

Winter 2019

CLIS Christians *in*
Library *and*
Information
Services



CHRISTIAN LIBRARIAN

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EVENTS AT A GLANCE

●**CONFERENCE: 2020 VISION: COMMUNICATIONS IN A DIGITAL AGE; SATURDAY 25 APRIL 2020.** Regent Hall, Oxford Street, London, from 10.30. a.m. Speakers: Rev. Mark Woods and Alexandra Davis. Details: p. 9

WALKING TOUR OF WESTMINSTER with Ben Virgo of Christian Heritage London. Wednesday 20 May 2020, from 2.30. p.m. Details: pp. 9-10.

●**ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE: SATURDAY 10 OCTOBER 2020:** Belfrey Hall, Stonegate, York, from 2.30. p.m. Speaker: Paul Burbridge, Riding Lights Theatre Company. Details: p. 10.

PLEASE PRAY FOR

●**Forthcoming CLIS activities including the annual conference, the walking tour of Westminster and the annual public lecture in York.**

●**The CLIS executive committee as it considers committee vacancies likely to arise in April 2020 and starts to plan for the work of CLIS in 2021. Pray that candidates will be found for the required committee positions.**

●**Current library assistance projects including the Greek Bible College and the Biblical Creation Library.**

●**The work of Bob Hartman as a writer and storyteller and for others working in similar ways to bring Bible stories alive for children and adults alike.**

●**The work of RADIUS as it completes its ninetieth anniversary year and seeks to promote religious drama in its various forms.**

●**The work of professional associations serving the library and information professions and especially CILIP and its groups.**



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THE FIRST WORD

RICHARD WALLER stresses the importance of checking the facts before putting pen to paper and points out that none of the gospel accounts of the Nativity story actually mention camels, donkeys, or kings

NOT CHECKING THE FACTS



I have quite a liking for good historical fiction, by which I mean books where the characters don't act like twenty-first century people dressed up in togas/Napoleonic naval uniforms/medieval armour or whatever and where the author actually understands the history before setting fingers to keyboard or pen to paper. I came across a particularly egregious example of the opposite the other day. This was a book purporting to be set in the early history of the *Royal Marines*, but the author clearly knows so little about military life that he thought that sergeants were superior to lieutenants and both were officers (Norma said to me when proof reading, '*But sergeants are officers*' but sorry no, they most definitely aren't). The behaviour of the sailing ships was rather peculiar too, although I would not claim to be an expert in this area, many years of reading C. S. Forester's *Hornblower* novels has taught me more than that! What was distressing was that on reading the on-line reviews, no one had picked up on the glowing errors. The worst that was said

was that the prose was a bit pedestrian, an allegation that didn't seem to be to be true, the writing was competent enough, it was the facts that were wrong.

Christmas is coming and I can't help feeling that some of the writers of popular carols did not check the facts before setting quill or pen to paper. Shepherds busy following the star and donkeys in every verse, when they are not mentioned at all in any of the Gospels. Some of the older ones are the product of popular culture, with a church that looked down on the singing of carols as doubtfully associated with pubs and parties. I have heard (and here I haven't checked my facts!) that at one stage the *Church of England* approved of only two carols as fit for public worship. This led to the largely Christianised laity, who were rightly sure that Christmas was a time for celebration, doing their own thing with some very mixed results!

Some of them are superb, the full version of '*This is the truth sent from above*', now only heard as a choir piece in a bowdlerised version or the very old but splendid '*God rest ye merry, Grntlemen*', for instance, but that is a dance tune, if you listen carefully to the rhythm! Others are more cavalier with the facts to put it mildly.

Years ago I tried one of those Bible facts Christmas quizzes on my quiz and puzzle loving colleagues at work, most of whom would have seen themselves as Christians and occasional church goers. None of them got above three out of ten! They were amazed to hear that there is no mention of kings, or of donkeys or of camels and the like matters.

However I am not arguing for the abolition of all carols that don't stick carefully to the facts! Otherwise you will end up not singing '*Hark, the herald-angels sing*' because Wesley allowed his poetic gifts to override his theology in one line! Such behaviour would be

perverse! I shall sing the calypso carol with gusto along with everyone else, carefully ignoring the juxtaposition of a silver star and the shepherds! Norma and I love carols and Christmas music; we have over seventy hours' worth in our massive CD collection alongside the tree and the decorations to be got out at the start of December. And if we get tired of that, there is always *Classic FM's* wall to wall carols on Christmas Day!

But facts are important, as we come to Christmas time again and as we celebrate we need to remember that there is a real message behind the celebration and we have a duty laid on us by our Lord himself to tell others that God intervened in history so that we might be saved. Unfortunately huge numbers of people don't check the facts and have only the vaguest idea of what it's about, hence the '*Christmas is really for the children*' school of thought. For a wry comment on this read Steve Turner's perceptive poem of the same name.

As librarians facts are our business and we should be communicating the real message of Christmas to a world that decorates the trees, listens to popular carols canned in every shop, and parties enthusiastically but has no idea of the facts and has never checked them.

Christmas is vitally important, God came and visited us, shared our world and intervened to save us. May God bless us all this Christmas with a new appreciation of the truths behind the tinsel. Happy Christmas and New Year!

Richard M. Waller, BD, was elected as the President of *Christians in Library and Information Services* at the annual general meeting on Saturday 14 April 2018. Until his retirement he worked for the public library service in the *Metropolitan Borough of Wigan*.

THE SECOND WORD

ROBERT FOSTER draws a contrast between artificial intelligence and the Son of God who came to us as a real human being with thoughts, feelings and emotions

AT THIS TIME OF THE YEAR



At our Oxford conference this year we learnt about some of the more recent results of artificial intelligence (AI). In one example, we listened to a simulated telephone call for a hair appointment, where the customer was speaking to a robot.

Most of us have at some point encountered an automated payment service where a disembodied voice gives you a list of options and takes you through the process. Sometimes they use voice recognition software to avoid using the keypad, but you are usually quickly aware that it is not a real person you are dealing with. What we saw in Oxford though was several stages on from that, because not only could the prototype apparently manage a complex query, it interacted with the customer, making more or less human responses. In a number

of the examples, it was clear that the more human the robot appeared, the more attractive and interesting (or chilling) it was to us.

At this time of the year, we as Christians reflect that the Son of God came to us as a real human, mental and physical, with thoughts, feelings, and emotions. In the New Testament, we find that Jesus was '*deeply moved*' by a sick person, and I understand the actual Greek expression says he was moved from his bowels. We perhaps might prefer to use the word '*core*'. The First Century would have viewed a person in a less compartmentalised way than we tend to do, but the point is that Jesus was nonetheless a whole person down to his very make up: '*frail flesh*' as a hymnwriter put it.

AI presents us with some perplexing questions, though of course it might help us too. But as the year closes and a new one begins, we can still be reminded that '*The earth is the Lord's*' and the love of God is still there for each of us.



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

CLIS NEWSLETTER



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COMMUNICATIONS IN A DIGITAL AGE

Next year's Annual Conference is to be held on **Saturday 25 April 2020** in the **Princes Street Room** at the *Salvation Army's Regent Hall, 275 Oxford Street, London, W1C 2DJ*, from 10.30. a.m. The theme for the conference is **2020 Vision: Communications in a Digital Age** and our speakers will be the Rev. **Mark Woods**, former editor of the ***Baptist Times*** and the ***Christian Today*** on-line newspaper, and now working in an editorial role at the *Bible Society*, and **Alexandra Davis**, Director of Marketing and Communications at the *Pilgrims' Friend Society*.

WALKING IN WESTMINSTER

Following our earlier walking tour of the City of London, and guided tour of the *British Museum*, we have arranged a walking tour of Westminster for **Wednesday 20 May 2020**. This will visit sites with connections with

such well known Christian figures as Martyn Lloyd-Jones, John Wesley, William Wilberforce, and Lord Shaftesbury. The tour will again be led by our friend Ben Virgo from *Christian Heritage London*. The tour should commence at 2.00. p.m. but we anticipate that those who can arrive in time will have lunch together in the cafe at *Westminster Central Hall* from 12.30.p.m. More details will follow in due course.

ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE

Next year's Annual Lecture is to be held on **Saturday 10 October 2020** at the **Belfrey Hall, 52A Stonegate, York, YO1 8AS**, from 2.30.p.m.,, and our guest speaker is to be **Paul Burbridge**, Artistic Director of the *Riding Lights Theatre Company*. Further details will be published as they become available but please book these dates and plan to attend.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Next year's **Annual General Meeting** is to take place on **Saturday 25 April 2020**, from 11.20. a.m., as part of the annual conference proceedings at the *Salvation Army's Regent Hall, 275 Oxford Street, London, W1C 2DJ*. Please let me have committee nominations and details of any motions for discussion at least four weeks before the date of the meeting. An agenda for the meeting will be circulated to all members of CLIS, either by post or e-mail, not less than two weeks before the meeting date.

Nominations are invited for the following executive committee positions: Publications Editor, Membership Secretary, Recruitment Secretary, and Members Without Portfolio (two positions). Each nomination requires a proposer and seconder and the candidate also needs to confirm in writing that he or she is willing to serve in this role. Some of our present committee members may be willing to stand for re-election but we are always pleased to hear from others who are willing to consider serving on the committee.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL NEWS

- Recent events involving Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle, Duchess of Sussex, have re-opened long-standing debates about the freedom of the press and the individual's right to privacy. As Christians and librarians we should defend the principle of a free press while recognising the right of people in the public eye to a degree of personal privacy. It may be that we have a special responsibility to support both the Royal family and the news media in prayer. You can read my recent article "*Some moments of privacy, please*" on the *Evangelical Alliance* web site at <https://www.eauk.org/news-and-views/some-moments-of-privacy-please>
- Our past speaker **Kevin Carey** is the author of *All Hail the Glorious Night (and other Christmas poems)*, published by *Sacristy Press*, RRP £19.99, ISBN 978-1789590517. Kevin gave our annual lecture in Salisbury in October 2015 and is a Reader in his parish church, a chorister, theologian, novelist and classical music critic. He has been a member of the *General Synod*, Chairman of the *Royal National Institute of Blind People* and, until retirement in 2018, an IT consultant specialising in assistive technology for disadvantaged people.
- Our Life Vice-President (and former President) **Eddie Olliffe** has taken up a new role as administrator for the *Roy Hession Book Trust* which is a registered UK charity with the purpose of making the writings of the Christian authors Roy Hession and George Verwer available worldwide. Eddie is a well known figure in the Christian book trade having previously held senior positions with the *Wesley Owen* bookshops and the *Christian Literature Crusade* as well as the publisher *CWR*. He is a former trustee of the *Christian Book Promotion Trust*, the sponsors of the *Speaking Volumes* library scheme.
- Our recent conference speaker, **Manoj Raithatha**, has taken up a new role as minister in training at the *Pinner Baptist Church* following a couple of years in which he has had pastoral and teaching responsibilities at the *Barking Baptist Church*. With the increased ministry and study commitments that this will entail Manoj is passing

over much of the leadership of his *Instant Apostle* publishing company to his colleague **Nicki Copeland**. Nicki has been with *Instant Apostle* since the earliest days and has been responsible for overseeing the publication and editorial processes. She also serves as a trustee of the *Christian Book Promotion Trust*.

BIBLICAL CREATION LIBRARY

Our Library Assistance Manager, **Rachel Johnson**, has received details of a possible cataloguing and classification project which might be of interest to members of CLIS with time and expertise to offer. The *Biblical Creation Trust Collection* is based in Soham, Cambridgeshire, and consists of some two thousand items, including books, journals, pamphlets, conference proceedings, audio-visual presentations, videos, and DVDs. Some material has been digitised and is available on CD. You can find more information about the *Biblical Creation Trust* on their web site <https://www.biblicalcreationtrust.org>

If any CLIS members are interested in assisting with the cataloguing and classification of this material the Trust has funds available to reimburse travelling expenses and Rachel and her husband Terry are willing to offer limited accommodation at their home in Ely, which is quite close to Soham, and transport from Ely to Soham. If you are interested in assisting with this project, or would like more information about [w](#) what might be involved, please contact Rachel at wanderinglibrarian56@gmail.com or telephone her on 01353 968564.

INKLINGS AT WAR

From the *C. S. Lewis Foundation*, of Redlands, California, comes exciting news of a five part documentary series ***A Hobbit, a Wardrobe and a Great War***. The series will be based on the book of the same name by Joseph Loconte (Thomas Nelson, 2017, ISBN 978-

0718091453) and will offer a close look at how the experience of World War I shaped the lives and Christian imaginations of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien. The production team are nearing completion of their first episode and plan to approach *Amazon* or *Netflix* in January 2020 to negotiate worldwide distribution for the films. Material for the series has been filmed in Oxford and France, scenes from the lives of Lewis and Tolkien have been re-enacted, and interviews have been conducted with well known Lewis and Tolkien scholars including our own past speakers Colin Duriez and Dr. Michael Ward.

CHRISTIAN RESOURCES TOGETHER

Several weeks before he gave our annual public lecture in Bath, children's writer and master storyteller Bob Hartman received not one but two awards at the annual retreat for members of the Christian book trade. ***Bob Hartman's Rhyming Bible*** (SPCK, RRP £14.99 ISBN 978-0281077946) was recognised as the year's best children's and youth title while Bob's overall contribution to Christian publishing was recognised with a special award sponsored by the *Association of Christian Writers*.

The retreat attracted several hundred booksellers and publishers to *The Hayes Conference Centre*, Swanwick, between **Tuesday 17 – Wednesday 18 September 2019**. . Next year's CRT retreat has been planned for **Tuesday 15 – Wednesday 16 September 2020** at Swanwick and you can find more information at www.christianresourcestogether.co.uk

FAITH AND LITERATURE

The ***Church Times Festival of Faith and Literature*** returns to the *Bloxham School* in Oxfordshire from **Friday 21 – Saturday 22 February 2020**. Held every two years the festival aims to celebrate the very best fiction, poetry and non-fiction with a faith perspective. The 2020 theme will be *The Power of Love* and the organisers have assembled an

impressive line-up of speakers including such well known literary figures as Michael Arditti, Rhidian Brook, Catherine Fox, Malcolm Guite, Cole Moreton, Mark Oakley, Salley Vickers and A. N. Wilson. You can find more information about the festival from the web site <https://bloxhamfaithandliterature.hymnsam.co.uk>

MOSES ON THE WEST END STAGE

The biblical character Moses will shortly be making his debut on the London stage in a new musical based on the successful 1998 animated film *Prince of Egypt*.

At the time of writing the musical is scheduled to be performed at the *Dominion Theatre*, 268-269 Tottenham Court Road, London, W1T 7AQ for thirty-two weeks between 5 February and 12 September 2020 and tickets are now on sale. The producers promise that they will be bringing “a musical theatre production like no other to the West End stage”. You can discover prices, order tickets, and obtain performance times and other details from the official show web site at <https://www.theprinceofegyptmusical.com>

BIBLES ON OFFER

Our member Sarah Etheridge, who works in the library of *Lambeth Palace*, tells me that her library has a couple of boxes of NRSV Bibles that are in need of a home. They are brand new and attractive editions. Sarah hopes that a member of CLIS might want them, perhaps for their church. They would be free, but would need collecting or postage supplied.

More details can be supplied if required and you can contact Sarah at sarah.etheridge@churchofengland.org

CURRENT AWARENESS

- Megan Cornwell's article *The Testaments* looks at the recently published sequel to Margaret Atwood's ***The Handmaid's Tale*** (Vintage, RRP £8.99, ISBN 978-1784873189) and asks whether the new book is presenting an anti-Christian message.

The Handmaid's Tale is a dystopian novel of the future set in the republic of Gilead ruled by a fanatical regime of religious fundamentalists who use the Bible to justify the horrific abuse of women. In this imagined country women are only valued for their reproductive abilities. The new novel ***The Testaments*** (Chatto & Windus, RRP £10.00, ISBN 978-1784742324) is set some fifteen years after the original story and follows the progress of three women living under the repressive Gilead regime.

Although a casual reader might read ***The Testaments*** as a critique of Christianity, a careful reading of the the novel reveals that genuine Christian faith is still to be found in Gilead and that the resistance movement to the Gilead regime is largely made up of members of Christian groups. Atwood's novels are a reminder to Christians to be sober minded and to resist evil, especially when it comes in the guise of religion. This article appears in ***Premier Christianity***, November 2019, pp. 20 – 23.

- Claire Muster's article *The Changing Face of Christian Fiction* looks at a genre that has sometimes been dismissed as “*boring*”, “*trite*”, “*predictable*” and “*uninteresting*”.

The article suggests that things are changing as publishers in Britain and the United States attempt to publish novels with “*crossover*” appeal that can be sold in both the Christian and mainstream markets. Authors are starting to write books that are more reflective of real life but this has sometimes led to criticism from Christian readers who are unhappy with books that may feature swearing, sex or violence.

Some writers are extending the boundaries of what has previously been recognised as Christian fiction. Matt Adcock's novel ***Complete Darkness*** (Burton Mayers Books, RRP £7.99, ISBN 978-0957338777) sees humanity “*exploring the phenomenon of Dark Matter, only to discover that it is 'hell'*”.

Fantasy author Michael Harvey is aware of the balancing act that Christian novelists have to perform. He does not write books in which everyone is converted in the last chapter, but he is aware of the dangers of watering down the gospel message beyond recognition. This article appears in ***Premier Christianity***, November 2019, pp. 50 – 53.

- Mark Vernon's article *Uncovering the Last Inkling* introduces the life and work of Owen Barfield whose writings on language and mythology influenced the thinking of his fellow *Inklings* C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien.

Mark Vernon is the author of ***A Secret History of Christianity: Jesus, the Last Inkling and the Evolution of Consciousness*** (Christian Alternative Books, RRP £14.99, ISBN 978-1789041945) which explores the legacy of Owen Barfield and calls for a recovery of the mystical tradition in Christianity. The article appears in the ***Church of England Newspaper***, 27 September 2019, p. 9.

- The ***Church Times*** for 26 July 2019 includes an extended section in which various contributors reflect on what it means to be human in the light of artificial intelligence.

Jory Fleming describes his experiences in researching at the *University of Oxford* in his article *Artificial Intelligence: my life among the algorithms* (pp. 15 – 16). Two contributors look back to thinkers of earlier generations who raised questions about technology. Clare Carlisle's *An Early Warning Against Slackness* (p. 16) looks back to Soren Kierkegaard while Ruth Jackson Ravenscroft's *Humans Are More Than Their Bodies* (p. 20) looks back to Simone Weil.

Our past speaker Andii Bowsher contributes *It Used To Be Monks: will machines now pray for you?* (p. 19) and Tom Chiver's *Brooms on a Mission: a cautionary tale* (p. 17) provides a chilling vision of a potential future with intelligent machines.

- Andrew Graystone's article *Alexa, what is the meaning of life* looks at recent developments in artificial intelligence and, in particular, the *Alexa* device which can play music, provide information, give the news and sports scores, and control home devices such as heating and lighting. Thanks to the *Church of England's* digital team *Alexa* can also

say a prayer or provide the location of the nearest church.

While we are rightly enthusiastic about the things that new technology can do for us we should be aware of the deeper changes that are happening in our society. Machines are appearing to be more and more “*intelligent*” because humans are choosing to abase themselves in front of them. We should be careful not to give computers names or genders. A machine is always an “*it*”. We should not use verbs which suggest that machines can think or speak or choose like human beings. We have a theological category for what it means to make ourselves subject to objects we have made: idolatry.

While the Church rightly addresses the evangelistic opportunities provided by digital communications, we are allowing fundamental challenges to the status of human beings to go almost unobserved. This article appears in the ***Church Times*** for 4 October 2019, p. 15.

- Mark Chandler’s article *The New Era of Publishing for SPCK* is based on an interview with Sam Richardson, Chief Executive Officer of the *Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge*. The article reports that the Christian publisher is “*harnessng the power of apps, data, and old-fashioned fiction in an attempt to further boost its sales and secure its future*”.

Since Sam’s appointment as CEO, the charity has sold its *Sheldon Press* health imprint to *Hodder and Stoughton*, merged with the “*troubled evangelical publisher*” *Inter-Varsity Press*, and launched the fiction imprint *Marylebone House*. SPCK hope to get books from this imprint onto the fiction shelves of general bookshops rather than the religious sections.

The amount of digital publishing is increasing although the uptake of e-books in the Christian market has been slower than in the general market. This article appears in ***The Bookseller***, 12 July 2019, pp. 18-19.

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

KAREN HANS enjoys an afternoon presentation by a popular children's writer and master storyteller at the Manvers Street Baptist Church, Bath, on Saturday 19 October 2019

BOB HARTMAN'S WOW FACTOR



Those of us gathered in Bath on a sunny afternoon in October enjoyed a warm and insightful time with speaker Bob Hartman. Our President Richard Waller introduced Bob, reminding us that we live in a story telling culture, even in preaching, and that Bob recently won awards at *Christian Resources Together*, the book trade conference, both as a writer generally and for his book ***Bob Hartman's Rhyming Bible*** (SPCK, £14.99, ISBN 978-0281077946). Bob is also involved in schools work with the *Bible Society's Open the Book* project.

Bob began by successfully enlisting audience participation to tell the Zacchaeus story, which was very lively. His aim is to help people re-tell Bible stories, recognising, for example, that it can be challenging to find different ways to re-tell the Christmas story every year.

In a primary school a boy was hugely excited and amazed at hearing about the resurrection. Bob reminded us that in re-telling, we must not forget the WOW of the story! He explained that it is really important to go back to the Bible, both to get the story accurate and to let it speak to you and give you the WOW to communicate.

Don't re-tell other people's ideas and mistakes without checking! Ages ago Bob nearly re-told the walls of Jericho story from Sunday school memories. He then re-read the passage and found there was an angel involved, which gave him a WOW and a fresh focus in telling this story.

It is also useful to do historical and cultural research on a story you are telling, for example why would the friend arriving with his family at midnight be naturally traveling at night in that parable? Bob warned us against mixing up the gospel accounts of one event as they are told specifically in that way by that author to make a point.

He said we should take the story apart and draw an audience in with the uniqueness of the characters and the strangeness of the setting.

For example with 'Doubting Thomas': when telling that story think about everything we know about Thomas, make him 3D not 2D (like the flannel graphs many of us remembered from our Sunday School days!)

Bob read from his book ***New Testament Tales: The Unauthorized Version*** (Lion, £4.99, ISBN 978-0745962849)

The story of the Widow of Nain was told from the son's perspective and uses what Bob called Sacred Imagination to bring the characters to life, for example asking how would the widow have felt in that situation?

A question was asked from the audience regarding what the limits are of sacred imagination. Bob recommended that when you know you are going too far be honest with the audience, but that each person probably

has their own limit when telling stories from the Bible,

Every story needs a conflict, a problem to resolve. Some Bible stories have multiple problems, for example the prodigal son; for some groups telling about the older brother's problem will work for that audience. Some stories have so much going on you need to tell them episodically, although there is also a bigger picture problem which can be solved when the various episodes are put together.

Sometimes we focus on a different problem for children and simplify a story too much, an example being when the gourd story at end of Jonah is left out in children's Bibles. Getting the conflict right brings the story to life. Bob said we should acknowledge that people have questions and tell stories that touch on those questions.

Pacing is also important. Establish the problem in the first quarter, in the middle half other problems come in, then resolve them in the last quarter. Jesus does these things in his stories. End each story with a BOOM!

Character, setting, conflict, pacing were covered and through Bob's own example we saw that lots of repetition, rhythm and rhyme ties a story together. *Aslan Christian Books* had brought along lots of Bob's books to sell and we ended our time together with hot and cold drinks, delicious biscuits and friendly fellowship.

Karen Hans, BSc, MA, FCLIP, works as Librarian at the *Forest Hill School* in London and serves on the executive committee of *Christians in Library and Information Services* as Prayer Secretary.

ROBERT FOSTER recalls the work of *Christians in Library and Information Services* in the year 2018-2019 in a report first delivered at our Annual Conference in Oxford in April 2019

ANOTHER BUSY YEAR

The year in review was another busy one for CLIS, with much to savour and reflect upon.

Major event

Our Annual Conference, held on Saturday 14 April 2018 at the Salvation Army's *Regent Hall*, in London, was entitled "*Freedom and Truth*" and covered the very timely subjects of freedom of speech and fake news. Our morning speaker, Mark Jones, chairman of the *Lawyers' Christian Fellowship* spoke on "*Gospel Freedom and the Workplace*", which covered practical matters concerned with sharing faith with colleagues. Later on, Malcolm Martin, Deputy Leader of the *Christian People's Alliance*, provided an entertaining yet also sobering presentation entitled "*What is truth and how do we know it?*". There was no annual lecture in 2018.

Visits

There were three visits organised by CLIS in 2018. On Wednesday 23 May 2018 Ben Virgo of *Christian Heritage London* conducted a walking tour of places of Christian historical interest in the City of London. On Wednesday 12 September 2018 there was a visit to the *Bible Society Library*, housed at the *University of Cambridge Library*. The curator highlighted some of the remarkable Bibles there, such as an early Gutenberg. The visit

was arranged by CLIS committee member Rachel Johnson. Then, on Saturday 20 September 2018 there was a visit to *The Kilns*, former home of C. S. Lewis, in Headington, Oxford, followed by a visit to *Holy Trinity Church*, the parish church where Lewis and his brother are buried and where there is a stained glass window commemorating the ***Chronicles of Narnia***.

Publications

Since the last conference, three issues of ***Christian Librarian*** have been published: Summer 2018, Autumn 2018 and Winter 2018/Spring 2019. Contents have included reports of recent CLIS activities, the text of the conference talk by Mark Jones, news items of interest to librarians, articles on information volunteering at the *Evangelical Alliance*, and the environment/climate change crisis and thoughts on our response to it. Other topics considered included art and architecture in Scotland, the *CARE* conference on artificial intelligence and robotics held at the *British Library*, preservation, Marshal McLuhan and communications theory, the decline of letter writing, Andrew Parker's thirty-two years at the *House of Commons* library, and more besides.

Over the same period, CLIS released five issues of the ***E-Newsletter***, containing details of CLIS activities plus articles and news items on retirement (the *AfterWorkNet* web site), public leadership resources, the *Surrey Performing Arts Library*, the *Arts Centre Group Poetry Alive* event, volunteering at *Salisbury Cathedral library*, the *British Library Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* exhibition, *Narnia and Middle Earth* on *Netflix* and *Amazon*, a Christmas meditation (by Richard Waller), and much more.

Thanks must go to Graham Hedges for the work he does in editing and producing the publications, as well as the very large amount he does as Secretary, even after nearly forty years!

On-Line Involvement

The CLIS web site, managed by John Wickenden, features

information about CLIS activities, the current issue of the ***E-Newsletter***, and back issues of ***Christian Librarian***. There is a *PayPal* facility for subscriptions.

CLIS continues to have a presence on *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *LinkedIn*, although there is scope for greater participation by members on all of these, bringing our activity to a wider public.

Outside Publicity for CLIS

CLIS continues to gain publicity elsewhere. Since the demise of the “*organisations in liaison with CILIP*” scheme we no longer have the same automatic right to publicise our activities in the CILIP journal, but our publicity continues to appear in a number of publications. These have included ***Together*** (the Christian book trade magazine), the ***Arts Centre Group E-Info***, the ***English Churchman***, and the ***Evangelical Times***. In addition, our secretary, Graham Hedges, has written various articles and book reviews for the *Evangelical Alliance* web site and ***idea*** magazine. It should also be noted that an obituary of Past President Margaret Keeling co-written by Graham Hedges and Margaret’s former colleagues from *Essex* and *Staffordshire* appeared in CILIP’s ***Information Professional***.

Membership

At the end of 2018 there were one hundred and twenty-seven CLIS members with an additional six subscribers to ***Christian Librarian***. A total of seventy seven names are on our *Facebook* group, and one hundred receive the ***E-Newsletter***.

Officers of CLIS

There have been three executive committee meetings since 2018 Conference. During the year, our former Chair, Richard Waller,

became the seventh LCF/CLIS President, whilst Annabel Haycraft stood down as a Member Without Portfolio. Thanks go to the various CLIS executive committee members for their efforts.

Deceased members

Margaret Keeling died shortly before the 2018 CLIS Conference. A past LCF President and CLIS Life Vice President, Margaret was a former County Librarian for *Staffordshire* and, then, *Essex County* Libraries. She served on the LCF review group, delivered talks and chaired various events. We thank God for her personality, encouragement, understanding and experience.

Derek Fawcett worked as the College Librarian of *Merton College* until his retirement. He took part in a number of our library working parties, such as those at the *Northumbria Bible College*. Following retirement he spent three years in Nepal working as a personnel officer but also re-organised five different libraries including a medical and hospital library. Derek and his wife Norah catalogued a friend's private library in France and also re-organised/catalogued the library of the *Spanish Gospel Mission*. Norah says that she hopes that there is a library in Heaven for him to tackle!

We are pleased to offer prayers of thanksgiving for the lives of Margaret and Derek, and prayers also for their loved ones.

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

REVIEWS

LIFE AND LITERATURE

THANK GOD IT'S MONDAY: FLOURISHING IN YOUR WORKPLACE

Mark Greene

**Muddy Pearl, 5th edition, 2019, RRP £9.99, Pbk., 214 p.,
ISBN 978-1910912574**

Thank God it's Monday is an acknowledged classic on Christian faith in the workplace and in its twenty-five year history it has appeared in five editions, changed publishers, and grown from one hundred and ninety two to two hundred and fourteen pages.

For twenty of those twenty five years Mark Greene has served as the Director of the *London Institute for Contemporary Christianity* and in that role he has campaigned for the Church to give greater attention to supporting its members during the many hours when they are not in church or involved in church activities.

Since Mark published his original book in 1994 there have been other books on a similar subject and various initiatives to help Christians relate their faith to their work. Despite this, workplace issues are often not addressed in many local congregations and Mark still finds it necessary to make a case for churches to give greater support to their members in working life and in other frontline situations.

Personal evangelism at work is one of the book's major emphases and the author gives helpful advice on the right and wrong ways of raising the subject of faith with colleagues who are not yet believers. However, the author has wider interests and the book has much to say on workplace ethics and the everyday problems that face Christians during their working lives.

Topics covered include the importance of honesty in the workplace, work/life balance and relationships with employers. The author recognises the problem of long working hours and the stress that many employees experience in their jobs. The book closes with a section for Christians who have reached senior positions in their organisations and stresses the importance of a servant approach to leadership as illustrated in the scriptures.

In addition to quotes from the Bible, Mark offers case studies of Christians who have flourished in the working environment, and stories from his own early career as an executive in the advertising industry. He does not pretend to have perfectly put his own principles into practice and he gives a candid account of the resentment that he felt when his superiors in his advertising agency passed him over for promotion on several occasions.

It is, perhaps, a weakness of the book that it takes most of its examples from the business world and has less to say to those who work in public sector organisations. I was a little disappointed that, although Mark briefly mentions the resources available from the *Christian Medical Fellowship* and the *Lawyers' Christian Fellowship*, he has little to say about the value of getting involved in organised workplace groups or Christian professional associations. The book is mainly addressed to Christians in full time employment and the author admits that he has less to say to readers who find themselves on zero hour contracts or part of the so-called gig economy.

The book closes with a listing of books and other resources that are available to help working Christians. This is useful but, again, there is no mention of organisations like *Transform Work UK*, or the help provided by workplace and professional groups.

Despite these few reservations ***Thank God it's Monday*** deserves its reputation as a major work for Christians who are keen to lead credible Christian lives in the workplace and it should be required reading for every member of Christian workplace groups and

professional associations.

Graham Hedges, *MCLIP*, *Hon. FCLIP*, is the Secretary and Publications Editor of *Christians in Library and Information Services* and worked until his retirement in government and public library services

**SCATTERED & GATHERED : EQUIPPING DISCIPLES FOR THE
FRONTLINE**

Neil Hudson

**Inter-Varsity Press, 2019, RRP £7.99, Pbk., 224 p.,
ISBN 978-1783599929**

This is an excellent book, both thought-provoking and inspiring. Its subtitle “*equipping disciples for the front line*” says a lot about it. The “*gathered*” in the title refers to being gathered together for worship which is, of course, very important and helps greatly to build our faith. But what happens outside worship is the main concern of the book – the “*scattered*”.

Our faith shouldn't be confined to Sunday worship but to be true disciples it should be reflected in our everyday lives where many opportunities to share our faith present themselves and the Church can help support us in this in various ways not least by providing opportunities to talk about the challenges we face in our everyday lives and by praying about problems faced by ourselves and others. This can take the form of mid-week groups, prayer meeting or the minister/pastor getting to know about their congregation's lives outside Church and perhaps even visiting their workplaces to see the problems they face there.,

There is an example given of a lady, a Church “*veteran*” moving to a new area to care for family and at the end of the service Neil Hudson (one of our past speakers) was telling her about his Church community and explained that they were less interested in how she could serve them and more concerned about how they could serve her in this new phase of her life. The lady hadn't been expecting to hear this – it was new to her. Maybe she thought Neil would be more concerned about

how she would fit in to his Church and how she could help them.

This book should inspire us all to be good disciples in the whole of our lives and make an impact for the Kingdom wherever we find ourselves. It is also very helpful for Church leaders.

Anne MacRirtchie, BSc, lives in Aberdeen and serves on the executive committee of *Christians in Library and Information Services* as our Scottish Secretary.

ANGLICAN WOMEN NOVELISTS
Edited by Judith Maltby and Alison Shell
T. & T. Clark, 2019, RRP £27.99, Pbk., 288 p.,
ISBN 978-0567686763

I began this volume with a sense of the anticipation of good things and worked through each chapter with gathering excitement.

Chronologically organised, the volume includes Anglican women novelists from Charlotte Bronte (1816-55) to P. D. James (1920-2014), thus covering approximately one hundred and fifty years of writing, across the nineteenth, twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

The editors clearly state the rationale for their parameters in an excellent introduction (not too long and as interesting as the main content; rare in introductions) and have included contributors with proven expertise in their subject. Entitled '*Why Anglican; Why Women; Why Novelists?*' the introduction paves the way for each contributor to state in what way their chosen subject is specifically Anglican.

A number of the authors included also wrote books for children and young adults, notably, Charlotte Maria Tucker (A.L.O.E.), Charlotte Yonge, Elizabeth Goudge, Noel Streatfeild and Monica Furlong. The last three of these authors are better remembered for their contribution to fiction for young people than for their writing for adults, the differentiation being a questionable distinction either way.

Seen through a contemporary lens, the broad, and in some cases unorthodox views of the nineteenth century authors are less well-known and even less acknowledged than is the stereotypical view of them as

pious moralists who portrayed ‘*good death*’, especially of children. The contributors disabuse the reader of such simplistic critiques, which are often given without the works being read.

Moving through the twentieth century, the chronology progresses from the largely unknown fiction of Evelyn Underhill, through the sophistication of Rose Macaulay, the cultural critique of Barbara Pym, to the higher profile writing of Iris Murdoch – in a chapter entitled ‘*Anglican Atheist*’ (pp. 161-173).

Barbara Pym has suffered from a fluctuating popularity since the early 1960s and is subject to sporadic revivals, and rightly so, since she had been compared to Jane Austen in her acerbic observations of ‘*The world of the parish*’ (p. 119). The writing of two of the best known detective writers (Dorothy L. Sayers and P.D. James), is brilliantly explored, leaving the reader with a renewed intention to revisit their work.

In a succinct Afterword, the context and position of the *Church of England* is outlined, from being ‘*hopelessly respectable*’ (p. 207) in the past to the contemporary scene when any sign of a serious faith expressed in public is as an embarrassment to what passes for respectability, now that ‘all churches are counter-cultural’ (p. 210) and should be seen to be so.

In brief, this book is both highly enjoyable, despite its unpromising title, and informative. It demands and deserves close attention. This short review hardly scratches the surface to expose the depth and riches within. The book inspires the reader to revisit the work of these novelists, or, in those instances where some titles have been on the reader’s intended list for years and never quite made it to the top, to encourage some list-jumping to discover their delights. I await a sequel with anticipation. Read it and share the excitement.

Rachel E. Johnson, MA, PhD, is an Associate Researcher for the *International Forum for Research into Children’s Literature* and works as a volunteer at *Tyndale House*, the biblical research library in Cambridge, Rachel serves on the executive committee of *Christians in Library and Information Services* as our Library Assistance Manager.

MARGARET HUNT introduces the work of a society that has pioneered the development of religious drama over an impressive nine decades

RADIUS AT NINETY

“Radius works with churches, community groups and the theatre to promote drama which explores faith. The membership of Radius is drawn from all denominations and reflects a broad Christian understanding.” In 2019 *Radius* is celebrating ninety years of promoting religious drama, and in this article I shall look at some of the changes the Society has seen.

Back in 1929, when the organisation was founded as *The Religious Drama Society*, its aims were formulated as follows: *“To promote the development of drama with a spiritual purpose and of Christian type as a means of increasing interest in religious and ethical ideals, imparting Truth, and quickening Christian sentiment.”* Leaving aside changing styles of public pronouncement, these aims are still recognisable in the twenty-first century mission statement quoted above. At a meeting on 15 April 1929 some practical goals were identified: a handbook, lectures, *“propaganda”* (not at the time always a pejorative term), commissioning plays, publishing, the formation of a library, running courses and being a centre of reference for religious drama societies. Over the years the Society has made an onslaught on all these goals.

The question of whether to include the word *“Christian”* in its title and aims was a point of contention from the beginning. *Radius’s* active membership has always been predominantly but not exclusively Christian, and the first Chair of the society's Council, the Tibetan explorer Sir Francis Younghusband, hoped in vain that the society would embrace Hindu drama. In practice, *Radius’s* main work has been that of providing resources for drama groups

where participants' belief is less of an issue than the task of putting on a play that "*illuminates the human condition*", to use a formula popular in the mid-twentieth century. There was always a strong belief that God would be working through the play and its performers, regardless of their hesitations and imperfections.

Doing drama in a church building was controversial, but the annual production of a play in *Canterbury Cathedral* Chapter House from 1928 onwards did a lot to change opinion in the Free Churches as well as within Anglicanism. Contrary to what is often assumed, the *Religious Drama Society* was not involved with the *Canterbury Festival*, but the two organisations shared some of the same leading figures, notably E. Martin Browne who directed T. S. Eliot's ***Murder in the Cathedral***, and Bishop George Bell, who commissioned it. Then as now, the plays most in demand by church drama groups were Passion Plays and Nativities, both to some extent legitimised in the eyes of congregations by their long history.

It was quickly decided that the creation of a library was unnecessary as the *British Drama League* already held religious plays. The Society would recommend approved plays, but predictably there were problems establishing agreed criteria and in the 1930s some plays had a chequered history of being repeatedly taken on and off the list depending on who was chairing the meeting. Supply arrangements with publishers came under strain and the *Faith Press* withdrew financial support when none of its plays were recommended. Martin Browne took an increasingly dominant role as a tough enforcer, believing that sentimental writing did the gospel no service, but the counter-argument, then as now, was that you have to start where people are.

Just before the outbreak of war the Society entered into an agreement with the Anglican missionary organisation *SPCK* which included renting premises at a favourable rate and welcoming *SPCK* representatives onto the Society's Council, including the eminent New Testament scholar Noel Davey. In 1951 the Society's *Festival of Britain* commission was Christopher Fry's ***A Sleep of Prisoners***, now regarded as a minor classic, but Davey and others

were not happy with its exclusively Old Testament themes and, rather bizarrely, the play was subsequently excluded from the Society's list of recommendations. It was an era of gospel-centred preaching, with Billy Graham's first crusade shaking the Church's complacency in 1954.

In the 1960s the Society reached its peak membership of over sixteen hundred with the annual week-long summer school attracting well over one hundred students, yet it became financially overstretched by employing several permanent staff in its central office and library: the Society was now operating a lending service and had acquired a substantial number of playsets. During the war years there had been grants which supported Martin Browne's professional touring company *The Pilgrim Players*, but funding dried up in the fifties when the Society found it harder to make a case on the basis of public benefit. In the sixties the Society's drama therapy arm, *Sesame*, had to dissociate itself from its religious origins in order to secure funding. The Society was struggling to adjust to the new secular age.

In the 1980s *Radius* started to experience a gradual decline in membership which has continued up to the present: the "joining" culture has gone, but paradoxically the eighties were a decade of renewed purpose. As drama entered the mainstream in schools and universities, there was less need for training courses and the focus moved towards publishing. Edmund Banyard, a URC minister who had written several religious musicals, launched *Radius's "Plays for the Eighties"* which were for a time jointly published with the *National Christian Education Council*. Edmund himself wrote several collections of short dramas or "sketches" intended for use in churches and school assemblies, but *Radius* moved away from this popular genre partly because organisations such as *Riding Lights* were already doing it so well and partly because it was felt that *Radius's* commitment to "exploring faith through drama" needed to be realised in longer plays.

Banyard pioneered the principle of flexible casting where characters could be either male or female, greatly increasing the

scripts' user-friendliness. Church playwright Les Ellison and BBC radio dramatist Nick Warburton have taken this principle further with sequences of self-contained scenes from which a selection can be made. Under Nickie Cox's editorship *Radius's* publishing operation has moved successfully from expensive print runs to scripts which can be bought online for £7 - £10 and printed out for the whole cast. Our collection of around fifty religious plays is unique and a panel of readers is responsible for quality control, with on the whole fewer disagreements than their predecessors of the 1930s. The same panel offers an assessment service for the modest sum of £25.

Radius's membership is now small, but several generous legacies have given us financial security and we aim to use this money to pursue the Society's aims in a twenty-first century way, operating from members' homes and increasingly reliant on the Internet and social media. Our 2020 Playwriting Competition is being run for the second time in partnership with London's *Finborough Theatre*, whose Artistic Director Neil McPherson is a long-standing *Radius* member. In 2020 we are launching a *Festival of Drama* in Cambridge on the last weekend in October, showcasing new plays and with Mark Oakley giving our first *Kathleen Hall Memorial Lecture*. In 2021 our Patron Rowan Williams will give the second lecture.

Information about *Radius* can be found on the website at www.radiusdrama.org.uk The Society's archive is held in the V&A theatre collections, THM/353, but researchers should note that this collection covers only the Society's internal activities and material relating to important members such as Browne, Bell, Eliot and Fry has been transferred to their dedicated archives. The *Radius* collection of older plays has not yet found a home beyond this writer's attic, and items can be borrowed by emailing me at radiusperforming@gmail.com

Margaret Hunt is *Radius's* honorary archivist and editor of *Radius Performing*. She is writing a history of the Society.

RACHEL JOHNSON considers criteria for assessing books for children – and adult readers – and draws some conclusions from George MacDonald's classic work *At the Back of the North Wind*

CHARLOTTE MASON'S CONCEPT OF LIVING BOOKS AND HOW WE MIGHT IDENTIFY THEM

*or, Books for children of five, or fifty, or seventy-five*¹

*'It was a perfectly normal day in the library When suddenly'*²

These words begin a story, written by a seven year old who loves reading. He is, if you like, in a place we wish for all the children we know. I start with him to remind us to keep in mind why we need to examine and choose books as informed and thoughtful facilitators in the process of enabling the enjoyment and imaginative interaction between books and children (and/or adults).

The first part of the title of this article is from Charlotte Mason's *An Essay Toward a Philosophy of Education*. The second part is from an essay by George MacDonald and indicates the agelessness of many books. Just how many, 'many' means of course depends on the individual situation and need, but the more pressing question is, 'which books?'

¹

² Johnson, David Randell. From unfinished story being written February and March 2018. Permission to use this story was asked and granted.

So, I have attempted to identify some criteria by which a librarian, parent or teacher might select 'living' books. This is how I plan to address the question:

- To briefly consider the concept of 'living books'
- To identify some criteria for selecting such books
- Following identification of criteria, to demonstrate what the criteria might 'look' like, by examining a story by George MacDonald, an author whose work appears on all the main lists of books related to Charlotte Mason's teaching methods.

Living Books

What is a living book? It is quite an abstract term and certainly does not refer to the experience encountered by the protagonist of Washington Irving's short story *The Mutability of Literature* in which the gentleman, whilst dropping off to sleep with an old book on the table before him, '*accidentally loosened the clasps; when, to his astonishment, the little book gave two or three yawns ... and at length began to talk.*'³

In her explanation of the importance of '*living books*', Charlotte Mason writes about:

1. The importance of the imagination
2. Books that engage the emotions – 'quick and informed with the ideas proper to the subject which it treats'.⁴
3. The power of narration
4. Character⁵

And so we have the basic concept of a learning approach through imaginative writing, through the awakening of emotional engagement, and through understanding the emotions. These concepts are still quite abstract and difficult to pin down, given the vast differences in what

³ Irving, Washington. *The Mutability of Literature*. A Colloquy in Westminster Abbey. As reported by Washington Irving in his sketchbook. [1819].

⁴ Cholmondely, Essex. *The Story of Charlotte mason (1842 – 1923)*. London: J. M. dent & Sons, 1960. p. 242.

⁵ Final two cited in: Ney, Marian Wallace. *Charlotte Mason: 'a pioneer of sane education'*. Nottingham: Educational Heretics Press, 1997. The Educational Heretics Series. p. 78.

might '*engage the imagination and emotions*' of any given person.

If we take a moment to examine the end result of reading such books, we are looking at reading that nourishes the development of empathy toward, and consideration for, other people, the development of an understanding of what it is like to be in their position, an insight into the difficulties they face, and a consequent change of behaviour toward them, which brings us to Charlotte Mason's underlying reason for education, the development of character.⁶

This quotation from Hannah More in 1804 partially sums up the concept: '*We do not so much want books for good people, as books which make bad ones better*'.⁷

Due to the development of neuro-science in recent years, we are on firmer ground in terms of scientific evidence for the belief, stated for a long time, including by Charlotte Mason, that what you reads affects how you think. I mention this aspect because sometimes, firmer evidence is needed, when we have to justify our position, than the fact that '*everybody knows*'.

Recent experiments have demonstrated measureable development in those areas of the brain relating to empathy and the understanding of another person's position. Iain McGilchrist, explains research done on the interaction between the two hemispheres of the brain, and reading fiction. Having noted that '*empathy is intrinsic to morality*'⁸ he later writes:

'Most of us probably share a belief that life is greatly enriched by (books)..... what is in them not only adds to life, but genuinely goes back into life and *transforms* it, so that life as we live it in a world full of books is created partly by books themselves.'⁹

The key word here is '*transform*'. You could say that as with the saying '*we are what we eat*', so also, we are, partially, what we read – food for

⁶ Ney, Marian Wallace. Charlotte Mason: 'a pioneer of sane education'. Nottingham: Educational Heretics Press, 1997. The Educational Heretics Series. p. 78.

⁷ From her diary 1804 in *Memories of the Life of Mrs. Hannah More, 2: In Two Volumes*. By William Roberts.. London: R.B. Seeley and W. Burnside, MDCCCXXXVI (1836).

⁸ McGilchrist, Iain. *The Master and his Emissary: the divided brain and the making of the Western world*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010 (2009). p. 86

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 196

the mind and heart – Charlotte Mason’s adage entirely.¹⁰ Marian Wallace Ney in her succinct and helpful book ***Charlotte Mason: pioneer of sane education*** notes that if all education is essentially to educate the will to choose wisely and thoughtfully, then the construct of character is the heart and end of education.¹¹ It would be possible to digress from the subject over this aspect of character which has been addressed elsewhere. (see ***A Complete Identity*** if interested).¹²

So what does ‘*to feed the imagination and engage the emotions*’ mean when we come to select books? Surely it must to some extent be subjective, a matter of taste or opinion (another term Charlotte Mason takes pains to unpick and differentiate from a view formed through the informed and thoughtful pursuit of knowledge).¹³

Somewhat like listening to music, we all have different affinities to which we are drawn. We need criteria that can be applied across a wide range of material and thus accommodate such affinities.

Criteria

In order to think about possible criteria to use as a framework within which to examine a book, fiction or non-fiction, a good place to start is with a question, implied by the second half of the title of this talk, a question discussed by children’s literature scholars and one that we need to touch upon and then park, so as not to be distracted by it, namely: ‘How does children’s literature differ from any other kind of literature?’

This question is dealt with at length by Jaqueline Rose in her seminal work ***The Case of Peter Pan: or the Impossibility of Children’s Fiction***¹⁴ and has been addressed by all major scholars of

¹⁰ Coombs, Margaret. *Charlotte Mason: Hidden Heritage and Educational Influence*. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2015. Synopsis of Educational Theory (1904). p. 265.

¹¹ Ney, Marian Wallace. *Charlotte Mason: ‘a pioneer of sane education’*. Nottingham: Educational Heretics Press, 1997. The Educational Heretics Series.

¹² Johnson, Rachel E. *A Complete Identity: the Youthful Hero in the Work of G.A. Henty and George MacDonald*. Eugene, OR. Pickwick Publications, 2014.

¹³ From: Mason, Charlotte. *Opinions and Principles*. CM, 1909. Cited in Cholmondely, Essex. *The Story of Charlotte mason (1842 – 1923)*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1960. p.119.

¹⁴ Rose, Jaqueline. *The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children’s Fiction*. London: Macmillan, 1984.

Children's literature. One aspect of this discussion is that Children's literature is in many instances regarded as primarily didactic and secondarily as an art form. But, if it is regarded as educative and as an art form, does this position necessarily mean it should be theorised differently, as if only children are educated by reading?

Perhaps Charlotte Mason would agree that the criteria for selecting works of literary merit would be the same for books categorised as 'children's' or 'adults', or, as George MacDonald writes, '*for children of five, or fifty, or seventy-five*'¹⁵, or by C.S Lewis when he writes about his own work:

'I put in what I would have liked to read when I was a child and what I still like reading now that I am in my fifties.'

and 'If you want to read what the writer has to say you will re-read the book at any age – 'the good ones last'.¹⁶

Lewis also notes: '*the neat sorting out of books into age-groups, so dear to publishers, has only a very sketchy relation with the habits of any real readers.*'¹⁷ (We are all aware that Librarians may also be guilty of such categorisation.)

In view of these comments, a good place to start is with some guidelines mentioned by Charlotte Mason, before moving onto some specific criteria noted by Maria Nikolajeva, a children's literature scholar of international repute.

Charlotte Mason's Criteria

I will note the main guidelines only, in order to lay a foundation on which to build.

First: "*For the children? They must grow up upon the best . . . There is never a time when they are unequal to worthy thoughts, well put*

¹⁵ MacDonald, George. 'On Fairy Tales' in *A Dish of Orts*. Whitethorn: Johannesen Publications, 1996. p. 317.

¹⁶ Lewis, C.S. *Of this and other worlds*. London: Collins, 1983 p.56 and 59

¹⁷ Lewis, C. S. *Of This and Other Worlds*. London: Collins, 1983. p.63

*inspiring tales , well told, well put; inspiring tales, well told. and we shall train a race of readers who will demand literature - that is, the fit and beautiful expression of inspiring ideas and pictures of life."*¹⁸

Charlotte Mason emphasised "*the fit and beautiful expression.*" The tales are "*well put*" and "*well told.*" We are to find books of 'high literary quality' but this criteria is highly debatable and, again, difficult to pin down. This guideline is to do with *Narrative*.

Second: "*Education is a life. That life is sustained on ideas. Ideas are of spiritual origin and God has made us so that we get them chiefly as we convey them to one another, whether by word of mouth, written page, Scripture word, musical symphony, but we must sustain a child's inner life with ideas as we sustain his body with food.*"¹⁹ "*Our business is to give him mind-stuff*"²⁰

This guideline is to do with *Content*.

Third: "*The children must enjoy the book. The ideas it holds must each make that sudden, delightful impact upon their minds, must cause that intellectual stir, which marks the inception of an idea*"²¹

Or, as George MacDonald writes in *At the Back of the North Wind*: what's the use of knowing a thing only because you're told it"?²²

CM also notes it is important the teacher enjoys the book too.

In terms of '*sustain(ing) a child's inner life*', the question resolves itself into - '*What manner of book will find its way with upheaving effect into the mind of an intelligent boy or girl? ... our spiritual life is sustained on other stuff*²³ [*than 'twaddle or 'condiments'*]"²⁴ *whether we be boys or*

¹⁸

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Mason, Charlotte. *School Education*, p. 178

²² MacDonald, George. *ABNW*, Whitehome Johannsen, 192, p. 57

²³ Mason, Charlotte. *School Education*. Vol. 3. *How to Use School-Books* Chapter XV. p. 168.

²⁴ Twaddle = *goody-goody stories*, *Condiments* = *highly-spiced adventure stories.* 'Again, as I have already said, ideas must reach us directly from the mind of the thinker, and it is chiefly by means of the books they have written that we get into touch with the best minds'. Mason, Charlotte. *School Education*. Vol. 3. *How to Use School-Books*. Chapter XV

girls, men or women.

Finding the 'other stuff' is the challenge, since we recognise it when we find it but cannot always explain what it is.

So, some criteria are shaping up:

1. Does it contain ideas and knowledge suitable for that particular child?
2. Does the child react with delight?
3. Does it make an impact on the reader's mind?²⁵

In terms of number 3, we may refer to Francis Spufford's autobiographical work *The Child that Books built* in which he describes 'readings that acted like transformations' and notes the dangers of children reading 'before you know it they'll be thinking for themselves.'²⁶ When children start to apply what they have read, and 'think for themselves', you have evidence of the impact of their reading material.

These criteria are a helpful start, but focus, especially the last two, mainly on the child's reaction rather than the book. Many of the examples given in *Philosophy of Education* are equally valid today: *Fairy tales, Aesop's Fables, The Pilgrim's Progress, Classical Myth and Legend, Norse Myth*.²⁷ There are some outstanding more recent retellings of Fairy tales, Classical Myth and Legend, and Norse Myth available. Notably Kevin Crossley-Holland and Geraldine McCaughrean, amongst others.

You will have noticed the preponderance of fairy tale, legend and myth in these examples, for as G.K. Chesterton pointed out in his reflection on fairy tales:

'Fairy tales do not give the child his first idea of bogey. What fairy tales give the child is his first clear idea of the possible defeat of bogey. *Exactly what the fairy tale does is this: it accustoms him*

page 177.

²⁵ Ibid Chapter XVI. p. 168

²⁶ Spufford, Francis. *The Child that Books Built*. London: Faber and Faber, 2002. p. 9.

²⁷ Mason, Charlotte. *An Essay Towards A Philosophy of Education: a liberal education for all*. 1909. (numerous reprints including Radford, VA.: Wilder Publications, 2008.)

..... to the idea *that these limitless terrors had a limit, that these shapeless enemies have enemies in the knights of God, that there is something in the universe more mystical than darkness, and stronger than strong fear.*¹²⁸

Fairy tales, myth, and legend will always transcend time because they deal with the universals of life faced by every generation, and with spiritual and moral issues that affect the development of character. (Here we are back to Charlotte Mason's fundamental concern.)

But let us move on to some generic criteria, working from the general to the particular, or from the abstract to specific:

In her books ***Aesthetics Approaches to Children's Literature: an introduction.***²⁹ and ***Children's Literature Comes of Age,*** Maria Nikolajeva approaches her subject from generic perspectives, some of which we may examine as potential helpful criteria in our search for help in selecting 'living books'. Firstly, a definition of aesthetics for our purpose, as: 'a set of artistic features characterising a specific phenomenon in the field of art', which:

- reflects reality
- carries ideology
- has potential to affect the mind and the emotions³⁰ (page xvii)

So, the books are seen as 'both art form and educational vehicle'³¹ and 'both art form and ideological vehicle'³²

The broad perspectives we can work with are:

Content
Themes and motifs
Characters
Narration

²⁸ *Tremendous Trifles* (1909), XVII: "The Red Angel"

²⁹ Nikolajeva, Maria. *Aesthetics Approaches to Children's Literature: an introduction.* Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. xvii

³¹ *Ibid.* p. xi

³² *Ibid.* p. xii

Language Suitability for Purpose

There are many other aspects to consider: genre, setting, style, medium, reader, for example.³³

Demonstration of criteria

Having established a few generic criteria, what might these criteria look like '*in the text*'? In George MacDonald's ***Adela Cathcart*** we find, literally, 'life-giving' stories, in that they bring health to Adela and it would be easy to light on any of MacDonald's fairy tales, short or long, but instead I will look more closely at ***At the Back of the North Wind***, which is a multi-genre story. Pigeonholing stories into one genre limits their horizons and subliminally encourages readers to read in a categorical mode thus limiting their expectations, hence the choice of ***At the Back of the North Wind***.

The aim of this section is to demonstrate George MacDonald's ***At the Back of the North Wind*** as fulfilling the criteria for a living book.

George MacDonald is regarded by those who know his writing, as a consummate writer of literary fairy tales. The following application could equally be made to his *Princess* books, *The Wise Woman*, and other, shorter tales to demonstrate that he writes life into text, inspires ideas, enlarges boundaries of thought, and takes the reader out of the commonplace. I will take the criteria chosen one at a time:

Content: in the examination of content we need to make a distinction between content - what a narrative is about, and form - how a story, fiction or non-fiction, is told.³⁴ Both these aspects will impact on the message of the narrative.

A brief overview of ***At the Back of the North Wind*** demonstrates that the text contains a realistic setting, a social aspect in the representation of the life of a cabbie, materially poor, in London. This

³³ Ibid p. 73

³⁴ Ibid p. 73

apparent realism morphs very quickly into something more mystical, beyond everyday life, in the characters of the two Diamonds, North Wind, and the introduction of 'goodness.' C.S. Lewis praised MacDonald for his ability to depict goodness,³⁵ an ability which raises MacDonald above what he himself refers to as 'the commonplace',³⁶ and fulfils Charlotte Mason's general criteria of '*Books that feed the spirit in some way: thought, feeling, soul.*'³⁷

With the introduction of North Wind herself, we are given access to MacDonald's thinking, about for example, suffering, and a glimpse of his theology. So the content includes '*values, ideology, and message*'.

MacDonald's superlative ability to write literary fairy tales, is demonstrated in the story of *Little Daylight*, which is a fairy tale placed in the centre of the narrative and a pivotal point in the story. [A study of this fairy tale and its position in ***At the Back of the North Wind*** can be found in ***A Noble Unrest***].³⁸

This brief outline indicates the richness and diversity of the content, namely: realism, the mystical, the transformational, and the faerie tale.

Themes and motifs: that is, 'a recurring textual element,' for example, an event, a character, a quest or a struggle, friendship, or death.³⁹ Diamond's meeting with North Wind is a major recurring theme, for example. Friendship and affinity between two Diamonds runs through the whole text, and Diamond's relationship with Mr. Raymond and how it affects Mr. Raymond provides an example of a thread of character development. The increasing struggle of the Coleman family demonstrates the fairy tale motif of struggle or test,⁴⁰ and Diamond's lengthening time at the back of the North Wind, that is, out of this world, becomes increasingly dominant. Any of these themes and motifs could be discussed at length, with quotations from the book.

³⁵ Lewis, C.S. *George MacDonald an Anthology*, London: Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press, 1946. p. 17.

³⁶ ^s for example, MacDonald, George. *The Princess and Curdie*. Any full text edition

³⁷ Mason, Charlotte. *School Education*. Vol. 1

³⁸ Webb, Jean.(editor) *A Noble Unrest: Contemporary Essays on the Work of George MacDonald*. Newcastle, UK.: Cambridge Scholars, 2007.

³⁹ Nikolajeva, Maria. *Aesthetics Approaches to Children's Literature: an introduction*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005. p. 73.

⁴⁰ See Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. 2nd ed. Austn, TX: University of Texas, 1968

Character: examination of character can be broken down into so many elements that we could get bogged down. In order to extract manageable criteria here, the first point is to clarify what we mean by character. Again, Nikolajeva is helpful and narrows the meaning down to 'agents performing actions.'⁴¹

From this definition we can ask such questions as:

- Is there more than one identifiable protagonist?
- Are they complex? For example, Is it obvious whether they are good or bad? Is the reader encouraged to admire or condemn?
- Is the protagonist (or other character) flat, (this is two dimensional, with only one trait)? or round (multidimensional, with a number of traits)? and, is this portrayal appropriate to the story?
- Is the protagonist (or other character) static or dynamic, that is, is there change and growth?⁴²
- Are they consistent or inconsistent?⁴³
- Is the protagonist a Type? e.g. youngest son, trickster, orphan – this character may be needed in some narratives to support aspects of content
- Are they subordinate to plot?
- How is the protagonist (or any other character) represented?⁴⁴

In the space available, we will focus on the two Diamonds, with a brief mention of North Wind in this overview Little Diamond is an ideal, comparable to Sir Gibbie the eponymous protagonist of MacDonald's novel **Sir Gibbie** (1879). In this novel MacDonald defends his depiction of ideal characters against what he perceives as the demand for, 'the representation of that grade of humanity of which men see the most,' when he writes,

whatever the demand of the age, I insist that that which *ought* to be presented to its beholding, is the common good uncommonly developed, and that not because of its rarity, but because it is truer to humanity. ... It is the noble, not the failure from the noble that is

⁴¹ Nikolajeva, Maria. *Aesthetics Approaches to Children's Literature: an introduction*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005. p. 145

⁴² Ibid p. 158

⁴³ Ibid. p. 159

⁴⁴ Ibid p. 145

the true human.⁴⁵

In this passage, MacDonald's position on character representation encapsulates his rejection of the demand for less than the ideal. He creates Diamond as an ideal, spiritual character, a carer and a problem solver. His travels with North Wind provide him with experience beyond the everyday and enable him to see *'the everyday'* as anything but commonplace. Clare Skymer, the protagonist of ***A Rough Shaking*** (1883) is another example of such a character. When examining character representation, we do need to have some idea of what kind of character we are looking for, aspirational? or 'that grade of humanity of which men see the most'? or both, since both are represented in ***At the Back of the North Wind***.

Old Diamond: It may appear strange to single out a horse for character examination but Old Diamond displays most of the fruits of the spirit: 'peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control'. (Galatians 5:23-25) and plays a crucial role in the story, alongside, Ruby, another horse, who superficially appears to be the antithesis of Old Diamond but is actually an angel, sent for a purpose. This passage, describing Diamond's first ride on Old Diamond, demonstrates a theme of mutual cooperation also found in Diamond's dealings with other people and with North Wind herself:

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⁴⁶

I hope from this comment you can deduce that these two characters are complex, even if you are not familiar with *At the Back of the North Wind*.

To briefly mention North Wind herself; much has been written and endless discussions had about this character and what or whom she actually represents. Her connection with the Wise Woman (in the *Wise Woman*, (1875), and the Grandmother in the *Princess* books (1871 and 1883) is clear. She is the lady who appears in difference guises,

⁴⁵ MacDonald, George. *Sir Gibbie*. Whitethorn: Johannesen, date? p. 43

⁴⁶ MacDonald, George. *At the Back of the North Wind*. Whitethorn: Johannesen, 1992. p. 54.

old/young, beautiful/ugly, large/small, the Sophia, the wisdom figure. For a full examination of her character, see Deirdre Hayward's *The Mystical Sophia*.⁴⁷

Narration: This brief examination of character leads to the criterion of narration, that is, 'how are their characteristics portrayed, or, narrated?'⁴⁸ Once again there are many potential questions, such as: what is the narrative perspective (who is telling the story)? or, 'who is the implied author, the narrator, the narratee, the implied reader, the real reader?'⁴⁹ In *At the Back of the North Wind* there are a number of focalisers, we find at the end that Mr. Raymond has been telling Diamond's story, but also Diamond often tells his own story throughout, and then there is the story told by North Wind herself. She presents the bigger picture, always taking the reader out of the familiar world, from which vantage point, she presents it from a different perspective.

Given Charlotte Mason's emphasis on readers learning to 'think for themselves', a key question is: how **didactic** is this narrative? Is the message 'constantly interfering with the story, telling the reader what to think' about any given character or situation?⁵⁰

George MacDonald's story *The Wise Woman* has been criticised for being overly didactic so it would be a good story to examine with this question in mind. Of course there is a didactic element in MacDonald's stories, the question is, is it intrusive? The answer depends partly on the reader's view of Victorian literature per se, but suppose we agree with MacDonald's Christian perspective as we examine this question? Then my conclusion would be that the story takes precedence. MacDonald tells the story primarily as a story. Of course, his message does come across, and he himself said his adult novel writing became his pulpit,⁵¹ the message comes from his inherent faith, life and thought rather than in a contrived plot to convey a message.

Language: Penultimately we come to language: is it simple/ complex? For example can we find:

⁴⁷ Hayward, Deirdre. 'The Mystical Sophia: more on the Great Grandmother in the Princess books.' *North Wind: Journal of the George MacDonald Society*. 13 (1994) 29-33.

⁴⁸ Nikolajeva, Maria. *Aesthetics Approaches to Children's Literature: an introduction*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005. p. 160-1

⁴⁹ Ibid p. 171-2

⁵⁰ Ibid. 182

⁵¹ MacDonald, Greville. *George MacDonald and His Wife*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1924. p.

- Polysyllables
- Lack of direct speech
- Imagery and figurative language
- Irony and ambiguity⁵²
- are there descriptions that really describe, dialogue that can produce some illusion, characters that one can distinctly imagine.⁵³

A typical dialogue between North Wind and Diamond demonstrates the way in which MacDonald lures his reader into thinking about the world (and beyond), differently, freshly:

NW 'I am not a fairy' answered the little creature.

D 'How do you know that?'

NW 'it would become you better to ask how you are to know it.'

D 'You've just told me'

NW 'Yes, but what is the use of knowing a thing only because you're told it?'

This conversation continues until Diamond's preconceptions about fairies, and about who he might be talking to, are swept away.⁵⁴ The complexity of the language in this story is diverse, from straightforward storytelling, through a wide range of vocabulary and intertextual allusion, demonstrated in the episode in the Cathedral, to what Rod McGillis has discussed in terms of the pre-language language of Diamond's songs and rhymes. (Diamond creates these rhymes to sing to his baby brother.⁵⁵)

And last but not less important

Suitability of purpose: the purpose of the text (e.g. fiction or non-fiction)⁵⁶ and for the reader. Is *At the Back of the North Wind* suitable

⁵²Nikolajeva, Maria. *Aesthetics Approaches to Children's Literature: an introduction*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005. p. 197.

⁵³Lewis, C. S. *An Experiment in Criticism*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1961. p. 29/30.

⁵⁴ MacDonald, George. *At the Back of the North Wind*. Whitethorn: Johannesen, 1992. p.57.

⁵⁵ McGillis, Roderick. 'Language and Secret Knowledge in ' At the Back of the North Wind'. In *For the Childlike: George MacDonald's Fantasies for Children*. ed. R. McGillis, Metuchen, NJ: The Children's Literature Association, 1992. 145-59.

⁵⁶ Nikolajeva, Maria. *Aesthetics Approaches to Children's Literature: an introduction*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005. p.201.

for the intended purpose of introducing whatever it is the teacher wishes to introduce? This question can only be answered by any given teacher, after the narrative has been examined, which leads on to the next consideration, noted by Charlotte Mason, that the book must have the potential to be enjoyed by both teacher and student, a difficult criterion to fulfil, especially when strict categorisation is applied. For example, in terms of enjoyment:

Horace Walpole commented, in 1726, on writing for children:

... children divide into the two eternal divisions of mankind, ... Romantics and Realists, Prosists and Poets, Business Men and Dreamers, Travellers and Stay-at-Homes, Exiles and Prosperous Citizens. ... (17-18)⁵⁷.

He continued by opposing the realists as the readers of adventures and the Romantics as the readers of fairy tales. We could spend a long time examining why this statement is far from as clear cut as he indicates, in just about every aspect, but suffice it to say that the number of identifiable genres (should one wish to define them as such)

in *At the Back of the North Wind* should stretch the preconceptions and satisfy the 'taste' of most readers who look in the story for their preferred sort of story. Incidentally, *At the Back of the North Wind* includes just such a discussion in Chapter 27 in which Mr Raymond asks the children in the hospital what kind of story they would like him to tell.

Charlotte Mason's wonderful expression of the need for a book to have an '*upheaving effect on the mind*',⁵⁸ includes the need for a reader to be prepared to have her preconceptions '*upheaved*'. Preconceptions can seriously get in a reader's way when approaching a book. If preconceived expectations are not met, confusion can follow leading to rejection, or criticism of that book. If the mind is open enough to be '*upheaved*', then expansion, not rejection can follow. This confusion and possible rejection can occur particularly if a reader has a preconceived

⁵⁷ Walpole, Hugh. 'Reading': Being One of a Series of Essays Edited by J. B. Priestley' and Entitled: *These Diversions*. Ed. J. B. Priestley. Vol. 1926. London: Jarrolds, 1926.

⁵⁸ Mason, Charlotte.

idea of what genre a narrative should fit into.

For example, in the case of *At the Back of the North Wind* the reader may expect, a more realistic novel rather than a fantasy containing a fairy tale, not anticipating a mixture of all three. George MacDonald crafted the story to fall into two sections, with, what the internal narrator (Mr. Raymond) calls 'a sort of a fairy-tale'⁵⁹ in the middle. Quite early in the narrative, events going on around Diamond demonstrate a move deeper into the fantasy or parallel world, the 'real' world is elided into the fantasy/parallel world and fades as the parallel world becomes clearer, more 'real'.⁶⁰

In one episode when Diamond is out with North Wind, the immediate material world becomes submerged as the larger picture of the parallel world takes precedence and becomes 'the norm'. It remains so for the rest of the story. The 'reality' and the 'fantasy' have swapped places, the unfamiliar becomes the 'real'.⁶¹ Thus realism, spirituality, action and adventure, character maturation, theology, and philosophy are all present in this story, fulfilling another Charlotte Mason requirement, that '*children will need to "dig" a bit for their knowledge*', and that '*the books would not be dumbed-down or a distillation of ideas*'⁶² are met in *At the Back of the North Wind* which both 'reflects reality' and 'carries ideology.'

Conclusion:

We accept the vital importance of encouraging children (of all ages) to read texts which we hope will enlarge their capacity to develop hope, empathy and imaginative responses to life, people and experience. We hope for the transformational effects of such reading for their development as human beings (in relation to each other and to God). In his essay on fairy tales, George MacDonald, wrote 'let fairy tale of mine go for a firefly, flashing and flying'. The statement could also be applied to any of his work, fiction or non-fiction, and to the work of many

⁵⁹ MacDonald, George. ABNW.

See also Johnson, Rachel. 'A Sort of a Fairy tale' in *A Noble Unrest, Contemporary Essays on the Work of George MacDonald*, edited by Jean Webb, *A Noble Unrest*. Newcastle, UK.: Cambridge Scholars, 2007.

⁶⁰ GMD. ABNW. p. 63

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 75

⁶² Mason, Charlotte.

other authors.

I will finish by saying that, whilst bearing in mind the practical or concrete criteria mentioned, look out for that extra dimension whilst selecting books for any given set of people/children, that 'single mark of red'⁶³, that 'flashing and flying'⁶⁴ that lights books up, and makes them live.

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⁶³ GMD. *Phantastes*. Whitethorn: Johannesen, 1994. Final page.

⁶⁴ GMD. *A Dish of Orts*. 'The Fantastic Imagination'. Whitethorn: Johannesen, 1996. p. 321.

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