

Spring 2012

# **CHRISTIAN LIBRARIAN**



The Journal of the  
Librarians' Christian Fellowship

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Redcliffe Anglican/Methodist Church Centre, Bristol. Speaker: Robert Hicks, *Creative Publishing*, on *Lost Letters and Early Writings from the First Century – from a publisher's point of view*. Details: p. 10.

## PRAYER NOTES FOR SPRING 2012

### PLEASE PRAY FOR

●The work of LCF's executive committee as it plans for the future and considers ideas put forward by the Fellowship's Review Group.

●LCF's annual conference planned for Saturday 28 April 2012.

●Our forthcoming conference speakers Michael Coveney, Gordon Harris, John Wickenden and Sara Batts.

●The work of the Christian Book Promotion Trust and its *Speaking Volumes* library scheme. Pray that there will be a good public response to the current poll to find the *Ultimate Christian Library Book*.

●The work of our friends at *Christians at Work* as they celebrate their seventieth anniversary year and as they prepare for an anniversary conference on 29 September 2012.

●The work of the *Methodist Central Hall, Westminster*. Pray that the recently catalogued *Epworth Collection* will be well used by researchers and visitors.

●Library and information staff in an era of reductions in spending, cutbacks, re-organisations, redundancies and other challenges.



# **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](http://www.librarianscf.org.uk)*

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Secretary and Publications Editor: Graham Hedges, *Hon. FCLIP, MCLIP*. Address: 34  
Thurlestone Avenue, Ilford, Essex, IG3 9DU, England. Tel. 020 8599 1310. E-mail  
[secretary@librarianscf.org.uk](mailto:secretary@librarianscf.org.uk)

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## THE FIRST WORD

**MARGARET KEELING** looks forward to the beginning of Spring. She welcomes the chance to read books that she might otherwise not have chosen to read and reflects on the future development of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship

# **LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD**



The beginning of Spring is a bit like the start of a new year. Maybe it is time to reflect on the highs and lows of the past winter, and to look forward with hope to better and brighter days.

A personal challenge and privilege was to spend a great deal of the Autumn reading! I was part of the panel looking at the nominations for the UK Christian Book awards – the *Ultimate Christian Library Book* 2012 - and determining the shortlist.

Over seventy lovely new books arrived. What a chance to read, and read – and to what a tight deadline! Hard work, and in the run up to the submission date it took over most of my time. But what I found harder was to step outside my usual ‘reading self’ with its personal likes and dislikes and try stand in the shoes of a non-Christian library user. Would this book attract me? Would it move me? and would it have value? Not for me, but for them? And now the shortlist is out and I look forward to seeing which title (adult, and children) will be chosen.

Last year brought a different challenge, to be part of the LCF Review Group – to stand back, look at where LCF is now, and where it might be for the future. As you may have seen in the *E-Newsletter*, the current situation is not good. Membership has been declining over the last ten

years, the age profile is rising, and many members are no longer engaged in library or information work. If we simply carry on, without prayerfully seeking to face the challenge of how God wants us to move forward, we risk our future existence.

Michael Coveney ably facilitated the Group's meetings, and pushed us all to think of what LCF is for. In a world of multiple pressures and choices, what can our membership offer? Is it relevant - in content and in terms of communication and media - to the Christian in today's professional world and workplace. We looked at how we might re-focus our organisation in ways that would connect with the wider world of information work. (A recent trawl through the professional press showed me how few people have the word librarian in their job title) Do we create unnecessary barriers to membership?

You will find the Executive Summary in this issue – and no, there are no whizzy solutions which will take us instantly toward growth – more of setting a positive direction for the future. Please read it as a whole vision – the details of what might change are secondary to that. Try to put yourself in the place of a new worker, wanting to find a clear direction, a welcoming and practical support network, a Christian take on current issues, which would be of value to you in your work and life now, and to which you could contribute? What is your vision?

It is never easy to step outside our particular framework and any change inevitably takes us out of our comfort zones. My prayer is that you too will have a passionate conviction of what the future of LCF can be in making Jesus known in our professional world, and supporting and inspiring future generations of library and information workers.

**D. Margaret Keeling, BA, MA, MCLIP, PhD**, was elected as President of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* at the annual general meeting on Saturday 2 April 2011. She worked until her retirement as Head of Services for Libraries, Culture and Adult Community Learning for *Essex County Council*.

## THE SECOND WORD

**LOUISE MANNERS** enjoys the final celebrations of 2011's four hundredth anniversary of the *King James Bible* but finds climbing a ladder a rather disconcerting experience!

# **ROYAL OCCASION**

There was tight security for the Service of Celebration to Mark the four hundredth anniversary of the *King James Bible* at *Westminster Abbey*. LCF members had been allocated seats in different parts of the Abbey and got differing views of members of the Royal Family. There was a procession of the Bibles, including Bibles from *Hatfield House* (1611) and *Southwell Minster* (donated in 1935) and *The People's Bible* (2011, digital).

There was lots of variety during the service. The Choir of Westminster Abbey performed "*Out of the South Cometh the Whirlwind*" by Zachary Wadsworth, part of the celebratory year's artistic legacy, which sounded very difficult and impressive. Actress Polly Frame performed "*A response to Exodus*" by Anne Michaels, which is part of the *Bush Theatre's Sixty-Six Books*. The congregation included school children and the readers included school children. Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, read a prayer. Behind me a male voice sang loudly during all the hymns apart from the National Anthem, when there was no sound at all! He clearly has strong feelings. LCF members proceeded to lunch at *Methodist Central Hall Westminster*.

I recently volunteered to go up in a loft of an elderly lady to fetch down some things for her. As she explained that there is no loft ladder I regretted not bringing a hard hat. I then realised that there was a gap between the top of the ladder she had brought in from the garden and the top deck of the loft. She appeared content with my just balancing at the top of the ladder, clearing the lower deck of the loft of items, and I was pleased to be down again in one piece.

**Louise Manners**, *DipLib, MA, MCLIP*, was elected as Chair of the Executive committee of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* at the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 19 April 2008.

NEWS

BOOK NOW FOR THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE  
LIBRARIANS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

**“LIBRARIANS AND DISCIPLES IN  
A TIME OF TROUBLE”**



**SATURDAY 28 APRIL 2012:  
CHANCELLOR'S ROOM, HUGHES PARRY  
HALL, 19-26 CARTWRIGHT GARDENS,  
LONDON, WC1, from 10.30.a.m.**

**SPEAKERS:**

**MICHAEL COVENEY**

*Flourishing in a Time of Trouble*

**GORDON HARRIS, JOHN WICKENDEN  
and SARA BATTS**

*Three Views on Discipleship and Ambition*

## **SPEAKERS AND THEMES**

**Librarians and Disciples in a Time of Trouble** is the title of the annual conference of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* which is to be held on **Saturday 28 April 2012** in the **Chancellor's Room, Hughes Parry Hall, 19-26 Cartwright Gardens, London, WC1**, from 10.30. a.m – 4.45.p.m.

Guest speaker **Michael Coveney** will be speaking on the subject **Flourishing in a Time of Trouble**.

Michael will suggest that, no matter where you look, gloom and despondency surround us. And yet in the midst of a global economic slowdown, where the threat of redundancy casts an ever-growing long shadow, the Bible tells us to “*look up*” and to be cheerful. Not only that, it promises that those that love God will flourish irrespective of what is happening around them.

Michael will ask: What does the Bible mean by “*flourishing*” and how do you shrug off the despair that surrounds so many people? His practical, lively session will aim to answer these questions and equip listeners to thrive no matter where they work.

Michael Coveney is an effective communicator with more than thirty five years of experience in helping organisations around the world plan and manage corporate strategy. He is the author of a number of business books and runs workshops on performance management for senior executives.

He also works part-time for *Transform Work UK*, a Christian charity that encourages and supports Christian groups to transform the places where they work.

In the second major session of the day, members of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship will offer **Three Views on Discipleship and Ambition**.

**Gordon Harris** will start with Bible verses about the priorities of Christians and will continue with the way in which he handles career goals in the context of coaching the whole person towards congruence.

Gordon has previously worked as Director of the *Orchard Learning Resources Centre* at the *University of Birmingham* and as Senior Information Officer for the relief agency *Tearfund*. He is now a coach. His interest lies in the development of information systems for Christian contexts in poorer countries. Gordon served as President of LCF from 2002-2011 and is now a Life Vice-President.

**John Wickenden** will describe his career over the past forty-three years, which he describes as “*very conservative*”. For most of this time he has run a one-person library and has not aggressively pursued career promotions, as he prefers a good work-life balance so that he can pursue activities outside work (e.g. church leadership and service).

John is an Information Scientist working on the research and development side of a large US Pharmaceutical company since 2000. He has worked for the same



company all his working life, although he originally was the site Librarian as a "one person band". He is now working part-time as he approaches retirement. He was until recently involved in two Pharmaceutical LIS Groups as the company representative. Outside of work he is a Gideon and an active member of a local evangelical Anglican church.

**Sara Batts** will argue that we are given talents to develop and explore and if someone's gift is leadership they should accept this. We should promote ourselves and our professional competencies as humility is not best exercised via lowliness/refusing promotion/working in a back office where no-one can see you.

Sara is Library Service Co-ordinator for a large US law firm based in the City and in 2011 served as President of SLA (*Special Libraries Association*) Europe.

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The *Annual General Meeting* of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* will be held on **Saturday 28 April 2012**, from 11.20.a.m, as part of the Annual Conference at the **Hughes Parry Hall, Cartwright Gardens, London, WC1**.

Nominations for office and notice of any motions to be put to the meeting should be in the Secretary's hands not later than *Saturday 31 March 2012*.

Nominations for the following executive committee posts are invited: Chair, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Irish Regional Rep., Northern Regional Rep., Western Regional Rep, Southern Regional Rep, Students/New Graduates Officer, Members Without Portfolio (two positions).

Each nomination will require a proposer and seconder, and each candidate should indicate their willingness to serve in writing.

A formal agenda will be circulated to all members not less than two weeks before the meeting.

## **TRAVEL AND BOOKING**

The *Hughes Parry Hall* is one of the Garden Halls of the *University of London* and is conveniently located just a few minutes walk from King's Cross, St. Pancras, Euston, and Russell Square rail and underground stations. Further travel directions, plus a full conference programme, will be sent to all registered delegates nearer the time,

The Conference fee is £25.00, including lunch and refreshments, with a reduced rate of £20.00 for unwaged delegates. Non-members are welcome. Please send your bookings and cheques to The Secretary, Graham Hedges, 34 Thurlestone Avenue, Ilford, Essex, IG3 9DU. Tel. 020 8599 1310. E mail [secretary@librarianscf.org.uk](mailto:secretary@librarianscf.org.uk) Web site [www.librarianscf.org.uk](http://www.librarianscf.org.uk)

# **LIBRARIANS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER**



**From The Secretary: Graham Hedges, Hon. FCLIP, MCLIP, 34 Thurlestone Avenue, Ilford, Essex, IG3 9DU. Tel. 020 8599 1310**  
**E-mail [secretary@librarianscf.org.uk](mailto:secretary@librarianscf.org.uk);**  
**Web site [www.librarianscf.org.uk](http://www.librarianscf.org.uk)**

## **FORTHCOMING VISITS**

Plans are being made for a number of possible visits during the Spring, Summer and Autumn of 2012.

These include a possible Spring visit to the offices of a leading Christian weekly newspaper, a summer visit to see a new stage production of C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in London's Kensington Gardens, and a September visit to the offices of *Hodder Faith*, part of the leading publisher *Hodder and Stoughton*.

Details of these visits have not yet been finalised, but if you would like to be kept informed of arrangements, please let me know.

## **ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE**

The Annual Lecture venue has now been confirmed as the **Redcliffe Anglican/Methodist Church Centre**, Bristol, and the date will be **Saturday 6 October 2012**, from 2.30.p.m. **Robert Hicks**, of *Creative Publishing*, will be speaking on *Lost Letters and Writings of the First Century – from a publisher's point of view*.

## **VISITING YOUR LIBRARY**

There has been a suggestion that some members of the Fellowship might be willing to host informal visits to their libraries by small groups of LCF members. If you would be interested in doing this, please let me know, if possible indicating possible dates when you would be able to receive a visit.

## **OUTSIDE EVENTS**

- This year's **International Christian Resources Exhibition** takes place from **Tuesday 8 – Friday 11 May 2012** at the **Sandown Park Exhibition Centre, Esher, Surrey**. Now in its twenty-seventh year and promoted under the heading “*equipping and empowering your church*”, the

exhibition is likely to offer something for everyone, not least Christian librarians wanting to catch up with current religious book and periodical publishing, audio-visual materials, and other resources. You can get more information from the organisers at the Trinity Business Centre, Stonehill Green, Westlea, Swindon, SN5 7DG. Web site <http://www.creonline.co.uk>

- Our friends at the **Evangelical Library** will be holding their annual lecture on **Monday 2 July 2012**, from 6.30.p.m. Cambridge lecturer **Ian Hamilton** will be speaking on the subject *Old Princeton and its Theology*. The lecture will be held at the library's premises at **5/6 Gateway Mews, Ringway, Bounds Green, London, N11 2UT**, and you can obtain information from this address or by 'phoning the Librarian, Steve Taylor, on 020 8362 0568.

- Our friends at **Christians at Work** are celebrating their seventieth anniversary with a conference to be held on **Saturday 29 September 2012** at the **Rugby Evangelical Church, Railway Terrace, Rugby, CV21 3EX**, from 10.30.a.m. . Those taking part will include past LCF speaker **Rod Badams** on *Looking Back at the Opportunities*, **Paul Mallard** on *The Challenges for the Future* and **Peter Milsom** on *Taking the Gospel Forward*. The booking fee is £25.00, including lunch and refreshments, and you can obtain

more information from Christians at Work at Suite 11, Hubbway House, Bassington Lane, Cramlington, Northumberland, NE23 8AD. Web site <http://www.caw.uk.net>

## **CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH**

My article *Contending for the faith, or spoiling for a fight?* first published in **Christian Librarian** for Winter 2011 has attracted a certain amount of interest outside our Fellowship. You can now read the article on the web sites of both *Christians at Work* at <http://www.caw.uk.net> and *Transform Work UK* at <http://www.transformworkuk.org>

However, I am still interested in hearing the views of LCF readers, and members of other Christian professional groups, on the issues raised in the article. Should Christian professional groups be campaigning groups, with definite policies and viewpoints which they actively promote within their professions? Or should they simply provide arenas for discussion in which different views can be expressed and members are free to reach their own conclusions? And how should we respond to claims that Christians are being persecuted or marginalised in the workplace today? Send me your comments and I will aim to include them in a follow up article in a later issue.

## **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL NEWS**

- We were sorry to hear that our former member, **Norah Sayer**, died on 1 November 2011 after a short illness. Norah, who would have been ninety-four in December 2011, worked for many years at the *Evangelical Library* where she had a particular interest in liaison with the local branches and back-up libraries.

Norah's husband, the late **Gordon Sayer**, was the Librarian at the *Evangelical Library* and served as a Vice-President of our own Fellowship during 1984-85.

LCF readers will want to give thanks for Norah's long life of Christian service and remember her family at this time of bereavement, and in particular her daughter **Heather Lewis** who is an LCF member and past member of our executive committee.

- Past LCF speaker Dr. **Peter Brierley** is the author of ***UK Church Statistics 2005-2015*** available, price £25.00, from *Brierley Counsultancy*, The Old Post Office, 1 Thorpe Avenue, Tonbridge, Kent, TN10 4PW.

- Our Belfast member, **Edwin Fleming**, is currently serving as Chairman of the *Causeway Coast Communities Consortium* and contributed a letter *Plans a Threat to World Heritage Site* to the **Belfast**

*News Letter*, 28 December, 2011, p. 10.

- Sharp-eyed viewers may have spotted our London member **Marion Hill** among the congregation during last year's ***Songs of Praise*** programme dedicated to the singer **Alfie Boe**.

Marion attended the recording of four programmes, filmed on four consecutive days at London's *Air Studios*, back in July 2011. The final programme in the quartet, featuring gospel singer **Mavis Staples**, is due for transmission on 25 March 2012.

Marion is winding up the *Christians Together in Camden* group, which she has organised for more than ten years, but continues her interest in ecumenical, inter-faith, musical, Fairtrade, climate change and social justice issues.

- Our recently re-joined associate member, **Louis Hemmings**, is a contributor and "ideas engineer" for **Vox** magazine, which he describes as "*Southern Ireland's only glossy, non-denominational Christian magazine to survive twelve quarterly issues*".

You can obtain more information about this magazine from Solas Publishing, Ulysses House, 22-24 Foley Street, Dublin 1, Ireland. E mail [info@vox.ie](mailto:info@vox.ie)

- *Premier Christian Radio's Travellers' Tales* programme on Sunday 11 December 2011 featured

an interview with **Paula Renouf**, Director of the Christian Book Promotion Trust's *Speaking Volumes* library scheme.

Paula spoke about her teenage conversion to the Christian faith and the work of *Speaking Volumes* which encourages local churches to make gifts of Christian books to public and school libraries and other institutions.

Paula has also recently been interviewed about the *Ultimate Christian Library Book* award by Paul Hammond for *United Christian Broadcasters*.

- Last year's conference speaker, the Rev. Dr. **Pete Wilcox**, took part in the Christmas morning Eucharist broadcast from *Lichfield Cathedral* on 25 December 2011. Pete, who serves as the Cathedral's Canon Chancellor, was seen and heard reading the story of the shepherds from St. Luke's Gospel as part of the broadcast.

- ***The Highway Code to Retirement*** (CWR, February 2012, £6.99, ISBN 978-1853456688) is the latest book from LCF subscriber Canon **David Winter**.

According to the publishers "*the latest in CWR's Highway Code series, this positive and practical guide – written by someone who has retired three times! - will help the reader's transition to retirement, making the most of it*".

## **IT'S TIME TO VOTE**

Which recent Christian books would you most like to see on the shelves of your local public library?

Members of the public have until 31 March 2012 to vote in the third *Ultimate Christian Library Book* poll organised by the *Christian Book Promotion Trust*, sponsors of the well known *Speaking Volumes* library scheme.

The authors of the adult and children's books chosen by the public to receive an award will be announced by LCF subscriber Canon **David Winter**, former head of religious broadcasting at the BBC, at the *International Christian Resources Exhibition* at the Sandown Park Exhibition Centre, Esher, Surrey, on **Wednesday 9 May 2012**.

Everyone is welcome to attend the awards ceremony and will receive a packed "goody bag" with vouchers and free gifts worth up to £50.00.

Shortlisted books in the adult category include Emily Ackerman's ***A Time to Care*** (IVP), Susie Howe's ***Resistance Fighter*** (IVP), Nick Page's ***The Wrong Messiah*** (Hodder Faith) and Andrew White's ***Faith Under Fire*** (Monarch).

The Children's list includes Anna Payne's ***A New Shape*** (CWR), Andrea Skevington's ***The Lion Classic Bible*** (Lion) and Andrew R. Guyatt's ***The Oncoming Storm*** (Scripture Union).



To obtain more details and to cast your own votes please visit the web site [www.christianbookawards.org](http://www.christianbookawards.org)

## **APPEAL FROM THE CONGO**

We have recently received an appeal from the *Universite Shalom de Bunia* (formerly *Bunia Theological Seminary*, or the *Institut Supérieur Theologique de Bunia*) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, an evangelical university which offers courses in Development Administration and Management, Agriculture Science and Science as well as Theology. The university is trying to establish a programme of post-graduate studies in theology going up to doctoral level.

One of their major challenges is with the Library. It has about 10,000 volumes at present but there are plans for a rapid expansion to prepare for the new programme. They have recently received an additional shipment of books from the *Theological Books Network* in the USA, which constitutes a major cataloguing headache for the present library staff.

A Volunteer Librarian is sought for a short-term consultancy which would involve evaluating current systems and services, make recommendations and provide some training. The volunteer will need a sense of adventure and broad experience in academic libraries including the expertise to recommend an appropriate library

software package. Some knowledge of French would be helpful. The university can provide free accommodation and food. See the university web site at <http://unishabunia.org/home.php?lang=en> for general information about the institution.

If you want to know more please contact LCF's Overseas Secretary Eleanor Neil at [LCFoverseas@etelligence.info](mailto:LCFoverseas@etelligence.info) Eleanor would also be interested in hearing from anyone who has experience with integrating a circulation module with ISIS and is prepared to offer advice.

## **GET A GRIP**

2011's *Biblefresh* campaign, sponsored by the *Bible Society* and the *Evangelical Alliance*, continued during the latter part of the year with the *Get a Grip* tour which visited various venues throughout the United Kingdom.

Past LCF speaker the Rev. Dr. **Richard Burrige**, Dean of *King's College*, London, was one of the main speakers taking part in the session held on Monday 7 November 2011 in the chapel of *King's College*. He began by pointing out that it had been his motion to the General Synod that had encouraged the *Church of England* to celebrate 2011 as the "Year of the Bible".

Speaking on the subject *How*

*Can the Academy Help the Church with the Bible?* Dr. BurrIDGE suggested that the **King James** version had helped to make the Bible look like a single book for the first time. However, recent biblical scholarship has helped the Church to recognise that the Bible is actually a *collection* of books, written over a period of centuries, in different languages, and reflecting a variety of cultures and situations.

The biblical writers wrote in a number of different styles and genres according to the conventions of their day. English translations, however, tend to obscure the stylistic differences between, say, the gospels of Mark and Luke. Read in the original Greek, Mark's account reads like the work of a man who spoke Greek as a second language, while Luke is a much more accomplished literary stylist.

Dr. BurrIDGE suggested that there is a crisis of confidence in the Bible, even among Christians, but that scholars can make a positive contribution to biblical understanding that is comparable to cleaning a dirty window or peeling away the outer rings of an onion.

He encouraged Christians to read the books of the Bible in their totality, rather than in bite-sized chunks, and quoted J.B. Phillips who compared the task of biblical translation to "*re-wiring an old house without turning the electricity off*".

Questioned during a later discussion session, Dr. BurrIDGE said that he considered the **New Revised Standard Version** to be

the best of the modern versions in the KJB tradition, and noted that the translators had used a "higher" literary style for the Old Testament than for the New. However, he hoped that 2011 would be the last time that anyone would read the **King James Bible** in church!

In the second major session of the day popular speaker and writer **Michele Guinness** answered the question *What can we learn from the Jewish approach to Scripture?*

Converted to the Christian faith from a Jewish background, Michele first read the New Testament at night under the cover of bed clothes. The New Testament had been present in her family home, but as part of a collection of "*forbidden books*", along with **Lady Chatterley's Lover**. Watching performances of the York Mystery Plays had been a major factor in her embracing of Christianity.

Michele suggested that Jesus knew the Old Testament scriptures off by heart, sometimes pulling disparate verses (such as Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18) together. She saw an amazing cohesion between the "Old" and "New" testaments and found the entire gospel message – Creation, Fall, Salvation and Redemption – in the first three chapters of Genesis.

Michele advocated an integrated and holistic approach to the Bible, pointing out that the Scriptures are about how to live and not about learning for its own sake. When we find parts of the Bible obscure, we should ask whether we are wearing contemporary (cerebral)

blinkers.

The Jewish approach to the Bible encourages an imaginative approach to handling texts. The Old Testament Torah is not the law of the Medes and Persians. It may have been etched in stone, but it was never set in concrete, and it is open to human re-interpretation in every age. The Jewish approach is not propositional, like so much Christian interpretation. The historical/critical approach, developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is an entirely Gentile phenomenon.

Michele went on to sketch out an approach to the Bible that is communal, not individualistic, which is celebratory, and which recognises the numinous, the presence of the divine amongst us.

The London *Get a Grip* conference also included shorter seminar sessions on *A Balanced Bible Diet* (Stephen Gaukroger), *Preaching Like Jesus* (Conrad Gempf), *Using the Bible Creatively* (Sam and Sara Hargreaves), and *God and Genocide* (Krish Kandiah). A discussion panel with the speakers covered such topics as the status of the Apocrypha and the role of women in the Church.

## ***KING JAMES AT THE ABBEY***

2011's celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of the ***King James Bible*** reached its climax with

a special service at *Westminster Abbey* on Wednesday 16 November 2011 in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen, His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh and his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.

The service, which was attended by several members of our own Fellowship, included a reading from the first chapter of St. John's Gospel by Dr. **John Sentamu**, the Archbishop of York, and a dramatic monologue based on the Old Testament book of Exodus, performed by actress **Polly Frame** and taken from the *Bush Theatre's* recent cycle of plays ***Sixty Six Books***.

At an early stage in the service there was a procession of 1611 KJB first editions, followed by the ***People's Bible***, an on-line project launched during 2011 at King James I's birthplace in Edinburgh. Education Secretary, **Michael Gove**, was one of a number of public figures who led the congregation in prayer during the service.

Dr. **Rowan Williams**, the Archbishop of Canterbury, gave a short address, in which he suggested that the ***King James Bible***, unlike some modern versions, was a good translation precisely because it was not immediately understood or instantly accessible. "A good translation", he said, "will be an invitation to read again, and to probe, and reflect, and imagine with the text. Rather than letting me say 'Now I understand', it prompts the response, 'Now the work begins'."

Press coverage of the service included Bill Francis' report *Abbey*



*Service Honours the King James Bible* in the **Baptist Times** for 25 November 2011, p. 3, and Glyn Paflin's *It's the Bible: don't expect it to be easy*, says Dr. Williams and *Where the Translators Wrestled* in the **Church Times** for 18 November 2011, p. 3.

## **CURRENT AWARENESS**

- John Capon's article *Majesty and Muscle: the King James Bible* marks the closing of 2011's four hundredth anniversary year of the KJB.

The article traces the history of the Bible in English translation, noting that as far back as 735 A.D the church historian Bede had translated St. John's Gospel into Old English. Events that prepared the way to the KJB included the invention of mechanical printing by Gutenberg and the Protestant Reformation, spearheaded by Martin Luther.

There were no celebrations to mark the publication of the KJB and for more than forty years after its publication the **Geneva Bible** remained the translation of choice for many English readers. Many distinguished scholars were initially very critical of the new translation.

An estimated 75% of the Old Testament and 83% of the New were carried over from the pioneering translation work of William Tyndale. Historian David Starkey has noted that "*Tyndale had written for the ploughboy; the Jacobean translators were preparing*

*an official text for an established church. The result should have been an uneasy compromise. Instead it was a miracle. Tyndale supplied the muscle, the Jacobean the majesty*".

The article appears in the **Baptist Times** for 9 December 2011, pp. 8 – 9.

- Steve Tomkins' *If it was good enough for the Apostle Paul, it's good enough for me* takes a critical look at fringe Christian groups who believe that the **King James Bible** is the only acceptable English translation of the Scriptures.

*Amazing Grace Baptist Church*, in North Carolina, has an annual book burning night where members destroy copies of any Bible apart from the KJB, along with country records and books by "*liberal heretics*" such as Billy Graham.

Dr. Peter Ruckman, founder of the *Pensacola Bible Institute*, goes so far as to say that where the KJB mistranslates the Hebrew or Greek, this is God improving the Bible.

The main basis of this phenomenon seems to be a fear of uncertainty. It is assumed that unless there is one true English Bible, there will be ambiguity in the word of God, which God could not possibly allow. For such Christians the Christian faith collapses unless every word of the Bible is certain.

Steve's article can be read on the **Ship of Fools** web site at [http://www.ship-of-fools.com/features/2011/king\\_james\\_only.html](http://www.ship-of-fools.com/features/2011/king_james_only.html)

- Jonathan Langley's *An Extremely Worthwhile Profession* highlights the faith and career of Andrew Hogg, formerly a foreign correspondent for leading newspapers and now News and Campaigns Manager for *Christian Aid*.

Andrew finds that the eyes of many professional journalists “glaze over” when faith issues are raised, unless Islamic fundamentalism is involved. This is a result not so much of the failings of the Church as of the growing secularisation of society.

There are occasions when journalists are justified in breaking the law, but the recent 'phone hacking scandals have been an “enormous own goal” for the profession.

The current twenty-four hour news culture is problematic, not least because it tends to lead to knee-jerk politics.

Journalism is still a worthy profession and can be a legitimate career for a Christian.

The article appears in the ***Baptist Times*** for 11 November 2011, p. 5.

- Derek Walker's article *Christian faith: all singing, all dancing* marks 2011's fortieth anniversary of the *Arts Centre Group* with an interview with one of the ACG's co-founders, Sir Cliff Richard.

Cliff became a Christian in the early 1960s at a time when fundamentalist preachers in the USA were burning rock and roll records.

His immediate response was to say that he planned to give up the music business and become a teacher of RE. However, invitations to work on Christian projects, such as a gospel album and a film for the Billy Graham organisation, convinced him that it was possible to be a Christian and remain in show business.

The *Arts Centre Group* came into being as a result of actor Nigel Goodwin's dream of a centre where actors, dancers, musicians, painters and writers could meet together and consider their work in the light of their faith. The Group helped to bring the gospel message to people who were professionally involved in the arts and entertainment and demonstrated the value of the arts to the wider Church.

Theological input was provided in the early days by the Christian apologist Dr. Francis Schaeffer and by the Dutch art historian Professor Hans Rookmaaker. More recently a 'mentoring' scheme has made it possible for younger practitioners in the arts to receive help and guidance from more experienced members.

The article appears in the ***Baptist Times*** for 11 November 2011, pp. 8-9. Similar information appears in Derek Walker's *Spiritual Support for the Stars of Stage, Screen and Television* which appears in the ***Church of England Newspaper***, England on Sunday, 22 January 2012, pp. E4 – E5.

- C.S. Lewis' children's classic ***The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*** is to appear on stage this summer in a re-imagined version

performed in a big top tent in London's Kensington Gardens.

Award winning theatrical director Rupert Goold is adapting the original novel so that it is "*rougher*, *'less posh*', *'less Enid-Blyton like*' and *'less period*'."

Other features of the book will remain at the heart of the production including "*the humiliation, execution and resurrection of Aslan, the noble lion and Christ proxy*".

Ben Hoyle's *Through the Wardrobe to a 'less posh' Narnia with modern take on a classic* appears in **The Times** for 3 January 2012, p. 4.

- Alister McGrath's *Beyond Narnia: the imaginative appeal of faith* chronicles a renewed interest in the apologetic writings of C.S. Lewis, especially in the years since 1990.

While offering a defence of the reasonableness of faith, C.S. Lewis emphasises the ability of faith to connect with the deepest human intuitions about life and to captivate the human imagination. In America his writings appeal to a new generation that has grown weary of the shallow understanding of the Christian faith that is often displayed, in public, especially during presidential elections.

Professor McGrath is working on a new biography of Lewis, to be published by *Hodder and Stoughton* in March 2013. His article appears in **The Times** for 7 January 2012, p. 82.

- Andrew Tate's article *What the*

*Dickens?* anticipates 2012's bi-centenary of Charles Dickens by looking at the spiritual world view reflected in the novels of this major nineteenth century writer.

Dickens is identified as a "*man of faith*" though one who was often at odds with organised religion. He has been described as "*a liberal Protestant with radical, romantic leanings*".

Although in Dickens' fiction "*religion is often either a comically theatrical or horribly vicious affair*," broad themes of repentance and conversion can also be detected in his work.

Dickens himself claimed that he had "*always striven ... to express veneration for the life and lessons of our Saviour*."

Dickens' ***The Life of Our Lord***, originally written for his children, "*avoids questions of atonement but does not rationalise the miracles and strongly emphasises the hope of heaven*".

The article appears in **Third Way**, December 2011, pp. 10-12.

- According to a recent press report, the Christian publishers *Darton, Longman, and Todd* have been holding crisis talks with creditors in an attempt to avoid the bankruptcy of the company.

DLT is said to be offering its creditors, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, the reduced sum of 25p in the pound. The company is reported to have built up debts of more than £450,000 as a result of "*difficult market conditions*" and the closure of the SPCK bookshops.

£15,000 Owed to Rowan Williams by cash-strapped Christian publisher appears in **The Tablet** for 19 November 2011, p. 32.

- Jenny Royal's *Why the Baptist Times Closed* explains the decision to cease publishing this long established denominational newspaper at the end of December 2011.

The BT's circulation dropped from 13,600 in 1980 to less than four thousand in 2011. This has been accompanied by a fall in advertising revenue. Last year the newspaper made a trading loss of £30,000 and its continued publication has only been made possible by a subsidy from the *Baptist Union* which is no longer sustainable.

Factors in the paper's demise include the tendency for many people to see themselves as Christians who worship in a Baptist church rather than as lifelong, dedicated Baptists. Such people rarely subscribe to a Baptist newspaper.

The printed newspaper, however, is to be replaced by ***Baptist Times Online*** which is to be launched in the Spring of 2012.

The article appears in the ***Baptist Times*** for 9 December 2011, p. 5.

- The one hundred and fifty six year history of the ***Baptist Times*** is recorded in a final commemorative issue published in January 2012.

Baptist historian John Briggs tells the story of the newspaper in *Where Did It All Begin?* The

evangelistic campaigns of D.L. Moody and Billy Graham are recalled and there are profiles of other notable Baptists including C.H. Spurgeon and Martin Luther King.

Other articles re-visit the newspaper's coverage of the First and Second World Wars and the centenary of the *Baptist Missionary Society*.

Former Prime Minister Tony Blair contributes an article on getting religion right in a complex and divided world.

There are reflections by past and present editors and journalists on the paper. John Capon notes that, in the early 1960s, there were twelve Protestant weekly newspapers in the UK. Now only four remain.

## ***VISIONARY MUSIC***

- Many readers will be familiar with the **London Community Gospel Choir** who, for nearly thirty years, have been bringing contemporary gospel music to a wide audience in the United Kingdom and beyond. In addition to their gospel work, the Choir have contributed their distinctive vocal sound to recordings by leading mainstream artists including Paul McCartney, Damon Albarn, Luther Vandross and Diana Ross. How did it all begin, and how has the Choir developed over the years? You will find some of the answers in ***A Boy, a Journey, a Dream*** (Monarch, £9.99, ISBN 978-1854249982), the

autobiography of LCGC's founder, the Rev. **Bazil Meade**, co-written with Jan Greenough. This follows the story of Bazil Meade from his early days on the Caribbean island of Montserrat, through to his arrival in Britain at the age of nine, and onto his current position as a respected leader and pioneer of gospel music. Bazil's reputation and standing in the world of contemporary music is illustrated by the fact that the foreword to this autobiography is contributed by Sir George Martin, producer of the Beatles.

- Rob Young's ***Electric Eden: Unearthing Britain's Visionary Music*** (Faber, £12.99, ISBN 978-0571237531) is a comprehensive survey of the history of popular music in Britain, with particular reference to folk performers such as Fairport Convention, Ralph McTell, Steeleye Span and Pentangle.

However, unlike other books of this kind, which usually ignore the work of Christian artists, ***Electric Eden*** pays tribute to a number of pioneering Christian musicians of the 1970s, among them After the Fire, Canaan, Larry Norman, Nutshell, Parchment and Water into Wine Band. There are also references to the "folk poet, holy sceptic and iconoclastic theologian" Sydney Carter, best known for his classic song *Lord of the Dance*.

- Back in the late 1970s and early 1980s, **Bob Dylan** produced a

trilogy of albums with strong and uncompromising Christian lyrics. This phase was fairly short-lived and there were soon claims that Christianity had been just another passing interest for the notoriously changeable Dylan. Dr. A.T. Bradford's ***Out of the Dark Woods: Dylan, Depression and Faith: the messages behind the music of Bob Dylan*** (Templehouse Publishing, £16.95, ISBN 978-0956479822) examines the lyrics of Dylan's songs written both during and after his so-called "Christian period" and finds evidence of a continuing faith in Christ on Dylan's part. The author also finds reasons to believe that Dylan suffered a long period of clinical depression following the breakdown of his second marriage and that this stifled his artistic creativity for many years.

## **EBSCO PUBLISHING**

The Librarians' Christian Fellowship has an electronic licensing relationship with **EBSCO Publishing**, "the world's most prolific aggregator of full text journals, magazines and other sources". The full texts of our two main publications - the **Librarians' Christian Fellowship E-Newsletter** and **Christian Librarian** - are available on **EBSCO Publishing's** databases. Subscribers are able to retrieve articles from our publications and the Fellowship will receive a small commission for each article retrieved.

# MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

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

A warm welcome to two re-joined members. We would like remind current members that subscription renewals are now due for 2012. It would be greatly appreciated if payment could be sent **before the end of April**. Minimum subscription rates for 2012 are: £25 (full rate), £15 (retired, unemployed and students), £15 each for two members at the same address. Overseas (outside Europe) please add £4 for postage. If you have **changed address, job, etc.**, please let us know as soon as possible.

## REJOINED MEMBERS

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## REVIEW GROUP

**MARY WOOD introduces the executive recommendations of the Review Group set up to consider the future work and development of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship**

# ***THE NEXT THIRTY YEARS?***

As you are aware a small review group convened by Gordon Harris and facilitated by Michael Coveney of *Transform Work UK* has been meeting during 2011 to consider the challenges facing LCF and to discuss the way forward.

It is clear that LCF membership has been declining and aging in recent years. We currently have around one hundred and sixty full members but only half are currently working in libraries and information. This represents a decline of about 50% since the 1990s when we had around three hundred members, with a peak of three hundred and forty three in 1993. This is due in part, to what might be called a 'non-joining' culture in younger generations. Nonetheless, if we believe that LCF has a role to play in our profession, we need to do all we can to re-vitalise the group and attract younger members.

The Review Group conducted a wide ranging discussion of strategy, activities, publicity, recruitment and governance. We agreed that the core mission of LCF is still, as it always has been, about:

- providing fellowship and support to Christians working in libraries and related areas, to help them meet the challenges they face and make Jesus known
- promoting Christian values in the workplace and becoming a credible Christian voice in our profession
- using our skills and knowledge for the benefit of the wider Christian community.

Nonetheless we came to the conclusion that fairly radical change is needed if we are to continue to fulfil this mission effectively. We identified several factors which we believe are hindering us in making an impact with younger

people and recruiting new members and looked at new ways to attract and retain members in the future.

Our report and recommendations are currently under discussion by the LCF Executive Committee and we would like to invite opinions and feedback from the wider membership. We really do need the active participation of as many members as possible to ensure a sustainable and successful future for LCF.

The executive summary of the report is reproduced below, but if you would like to see the full report, which gives more detail about how we reached our recommendation, please contact me at 1 Conifer Close, Lutterworth, Leicestershire, LE17 4RH and I will be happy to send you a copy.

Please forward all your comments, suggestions and ideas to the Secretary, Graham Hedges at 34 Thurlestone Avenue, Ilford, Essex, IG3 9DU. Once the Executive Committee has considered all your views, we will put proposals forward to a general meeting of LCF and/or a postal ballot of all members.

**Mary E. Wood, BA, MScInfStud**, serves on the executive committee of the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* as Midlands Regional Rep and Web Site/**E-Newsletter** Manager and also served as a member of the LCF Review Group.

## **Executive Summary**

### **1. Current Situation and the Need for Change**

The review group recognises and appreciates the achievements to date. Since 1976 LCF has been a Christian witness within the library profession, provided opportunities for fellowship for Christians working in the sector and offered practical professional assistance to Christian organisations.

However, several issues urgently require attention to secure the future of LCF and the achievement of its objectives:

- LCF membership has suffered decline in recent years.
- The age profile of the membership is rising and it has proved difficult to recruit new members.
- Only a small percentage of members attend events or are actively involved in running the fellowship.
- Workplace changes, especially the development of new technologies



have brought huge changes to expectations and opportunities in the workplace.

## **2. LCF Aims and Objectives**

These have been reviewed by the review group and re-stated as follows:

**Objectives:** LCF aims to:

- make Jesus known within the profession
- provide a Christian network for the support and development of members
- promote Christian values / be a Christian voice within the profession
- create opportunities to provide associated, professional services to Christian organisations both in the UK and abroad

**Values:** prayer underpins all we do.

## **3. Changes to the Focus of Activities**

Activities should be more closely linked to the four objectives outlined above. The fellowship should think about how it can support members in their work and career development and consider which issues it wishes to be a voice for.

## **4. Recruitment of Membership**

Recruitment activities should be more focused and intentional and it is vital both to appoint someone to undertake this role and to encourage all members to play an active part in identifying potential new members .

## **5. Communications**

Internal and external communications play a key role in raising awareness of the fellowship, engaging members and recruiting new members. LCF's publicity materials need updating to present a relevant, current and professional image and the overall focus should move to more electronic communications.

The review group recommends that:

- a design consultant be employed to produce a new logo, colour scheme and house style for LCF
- new publicity materials be produced including a recruitment leaflet and welcome pack for new members
- the web site and e-newsletter be updated
- Christian Librarian become an electronic publication
- more use be made of on-line forums and social media

## **6. LCF Governing Structure**

The review group recommends that the emphasis be shifted from a regional basis to functional responsibilities and roles covering areas such as recruitment, prayer, publicity, social media etc.

## **7. LCF Name**

The fellowship's name should be brought up to date to reflect the broader constituency of the information profession. The recommendation of the review group is that the name is changed to: "Christians in Information Work".<sup>1</sup>

## **8. LCF Constitution**

The current constitution should be simplified to facilitate greater flexibility in how the organisation is run. It is recommended that a new constitution be based on the model constitution produced by the Charities Commission for small charities. The doctrinal basis should be retained but only officers of the fellowship should be required to give formal assent to it. Membership should be open to anyone in sympathy with the beliefs and objectives of the organisation and who supports our professional faith and witness.

## **9. Next Steps**

The recommendations of the review group should be considered by the Executive Committee at their next meeting in November 2011. It will be their decision how to proceed with any proposals for change.

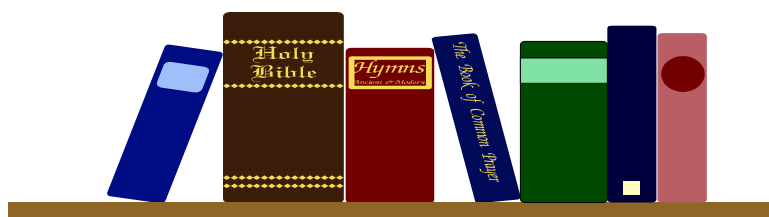
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<sup>1</sup> The alternative name "Christians in Library and Information Work" was also suggested at a meeting of the Fellowship's Executive Committee held in November 2011.

## ARTICLES

**FRANK WALLER** describes a current library project that continues a tradition established by John Wesley that Methodists should be a “reading people”

# ***EPWORTH PRESS***



## ***EXPLORE, EXPRESS, ENGAGE?***

John Wesley established a 'book room' at the Foundry in 1739 which transferred to City Road, London, in 1778. In 1918 the *Epworth Press* imprint was adopted, partly to distinguish official publications such as the Agenda and Minutes of the Methodist Conference, hymn books and Service Books from more general titles. These included literature, theology, devotional works and biography and helped to subsidise less profitable works. There were also various periodicals such as the ***Methodist Magazine*** and the ***London Quarterly Review***. The name *Epworth Press* was adopted to give the trade some permanent reference for the imprint. Previously the books had been published under the name of the serving Book Steward.<sup>2</sup>

A 1950s memorandum lists the subjects published under the *Epworth* imprint: hymn books, official publications for the Church, theology, religion, philosophy, psychology, essays, poetry, drama, fiction, nature, education, travel, biography, art, history, sociology, music, books for boys and girls, and annuals.

<sup>2</sup> *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland*, edited by John A. Vickers. Epworth Press, 2000.

Epworth House, a seven-storey building in City Road, London, housed Methodist publishing until 1969, being still known affectionately as 'the Book Room'. It then moved first to Wimbledon and in 1988 to Peterborough. In 2008, in the light of financial crisis, the Methodist Conference agreed that Connexional publishing should be integrated into the work of the Connexional Team and the *Methodist Publishing House* ceased its separate existence in the autumn of 2009.<sup>3</sup>

Following the closure of the *Epworth Press*, in line with the Chairman and Trustees of the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster's continuing commitment and concern for scholarship, discipleship and learning, core values of Methodism, a room was made available to house the archive of available volumes.

In September 2009 an article published in the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* journal requested assistance cataloguing the Epworth Collection – the back list of the *Methodist Publishing House*. In July 2010 Janet White and Elizabeth Williams, volunteer librarians, visited the Susanna Gallery, a basement room at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, where the library was to be located. The walls were lined with book shelves and most of the floor space was filled with ninety boxes of books published by the *Epworth Press* and its predecessors. Working one or two days a week to sort, catalogue and classify the three thousand one hundred and ninety books using the Dewey system, the task was completed in December 2011.

Books of special interest include the oldest volume dated 1826, (*The Life of Francis Xavier*) and the most recent, four books published in 2010, (including *The Making of Methodism* by Barie W. Tabraham). Not to mention *John Wesley and His Horse*, by T. Ferrier Hulme, published in 1933 with a foreword by F. Luke Wiseman, Superintendent Minister, Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, 1938-39. Additionally there are several books by Dr. William E. Sangster, Superintendent from 1939 – 1955. The archive provides a fascinating social and theological history of Methodism and though most volumes are on religious themes there are several unusual titles about cricket, travel and nature studies.

The Rev. Patrick Slattery kindly donated two titles in the Welsh

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<sup>3</sup> *The Book Room* by Frank Cumbers. Epworth Press, 1956.

language. Whilst the archive welcomes donations from *Epworth Press* and its predecessors, due to space constraints, it is not possible to file more than two copies of a specific publication.

Following the Covenant Service at Central Hall on Sunday 8 January 2012, the President of the Methodist Conference, the Rev. Lionel Osborn, accompanied by the Vice President, Mrs. Ruth Pickles, visited the Epworth Archive. The President reminded us that John Wesley wanted the Methodists to be a reading people and prayed that visitors to the archive would find the experience spiritually uplifting and that Methodists are helped to appreciate something of the tremendous asset that is available to us in the Epworth Archive at Methodist Central Hall, continuing the tradition established by John Wesley in 1739, housed in The Book Room.

The collection is to be available by appointment for reference and research purposes with the intention of eventually publishing the catalogue on-line at [www.methodist-central-hall.org.uk](http://www.methodist-central-hall.org.uk). Clearly there is certainly research potential for students and others on many aspects of Methodism as well as several interesting biographies. Enquiries regarding access and donations of books may be made to Frank Waller, Assistant Visitor Services Manager, Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, Storey's Gate, Westminster, London, SW1H 9NH. Telephone 020 7654 3826. E-mail [fwaller@c-h-w.co.uk](mailto:fwaller@c-h-w.co.uk)



**Frank Waller** works as the Assistant Visitor Services Manager at the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster.

**JANET WHITE provides a librarian's perspective on the Methodist Publishing House library project at the Westminster Central Hall**

## ***CATALOGUING THE EPWORTH COLLECTION***

In September 2009 I responded to a small article in the LCF journal in which Mary Barker asked for help cataloguing the Epworth Collection – the back list of the *Methodist Publishing House*. Mary replied to my offer of help and then got back in touch almost a year later when the project was able to start.

It was July 2010 when I and Elizabeth Williams, another volunteer librarian, were shown the Susanna Gallery, a small basement room at Westminster Central Hall. The walls had been lined with book shelves and most of the floor space was filled with ninety boxes of books published by the *Epworth Press* and its predecessors. Working one or two days a week it took us sixteen months to sort, classify and catalogue the contents of those boxes and it proved an interesting and rewarding task.

The collection will be available for reference purposes and it will be interesting to see who uses it in future when the catalogue is on the Internet. There is certainly research potential on many aspects of Methodism as well as biographies that may help those looking into their family history.

Central Hall proved a fascinating workplace as it is a very busy venue for many meetings, graduations and exhibitions. Our time there coincided with the total refurbishment of the Great Hall and its magnificent organ ready for the Centenary celebrations in 2012. We also witnessed people registering to vote for the formation of South Sudan – on that day we worked to the sound of African singing outside our room. The biggest event was the Royal Wedding in May when Central Hall was the hub of the BBC Broadcasting for that occasion and we saw the weeks of preparation that took place inside and outside the building.

Now the task is complete I will miss my weekly commute to London and the friends that I have made. I am really glad to have helped in such a practical way using my old library skills and learning new ones.

**Janet D. White**, lives in Dartford, and previously worked as the School Librarian for the Brent Primary School.

**Stephenie Meyer's Bella and Edward and the heroes of Dan Brown's novels are all high profile 'evangelists' of the 'power that is within you'. Why has this theme emerged, what is its appeal, and what has the Christian worldview to offer in response? DAVE ROBERTS considers themes in contemporary fiction**

## ***SPIRITS IN THE MATERIAL WORLD***

**The resurgence of a spirituality of personal supernatural power in best selling literature**

**The Librarians' Christian Fellowship Annual Public Lecture given on Saturday 1 October 2011 in the Conference Hall, Reading International Solidarity Centre, 35-39 London Street, Reading, RG1 4PS.**

During my time as a publisher I helped to produce books such as ***A Closer Look at Harry Potter***, ***A Closer Look at the Lord of the Rings*** and ***A Closer Look at Science Fiction***. These books sought to understand how a Christian worldview might inform our thinking about popular fiction and popular cultural stories.

***Star Wars*** was, and still is, a very popular franchise. Christians had tracts printed which suggested that The Force was like the Holy Spirit and that Luke Skywalker was like Christ. They were using popular culture as a 'redemptive analogy'. However, the religious world view of ***Star Wars*** owed more to Taoism and ancient Eastern thought than it did to any kind of orthodox Christianity.

Today, we will look at Stephenie Meyer and Dan Brown. The supernatural elements of their stories owe a debt to the fascination of the counter-culture in the sixties with ancient religion from around the world.

One of the things that I often find is that there are unexpected connections in culture and in everyday life with a religious worldview.

For instance, let me give you something really obscure. What kind of world view do you get from a cornflakes packet? I'm not asking you to answer that question, because I'm going to answer it myself. It's a rhetorical question. You get a surface world view and actually there's also an underlying world view. The surface world view equates cornflakes with healthiness. The scene in which the food is dispensed in the pictures in the adverts is often one of extreme cleanliness and there's a view of life that's coming through in the promotion and the advertising.

But if you go back to the founding of the cereal industry you discover that the view of life that was being propounded by the people who started Golden Grahams and Shredded Wheat and Post Toasties was a religious Christian vegetarianism. But it wasn't a healthy robust Christian vegetarianism, it was a "*sex is not a very good idea*" kind of vegetarianism. "*Try not to enjoy it under any circumstances, it's only for making babies. Any other expression of it is illegitimate.*"

Now, within that worldview, eating meat inflamed the sexual passions, so what Kellogg and the others were trying to promote were diets which they believed would repress the sexual urge. Now, looking back at this point in 2011, most people who walk into Sainsbury's don't think, "*Ooh, I'd better get some of them, I'm feeling a bit over-enthusiastic*". The roots of the belief system that brought forth that cultural artifact have been lost. We're now going to look for the worldview strands that run through some popular fiction.

So to our title for today, "*Spirits in the material world: the supernatural in popular fiction*". Because you're a group of librarians, I'd just like to take a little step back and then accelerate into the subject. But it is relevant. The role of fiction in the growth of literacy is very important.

When the printing press came along, initially it was used to print the Bible, ***The Canterbury Tales*** and other not so famous titles. As literacy grew the books that were creating momentum included John Bunyan's spiritual classic ***Pilgrim's Progress***. When we come into the eighteenth and nineteenth century, with the advent of enthusiastic Wesleyan Methodism and other expansive, hopeful, optimistic spiritualities, there began to be a desire to create literature that would be edifying to people, so we had growth in the publishing of Christian fiction. We had the growth of magazines, ***Woman's Own***, ***Woman's Realm***, ***Women's Weekly***. All of those magazines were started by Christians. The advice columns contained spiritual advice. The romance publisher Mills and Boon was started as a Christian company. For the



first ten years, there were no stories that did not have an overt religious theme.

So, literature in its popular form, has been propelled forward by the previous oral culture. So people come from a culture of storytelling and want to continue to engage with story, not textbooks or philosophical arguments. Into that milieu comes the Sunday school movement. The Sunday school movement is the cradle of late Western civilisation. When you teach the whole populace to read, then things start to happen. Some of the rich aristocracy tried to damp down the Sunday school movement in the UK because they didn't want the ordinary poor to be able to read and then start to self-organise.

The other thing that came out of the Sunday school movement is probably being celebrated at the Madejski Stadium (in Reading) even as we speak. Organised sport was viable because churches formed cricket teams; out of the cricket teams came the football teams and out of the football teams came this worldwide sport which we have now. So, teaching children to read, using the Bible was a key point of contact between the church and the ordinary population and out of that sprung a lot of the institutions of our society.

Now, in the middle of all that, there were entrepreneurial publishers. There were the Harper brothers, who were three Methodists; there was Collins who was a Presbyterian from Glasgow; there was the founder of Bertelsmann, the big German secular media giant, who was a Bible distributor, there was Hodders which was founded out of the Religious Tract Society.

Much of this activity comes back to seven men, the Clapham Sect, a group of Anglican men in the main, who between them started one hundred and fifty organisations, many of which had a literary bent - tract societies, book publishing, book distribution. And in the middle of all that, there's a desire for popular literature. Why is all of this relevant to the "*Spirits in the Material World*"?

What kind of literature was published? Not just from Christians, but from everybody? Some of the literature was mystical in its intent, so out of Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry and those kind of beliefs emerged mystical books like the Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses. Traditional Christian belief said there were five books, the Pentateuch, but these mystical people said there were lost books – the Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses. There were also books such as Enoch and various others that the church had decided were not to be in the canon. Now, whether these books were genuine books from fifteen hundred years ago or not is the subject of major debate. We don't really know, but

they've not been considered suitable for the Biblical canon by either the Hebrews or the Christians. So, they found another audience with the advent of the printing press.

Within Freemasonry a key part of the belief system is this: God particularly gifted David and Solomon and out of David and Solomon's line have come the ruling elites of the world ever since. In that worldview, Jesus (and we'll come back to this when we get to Dan Brown, that's why I'm building up towards it), was just another king in that line.

Some people in Masonic circles believe that much of the New Testament was made up. They believed Jesus was actually a warrior and that he lived well after he was supposed to have been crucified and eventually had to flee to France with his wife Mary Magdalene. So, you have a whole worldview in Dan Brown's fiction that actually relates to a popular worldview which has been circulated for several hundred years and found an extra momentum when the printing press made it possible for more people to read this type of material.

Now within that worldview, Jesus was not the Son of God, he was just another king in the Davidic line. If you've adopted that worldview and you do believe he fled to France, you then believe that some of the French kings, the Merovingians, inherited the ability to act supernaturally. This idea remains alive to this day. On Maundy Thursday, our own Queen takes money to put her hands on people and heal them

Princess Diana was a Stuart and was much more in the Merovingian line than the Windsors. So there's all that mythology floating around to help create the atmosphere for Dan Brown to create a mystical thriller.

So what contrast did early Christian fiction offer to the mystical tomes of the day. It often involved people being saved on their deathbed. The women in these stories were often saintly women whose only estate in life was to marry a deadbeat guy. The deadbeat guy often got saved after he'd been run over by a horse or a carriage or something. So you had these saintly women, approximate equivalents of the virgin Mary, and these deadbeat guys who were absolutely useless.

If you go back and read the Christian literature of the 1860s to the 1900s and then go into an average Christian bookshop and read anything that comes from popular Christian literature in America today, you'll find that a lot of that tradition has actually continued. The women are often very spiritual and the guys are pretty messed up.

The other thing that was popular in popular literature was occult

and horror. The two big names that everyone would know are **Frankenstein** and **Dracula**. Out of the Dracula myth came a whole vampire mythology which brings us right to this present day with Stephenie Meyer. What we want to do today is to focus on the spirituality of these particular stories, rather than the heritage of the myth.

Why does this type of literature flourish in a rationalistic age? Since the Second World War there has been a strong emphasis on scientific rationality. Richard Dawkins has released a book this week where he continues to seek to propound that rationalistic view of reality. In Christian theological circles, it is said that we need a good epistemology – we need to know how we know what we know.

Dawkins' book almost has those words on the front: '*how we know what we know*', but he wants to posit it in another place. One would have thought that that rationalistic urge, that denial of the supernatural, would have dented the ability of occult mystical material or even Christian spiritual material to make a massive impact in popular culture, but it doesn't actually seem to have done so.

One factor is that historically many of the learned men of our culture, people like Francis Bacon, people like Isaac Newton, didn't see any tension between having a scientific enquiring mind, seeking empirical evidence, but also believing that there was a spiritual realm that you could in some way get in contact with. Within popular culture, there's a musician called Sting who used to be with the Police and they produced an album called **Spirits in the Material World** - that's where the title of today's lecture came from.

He was influenced by a writer called Arthur Koestler who wrote **Darkness at Noon** about the spiritual emptiness of dialectic materialism in the Soviet Union. We have this society which has been run by people who denied God, who've started a ten day week, we've done all of these things, but actually we're empty. There's something not quite right. So, they were searching for a spirituality that would work alongside a materialism that denies the existence of conventional gods.

One of the things that's happening, in Dan Brown and in Stephenie Meyer, is that they are looking for and promoting a spirituality which might work within materialism. So it denies, really, the possibility of an external God and places the god within. The spiritual power doesn't come from a mythology or a mythical figure or a supernaturalistic figure, it's actually coming from within you. So, the milieu that Koestler is talking about, that Sting is singing about, is being made large in the imagination of everyday people, by Meyer, by Brown and by others.

In the light of the scientific materialism that's gripped our culture, it's quite an irony that the commanding heights of that popular culture will be held by people like J. K. Rowling with the Potter series, Brown with his two blockbusters and Stephenie Meyer with her four and a bit blockbusters, because she's also released little subsidiary books that haven't been as big as the other four but are still part of the story.

Occult and vampire themes are wide-ranging and pervasive. We can't talk about all of them so let's focus on Dan Brown and Stephenie Meyer. But before we do that, let's step back and ask ourselves these questions:

- What are the traditional Christian approaches to the occult or the supernatural in literature?
- Do we believe that there is a place for the fantastic in storytelling?
- What is the unique worldview of *The Twilight Saga*, *The Lost Symbol* and two other books that are contemporary best-sellers? One is called *The Secret* and the other is called *The Power*.
- What constitutes a measured Christian response to this view of reality?

What are the traditional Christian approaches? They are threefold. One is **radical denouement**. If you tell a story that contains an element which has anything to do with any other belief system, then you are guilty by association and you are denounced as encouraging an occult belief system. If you google Dave Roberts and prayer you will find web sites that say that I am a tool of the Roman Catholic church and that I'm introducing young people to occult meditational practices. This is because I wrote a book called *Red Moon Rising* with a guy called Pete Greig about the 24/7 prayer movement.

There are people within the worldwide church who object to the spirituality of Richard Foster and other evangelical stalwarts who are looking towards a reflective, contemplative tradition. If anything we do looks a bit like what that Hindu mystic from the ashram is doing, we are clearly heretics from the pit of hell. So one of the ways in which people respond to popular literature is radical denouement.

Now, when you're in the radical denouement camp, everything starts to go. So you look at Tolkien and you think, "*Finnish occult folk myth*". C. S. Lewis becomes a bit dodgy, because, despite the Christian typology in the Aslan figure, there is a book that's come out recently, not from some kind of fundamentalist either, talking about the astrological underpinnings of Lewis's worldview. So, if you're a radical denouncer,

you get hold of that kind of thing and you say, "*Right, that's it, finished.*"

One of the troubles in all of this, is that a lot of Christians also tend to see the occult as a general blanket term, when in fact the reality is that there's a huge difference between a Satanist who believes in an evil authority, principality, that does evil things and is worthy of worship and somebody who's into a nature religion and thinks that the earth is full of spirits.

There are people who use this building where we are meeting who are into that kind of thing, but are appalled by black magic. When I lived in Eastbourne, our local white witch who used to go and dance on the downs and invoke nature spirits was one of the most determined campaigners against the Satanists in the area.

A lot of what we see in popular fiction isn't black magic, it's what people call white magic. It still throws up ethical concerns, but we have to approach it in a nuanced way, otherwise the people who are reading it, or who are practitioners will dismiss us as bigots who clearly don't know what we're talking about.

Another Christian approach, I would characterise as "**We're all sensible here.**" This approach basically says, "*It's only a story. Don't worry about it.*" and would then go on to say "*What you need to do is look for the redemptive analogy.*" So, there's a whole host of literature about *Twilight* that basically says, "*Look at the courage of Bella in overcoming her difficulties; look at the inner struggle of Edward as he seeks to renounce the violence; look at the heroic stance of the Cullens, mother and father, as they go against the flow of the culture of vampire killing which has been part of their heritage for four hundred years.*"

We're encouraged to look at this material, understand where there might be some good in it and then slowly link that over to Scripture and find something good in it. This is not without merit, because Jesus and Paul were not averse to using the writings of other cultures, for example when Paul says, "*As your poets have said, 'In him we live and move and have our being'*", he's taking that from a hymn about Zeus.

He's taking something from the culture and investing it with a new meaning. So, the redemptive analogy approach is not without merit, But it can also be a convenient shelter for those who don't actually want to confront the reality of the story.

The third Christian approach is what I would call **prophetic discernment**. Prophetic discernment would look at some of what's going on in popular culture and some of what goes on within the church and say, "*Is it possible that a story which is mythical, i.e. not actually objectively true, nevertheless might have truth within it?*"

Now, I don't think it's objectively true that a farmer had his son come to him and demand the land and run off with the money and then come back. Jesus told a story, that could or could not have happened, but the story had great import. We have a very clear understanding of the love of God the father out of the story of the prodigal son and many other layers of meaning that we derive from that story. It probably happened, but it may well have been something that Jesus just brought forth out of his imagination.

As you look around the world, there are many myths that have slivers of truth in them, so for instance, we do believe that there was a worldwide flood and that it is detailed in the story of Noah. Almost every culture in the world has a flood myth, which kind of makes you think there was probably a big flood at some point. The thing about the Hebrew one is that it's credible. The ship could have contained the people and sheltered them in the extreme weather; the animals could have fitted in.

When you look at the epic of Gilgamesh which is one of the other big ones, it's not really credible that the amount of people and the amount of animals could have survived. The Hebrews tend to be a bit more down to earth. They love the big old story as much as everyone else, but their stories resonate, they seem more true to life.

Another key in prophetic discernment is examining the worldview of the story. John Houghton wrote ***A Closer Look at Harry Potter***. He looked quite closely at Rowling's use of occult spells and concluded that it was much closer to actual occult spell books than much of popular fiction. But he asked people to step past that for a moment, and ask what J. K. Rowling was saying about human nature. He said that a lot of people just treat these books as a story, not an accurate reflection of supernatural reality. This being the case, what do the stories say about life? He contended that she had a very dark view of human nature, a very bleak view of the human condition.

You ask questions of the stories, as we did just now about the prodigal son, and you say to yourself, "*Some of these stories have supernatural elements, but they're not supposed to be a representation of reality.*" So, when Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus, is that actually a representation of the ability to see from heaven into hell? Or was Jesus just taking the popular folk stories of the day about the afterlife and injecting them with a biting critique of the Sadducees and their riches and their inability to live out a just, righteous life?

With some popular fiction are we meant to view it as fantastical? Perhaps we're not even supposed to think it might be true.

In a film called ***Field of Dreams*** with Kevin Costner, he hears a voice saying, “*Build it and they will come*”. He builds a baseball field and at certain times people emerge from the local cornfield and they have a game of baseball and then fade away again. They are all people who have died, including his father. Now I watched that film with friends. One thought it was wonderful. Two sat there grumbling and muttering about the occult

They missed the point. You’re supposed to suspend disbelief and just say, “*This is a story.*” It was the same with ***Flatliners***, a film with all the young actors of the mid-80s, They were all doctors and were experimenting on each other. They would stop people’s hearts and then start them about twenty seconds later and all the people whose hearts they started again, amongst their little circle, started having vivid flashbacks over the next several weeks of their life.

These were horrible flashbacks of the really bad stuff that they had done. One of them, Kevin Bacon’s character, eventually believes that what he needs to do is repent, so he goes and finds the woman he had wronged and he repents. The flashbacks stop. Then he goes to the others and says, “*I know you’re not going to like this word, but we’ve got to repent*” and they all go, “*Right, we’ll do it*”, except for Kiefer Sutherland who says, “*No, I’m not going to repent. All that is nonsense*”.

Eventually, they all get healed of the horrific flashbacks except Kiefer Sutherland, who finally gives in.

You’re not supposed to be sitting there thinking, “*This is real*”, you’re supposed to be thinking, “*This is a mythical story, with a philosophical intent.*” So, as Christians, maybe the way forward is prophetic discernment, where we say, “*What is at the heart of this story? What’s it trying to say? Is it trying to suggest that it is propounding an objective view of reality - this stuff could really happen? Or is it saying, ‘This is just a story with a meaning that you can discern.’*”

So, with C. S. Lewis, we suspend belief. We do not believe that the lion talks In our heart of hearts, we don’t believe that there’s a wardrobe somewhere in Belfast that you can walk into and suddenly you’ll find yourself in a forest. We don’t believe that, we just think it’s a fantastic story. We look for the meaning that comes through.

We enter the emotion of the story. The thing about parables is that they draw you into the emotion of the story. The prodigal son draws you into the emotion of the story. The Samaritan draws you in to the emotion of the story. A lot of Jesus’ listeners would have been going “*No! - these Samaritans are bad people.*” It would be a bit like going the centre of New York and telling a story about a kind Moslem. They might be going,

“No! We don’t know any kind Moslems. Go away!” That’s how in the face of everybody Jesus was with that story about the Samaritan. There would have been emotion welling up in the crowd. So, stories bring out the emotion.

Then we begin to derive meaning. There’s a famous line that says “*The pictures are better on the radio.*” Quite often when we read or when we listen, we enter the story in our imagination, in our mental pictures. In a lot of the stories like C. S. Lewis and ***Flatliners*** and ***Field of Dreams***, the spiritual power is external to the created beings. So, they do not possess spiritual power, they are just in the middle of a supernatural situation.

It’s very important to note that, because the thing about Stephenie Meyer and Dan Brown and these others, is they are moving the supernatural power from something that happens to people in the story to within the people. They are moving it from being the activity of principalities and powers, demons and devils, or God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and are placing the spiritual power within the characters of the story.

Let’s now focus down onto the specific worldview of Stephenie Meyer and Dan Brown. For those of you who have not read Dan Brown’s second book, ***The Lost Symbol***, let me just give you a quick plot recap.

It’s set amid the Masonic architecture of Washington and the key characters, Catherine Solomon and her brother, explore the possibility of changing reality through the power of thought. It promotes the idea that there is a God within. In the early church, this was known as the Gnostic heresy, where you would pursue an elite mystical knowledge that would be revealed to you, and Paul and the other church fathers were constantly having to fight against the infiltration of those ideas.

Brown puts several Scriptures in the mouth of his characters, to promote the idea that classical Christianity actually supports this idea that we’re all gods. He suggests that both the Old and the New Testament have coded meanings when things are talked about like Jacob’s Ladder. So for instance, he takes hold of Luke 17:20 where in the King James Version it says, “*The kingdom of God is within you.*” In most of the other versions since then, it has been translated, “*The kingdom of God is in the midst of you.*”

One of the reasons for that later reading is that it is highly unlikely that Jesus would have addressed the Pharisees and said, “*The kingdom of God is within you.*” He and the Pharisees were not getting on well. It’s far more likely that he would have said, “*The kingdom of God is in your*



*midst, i.e. myself and the disciples are exhibiting the character of God, we're seeing healing come by the Holy Spirit, we're seeing the poor fed, we're seeing the naked clothed, the kingdom of God is breaking out."*

This was the kingdom of God ethos. It was about a concrete, embodied expression of who God was, not some kind of secret knowledge.

Brown then notes Psalm 82: 6 where in the KJV it says "Ye are gods." His character in the story say, "*There it is, it's in the Old Testament. We're all gods.*" It's a Psalm of Asaph and God is addressing a group of angelic beings, or spiritual rulers and judges. If you start looking at the original language that underlies the passage, He's telling them that they are failing to do justice and that they are going to die like men. So there's a distinction, even in the passage, between these spiritual figures, these angelic beings and the fact that they are going to die like men. The passage is definitely not saying, "*You are gods – that we are gods, mankind has godlike capacities.*"

Then he has a character quote Luke 8:17 where it says that "*Nothing is hidden, the mysteries will be revealed*". What Jesus is saying here is that we need to make a wise use of the word of God. To go from that to this verse sanctioning a leap into a new spiritual enlightenment is to miss the point. The word '*mystery*' is used in the New Testament in a way that's quite distant from the mystery religions of Jesus' day and indeed the mystery religions of today.

Brown also says that Mark 4:11 is another passage which points to the hidden esoteric teachings that underlie Jesus' ministry. But by the same token Jesus is talking more about the revelation of the kingdom, not about a secret knowledge. In Matthew 6:22 which once again Brown refers to, it says "*the eye is the lamp*". In the dialogue in the book Catherine Solomon says that this points to the idea that the pituitary gland is a source of spiritual enlightenment and that this is a coded reference in the New Testament record to all of that.

But Jesus is actually talking about you are you going to serve. If you read the passage in its context.

Brown then equates all of this with popular quasi-scientific thought, particularly quantum physics. He references books like ***The Intention Experiment*** which you can find on Amazon for £5.99. It's all about controlling reality with your mind, so although he always says at the front of the books, "*This is just a story*", he references books which quite clearly say "*This isn't a story, we believe this is a credible way of looking at life*".

Brown is propounding this idea that we are god-like figures and he

is pointing to external sources that suggest how you can tap into that god-likeness. Brown's god is not Yahweh, the God of Jacob, Moses, Abraham, not the God of the Holy Trinity. The occult force in his books is not the devil; the spirituality in his books is not an animistic belief in the spirits of the earth. What we actually see in Dan Brown is that he believes that the supernatural is an adjunct of our mind.

Now, this is actually much more corrosive than black magic or even worshipping the trees and plants magic, because a lot of people will go, "*That doesn't exist. This doesn't happen. In reality, I can't see it working.*" Whereas saying to people, "*The power is within you, you can train your mind to do these things*", starts looking like a more attractive proposition. In the worldview of Dan Brown, Jesus becomes an ethical mystic, not a revelation of God.

Now a small diversion. Rhoda Byrne who wrote ***The Power*** and ***The Secret***, two very big selling books in the self-help section of your libraries and the local shops, propounds the idea in those books, that Jesus is also saying, "*The power to change is in your words.*" So she quotes Jesus saying, "*Ask and you shall receive*" and she propounds that what you speak out attracts things to you.

A lot of the change, the supernatural, the incredible and mystical that could happen around you becomes focused on what you say about life and reality, which is kind of like a cousin of what Dan Brown is saying and as we'll see in a moment is like a cousin of what Stephenie Meyer is saying. The thing about Rhoda Byrne is that she's not even cloaking it in a story, she's saying, "*This is it. This is the story.*" ***The Secret*** sold twenty million worldwide, about a quarter of what Stephenie Meyer has sold.

What Dan Brown and Stephenie Meyer are doing is taking the stuff that's been discussed in new age camps on the edge of Dartmoor and at Findhorn for the last thirty years and taking it from the fringe of society and putting it there right in the middle, in the popular imagination. Not by writing a self-help book, but by writing a fictional title.

Rhoda Byrne and ***The Power*** and ***The Secret*** – the trouble with this is that it promotes legalism and callousness. The legalism comes from constantly watching your words. You can't say, "*I feel a bit sick today*" because it will attract sickness. The callousness suggests that the poor are poor because they've said the wrong things. One of the key people from that milieu was on Larry King, the big TV interview programme in the States, and he said, "*So, the Rwandans, they attracted this atrocity with their words? The Jews, they attracted the*

*Holocaust because they had said the wrong things, thought the wrong things?” and the guy’s going “Well....” and King is saying, “Yes, but that’s the logic of what you are saying.”*

These power of the mind ideas are part of a wider mystical worldview based in the myths of the lost city of Atlantis. In this myth, before a great deluge, everybody had supernatural powers. The deluge and the aftermath of it, diminished those powers and they faded from our reality and they became latent. If you start digging around in new age mystical circles, you’ll start seeing the Atlantis myth creeping out here and there and then it emerges full blown in Stephenie Meyer and Dan Brown, not necessarily explicitly said but nevertheless as an underpinning of what is being said.

Finally, ***The Twilight Saga***. Just a quick recap for you if you haven’t read it, because it’s twelve hundred pages and aimed at teenagers. Bella is the key figure. She has a very poor self image but towards the end of the story she ends up being the most powerful spiritual figure in the whole narrative.

She is absolutely besotted with Edward Cullen who’s one of the vampires. He doesn’t want to be attracted to her because he doesn’t want to destroy her with his vampiric power. He’s incredibly tempted to bite her neck and just drink her blood and it takes every ounce of self control not .

Edward is part of a group of pacifistic vampires who are trying not to be vampires. He has no sense of grace or forgiveness. He thinks there’s no redemption for him. He killed too many people when he was a full-on vampire. That’s Edward. Then there’s Jacob who’s a werewolf. I won’t bore you with the details but he’s the love rival.

Then there’s the Cullens. The two older Cullens are the pacifistic drivers of the story. There are many religious themes: Edward and grace; the Cullens and non-violence and there are many other worldview hooks in the story. If you read my book ***The Twilight Gospel*** I’ve got a whole chapter on materialism and the fact that Alice, one of the Cullen girls, is absolutely obsessed with material goods. Somebody gets married – twenty thousand lights and three thousand flowers. The Cullen mother says at one point, “*We never wear the same clothes – Alice won’t let us*”.

Youth culture used to be rebellious. ***The Twilight Saga*** is like an advert for consumer capitalism, as is much youth culture today. When you watch MTV which, looking around the room, I don’t think many of you do, one of the drivers of the whole thing is a thing called Cribs. They go and look at the homes of the rich and famous. Who cares what

settees they have? Who cares what size their swimming pools are? You and I don't! But actually this is being propounded as the model to live by.

Alice is not doing anything to upset that status quo. She uses her mystical powers to discern where the stock market's going and make the right investments so that the family is always rich and live on and on and on as vampires, They can't work. They'd be too tempted to bite people's necks.

The other thing about the story from a worldview point of view is that Bella is obsessed with looking beautiful. Now it's estimated that 97% of women in the world and quite a large number of men worry about their self image all the time. A generation of teenage girls do not need a heroine who spends her entire time thinking, "*Maybe I'll be pretty one day.*" The whole concept of prettiness that's wrapped up in all of this is based in a Western cultural construct, not in the reality of your character, your personhood, the fact that you're loved by God unconditionally!

One of the things that's so poisonous about ***Twilight*** isn't the occult worldview, it's the worldview, period. When Bella gets bitten, she becomes a vampire. She looks in the mirror and says, "*At least I'm pretty now.*" And you think to yourself, '*three and a half books in and this is the pinnacle of her life?*'

At the heart of the story are the Volturi. They are the baddies, for those of you who have not read the story, and they hear that there is a human living with vampires. This can't be allowed. So they come from the other side of the world to sort out the Cullens because they've got this human amongst them. They're a pretty wild bunch. There are three kinds of vampires: the Volturi, who are the aristocracy; there's the '*I'm just going to go round and bite people and kill them*' vampires; and then there's the Cullens.

The Volturi will often seek out those who kill others and kill them because it's bad press for vampires generally and brings attention on them, but by the same token they don't understand the pacifistic Cullens and they certainly don't want a human living amongst them because that just messes with the story.

And the Volturi do love blood. So, they come for a visit . One of them is called. If he touches you he can hear your every thought. Then there's Marcus - he can discern your emotions, he knows exactly what is going on in your life. Jane who can look at you and you feel pain all over your body. Chelsea can influence the emotional ties between people, so whatever she does, she sets people against each other.

Now the equivalents of these things in contemporary Christian understanding would be word of knowledge, discernment of spirit, blessing and cursing, and the influence of demons. So, there are classical Christian supernaturalistic beliefs that sound a bit like what these baddies are doing.

The 'goodies' have the following traits: Kate has electric power and if she touches you a surge of electricity will go through you. Zafrina can look at you and make you blind; Benjamin can do nature miracles - like looking at a piece of land and a making a chasm appears - a bit like God and the Red Sea. Alice, one the key characters in the story has the gift of clairvoyance - she can see the future. She's always saying, "*I'm not sure what's happening, but it's up there in the North West*"

This sounds a little like the prophecy we often get in our charismatic and Pentecostal churches - of which I'm a part. I'm not being cynical about that, it's just the reality. Characters in the story refer to latent talents - this idea that there is a latent spirituality that's been lost, and that Bella is rediscovering. They actually use that word. A character called Eleazar uses the word latent.

Now the Christian equivalent of some of these ideas is found in Luke 7:39. Jesus knows the Pharisees' thoughts. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-1,1 a series of gifts are described. Within classical Christian theology they are known as gifts of grace; they are gifts from God; they are not latent; they come from outside; they become part of the cooperation between God and man through the Holy Spirit.

They are not latent; they are not reawakened; and they are not used at whim. In ***Breaking Dawn***, Bella begins to use these talents and her talent is creating a force field that protects people from physical harm. One of the characters trains her to use this gift but there is no initiation, no mystical ritual, no occult hocus pocus; she basically says "*You've got it within you, this is how to use it more*", and then she finds that when she gets angry, it becomes even more effective.

This is the total opposite of Luke Skywalker in ***Star Wars***. He's coming in to bomb the death star and Yoda's whispering in his ear, "*Calm down! Calm down! Let the force be with you, otherwise it won't drop in the trench.*" In Bella's case, it's more like, "*Get mad! It really helps with the shield around people that you love*". There is a worldview here that is removing the supernatural from being an act of God, mediated by the Holy Spirit, to being a latent talent that we theoretically can train. You don't have to go very far in the self-help section of a bookshop to find this kind of books about trying to seek and cultivate that kind of power.

If you then step back, one in twenty people who are literate in the world today, has probably read one of these books. So these aren't ideas that are floating around on the fringe. Dan Brown and Stephenie Meyer have been read by at least a hundred million people. It only took twelve people to change the world after the death of Christ and twelve out of a couple of million in Israel is quite a small number, so if one in twenty people in the world are imbibing these ideas of a kind of rationalistic supernaturalism that comes from within, that's got to be a challenge.

At the heart of this story too, is the idea of an elite heroic group, the philosopher kings, if you will. There is a glamour to do with spiritual power, the elite and the beautiful and the powerful. This is a recipe that in the past brought us National Socialism - the elite, the blonde ones, the Aryan ones, the powerful trying to tap into the force that came from the spear that went into Jesus' side, trying to find the gateway to another world somewhere in the Andes, that kind of mystical thinking. It's not a good combination: an idea of an elite powerful group seeking spiritual knowledge, theoretically for the good of everybody.

I'm sure many Nazis thought it was for the good of the planet that they purged the Jews, but the rest of us didn't agree. In conclusion, these books promote a rational mysticism; they take to the heart of the culture; they're promoting elite knowledge; they're marginalising Jesus as the Messiah; they're dismissing the role of the Holy Spirit; and they're legitimising an esoteric worldview.

What is a proper Christian response? We have to arm people with wisdom, not rules. You are librarians. If somebody came to you and said, "*Don't stock Potter*", your response might be, "*I can't start picking the books. Where do you stop and start when you start picking the books?*" Banning the books smacks of coercion and authoritarianism and what it does is to make evil attractive. It's actually much better to arm people with wisdom so that they out of their own understanding of the revelation of God, take every thought captive, which is what Jesus did.

When you go back and read the New Testament, note how many times does Jesus ask a question. He doesn't usually say, "*Look, here is a tablet from the mountain, do this*". He asks a question. "*Who was the good guy in this story?*". The audience is thinking: "*I suppose it was the Samaritan but I don't really want to say that.*" He's making people think.

So we need to make people think, so that they consciously reject destructive views, not just because somebody told them to, but because they have actually imbibed wisdom. You want them to understand

books from within their own understanding of God, the character of God and the work of Jesus.

We are not promoting a supernatural knowledge that comes from within us, we are promoting a relational faith. We need to make a prophetic response that has to do with the introduction of the kingdom of God. This arises from our concern for the poor, our concern for the lost, our concern for people's lives that have been scarred by the sins of others and our compassion for people who are scarring their own lives with sin and rebellion.

We seek a balance with regard to the supernatural. We do believe that God acts supernaturally today, but we don't believe that the supernaturalism comes from within us.

So there it is. I hope this has given you some food for thought about '*spirits in the material world*' and the fact that some of the popular literature of today is not promoting a fantastical, "*I don't really believe that, I just think it's a good story*" supernaturalism but is actually promoting a view of the power within that finds precedent in the popular self-help literature of our day.

Thank you.

**Dave Roberts** is an author with over 120,000 sales to his name. As an editor he commissioned John Houghton's ***A Closer Look at Harry Potter*** (Kingsway, 2001, ISBN 0854769412) which sold over 20,000 copies and was translated into several languages.

He is also the author of ***The Twilight Gospel*** (Monarch, £7.99, ISBN 978-1854249760) which looks beyond the occult themes of Stephenie Meyer's best selling saga and examines what it says about self image, materialism and much more.

Dave is a former editor of ***Christianity*** magazine and the founding publisher of ***Youthwork***. His other books include ***God's Plan for Children*** (Kingsway, £5.99, ISBN 978-1842911228) and ***Red Moon Rising: the adventure of faith***, co-written with Pete Greig (Kingsway, £7.99, ISBN 978-1842910955).

Can technology result in people failing to acquire relevant skills and knowledge? What are the pros and cons of allowing trusts, private companies, or neighbouring authorities to run public library services? LOUISE MANNERS surveys the recent specialist press for librarians and information professionals

## ***EYE ON THE PROFESSION***

**Research Information**, June/July 2011, interviews Ys Chi, chairman of Elsevier's management committee and president of the *International Publishers' Association*. There is a round-up of the latest on e-books from industry meetings.

**Multimedia Information & Technology**, February 2011, reports from *Middlemash 2009*, the third *Mashed Library UK* event. Rene Hermes, Vice President of Marketing at *CoreMedia*, shares his thoughts on working with consumers who pay.

In August 2011, **CILIP Update with Gazette**, Charlie Inskip reports from the ISKO UK Conference 2011 and Elspeth Hyams reports from *Umbrella*. Andrew Shenton expresses his opinion on the skills being lost as automation increases. He argues that "*the use of certain technologies may result in people failing to acquire particular skills and knowledge.*"

September 2011 **CILIP Update with Gazette** has Elspeth Hyams interviewing UCL academic Vanda Broughton on a structured approach to information retrieval. John Hicks investigates public library governance including public libraries being run by trusts and another local authority. Donna Carroll of *University of Warwick Library* explains how she shared her experiences with library colleagues in the Netherlands.

In the November 2011 **CILIP Update with Gazette** Elspeth Hyams interviews Nigel Crisp, NHS Chief Executive until 2006 and author of ***24 hours to save the NHS; the Chief Executive's account of reform 2000 – 2006***. Mr. Crisp stresses the importance of clarity of communication and teamwork. Ian Anstice investigates the subject of private companies running public libraries in "*Monster or saviour?*" He looks at the experience of Laing in the UK at Hounslow and LSSI in the USA with sixteen separate library contracts. Keith Trickey applauds the ***Dewey Decimal Classification 23***, finding it moving "*from offering a North American view to becoming truly international*".

**Louise Manners**, *DipLib, MA, MCLIP*, was elected as Chair of the Executive committee of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship at the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 19 April 2008.