are using the Internet. There's been lots of research around on-line church and how people use religious web-sites, particularly in the US. I have a day job as a research librarian, so I'm interested in the way that the church(es) are providing information. I'm so used to going to the Internet for things that I find it interesting how there's a marked gap when it comes to faith-based content from local churches. It's not just outreach information, but the day-to-day details like service times and home groups and maps and 'phone numbers. The stuff people probably take for granted when they've been part of a church for a long time. The project is looking at how the decisions are made about what to publish. It isn't about being judgemental, but just investigating how one part of English society is finding its feet on-line.

My local parish church doesn't put flyers through my door. If it

didn't have a web-site it might as well not exist – how do they expect newcomers to the town to find out that they're there, what they do, why I might want to join them? I don't think churches can expect people to turn up on their doorsteps to ask for information.

There are three strands to the research: I'm tracking developments in the proportions of churches with web-sites, then looking in-depth at the content of a smaller number of sites. Once I have results from both phases I hope to be able to discuss this with clergy and church staff to really understand the decisions that are being made.

What have you discovered so far?

I took a random sample of four hundred churches from across England (one hundred are Catholic, Methodists, Baptist and Anglican) and, in April 2009, 42% of the churches had a findable web-site. By 'findable' I mean one that was listed on any of the major directories like achurchnearyou.com, or that was in the first two pages of Google results. Lots of other research says that two pages of results is the most that people generally look at. By January 2010 the percentage had risen to 49%. But that still means that it could be reasonable to assume that half of the churches in England have no useful Internet presence. These are only preliminary results; by the end of the year I will have checked back two more times on the sample of churches so will be able to see how many more have sites; and whether the rate of increase varies by denomination.

What areas will you be going on to look at?

The in-depth research will be looking at the web-sites of a smaller number of churches in my localish area – East Anglia. This will be assessing structure of sites, like how they are navigated, as well as content (words and pictures). I'm also interested in finding out the extent to which Web 2.0 tools, like blogs or Twitter feeds, are being used. I'm going to be looking for any key differences between denominations, and also, if I can find a way of coding for it, between types of church. And I'll be looking at congregation size since that obviously has an impact on

the resources a church has to draw on. Once I've done that – which will take up most of my weekends this summer! - I'll pull the results together and use the information as a basis for interviews with church leaders. If any readers are interested in participating, please do get in touch.

What do you hope to achieve from your research?

I'd like to know what the decision making process is around churches' engagement with the Internet. Perhaps this could be the basis for guidelines, or for some other kind of good practice. I suspect that perhaps many churches are starting from scratch with the same problems which could be overcome by a bit of collaboration. At the moment I'm just focused on getting the data collected – there's still another three years before I complete!

What would you say makes a good church web-site?

Well, firstly, one that you can find ... I think that the best web-sites favour simplicity. And they're kept up to date, reflect the church as an organisation of people. And any church that uses one of your cartoons from the **Church Times** clearly has its finger on the pulse.

Have you found any particularly unhelpful church sites?

There are some pretty bad web-sites out there but I think it is unfair to name names! But I know of one that doesn't have service times. Another sometimes has a menu bar, sometimes doesn't, many have rather naff photographs of cheery groups of people. (Could be replaced by cartoons ...).

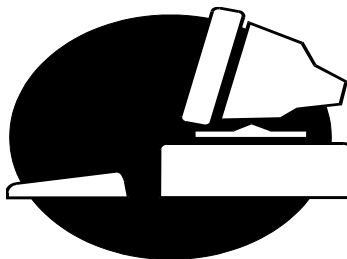
Are some denominations better than others?

It's interesting in that the Baptists, so far, seem to have a higher proportion of churches with web-sites. Methodists have the least, but this is possibly an artefact of the way the circuits are organised, however this has been taken into account to a certain extent. Catholics have more than Methodists but fewer than Anglicans. The rate of change

may also be different, but it's hard to be definite with only two sets of data.

What do you think the answer is for those churches with no web-site?

The shift to Web 2.0 tools mean that there are easy ways to create, publish and update content. So possibly people are thinking that an on-line presence needs a lot of work, or technical ability, or costs a lot, and I don't think that is the case any longer. Equally you don't have to have a finger in every social media pie there is going, nor do churches need to re-invent the wheel when there's lots of great linkable content out there already. I wouldn't expect every country parish church to have a bells and whistles site on the same scale as some of the mega-churches – that's just not feasible. But I'd say that as a minimum, making sure you've got some contact details on a directory site is important. The Internet can seem a scary place but it doesn't take long to learn how to search and how to sort the wheat from the chaff. It's a skill I help our library users develop.



Sara Batts, *BSc (Hons), MSC*, works as Senior Research Librarian for *Reed Smith* and serves on the executive committee of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* as our regional representative for London. This interview first appeared on the **Church Times** blog and is reproduced by kind permission of the Editor.

You can read more about Sara's research on her web-site, <http://phdinprogress.wordpress.com/> Sara is also keen to hear from people who would be willing to be interviewed about their church web-site – contact her via her web-site or Twitter@Batty_Towers

Professor KEN BAKEWELL recalls the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and suggests some ways in which the Spirit has been active throughout Christian history

COMMUNICATING VIA THE HOLY SPIRIT



Thank You, O My Father, for giving us Your Son, and leaving Your Spirit till the work on earth is done. (Melody Green)

Waiting can bring forth a number of different emotions: boredom and perhaps anger if we're waiting for a bus or a train that's running late; nervousness if we're in a doctor's or dentist's waiting room; excitement if we're waiting to meet somebody or perhaps looking forward to an outstanding lecturer at a Librarians' Christian Fellowship conference.

Luke tells us that Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:29). I wonder what their emotions were. Perhaps a mixture of all three of the above and also bewilderment – unsure of what had happened or what was going to happen.

They were, of course, waiting for the event we celebrated on 23 May – the coming of the Holy Spirit at the first Pentecost. J.I. Packer reminds us that the term 'Paraclete' is sometimes used instead of Spirit and that this can be translated as comforter (in the sense of strengthener), counsellor, helper, supporter, adviser, advocate, ally and senior friend (***Keep in step with the Spirit***, IVP, 1984).

We're told what happened in Acts 2:2-3. A sound like a rushing mighty wind, tongues like fire sitting on each one of them. Some

counsellor! Some comforter! The disciples must have been scared to death! But verse 4 tells us they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues. The Holy Spirit was enabling them to communicate the Gospel – the Good News of Jesus Christ in every language under the sun.

Of course there were cynics, just as there are today. They are drunk with new wine (Acts 2: 13). Being made fun of because of a conversion experience or religious belief is not new. Yes, they were drunk – drunk with the Holy Spirit!

Then Peter stood up. Dear old bumbling Peter, who had denied Jesus three times before the crucifixion. He pointed out that he and his friends were not drunk at nine o'clock in the morning. He reminded them of the words of the prophet Joel: that God would send His Spirit to all people. He preached the first Christian sermon, apart from those preached by Jesus himself, resulting in about three thousand conversions (Acts 2: 14-42). The waiting was over. The promise had been fulfilled. The barriers of culture and language were broken down as God drew to himself a new people drawn from every nation under heaven.

The Spirit changes lives and facilitates communication. Peter speaks out boldly. The disciples are transformed from weak and ineffective people to bold and effective communicators for Christ. Later, the Spirit changed Paul from one of the most effective persecutors of Christians to Christianity's greatest advocate, communicating the Good News throughout the world. Much later still, the Spirit persuaded Martin Luther to nail his ninety five theses on the church door at Wittenberg and start the Reformation. About a hundred and fifty years after that, the Spirit enabled John Bunyan to write *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Grace Abounding* while in prison in Bedford. In the eighteenth century the Spirit moved an Anglican priest, John Wesley, to highlight some of the faults of the Church of England, including its failure to reach out to the community, leading to the formation of the Methodist Church. The Spirit moved John's brother Charles to communicate the Good News through some of the finest hymns in the English language.

The Spirit enabled William Wilberforce to campaign vigorously for the abolition of slavery and Lord Shaftesbury to support orphanages, to oppose child prostitution and child labour, and to fight for proper care for those in mental hospitals. In the twentieth century the Spirit made an Irish atheist and noted academic, C.S. Lewis, realise that Christianity is the right way and enabled him to communicate the faith through many

books which have helped others to find Jesus.

The Holy Spirit has been active in the lives of many less well known people including a lady called Jo, who was going through a period of depression and was almost suicidal. The Spirit led her to a parish house party, spoke to her through the present Bishop of Liverpool, and enabled her to find Jesus.

Unlike the disciples, we do not have to wait for the Spirit to come. He is with us now as a guiding and transforming power. He has given us various gifts, but it is up to us whether or not we use them. One of these gifts is administration (1 Corinthians 12: 28), which can be useful in our libraries, our homes and our churches. Others are leadership and encouragement (Romans 12: 8), which affect our relationship with our colleagues.

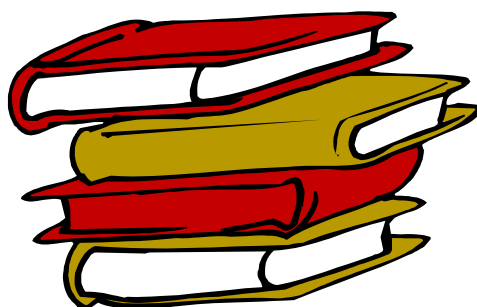
Library and information practitioners are in the business of communication, but the greatest communicator of all time is God and his agent in this is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit can help us in our daily work and in conforming to the aims and objectives of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship: the provision for all Christians engaged in, or about to enter upon, library work of the opportunity to examine their profession from a specifically Christian viewpoint; the positive presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ to the library world and through the library world to the general public; the promotion of fellowship and unity between Christian librarians; and the provision of opportunities for Christian librarians to make their professional training and experience available to the wider Christian community.

Finally we must always remember that the Holy Spirit is the third PERSON of the Trinity and never refer to him as 'it'. J.I. Packer has written, "*My heart sinks and I wince when I hear Christians, as I sometimes do, calling the third divine person 'it' rather than "he"*" (**Keep in step with the Spirit**, p. 62) Some years ago I attended a service of Evensong at York Minister and I was looking forward to the address by a well known Canon of the Church of England (who has since become a Roman Catholic). I was very disappointed and I now remember only two things about the address: a number of criticisms of Evangelicals and several reference to the Holy Spirit as 'it'.

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REVIEWS

THE BOOKWORM'S SUMMER SELECTION



THE TWILIGHT GOSPEL: THE SPIRITUAL ROOTS OF STEPHENIE MEYER'S VAMPIRE SAGA

Dave Roberts

Monarch, 2009, £7.99, Pbk., 159p.,

ISBN 978-1854249760

The Twilight Gospel is difficult to categorise – the author makes no claim for its being literary criticism rather calling it a “*respectful engagement*”. The runaway success of the *Twilight* series has caused him to look critically at this phenomenon which might threaten to capture the hearts and minds of impressionable young people or others who read the series as the latest best seller.

The target audience is broad and in a hundred and fifty pages the author explains a range of concerns about the *Twilight* series which runs to some 2,500 pages so his treatment is not exhaustive. He gives a brief overview of the stories and identifies key issues for Christians in chapters on fantasy and the supernatural, physical appearance and consumerism, sexuality, the occult and finally distinctions between the Christian and *Twilight* gospels.

A survey of other vampire fiction and its origins sets the scene and Dave Roberts talks generally about the power of story. He finds interesting parallels with other best sellers such as Harry

Potter and Dan Brown. He points out that the Vatican came out against both of these, although it has softened on Harry Potter. It is to be hoped this will not prejudice the case for caution with regard to ***Twilight***. The author declares his position '*mainstream Christian orthodoxy*' but deals fairly with the books giving credit to characters that do portray Christian values and demonstrate Christian behaviour.

He argues against the consumerism rife in the novels and the vaunting of appearance rather than character. He identifies this influence as stronger and more insidious than the glamorous background in many other contemporary novels. Alice, an otherwise appealing character, is a mega shopaholic who has created the wealth of the Cullens by using her psychic foreknowledge to play the financial markets rather than by the Protestant work ethic!

Dave Roberts points out differences between the orthodox Christian gospel and its distorted manifestation in the ***Twilight*** books. Stephenie Meyer has stated her intention to explore free will, but the author points out very clearly how she diverges from the Christian doctrine of free will and salvation by grace. The representation of immortality is obviously sub-Christian, as achieved by vampires and it is this deviance which has been cited against the series by the Vatican.

Many people (including myself as the Librarian of a Catholic school) welcomed the books as promoting chastity before marriage but Dave Roberts points out how erotically charged they are and that Edward is chaste for practical reasons because he is a vampire – an argument unlikely to weigh with most young people who are not vampires!

The points with which Dave Roberts contends are linked to the ***Twilight*** series at the end of the book whereas it might have been easier to use in conjunction with the books had the references been footnotes throughout the text or at least at the end of chapters.

The title ***Twilight Gospel*** is an interesting comment when 'twilight' is defined as 'dim light' or 'imperfect light' which sums up Dave Roberts' conclusion about Meyer's works.

The Twilight Gospel would be an excellent starting point for discussion on the ***Twilight*** saga. I wish it had been available when

my school parents' reading group met to discuss Stephenie Meyer's vampire series. I plan to pass on my copy to the leaders of our church Youth Group and feel confident that it will be very helpful in identifying issues and guiding a discussion about this astonishing phenomenon in youth culture.

Mary Barker, BA, MCLIP, is School Librarian of the *Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School* and serves on the executive committee of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* as our Library Assistance Manager.

***A SWORD BETWEEN THE SEXES:
C.S. LEWIS AND THE GENDER DEBATES***

Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen

***Brazos Press, distrib. Lion Hudson, 2010, Pbk.,
264p., ISBN 978-1587452088***

“A keen intellect and a rich academic background are necessary in tackling a substantive study of C. S. Lewis and gender” writes one reviewer of this book. I couldn't agree more. Possessing neither, this opus with its seven hundred and seventy eight footnotes (no, not a misprint!) gave my brain an unaccustomed and unexpected workout. In exploring concepts of gender both before and since C. S. Lewis, as well as Lewis's own views, the book encompasses the disciplines of philosophy, theology, psychology, the social sciences, and literature. This is an academic book; and the *“rich academic background”* of the reader is for the most part assumed.

For the more general reader, however, whose interest may well be in Lewis himself rather than in the wider and more academic aspects of the gender debate, two questions of particular interest emerge. Firstly, was C. S. Lewis, regarded by many as an archetypal misogynist, *“a better man than his theories”* in his actual treatment of and relationships with women? Secondly, did Lewis's views on gender evolve and change during the latter part of his life, and if so, to what extent was this due to the appearance of Joy Davidman, the Jewish American divorcee who eventually became

Lewis's wife? "*There is*" wrote Lewis following Joy's death from cancer, "*hidden or flaunted, a sword between the sexes till an entire marriage reconciles them.*"

Lewis grew up in the Edwardian era and in his early years at Oxford held a view of gender that was "*both essentialist and hierarchical*". But this, as the author points out, merely reflected the ethos of the times. Men's innate moral and intellectual superiority, and their right of authority over women, was considered natural, God-ordained and biblical. Lewis was perhaps unusual in limiting male authority over women to the spheres of marriage and the church. In fact he championed the cause of women's equality in political and economic – though not at this stage academic - life. While firmly favouring the proposal of a "quota" limiting the number of women that would be admitted to Oxford University, he nonetheless recognised and encouraged female students of talent and ability, tutoring these with the same conscientiousness as talented male students. He also corresponded extensively with female authors and scholars such as the poet Ruth Pitter, and the writer and broadcaster Dorothy L. Sayers. On the domestic front, there was Lewis's unlikely attraction to Janie Moore, a woman of apparently limited intellect with whom he chose to share hearth and home for thirty odd years. She constantly interrupted his work with demands for assistance with household chores, which Lewis obediently performed. Her demands on him increased with age, and were still met. In his actual relationships with women, was Lewis indeed "*a better man than his theories*"?

By the 1950's, however, it is clear that Lewis's thinking on gender relations was undergoing a shift – even before the wave of "new feminism" hit Britain and the United States in the 1960's. "... *there ought spiritually to be a man in every woman and a woman in every man*", he writes to a female correspondent. "*And how horrid the ones who haven't got it are: I can't bear a 'man's man' or a 'woman's woman'*". In a letter to Dorothy L. Sayers written in 1955, he goes even further, finally stating "*a preference for people*" (emphasis original). This from a man who had shown a lifelong preference for exclusively male companions, and who had earlier asserted that true friendship could not normally exist between a man and a woman "*because they would have nothing to be friends*

about”.

But there can be little doubt that it was Lewis’s experience of marriage to Joy Davidman that finally sheathed for him “*the sword between the sexes*”. “*What was Joy not to me?*” he writes in ***A Grief Observed***, published after her death. “*She was my daughter and my mother, my pupil and my teacher, my subject and my sovereign ... my trusty comrade, friend, shipmate, fellow soldier ... all that any man friend (and I have had good ones) has ever been to me ...*” (emphasis mine)

For the present writer, however, the most absorbing chapter of the book is one not obviously related to the title theme. It carries the subtitle “*C. S. Lewis and Family Life*”, and deals among other things with Lewis’s relationships with children. Once describing himself as “*a bachelor who has seldom even talked to children*”, he acquired a surprising number of godchildren, and was of course the recipient of a vast number of letters from juvenile readers of the Narnia books, especially from the United States. His face-to-face experience of children, though, was virtually non-existent until World War 2 brought a posse of young evacuees to his Oxford home, “The Kilns”, followed a few years later by his two stepsons, David and Douglas Gresham. It is in his interaction with both the evacuees and the Gresham boys that the warmth and “human” side of Lewis the academic, the “man’s man”, comes to the fore. Lewis claimed not to enjoy the company of children; yet clearly there was something in these youngsters that he could and did respond to. Refreshingly anecdotal, this chapter proved to be an unexpected revelation - and a delight.

To conclude with those bibliographic details that are supposed to interest librarians: the book is blessed with an index, though with one or two surprising omissions, and frustrating in that it frequently failed to retrieve for me passages that I wanted to refer back to. There is no bibliography as such, though the seven hundred and seventy eight footnotes of course include numerous bibliographical references. It would have been useful to have these references extracted from among the expository footnotes and grouped together under subject headings to form a proper (and extensive) bibliography. The expository footnotes are copious as well as numerous (sometimes occupying up to half the print page), but

definitely illuminating and well worth reading in full.

I admit to having been selective in my review of this book, and more academically inclined readers may rightly claim that I have not done it justice. If you are, like myself, a “general reader”, this is not a book to take to bed with you; but it is, as one reviewer has put it, certainly an “eye-opener”.

Barbara Gilman, MA, is a retired librarian who has previously worked for the *University of Hull* and the *Torch Trust for the Blind*.

THE RAGE AGAINST GOD

Peter Hitchens

***Continuum; 2010, £16.99, Hardback, 168p.,
ISBN 978-1441105721***

After reviewing the autobiography of former Fleet Street journalist Tom Davies in an earlier issue it was interesting to turn to this recent book from another member of the journalists' profession who has found his way back to the Christian faith by an interesting route.

Peter Hitchens, currently a columnist on the ***Mail on Sunday***, describes his early public school upbringing and how he rejected the Christian faith of his childhood, even to the extent of publicly burning his copy of the Bible as an expression of his new-found unbelief. He goes on to explain that for many years he was a Trotskyist and a dedicated opponent of religious belief. A period as a foreign correspondent in Moscow, however, in the early 1990s, caused him to question the claims of the Communist system, and other philosophies that seek to create a perfect society on Earth.

The book contains an interesting chapter on the realities of life in the Soviet Union during the dying days of the Communist regime and looks back at atrocities committed during the earlier days of Lenin and Stalin. This part of the book reminded me of the writings of the late Malcolm Muggeridge, whose disillusionment with the Soviet system while working as a foreign correspondent, also prepared the way for a return to Christianity in later life.

The author is the brother of Christopher Hitchens whose book ***God is Not Great*** spearheaded the recent “new atheist” attack on religious belief. Peter Hitchens responds to some of his brother's arguments in the present book, while acknowledging that, on a personal level, relations between the two brothers are better than they have been for many years. In particular, he questions his brother's argument that the the excesses of the Soviet system only occurred because Marxism is itself a quasi-religious system.

The author tackles a number of other questions raised by the new atheists. For example: Are conflicts fought in the name of religion *really* conflicts about religion? Is it possible to determine what is right and wrong without God?

The Rage Against God makes a powerful plea for the followers of Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, et al to re-examine their assumption that non-belief is the only sensible option for intelligent people. It should be recommended to anyone interested in the current debate about the role of religion in society.

Graham Hedges, *Hon. FCLIP, MCLIP*, is the Secretary of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* and works for the public library service in the *London Borough of Wandsworth*.

ONE STEP BEYOND:

ONE MAN'S JOURNEY FROM DEATH TO NEW LIFE

Gram Seed with Andrea Robinson

CWR Publishing, 2008, £7.99, Pbk., 180p.,

ISBN 978-1853454622

One Step Beyond has been voted the **Ultimate Christian Library Book**. If, like me, you hadn't come across it before, I would highly recommend this book. It isn't too much of a plot spoiler to explain that it's the autobiographical tale of the rise of Gram Seed from serial offender and alcoholic via near death to being fully alive in Christ. Knowing that the story ends well does not diminish its power.

I liked this because it was British. It sometimes feels as if we are at risk of losing our British Christian cultural identity because so

many books and so much of the music are American imports from the mega-churches. It was refreshing to hear about unglamorous Middlesbrough instead. I had also started to wonder where the modern stories were coming from as I saw only 'classics' in the bookshops. ***One Step Beyond*** is bang up to date. Is it a ***Cross and the Switchblade*** for our times?

Gram's transformation from sinner to sunbeam is truly amazing. Gram's experience of the darker side of life is not skipped over. This depth of experience of addiction and prison life is simply told, but it is told well. It is a challenge to us all to not ignore or sideline those who we associate with crime, ASBOs and hopelessness. The book brings this to life without sentimentality, excuses or inviting pity. Gram says himself at one point that compared with some of the kids he meets now, his upbringing, although troubled, was '*like a choirboy's*'.

There are no obvious appeals to us to turn to faith. The narrative is not cluttered with Christian jargon – in fact there are footnotes to explain things like '*speaking in tongues.*' Andrea Robinson has done a great job in producing this narrative, retaining the character of Gram the storyteller. There is just a compelling story, simply written, of how a man who believed '*nobody gives owt for nowt*' came to understand the nature of the love that is freely offered in Christ. This makes this an ideal book for people who are wavering, those unsure about religion. It's not a difficult read, which is good, because it is difficult to put down.

Other simple facts challenge us in our way of evangelising. Ours is a faith based in the written word. How do we engage with people with poor reading skills?

Gram's story left me feeling guiltily comfortable in some ways. Perhaps those who have a better sense of what they have gained through faith are those who are most prepared to make a radical commitment.

Sara Batts, BSc (Hons), MSC, works as Senior Research Librarian for *Reed Smith* and serves on the executive committee of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* as our regional representative for London.