



Christian Librarian (Autumn 2024)



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

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CHRISTIAN LIBRARIAN

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Contents

First word: Richard Waller

Annual Report (2022-2023): Robert Foster

Treasurer's Report (to December 2023): Diana Guthrie

Paul Burbridge – a tribute: Andrew Parker

Annual Lecture in York (2021): Paul Burbridge

The Old, Old Story: Steve Bassett (Lifewords)

The Library of Karl Kumm University, Nigeria: Lydia Endaben Lakan.

Fantasy – report on a British Library Exhibition: Janice Paine

George Verwer: Eddie Olliffe

Book reviews:

Abraham Verghese – *The covenant of water* (Eleanor Neil)

Jem Bloomfield – *Paths in the snow* (Rachel Johnson)





First Word: Helping others

By Richard Waller

One of the most important parts of Christian life and witness is the help we can be to other people. CLIS is no exception to this and an important part of our work as a Fellowship has been the assistance we can give to other Christians who need help and advice on running their library or information service. This has a long history, right back to early days with the then South Wales Bible College in Barry in 1977. Many of us have happy memories of our times on such projects, in fact I proposed to my wife Norma while cataloguing on one such working party in Liverpool in 1978!

Many of those of us who helped in those early days are now too elderly to work the long days like we did then! Indeed, in the last issue of the Christian Librarian I paid tribute to one such stalwart, Jean Woods, who has now gone to be with the Lord. However, the work goes on and we still seek to help other Christian organisations but nowadays the help is more likely to be financial to help struggling training colleges with book stock than practical, although there is one practical project currently going on.

Looking back to when our assistance programme was first on the go and remembering the Fellowship's impecunious hand to mouth existence when we sometimes wondered if we could pay the production and postage costs of our magazines, times have changed. Who could have believed we would have sufficient cash in the bank to entertain such a notion as paying for the supply of study materials to overseas libraries? The Lord has been good to us in this, but the needs are huge.

I know I was struck by the information from the Langham Partnership at our 2023 conference that a substantial proportion of the organisations seeking to train the pastors and church leaders in Africa and Asia have libraries less than half the size of my own private collection of theological materials (currently standing at 576 items, I have just added 4 new commentaries picked up in May at the Grace Baptist Assembly, where I was a delegate from our church). When I think of the size of the theological college libraries and personal pastoral libraries in the UK, there is no basis for comparison. Yet what can be more important for the future of the Church in much of the world outside our rich western heritage than the training of the leaders of the rapidly expanding churches of Asia, Africa and South America?

I would commend the support of this programme of assistance to you. If you know of needs let us know or can offer support, then please do. Above all pray for blessing on this aspect of our work, the need is great and by comparison the resources are few, but if we can help make a difference then we should do so.





CLIS Annual Report for 2022-23

A review of two years' work

The report for 2022 was given verbally at the 2023 conference, and so this write-up is a combined report for the two years.

Our 2022 conference 'Mission Information' was held at the Wesley Hotel in Euston. This was our first meeting in person since the pandemic and was an encouragement to all who were there. We had two excellent talks, the first coming from Steve Bassett and Coco Gaie representing Lifewords (previously Scripture Gift Mission), and the second from Eirwen Dorkins from SAT-7. Both presentations were thoroughly absorbing with multimedia material, and they drew a number of questions and comments.

There was a lecture on 29th October 2022, given by the author and poet Malcolm Guite, at Little St. Mary's Church in Cambridge. Malcolm talked about the background to writing his book of poetry on the Psalms David's crown. He read a number of the poems. I think all who were there found it a captivating, at times moving talk. It's a book which has helped a number of people, including some going through bereavement, having been written during the pandemic.

Our president, Richard Waller, produced an excellent issue of Christian Librarian in January 2023, featuring the previous year's talk about social media by Alex Davis from Pilgrims' Friend Society ; a report on a CLIS group visit to SAT-7 studios, organised by Janice Paine ; a review of a book on Lady Jane Grey ; and a poem by John Marrison. There were also the usual reports and announcements, including a full conference report for the 2022 event.

An additional article in this magazine gave some details regarding the £10,000 donation given by CLIS to Tyndale House, to fund electronic resources for researchers working in developing countries, who are unable to travel to Cambridge, or who have completed their time there and continue to need online access. Around the same time, it was agreed that we would also make a donation of £5000 to Langham Partnership, as Langham would be able to supply the library of the Chaima Institute in South Sudan with appropriate materials. We had been interested in supporting the Chaima library for a while but the logistics had been too difficult. Both gifts were possible thanks to the bequests of Graham Hedges and Philip Hayworth.

It was felt that both Tyndale House and Langham Partnership would be good subjects for our 2023 conference, and that members might like to have more information about where the donations had gone. We therefore invited Matt





Baalham from Tyndale House and Luke Lewis and Katharina Penner from Langham Partnership to speak to us at our 2023 Conference The Word for the World, which took place at Abbey Baptist Church in Reading.

We followed this with our second 'in-person' event for 2023 in Gloucester on 14 October, given by Daniel Button of Gateway Theology School. Dan, a former tutor from the missionary training college, Redcliffe, now offers courses which make the field theology accessible to a wider public. He spoke partly about this in a talk entitled Theology for Everyone – a View toward a New Creation. Discover Decrypt, a central location in the city, proved to be a handy place to take in other things, not least Gloucester Cathedral, with its own fine library. Dan made every effort to engage with those joining us on Zoom - not easy when the event is interactive - as well as the small number present. The CLIS committee was to consider whether Zoom-only events would facilitate greater participation in the future, especially as it asks a lot of those who travel a distance to stay overnight, or negotiate rail engineering works.

By the end of 2023, CLIS had 100 members, 4 subscribers. A total of 97 received the e-Newsletter. In 2023 we also remembered Jean Woods, a long-serving member of CLIS (Richard Waller's tribute appeared in the previous issue of Christian Librarian).

As Committee Chair I must pay tribute to the Committee, who do so much to keep things going. They are: Diana Guthrie (treasurer), Karen Hans (prayer secretary), Anne MacRitchie (retiring Scottish rep), Eleanor Neil (outreach officer based in New Zealand), Janice Paine (membership secretary and much else), Andrew Parker (member without portfolio), Louise Manners (minutes secretary) and John Wickenden (acting secretary and member for all things electronic).

As this report is about to go to press, we have received the great news that our gift of books for the Chaima Christian College of South Sudan has arrived at the College. Langham Partnership identified resources suitable for Chaima, and CLIS was able to donate £5000 through them. However, the very difficult internal issues within the country have made the transportation there almost impossible. Our thanks go to Eleanor Neil, who refused to give up on the situation when all – including the packages – seemed lost, and co-ordinated an effort with Mission Aviation Fellowship to get what are precious resources to the College finally to their destination.

Robert Foster (Chair CLIS Committee)





**CLIS – STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER
2023**

INCOME

Subscriptions	1255.89
Donations	795.00
Annual Conference 2023	226.46
TOTAL INCOME	2277.35

EXPENDITURE

<i>Christian Librarian</i>	594.30
Operational expenses (membership, publicity, postage, Zoom subscription)	224.11
Annual Conference 2023	610.00
Annual Lecture 2023	240.85
Donations: CILIP Benevolent Fund Speaking Volumes Transform Work UK Soldiers' and Aviators' Scripture Readers Association	900.0
Miscellaneous: Website Insurance Information Commissioner	190.50 215.17 40.00
Total Miscellaneous	445.67
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	3014.93

Deficit for 2023 (Expenditure over Income)	737.58
Balance brought forward from 2022	11979.91
CLOSING BALANCE at 31 December 2023	11242.33

ASSETS (at 31 December 2023):

Barclays Community Account	10403.18
PayPal account	839.15
TOTAL ASSETS	11242.33

**INCOME & EXPENDITURE
2022**

INCOME

Subscriptions	19.12
Donations	1250.90
Annual Conference 2022	208.23
TOTAL INCOME	1478.25

EXPENDITURE

<i>Christian Librarian</i>	15.84
Operational expenses (publicity, postage, Zoom subscription)	195.21
Refund of annual subscription	20.00
Annual Conference 2022	835.50
Annual Lecture 2022	378.90
Donations: Donations to venues Donations to CILIP Benevolent Fund, Speaking Volumes, Transform Work UK, UCCF Tyndale House Langham Partnership <i>Librarian's Manual</i> for Chaima Institute, South Sudan	100.00 500.00 10000.00 5000.00 <u>49.90</u>
Total Donations	15649.90
Miscellaneous: Website Insurance Information Commissioner	431.49 215.17 <u>40.00</u>
Total Miscellaneous	686.66
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	17782.01

Deficit for 2022 (Expenditure over Income)	-16303.76
Balance brought forward from 2021	28283.67
CLOSING BALANCE at 31 December 2022	11979.91

ASSETS (at 31 December 2022):

Barclays Community Account	11283.11
PayPal account	696.80
TOTAL ASSETS	11979.91





Treasurer's notes to the Annual Statement of Accounts for 2023

After our 'jubilee year' in 2022, we returned to charging a subscription in 2023. Many of our members include a donation with their subscription – our thanks go to everyone who supports us in this way – it really does encourage the Committee; the donations include a sum received from the estate of Elizabeth Pool, a long-standing member.

We published one edition of the Christian Librarian in 2023. The e-Newsletter costs us nothing in financial terms.

We always make a loss on the Annual Conference, but the Committee members feel that as CLIS is in a good place financially, we can afford to spend a bit extra on a good venue and speakers, and we had a healthy turn-out for the Conference in Reading.

We are increasing our donations to other organisations working with libraries and literacy, and in 2023 we added a new organisation to our list: the Soldiers' and Aviators' Scripture Readers Association.

Diana Guthrie
CLIS Treasurer

Next Event
Annual General Meeting
29 March 2025
From 10.30 am on Zoom
More details to follow





PAUL BURBRIDGE (1953-2023)

Paul's death on 19 April 2023 at the age of 69, after a short illness, came as a considerable shock to all of us who knew him. As one friend put it, it was difficult to grasp that someone with such a big personality and who had exercised such influence was no longer with us.

Paul was best known for his long association with Riding Lights Theatre Company in York, with its Christian ethos and distinctively original approach to Christian drama. Having been one of its co-founders in 1977 (with Murray Watts and Nigel Forde), he was its Artistic Director for 40 years.

He was very gifted in the arts of writing, acting and directing and his breadth of experience, including as co-director of the York Mystery Plays in 2012, reflected all three. The subjects of the plays with which he was involved varied considerably, from the comic to the much more serious, but the same high standards were applied to all. To quote from the June 2023 Riding Lights Members' Newsletter, 'Paul was unable to settle for less than the best possible – in anything or anyone' and 'though deeply serious in his faith, he was never sententious, and he held it and himself lightly'.

Paul's sense of humour and comic timing were brilliant and his humorous sketches were always something to look forward to, and enjoy, at the annual Riding Lights Summer Theatre School (which I have attended most years since 2002). He treated all students there as of equal value and he was skilful at bringing out the best in all of us, often enabling us to achieve more than we initially thought we could. A week at Summer School, under Paul's overall direction, was always a unique and immensely positive experience.

He also led several Riding Lights trips to Israel/Palestine, ensuring that all those involved stayed in Palestinian Christian hotels, whenever possible. These journeys were a combination of pilgrimage and theatre, the intention being to perform appropriate sketches in the relevant Biblical location (a sketch about the wedding in Cana, for example, was performed in Cana), but there were more political elements, too. I was privileged to be on the 2008 expedition. CLIS members who attended Paul's lecture in York in October 2021, or who – like me – watched it afterwards, experienced his great sense of humour and comic timing in a very funny sketch about a librarian who used every argument possible to refuse to lend books, thus undermining, in a humorous way, the whole point of libraries!

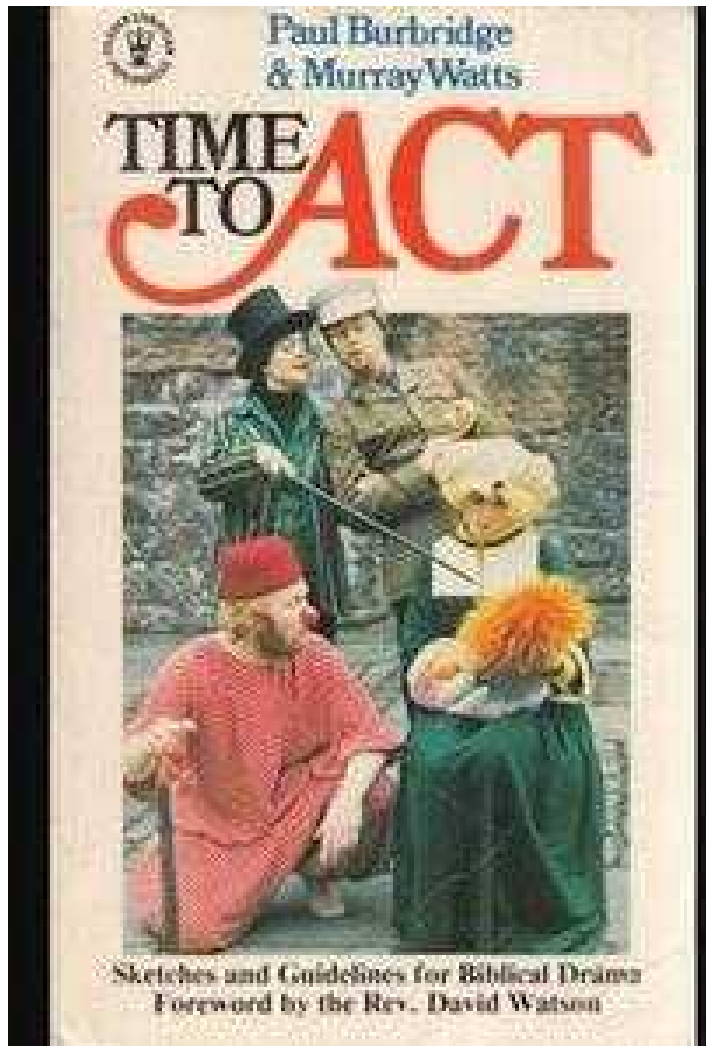
I attended Paul's Thanksgiving Service at St Michael-le-Belfrey, York, on 10 June 2023. It was a powerful experience in a full church. The service included





poignant tributes from family members and from others, but it also included a good deal of humour and a sketch based on one of Paul's favourite Biblical stories, the Road to Emmaus. The singing was truly magnificent, some of the best I have ever experienced anywhere. Despite the feeling that Paul's death was too early, it was an overwhelmingly positive service.

A fund to encourage new writing, known as The Word Bank, has been set up in memory of Paul. Details can be found at ridinglights.org/TheWordBank.



Time to Act appeared in 1979 and was translated into other languages.





PAUL BURBRIDGE CLIS LECTURE OCTOBER 2021

Edited transcript of the lecture given by Paul Burbridge, then Artistic Director of Riding Lights Theatre Company, to CLIS in York in October 2021. He was accompanied by Richard Mapletop. Some extracts originally read or performed are NOT included in this transcript.

Sadly, Paul died in April 2023.

Paul Burbridge: Yes. Thank you very much, Richard and thank you, all of you. You're welcome. Welcome to York.

How many of you are actually from York? [Inaudible] Yes, it's a nice place, it's a good place to come for your annual get-together, I guess. And obviously welcome to people who are watching on Zoom from pretty well anywhere, as you say. Andrew, you might be there in the Isle of Wight.

I suppose a lot of you will know Andrew Parker reasonably well. He's a loyal, I understand, and committed member of this group. And also a loyal and committed member of Riding Lights Theatre Company, actually one of our members and also a regular attendee at our Summer Theatre School. So, I regard him as a friend. I shall review this now that he's avoided [Inaudible] speak today, but I hope he has a lovely holiday. I'm sure he will. That noise, by the way, I'm a range specialist. if you find yourself dropping off, it should hopefully help to maintain attention.

So, as Richard said, I've given myself this title of Theatre Works, which I thought was probably a category that you might find in various institutions that you might work in, but also from York mystery plays. I personally have had quite a lot to do with York mystery plays over the years and in one year particularly, was responsible for directing them with the community here in York.

And also the links that there may be with the work that Riding Lights Theatre Company has been doing for the past 44 years. Richard, my friend, colleague, was in this very building, this very room, on the first day that Riding Lights rehearsed as a professional theatre company.

[We worked with?] members of the Church of St Michael-le-Belfrey, which is just next door to the Minster. You have a choice that you could see the Minster, which is lovely. You could also go to St Michael-le-Belfrey, which is also lovely. But anyway [?], we were in this very room, so, historic.

Richard Mapletop: September 3rd, 1977.

Paul: Ah, there you go. Excellent. So, I will talk a bit about theatre, I'll talk about mystery plays, I'll talk about the work of Riding Lights over the years a little bit. And we'll perform a little bit for you. And we'll read some stuff to you and hopefully that will be reasonably entertaining for the point before you can ask questions and do ask questions, if you'd like to.

Riding Lights has one connection. As you know, these York mystery plays were written to be shouted on the streets of York, in the open air, from dawn till dusk on Corpus Christi Day and the rhythm and the rhymes and the strength and solidity of the language. It doesn't work so well if you do it indoors, as I discovered, but it really does ring out and work terrifically well on the streets. And, actually, Riding Lights Theatre Company, we grew out of student street theatre enterprise, which was a sort of precursor of Riding Lights, a group called Bread Rock that operated at sort of holiday resorts in the vacation, so I suppose there's a little connection of actually growing out of a kind of evangelistic





street theatre mission that was happening in pub car parks and on the street, on the beach, various outdoor locations.

And I think similarly also to the mystery plays which had a sort of relationship with the church and with the religious community, which was a little fractious at times. There was opposition and you probably know that as the mystery plays developed and they developed out of the services of the mediaeval church, they were actually kicked out into the streets because they got too entertaining, basically. And there were very dramatic sorts of developments, characters of the devil and Herod that were far too rival rowdy [?] for sacred space, so they were booted out onto the streets.

And we had our moments of opposition, too, starting in the 70s, in certain circles. I'm very grateful. It was everywhere. But there was suspicion about doing theatre, basically - pretend, whatever. So, there was some opposition. But theatre does work, and obviously, I would say that, wouldn't it?

But the question is, I suppose, **how** does theatre work? Well, theatre is human sized. All the art forms that you might choose, definitely the actor, the human being, man, woman, boy, girl. That's the sort of building block of any theatre performance. And it's what happens when art and ordinary human life get superimposed. So, theatre **is** human life, with all its failures and its aspirations. It's compressed, distilled, heightened and communicated so that its audiences can engage emotionally and make connections with their own lives.

That's what you do. You go to the theatre, you start to kind of respond, obviously, to people, to situations, and make those connections with your own life as you go away from [it], sometimes because of the truthful impact that really good acting can make.

There is a fine, almost invisible line between everyday reality and the heightened reality. The two, as I say, are superimposed.

Now, a few years ago, Riding Lights was booked to provide some moments of theatre, to pep up the communication for a company called AHS. This was the company, and they were a Yorkshire company trying to sell pension schemes to major businesses. Anyway, they booked [us] one morning, I think.

One weekday morning, they booked the West Yorkshire Playhouse, a huge playhouse, to have a presentation, pensions, and how important this was. And there was a sort of interactive theatre bit that we were supposed to be doing. That was before the thing got underway.

It was to start early and my task was to impersonate a very foolish businessman who hadn't sorted out his pension or arranged it properly and fallen on hard times and was now desperately seeking help from anyone in the coffee queue who would listen. And there I was, accosting people, a bit like the Ancient Mariner, with wild eyes and a chilling tale of the folly of neglecting proper pension provision. How he wished, his character, how he wished he'd have been more sensible, if only he'd bought a pension from AHS.

And this seemed to be effective. Several people were clearly moved by my predicament and my unkempt appearance. But it wasn't long before I found myself being frogmarched out of the theatre foyer by burly security personnel who thought that I was a member of the public, causing a nuisance to clients. And as we stood in the car park outside and they were jabbering away into their shortwave radios, they took some persuading that what was going on in their theatre was, in fact, theatre. So, as far as I know, I may be the only person who's been thrown out of the West Yorkshire Playhouse for the **excellence** of their acting.





Now one reason why theatre works and is so valuable to us as an art form is that it stimulates imagination. And that's not the same in television in quite the same way, because usually audiences have to work with the performers to enter the imaginary world they are revealing, to believe that it's reality, at least for the length of the sketch or the play, to believe in its truthfulness for a couple of hours or so. And imagination is obviously stock-in-trade for actors, of course, but it's an increasingly neglected faculty today.

But we're all born with it, we just don't get to use it as a muscle, if you like, quite regularly, because we've got a huge diet fed to us and stuff that we don't have to exercise imagination about at all. It comes to small screens in our hands, for instance. So why is it important? Well, if you think about it, imagination is a great driver for change in our society. It's the key to hope what might happen here, how might things be different, how could we change things? Imagination is a great motivator for a Christian community, for our prayer. We can imagine change, so we pray for change.

It's also the key, I think, to compassion. It's because we can imagine what it's like to be in, say, a refugee camp, that we do something about it. We can imagine what it's like to be without parents or homeless or imprisoned, that we do something about it.

And this is so important in our education of young people, I think, that we learn to stimulate their imaginations because a society that stultifies the imagination is on a slippery slope, becomes a compassionless society. Unless we can, through imagination, put ourselves into somebody else's shoes, we will not really care about them. I know that's a commonplace phrase, but it is actually the truth.

And it's often been said, hasn't it, that in order to understand your enemy you must walk 1000 miles in his shoes, her shoes. Well, there are other benefits as well, obviously. At least you'll be 1000 miles away from your enemy and you will also have his shoes. But the point is made, isn't it.

And we're doing a little show at the moment, just previewed it yesterday in a cobbler's shop and there are lots of pairs of shoes and they all have a story to tell. This is a Christmas show - children.

Well, as I said before, the theatre and the church have not always had an easy relationship and this very much includes the mystery plays, talking about it being sort of bootied out of the services of the cathedrals, et cetera.

And I remember as a young Christian, I might have been about 21 at the time, just at university, seeking guidance about whether I should be making a career in the theatre. The Bible is obviously a good place to start if you're looking for guidance in your life, but on this topic I found that the Bible is not always as clear as it might be, in my opinion.

For instance, I read - you may know the story - in Acts chapter 19, verse 29. It says that during a riot in Ephesus, the people 'rushed as one man into the theatre'. Great! Brilliant! Here, in black and white, here is Biblical endorsement of what I would like to do. And then a couple of verses later, I read that Paul's friends begged him not to venture into the theatre. The difference was that Paul actually listened to those friends.

But I think I was probably more influenced by the approach of Jesus, the master storyteller. Remember, the Gospel says that common people heard it, by the existence actually of the York mystery plays themselves opening up the Biblical story of salvation so powerfully to ordinary people.





Or those episodes in the Old Testament where the prophets use stories and actions and visual entertainment, if you like, to embody their message.

A particularly striking example, which I'm sure you will know, is the prophet Nathan. And he hooks a guilty King David into a story about a rich man ruthlessly abusing a poor man over a pet lamb. And so, the ex-shepherd David is emotionally engaged with this story and angrily he suggests that death would be the appropriate punishment. The rich man is showing no compassion.

And then another level of reality [Inaudible]. Nathan says, well, you **are** the rich man in my story. So, a piece of art exposes the truth. It invites the listener to identify herself, himself within the make-believe world. And the key in the Middle Ages, as in the 21st century, is to make a strong connection with your audience, whatever your audience is, make a connection with them and then allow them their own freedom, if you like, to make their own connections with, maybe, the deeper implications of your performance, of your material.

Maybe a bit like this.

Customer: These two, please. I'd like to take out these two books, please.

Librarian: I'd like to take out a new girl in the local history section, sir. But we don't live in an ideal world, do we? How can I help you?

Customer: Just the two books. Oh, just the **two**.

Librarian: You sure you don't want anything else? You don't want, for example, four pounds of prime beefsteak, a Toshiba amplifier deck, a small granary, a second-hand Pentax with a telephoto lens or maybe a dental checker or a brand-new iPhone?

Customer: No, I would just like to take the two books.

Librarian: Did I hear you alright, sir? You would like to **take** two books?

Customer: Well, I'll rephrase it if you like.

Librarian: Yes, I should, if I were you, sir. You would like to **borrow** the books. I'm sorry, sir, that's [Inaudible].

Customer: Why?

Librarian: Those books belong to the library.

Customer: Well, this **is** the library, right?

Librarian: So, they belong here. Good afternoon.

Customer: No, I also realise they **belong** in the library. I've come to take them out.

Librarian: You need a little bit of fresh air, do you, sir? Looking a little bit peachy, are they?

Customer: I can't do without these books any longer.

Librarian: Oh, I see. [Laughs] Oh, my goodness. What you must think of me! So, they're **your** books and you just want to have a little go with them?





Customer: No, no, no, they're **your** books.

Librarian: Oh, no, sir, I've only got one or two this colour. No, I'm sure to remember that. I think you'll find, sir, that they belong to the library.

Customer: Yes, yes, yes, alright. Okay. Yes. Now, they belong in the library. I've come to **borrow** them.

Librarian: Let me get this right, sir. You freely admit that these books do not belong to you, that you have no claim on them whatsoever, and yet you still want to stuff them into your Sainsbury's carrier bag and disappear out the door with them?

Customer: I'm not going to disappear out the door with them. I'm going to bring them back.

Librarian: [Laughs] Oh, sir! [Laughs - inaudible] So, we live in an age where you are scanned electronically and frisked by [Inaudible] security guards. If you so much as wander into a supermarket with a packet of Polo mints popping out of your breast pocket and you expect me to allow you to take two of our most valuable books out of those doors just on your promise that you will bring them back? I mean, you could be telling me a whopper, couldn't you, sir? I mean, how would it be if we let any Tom, Dick and Harry just come in here and take what - I mean we'd have nothing on the shelves within a fortnight. Sir, would you behave like this anywhere else? In a car showroom, for example? At your own wine merchant's, sir? 'Sorry, I'm just taking a case of a Chateau [Inaudible] 72. Don't worry, I'll bring it back.'

Customer: This is a library, don't you [Inaudible]. And you have got thousands and thousands and thousands of books.

Librarian: I can't argue with you there, sir.

Customer: I only want two.

Librarian: No, sir, I'm sorry. It's the principle of the thing.

Customer: Libraries are supposed to lend books.

Librarian: It's a little bit of a generalisation, isn't it, sir? And frankly, as that must be philosophically suspect, as Blake himself says, to generalise is to be... Have you read much Blake, sir? You'll forgive me for saying so, sir, but you don't strike me as a man who's particularly well read. Get hold of a couple of books. A good book is the lifeblood of a master spirit. [Inaudible] [Laughs maniacally]

Paul: I think it's possibly true that librarians just don't want to let books out of their sight. Really? Or maybe there's a parable there. This was written by Nigel Forde, who's a member of Riding Lights and for many years a great devoted book lover, book reader, and also presenter for a time on Radio 4's Bookshelf, which you may remember. But maybe Nigel wrote that as a little parable from a borrower character's point of view about self-control, because I think had there been a blackout, you would see some sharp weapon used.

Anyway, so in what ways might there be some thread connecting the York mystery plays, this magnificent, world class dramatic cycle of Biblical plays surviving almost intact as a cycle over hundreds of years and still potent in modern performances? Is there any connection between this tradition and a small professional company like Riding Lights working today from a Christian understanding of life and the universe. Well, as you, I'm sure, probably know that these mystery





plays, these guild plays, had a good run of about two or three hundred years. Annually, they performed and developed, evolving until they were prohibited in the 1570s.

From a religious point of view, they were likely to incite differences of theological opinion, violence and the rest of it. But a run of two or three hundred years is pretty good and beats The Mousetrap and then Riding Lights was formed here in York in the late 1970s. And we've been working here. We now have a little theatre down by the river which you might want to visit. And the mystery plays obviously stopped in the 1570s and then revived in 1951 during the Festival of Britain, which was a 'Let's Regather' after the Second World War – 'let's have a bit of a celebration' going on. And thereafter there was a four year recycle of these plays being done in York, in the Museum Gardens, against the backdrop of the ruins of St Mary's Abbey. And this sequence every four years went right up to a huge millennium production, 2000, that happened in the midst of [it?].

And that sort of kind of took some of the energy out of that four-year tradition because it was so magnificent and huge, such a glorious setting, in some ways very different from doing the stuff on the streets of York. And that tradition kept going in the city by the wagon that kept that sort of 'rolling through the streets' approach going.

But then the whole tradition was reborn in 2012 and we were involved in this. There was a huge democratic endeavour to get plays back in their original performance place in Museum Gardens in front of the abbey. The City Council were involved, York Theatre Royal, Riding Lights, York Museums Trust and the plays were returned, as it were, to their 1951 home.

Anyway, 33,000 people saw that production. For a while, it was the largest temporary stage in Europe. We had a double cast of 300 people, 350 people, so there were 700 in all on stage. They took turns to get us through their holidays and that sort of thing, so we always had a complementary actor or person or another company that could come in and kind of rotate, and a similar number of people doing backstage work, technical work, front of house. There were 1200 people involved, some of the choir making music, playing instruments.

It was an extraordinary thing. And it was very much a time [?] that relationships were kind of formed and built and people still sort of recognised each other in the streets from that particular production because it was so widespread.

And I suppose, after working here for 35 years, at that point, adding our own little 21st century footnote, if you like, to this same mystery play tradition, this opportunity that we had then to be involved is a very precious gift, and I suppose it emphasises the importance, both in the mediaeval period and now, of visual things.

The heart of the Christian faith is the incarnation of God within humanity in the person of Jesus. That's also the core narrative of this mystery play. The process of theatre is incarnation. Men and women inhabit different characters, are seen doing things which can have actual or metaphorical or symbolic significance.

And one of the great things, I think, about mystery plays and that whole tradition is that ordinary people could not only see and understand the biblical story, no longer in the Latin language of the Church, but in their own dialect, Yorkshire dialect, but that it could actually see themselves in the story on their own streets. They could see themselves being involved, caught up in the action, neighbours playing different parts for good or for bad, depending on which part of the story they're responsible for.





And one of the sections of the cycle which has had a clear connection with *Riding Lights* is the whole Christmas section, because everyone wants a bit of entertainment at Christmas, so we're constantly asked and happy over the years to do Christmas shows of different kinds. And this, of course, is this actual story of the incarnation. And here ordinary working people are playing the Holy Family, they're playing the working-class shepherds, if you like, who become the first worshippers of Christ in the stable. So, Richard and I are going to read a little extract from the York cycle.

[THIS SECTION NOT TRANSCRIBED – TOO DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY WHICH ACTOR IS PLAYING WHICH PART. THE EXTRACT FROM THE YORK CYCLE AND A SKETCH ABOUT THE SHEPHERDS ARE BOTH OMITTED]

Paul: So, you can see there are some parallels between the spirit of the Mystery play and this one. And we must have done that little sketch about the shepherds' story several times. Might even do it again this year.

One thing I noticed, because I rather like the detail, there were some nice things in the shepherds' gifts that were in the York play. But there's another one. It might be Chester, I'm not quite sure. But there was a huge National Theatre three-play version of the mystery play done around the millennium. But I love the little gifts. There was a little brooch there. There was a [inaudible] on a band and something else. [Inaudible] What? A spoon. [Inaudible]

But in the other one, so one of them says, Lo, Mary, he is, lo, he laughs my sweetie. Ah, very fair meeting, I've held to my telling, have a bob of cherries. That's from one shepherd. And the next one says, a bird I have brought to my beer. Hail, little, tiny moth of our creed, thou art crop, I would drink of thy cup, little babe star, bobbichillis bird. The last one's great. He says, my heart would bleed to see thee sit here in so poor weed with no pennies. Hail, put forth thy door, I bring thee but a ball. Have play with thee with all and go to the tents and emerge.

[REST OF SKETCH OMITTED]

Paul: So, there's a little tradition - connection, if you like - between the traditions of the mediaeval period still spilling over into some of our work. One thing that's really an important thread, I think, is comedy. And a lot of our work, our stock-in-trade, has often had a strong vein of comedy, and I mean serious comedy as well as comedy, different types of comedy running through it. So, there's good laughter, there's joyous laughter, there's instructive laughter that comes through satire, a theatrical approach and as a literary form, great comedy. Great comedy, as opposed to the wearisome analysis of TV sitcoms.

I think this is the truest expression of Christian hope because the triumph of the Resurrection and the eternally happy ending, if you like, of heaven, is what Christian hope is really all about. And Dante understood this with his *Divine Comedy*, didn't he? Last month was the 700th anniversary of his death, I believe. So, there were various sorts of readings from the *Divine Comedy*, but he understood this, that great comedy is profoundly serious, if you like, at its greatest. But you could say his epic work of European literature is a little short on jokes.

But human beings in defiance of a loving, all-powerful creator is comic, even tragicomic. Men and women in farcical oblivion of the divine story which explains their existence are comic. But also, the elevation of human beings by the grace of God to partake of eternal glory with Christ is also supremely comic. No wonder Jesus often described heaven in terms of a party filled with the laughter of celebration.





And the mediaeval dramatists, whose plays, as we've said, still endure remarkably well in performance. They lived and they breathed this view of humanity and for many of their characters, it's the comedy itself which becomes the religious experience. Into the comic absurdities, if you like, of human life, the wonder of the divine breaks through and they are humbled. They kneel and worship, painfully aware of their incongruity. Their 'newness' is the way the mediaeval writers put it, in the presence of God. And the situation is, as we've just heard a little bit, is at once sympathetic, is both funny and joyous at the same time. So, the comedy, one of the reasons the plays were expelled from the holy space of the cathedrals and churches, the comedy becomes the vehicle of God's love.

Working from York, as we know where some of these fabulous biblical plays originated, Riding Lights has found the inspiration which has strengthened the late 20th and 21st century, now flowering [Inaudible]. Our work, and especially our sketches, might be a far cry from the grandeur of the mystery cycle, but the spirit behind them is essentially the same. So is the intention. As in the 14th century, many people today need entertaining responses to their deeper questions. And we need to take a leaf out of the methods of Jesus, who was both direct and entertaining at the same time.

Did you know there was a Yorkshire dialect version of the Bible? There is. And it goes in one part of it, it goes like this, these are the actual words. 'When asked by one of them legal eagles in crowd, who is my neighbour, Jesus gives it him straight and tells him this yarn', or in Riding Lights terms, maybe does in the sketch, forms his bread.

Of course, the wider range of our work now goes way beyond a kind of Yorkshire mystery play dramatisation of purely Biblical events and parables. We have to because we're all living in a culture which is losing its Christian memory. So, our work in schools and prisons, you can see this so clearly. You can't go in with lots of Biblical kind of material because people just don't want to talk about that.

[Inaudible] Frame of reference, to interpret it. So, a play exploring, as the mystery plays do, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, is perhaps the most accurate definition of a Christian play, if you like to put inverted commas around that. I think we would now understand that genre in additional ways, too, maybe a play that brings the audience closer to the thoughts and feelings of God about any issue, a play that is perhaps carried forward or which reveals Christian values within its characters, values of justice and love, to give its honest [inaudible].

So, our recent work has included plays, new plays, being written on a variety of topics that are relevant to our audiences today. We recently had a play that dealt with people beginning to suffer from dementia, for instance. We did a play about slavery, both in Wilberforce's time and today, about international debt, clean water provision, the separation war in Israel between the Palestinian community and the Jewish community, about climate change, about the origins of the Olympic Games, about artificial intelligence, about science and faith, even - and you may like to note this - we did a tour of libraries with a lovely little play to encourage adult reading. I'm sure you all believe in that, but it was great to be able to do an hour-length play in the library, pushing rolling shelves back, and we could revive it. And some of these plays have been seen on major tours of the UK.

Some of our stuff recently has had to go online, for obvious reasons, because we couldn't gather an audience in the last 18 months. But it struck me that online is becoming the streets of now, the places where we do meet and interact with other people.

So, there's a relevance there. Actually, if our work is seen online, street theatre, if you like to see it that way, is the context for a new and very different kind of theatre. So, theatre at this level is powerful, it's costly, it's precious, but it's capable of making a distinctive cultural impact that helps transform the atmosphere. That's why it's so worthwhile.





This, to me, is reminiscent - and I'll close with this - is reminiscent of the Gospel story of a woman who gatecrashes a dinner party to anoint Jesus' feet with an exotic perfume. On one level, it's an astonishing act of theatre that she makes, revealing, in an intimate and shocking way, the woman's devotion to Christ. But the long-term effect of what she did is just as significant. As the perfume got everywhere, the atmosphere of the whole house was transformed. It was filled for days afterwards, apparently, with a powerful fragrance.

Some of those who watched understood. Some thought it was a criminal waste of money and likely suggested other ways of being more socially helpful with the money that the perfume cost. But Christ's response was not to dismiss the idea of helping the poor but, in addition, to praise the expenditure on the perfume for the beauty it created, the prophetic insight giving the demonstration of love and the effect on the whole house.

Our ambition at Riding Lights is for our theatre to be, in the same way, both persuasive and pervasive. At times, we should be publicly persuasive but focus on our devotion and creativity. At other times, our calling is to affect the atmosphere of the culture we're all in, to allow that fragrance that bravely addresses the issues of our time, theatre with a spiritual heart, infused with energy and truthfulness, allowing that to get everywhere, just like the mystery plays taking over Corpus Christi Day [Inaudible] sweep of the story from creation.





Christians in Libraries and Information Services Conference presentation
April 2022, Wesley Hotel, London
by Steve Bassett (with Coco Gaie)
from Lifewords

The Old, Old Story (in a new context)

I'd like to start with an ancient story about a teacher, who would spend his time travelling from village to village, town to town, city to city - teaching, preaching, telling stories, and answering questions. He was brilliant, wise, and scholarly. He had an answer for everything, a veritable Oracle. Once, after a particularly long day of journeying from village to village, town to town, city to city - teaching, preaching, telling stories, and answering questions, he was tired. He was surrounded by a crowd. A voice rang out, the voice of a young girl. "Teacher, I have a question ... I don't think that you can answer it". The teacher was exhausted, and ready for a rest, but the crowd was expectant, so he called her forward. "Speak, child". The girl looked mischievous. "Hidden behind my back, held tightly in my hand, is a young bird. My question to you is this: 'is it alive ... or is it dead?'" She thought to herself: "He can't win. If he says the bird is dead, I'll let it go out of my hand. If he says it is alive, I'll just crush it!" The teacher stroked his chin. Of course, he knew the mischief that was in the air, but he wanted to answer her in a way that affirmed the girl's dignity. Finally, the answer came to him like a flame kindled by a leaping spark. "My child, you have the answer in your hands. It's up to you. You have the power to kill it, or to let it fly free."

That story has stuck with me, because that's what we're about, with the story in the Bible. We're trying to let the Bible fly free, but sometimes we're actually strangling it with all our efforts. It's about trying to get out of the way so the story can speak.

So, it's fitting that we're here today, because Lifewords' entire mission is about working with this library of sacred texts, gathered up in 66 books that we know as the Bible. Our task is not only to come in and browse this library, but to read it and to engage with it in ways that are transformative; and of course, to connect with its central Story of love, redemption, forgiveness, and new life in Jesus.

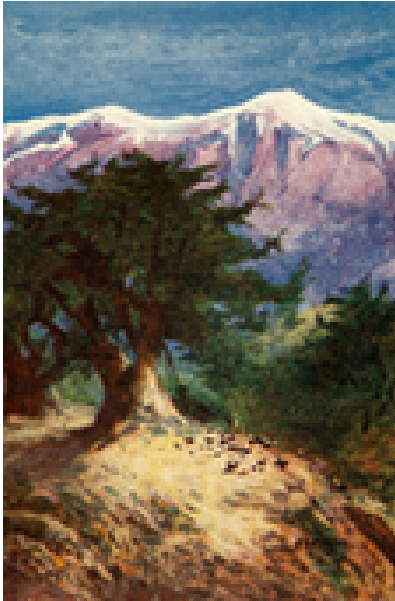
Our story began in 1888 with a Birmingham printer named William Walters. I wonder what he might make of today: not just how the ministry that he started shows up in the world now, how it reflects his legacy of providing resources for mission and evangelism in multiple languages and contexts; but rather what he would make of this *time*, this moment of history. Walters founded the Scripture Gift Mission (SGM) in a time of great economic and social change. 1888 was the year of some significant firsts. The first motion picture, the first electric car, the first Kodak camera, and the first copy of the Financial Times. The first mechanical adding machine was, well, added to the list of inventions. It was the age of the great societies: the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the National Geographic Society, which epitomised the Victorian interest in travel and exploration, its thirst for knowledge, science, technology, and the natural world, albeit with that undeniable whiff of colonialism.

This was the climate that SGM was born into. This was Walters's world. It's no surprise that he embraced the very latest printing techniques to reproduce stunning watercolour paintings of the Holy





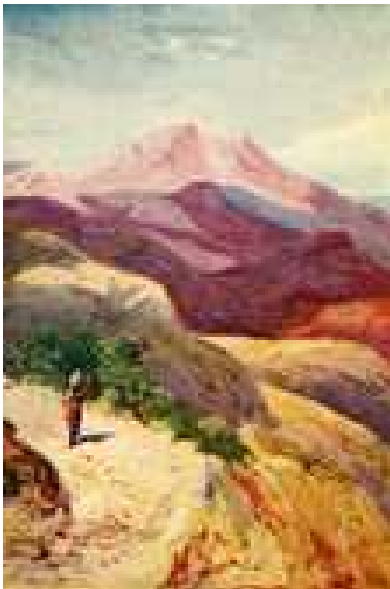
Illustrated Bible artwork by Henry A. Harper and James Clark



Cedars of Lebanon (Matt. ch. 12, v. 13)



Eastern Merchants (James ch. 4, v. 13)



Mount Hermon (Matt. ch. 17, v. 1)



Shaving the Head (Acts ch. 21 v. 21)





Lands by the artists Harper and Clark of the Royal Academy. Walters commissioned the young artists to travel to the Middle East, easels on their back – a remarkable journey in itself - to paint everyday life in those Bible lands. This was an innovation. Now, if we wanted to see such a distant location, we simply do a 360-degree internet tour, or virtual reality viewing, of Jerusalem. Back then, nobody had seen these places and photography was in its infancy. Walters turned the Harper and Clark paintings into coloured plates which were then inserted into the printed Bibles as illustrations. Walters hoped to show people what everyday life in the Holy Land looked like, so they could locate *themselves* in the Bible story. It was a way of providing a window on the Bible world. This then was an era of missionary fervour, and Walters' innovation served it very well.

Those early years, after Walters had founded SGM, and Harper and Clark had produced their paintings, were pioneering. Incidentally, many of those paintings have been lost, but what we have are very beautiful. The first illustrated text produced was the Gospel in Arabic for North Africa in 1891, followed by translations into other languages in which Scriptures had never before been printed. There were pocket New Testaments, as well as deluxe versions for the wealthy. Then in 1924, under the direction of Walter's son, SGM started to publish portions of scripture – significant because that's what we are known for now.

During both World Wars SGM turned its entire production towards producing scripture for the military. In World War I alone, 43 million items were published, pushing the organisation close to bankruptcy on more than one occasion. After World War II we were distributing gospels in China, just before the doors were closed. In 1949 we took gospels to Latvia and Lithuania, probably the last time gospels were made available in the old languages and the doors closed there too. As the Iron Curtain descended in the 1950s, we took thousands of New Testaments and other publications into eastern Europe. By now, SGM had published 1154 titles.

1956 was another very important year because there was a fire at our premises which destroyed everything including our archives. So, a new building was planned. In 1958 we opened a new building at Radstock House, London. It was an innovative time. Around this time, our organisation had a stand at the Ideal Home Exhibition, with the slogan "The ideal book for the ideal home". (Something to read while the chaps puff on their pipes with their slippers on!) This was very innovative, going straight to culture. Of course, times change, and the presentation then wouldn't be what you would expect to see now. Even so, you can see how the 'DNA' of the organisation is carried through until today.

Moving forward to 1996 we looked at other ways of communicating the gospel. We had reached the figure of 1bn items distributed. But the great era of print was changing, and mass distribution was waning. We realised that numbers of languages covered was a better measure than numbers of items printed. Higher quantity of items did not equate to more lives transformed. The great printing era had been used wonderfully but there was now a period of significant shift.

Walters would probably have recognised the opportunities today as he did in 1888. He would not have expected us to watch change happening around us but to go out and embrace it, innovate, and create; his vision was to empower Christians to love, live and retell God's story in the changing culture. The same Word – just a different world. Our mission then is still the same: to reach the hard places and the speak the Bible's life words into this changing world, in ways that resonate with people's lived experience. So that as Walter himself put it "People will read the captivating story of God's love and experience that love for themselves".





All around the world we see many fruitful ways that we are reaching people, now as Lifewords (the name changed in 2005). What we do is always contextualised and it's almost always with partners. We try to tune in to 'mission moments' in culture. So, for example, to mark the anniversary of World War I we produced a replica pocket Gospel of John, the original of which those Great War troops kept in their top pocket. It was a labour of love, getting this right, and we paid a lot of attention to detail, such as the rounded edges, brass staples, and original font. The latter required a visit to the Font Museum (there is such a place!) because the typeface no longer exists in today's print. We have now produced over a million of these replicas. It turned out to be popular with young men and is regularly used in Australia on Anzac Day.

There are lots of initiatives that we that we could tell you about: there is the Bible-based counselling resource *Pavement Project* which reaches out to children at risk around the world in around 29 countries, bringing God's love and care and improving the self-worth of children and those who work with them. Or we could talk about a 9-week curriculum which is about enabling people to explore the way of Jesus through the experiential lens of the Beatitudes, using story, theology and music conversation and reflection. Or our work in the world's largest Muslim nation of Indonesia, equipping pastors with much needed resources – and very often the pastors don't even have Bibles. There might be one per hundred people. There are also opportunities to share the Bible in villages where the literacy levels are low, through our programme *The Visible Story*. Or *Choose Life*, our values-based curriculum for children that begun as a response to HIV Aids and is now speaking into the lives of children (and their families) in Africa and now Brazil, Then there are our partnerships created to work on specific resources like *The Little Book of Chaos*, on the issue of teenage mental health, which we did with the charity *Think Twice* ; there is *Consider the Wild Flowers*, which we did with Azalea in Luton, working with sex-workers and trafficked women and girls ; and *One of Us* which we did with Off The Fence in Brighton specifically aimed at the homeless community, and now repeated in other towns and cities ; or we could talk about our digital engagement on Instagram and other social media platforms to reach young people.

Our core range of Bible literature has always been the central plank of our ministry, right from the start, and we have printed portions of the Bible in well over 1000 languages, including 200+ pioneer languages where no scripture had ever been published before. Today we still distribute material in dozens of languages, in between 60 and 90 countries. We do that from our seven offices from around the world through what we call our Global Bible Resource, which is based in Torun, Poland, and through supporting digital channels. Over time we've become well-versed in the creation and production of booklet resources combining powerful scriptures with a high artistic aesthetic and conceptual, contextual non-Bible material (NBM). The NBM part is key because our ethos is to present the Bible without note or comment. That is in a way impossible, because whenever you translate the Bible, you are doing something with it. But as far as possible we try to stay out of the way and let scripture fly. We believe it can speak for itself. The Spirit is in the words – they are life words. We try to give people a foothold into a subject but try to make it as little as we can. This makes us an important organisation in the sense that we become a meeting place, one which takes in the whole spectrum of the Christian faith. We might not agree about everything but when we gather around the word of God, such as the Beatitudes, we can bring that conversation together with people of faith, and also people of no faith, and talk about the everyday experience of our lives. So, even as new





formats emerged and projects and programmes were set in motion, the core has always been the booklets, which have encouraged and equipped many thousands of Christians all over the world in their witness and evangelism, pastoring, in youth ministries, discipleship etc. And we hear wonderful stories from all over the world that our booklets helped to do things. This encourages us and gives us the motivation to continue. Jarek Jankowski, in our distribution centre in Torun, says:

“It is a great privilege to be part of the ministry, which is providing people with tools which make their ministry easier. The Bible Resources Project is simply providing people with Bible resources in major languages. Every week we get orders from individuals, churches and projects representing all continents and we send out the materials by post. This week we have received orders from Portugal, Belarus, Ivory Coast, Brazil, India, and Pakistan – just in one week. Printed resources are available in all the key major languages, which are also available electronically. We are interested in minor languages too, and with our partners we are working to provide materials for them too, which is very exciting to be part of.”

Lifewords is not a massive production line such as Amazon. The operation in Torun is at Jan's farm in what was his barn. Jan receives his order, he locates the materials himself, packs them himself and then posts it. He will also pray over each package. It's a wonderful touch. It could be done more swiftly by conveyor belt, but it would not be as kind, gracious or lovely. There is a place for this way of working in our world and it needs to be rediscovered more widely.

We started the Global Bible Resource platform in 2011 and it grew massively. We couldn't cater for 7000 languages, so we concentrated on 20 key world languages. Existing material in other languages was retained until stocks ran out. The new range includes titles which are also available digitally, which has enabled us to reach many more people, and was key during the pandemic. Last year, we completed our project to have at least two titles available in 50 core global languages, a considerable step up, and a great encouragement to many.

Despite the increased use of digital resources, print is still in demand. It's indispensable in many situations and the two media very often co-exist. In parts of the world, Jakarta for instance, we see young people on their mopeds carrying tablets on their back and a booklet in their pocket. So, the two work seamlessly. We also are aware that the quality of the material matters.

We can only do so much, of course. Working towards 50 languages was an investment of time and funds. But even only a handful of languages across our titles would reach a substantial number of the world's 7.8 billion people. 50 languages will potentially reach 5 billion. If we are talking about second languages, then the reach is even wider.

The plan has been to produce one pastoral title, *Finding hope*, and a couple of evangelistic titles, *Way of life* and *Invitation*. The former is in 21 languages, the latter in 31. The aim is to produce these titles in at least 50 languages and then go on from there. Last summer, 13 new titles were published, in languages we haven't published for decades. It's exciting to see this come about, and to have evidence of use of these publications. We will still print other titles, but this is the core of the programme.

The widening of access only works with the people that make it work. We've mentioned the team in Poland; then there are the translators, the typesetters, the printers - a whole network of people who not only have the professional skills to offer but also a passion for what they are involved in. It's not just a clinical job. We also reach out to other organisations that we work with such as Biblica, a global Bible translation agency; in Bulgaria and Romania we work with an organisation called Lights in the



East to do the translation. We ourselves are not doing the translation work – we mostly engage others in this, including Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Once we have got the material printed and digitised, there is another group of people that play a decisive role: they are the people that order the booklets, that download them and share them with others. These are people who use their skills, faith, and passion to share God's Word all over the world. In Brazil, Marisa uses materials in Portuguese to reach out to her community. She says that there are many people with depression and related conditions and wants to bring them a little hope. In Poland, Lifeworlds has developed material for homeless people in a coffee house ministry where homeless men and those who are recently out of prison receive a hot meal and personal hygiene items. "Good things are happening, thanks to Lifeworlds" they say. "Praise God for all the changes in people's lives." There are hundreds of stories like this that we could share.

So, what factors do we consider in selecting languages for our publications? It's not necessarily the most popular languages, although that does come into the equation. We look at demographics, what needs and opportunities exist, the accessibility of the region, what the demand is, the strategic role of the language and so on. A lot of background work goes into this before we begin the translation process. Swahili, for example, is spoken by one million people as a mother tongue – a relatively small number - but about 100 million use it as their lingua franca. It's this kind of analysis that helps us to see if something will work. It's not set in stone: the 50 languages may change, and there is always scope to respond to changes going on in the world.

The resources have found an incredible new resonance in the dire situation which has unfolded in Ukraine. As with most charities, we asked what we could do to help. Our contact in Poland worked with the many partners that we have there near the border, reaching out to the millions of refugees. (Incidentally, we might note that they are referred to in Poland as 'our guests'. It's a small way of giving dignity and lessening the trauma that they are dealing with.) The population of Polish cities near to Ukraine increased very significantly, bringing with it enormous challenges. As a result, the demand for Bible resources in Ukrainian and Russian to have increased significantly, and we asked our supporters to help us print more of the resources in those languages.

The organisations that use them do so as part of care packages. Whilst you can't eat printed booklets, we have found they are really appreciated and that they have brought comfort and solace. It's something which also helps people to get talking as well. Obviously, we can't control the ways all the booklets are used. Some use them as tracts, something which we discourage. They ought not be pushed on people in extremis, but rather offered as part of a holistic aid package: this spiritual solace through the Gospel has proved to be vital. As far as we know, we are the only Bible organisation which produced a resource - *Finding hope* - which was specifically created for crisis moments and trauma. We haven't seen anything else, so we feel it's quite unique and helpful. In addition, over 210,000 people watched two short animations, many of them still in Ukraine when they didn't have access to the booklet. Please do pray for this work if you can.

Bringing up to date, we are proud of our *little books* range. On leap year day 2024, we launched *Little Book of Joy*, along with a stylised 'boxed set' called the *Little Brick of Little Books*. Each 'brick' comes pre-loaded with 48 little books - eight copies of the six titles in





our range, *Little Book of Help*, *Little Book of Faith*, *Little Book of Chaos*, *Little Book of Prayer*, *Little Book of Jesus*, and the brand-new *Little Book of Joy*. Once used, the brick can be re-filled via Lifewords online store, where Bible resources are available for free or for a donation.

To maximise this concept, we set up a *Gift a Brick* scheme, inviting individuals and churches to gift a Little Brick for distribution to vital ministries such as hospital chaplaincies, youth groups, homeless outreaches, prison chaplaincies, or community outreach initiatives. For just £25 donation per brick, supporters can nominate a ministry of their choice (or gift it to themselves personally!). Ministries and workers in need can also apply to receive a gifted Little Brick, and Lifewords will match them with a sponsor.

We hope the Little Brick will be a great way to equip ministries with Bible-centred resources that people will want to read, re-read, and keep. Imagine a Little Brick being available in churches, schools, hospitals, prisons, sports academies, workplaces – anywhere that people gather, and the story can be shared.

Someone once said, “Stories are like Velcro – some stick and some don’t”. If some of this sticks, that’s good. It’s wonderful that between us all, we are blessed to work with, to interact with, this book of books, a collection of wisdom, poetry, praise, knowledge, imagination, faith and so much more. It’s a library of forgiveness, redemption and love, a living word which points us to *The Living Word*, Jesus. It’s a very, very special. In the words of William Walters “The Word of God wipes the scalding tear from sorrow’s cheek” – a lovely and winsome way of talking about Scripture, and so relevant for the times we live in today.

STEVE BASSETT
(Creative Director)

Lifewords exists to help people from all walks of life share and experience the Bible in person, in print, and online. Through our resources and a range of programmes and projects, Lifewords worldwide ministry is all about creating ways into the Bible for everyone, everywhere. We don’t want cost to be a barrier to engaging with the Bible, so we continue to make our material freely available (with donations encouraged) to everyone who needs them, just as we have since 1888.

Find out more at www.lifewords.global



LIFEWORDS LITTLE BOOKS

“These resources enable and equip people to share the vital message of the Bible in today’s world. I’m so pleased that this excellent, vibrant, beautiful resource is available.”

Revd Canon Giles Goddard



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Lifeworlds Little Brick of Little Books is a brand-new tool for ministries that need quality Bible-centred resources that people will read, re-read, and keep. It comes pre-loaded with 48 Little Books – eight each of the six titles in our popular range. Once used, the brick can be re-filled via our online shop of resources (free, or for donation).

Lifeworlds Bible resources are great to read, easy to share, freely available, and supported by donations since 1888.

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THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN NATIONS (COCIN): ESTABLISHMENT OF KARL KUMM UNIVERSITY VOM, NIGERIA

By Dr Lydia Endaben Lakan
Karl Kumm University Librarian
Email: universitylibrarian@kku.edu.ng

The Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), Nigeria was founded in 1904 with headquarters in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. Its current President is Rev. Dr. Amos Musa Mohzo. COCIN is a member of the World Council of Churches, Christian Association of Nigeria, the Reformed Ecumenical Council, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

COCIN has been a pioneer in driving education, health and agricultural development in Nigeria since the early 1930s. Its cluster of schools in Gindiri, Plateau State, provided educational opportunities for many Nigerians of note during and after the colonial periods. These schools include the Famous Boys Secondary School, Girls High School, Gindiri Teachers College (Now COCIN Comprehensive College) and The School for the Blind. On the same compound, it has a Theological College giving quality theological education up to the first-degree level and a school of Nursing Vom, Plateau State, which was later handed over to the Government of Plateau State.

The Church also has other secondary schools and vocational training institutes in different regions of the country. These include the Pastors' College in Kabwir, which gives pastoral training at diploma level in Hausa, for non-English speakers. There are other diploma awarding institutions, but of special note are the following: COCIN Bible & Agricultural Training Institute (COBATI) Zamko, Langtang North LGA of Plateau State which offers Bible and Agricultural training for Pastors working in rural areas; Extension Theological College (ETC) which gives theological education to hundreds of students all over Nigeria by a specialized distance learning method.

In addition, the Church has other hospital facilities which include: the famous Vom Christian Hospital (VCH) which served most parts of northern Nigeria and beyond for many years in the past; a Hospital in Sabon Layi in Mangu LGA of Plateau State which specialises in treating physical disabilities, Barnden Memorial Hospital in Jos North LGA in Plateau State etc.



COCIN has played a significant role in the education of a vast number of Northern Nigerian elites, past and present. Its educational policy has been non-discriminatory, allowing individuals of all religious and other socio-cultural backgrounds to benefit from its educational programmes.

ESTABLISHMENT OF KARL KUMM UNIVERSITY

The effort to sustain the desire for quality education for all at the university level gave birth to the establishment of Karl Kumm University Vom. The University is named after the pioneer missionary for COCIN, Dr. Kumm, (Hermann) Karl Wilhelm (1874-1930). The Church took a step to actualize this dream of quality university education available to many, who desire it by securing an operational license from the National Universities Commission (NUC) on the 8th of April, 2021. Following a successful resource verification exercise in 2023, approval was granted by the National Universities Commission (NUC) for the commencement of academic activities for the 2022/2023 academic session on 14th March, 2023.

The main campus of the University is located at Vom, Jos-South Local Government Area of Plateau State. The location is characterised by extraordinary and striking scenery and a near-temperate climate associated with the beautiful highlands of the Jos-Plateau in Nigeria, which is conducive for learning and research. The University took off with two faculties namely; the Faculty of Science/Computing and Faculty of Arts, Social and Management Sciences with the following programmes: B. A. Christian Religious Studies; B. Sc. Accounting; B. Sc. Business Administration; B. Sc. Entrepreneurship; B. Sc. Economics; B. Sc. Political Science; B. Sc. Microbiology; B. Sc. Industrial Chemistry; B. Sc. Biochemistry; B. Sc. Computer Science; B. Sc. Cyber Security; B. Sc. Information Technology; B. Sc. Physics with Electronics; and B. Sc. Mathematics.



Main Entrance of the University



Aerial view of the University



The Mission Statement of KKU

“To produce highly skilled graduates in their area of specialization with impeccable character who would contribute positively to the development of the nation and mankind”

University’s Vision

“To be a centre of excellence in scholarly learning and training, producing graduates who are thoroughly knowledgeable in the workings and forces of nature, the course and development of mankind and his environment, and who can apply scientific thought to design and implement solutions to societal problems”.





University's Objectives

The main thrust of the University shall be the production of holistic human resources (total Man) for the development of appropriate infrastructures, immediate developmental needs of the nation, and a conducive learning environment for the present generation and beyond.

Karl Kumm University Library

A university as an institution and a library are like Siamese twins. Each is indispensable to the other and this is the singular reason why a library is established alongside the university. Consequently, KKU University's main Library structure started alongside some developmental structures in 2021. However, due to financial constraints, the building was not completed at the time of take-off of academic activities in 2023. This, therefore, necessitated the need for a temporary site for the library. The temporary Library was stocked with shelves, books and a few journals covering the 14 programmes domiciled in the Faculty of Science and Computing and Faculty of Arts, Social and Management Sciences. In addition, an e-library was established with 20 computers with full internet service. The library has a seating capacity for 80 students, while the e-Library has a seating capacity for 20 students. The library is a growing organism; therefore, it is expected that this Library will grow, particularly when it finally moves to the main library complex when completed.

KKU Library Objectives

The objectives of the University Library are derived from those of the University's mission Statement thus;

- a. To develop dynamic and quality Library collections to meet the need for quality education in KKU.
- b. To establish a strong Library linkage with other institutions and agencies in the country and if possible, with organizations and agencies from foreign countries that will facilitate seamless information sharing.
- c. To create various bibliographies and Library pathfinders for easy access and retrieval of information.



- d. Ensure maximum use is made of the resources of the library.
- e. Engage in inter-library networking, source and deliver information to users, both on-demand and on an anticipatory basis.
- f. To support innovative scholarship and research productivity by providing a learning environment with full internet facilities where students, lecturers and researchers can pursue independent learning and discovery outside the classroom.

Plans for Karl Kumm University Library

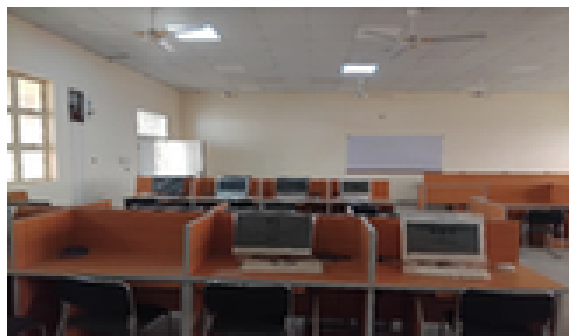
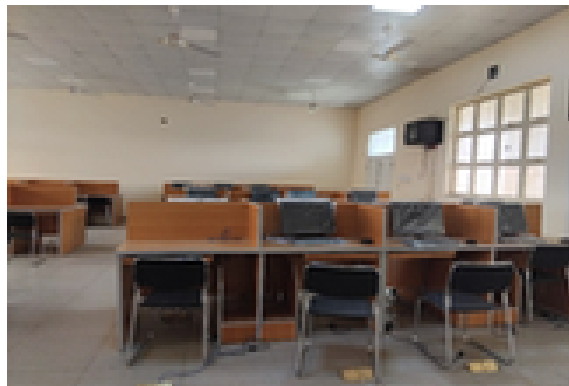
Today's libraries are hybrid i.e., a combination of traditional and digital libraries. Traditional libraries consist of physical items, such as books, periodicals, manuscripts, journals, and other sources of recorded information, while digital Libraries provide access to electronic information and services from a network of databases. Digital library technology presents new opportunities for academic libraries to expand access to their collections and facilitate access to digital resources outside their libraries. A full-scale digital library involves multifaceted development issues and challenges; however, a digital Library for the Karl Kumm University will be essential to the success of students, lecturers, researchers, scholars and higher education in Nigeria.

Vision

In line with the main thrust of the University which “shall be the production of holistic human resources (total Man) for the development of appropriate infrastructures, immediate developmental needs of the nation, and a conducive learning environment for the present generation and beyond”, the University Library will support teaching and learning by providing and facilitating access to information resources and services that are very pertinent to the University community. These information resources are both digital and non-digital.



The library is in the process of developing an e-library with 24/7 internet access (E-library below).



This facility will provide access to both online and offline databases e.g., ProQuest (eBooks and journals), Research4life, JSTOR, Emerald, Science Direct, and other relevant databases. The university acquired 20 computers for the e-library. This is, however, grossly inadequate for the library as the student population grows annually. Secondly, some incoming innovations like the installation of KOHA, the Library Management System, providing OPAC services will require dedicated computer systems for use by library staff, lecturers and students.

Also; a non-digital collection in the form of books and Journal collections is coming up gradually. (See pictures of library reading tables, shelves and books below). These collections cover all the programmes currently run by the university as indicated above.





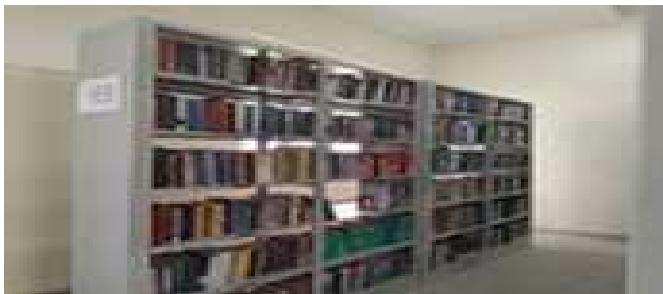
The entrance to the temporary library



View of the Library



Picture of Library shelves and books





The staff of the university consulting some information resources at the library



Some upcoming plans of the University library include:

1. The deployment of KOHA (Library Management System). This will enable the library to manage all aspects of a library, including cataloguing, circulation, acquisition, OPAC and patron management. KOHA is a Library Software used mostly in Nigerian University libraries. Cataloguing and classification of our books and other resources are not yet in full swing due to lack of technical support i.e. installation of the KOHA Library software, training and other logistics.
2. Provision of a well-equipped and functional physical space known as 'Learning Commons' with full internet facilities where lecturers and students can pursue independent learning and discovery outside the classroom. The University Library will by this support innovative scholarship and research productivity and foster their vitality (**see prototype below**).





In an era of post-Covid-19, online education and virtual conferences have taken the center stage, hence, the need to set up a virtual conference room for networking and sharing of knowledge among researcher experts and scholars outside the University is indispensable. This will be one of the facilities that the library will establish. **(See prototype below)**



To achieve these,

1. **A robust University/library website is been developed to ensure:**

- a. Provision of a single point of access to library resources
- b. promote both e-resources held by the library
- c. improve navigation of library resources

2. **Library Housing Infrastructure**

A permanent Library structure is currently under construction (Picture below).



3. **Library Infrastructure**

Building a hybrid world-class library requires well-tested and proven information technologies including computer hardware and software. The University has plans to equip the library with IT facilities.





Management information resources of the library

The primary aim of a library is to promote the effective and efficient delivery of information and also provide long-term learning opportunities to the users. Therefore, the KKU Library will promote access to its content. Users will be given full access to all contents of the University Library. Secondly, in-house training of staff and students will be undertaken for the effective use of both digital and non-digital information resources

Challenges

The main challenge facing Karl Kumm University Vom, which directly affects the library development is the issue of funding. COCIN in its wisdom of establishing the university is to bridge the gap in access to quality education backed up with godly Christian morals which is fast eroding from public institutions in Nigeria and globally. The demand for these types of Institutions where students can learn from without compromising the virtues of the Christian faith is on the increase. It then became imperative to set up private learning institution to promote these virtues, however, the initial funding is a huge challenge. Though, it's worth noting that the University has received a lot of support from organisations and private individuals within and outside Nigeria in growing the university to this level, a lot is still required for the university to reach a self-sustaining level.

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FANTASY: REALMS OF IMAGINATION

Report on an exhibition at the British Library, winter 2023-24

This was a fascinating exhibition not just of fantasy literature, but very much multi-media, with everything from ancient manuscripts, to maps, films, objects from films, art, games, and costumes. It set out to show how modern fantasy can be traced back to ancient folk tales and epics.

There were some items that I recognised from my own reading of fantasy, but also many others less familiar; I didn't recognise most of the modern games, films or books included, so the following notes are a personal selection.

The exhibition was set out in 4 sections. "Fairy and folk tales" may be simple stories for children, but are often dark and complex. This section began with Sleigh's huge 'Ancient Mappe of Fairyland' (1918) and Andrew Lang's set of Coloured Fairy Books, continuing with Peter Pan and Garner's 'The Owl Service' (the original owl-decorated plate). The "dark enchanted forest" sub-section included the Japanese anime film 'Princess Mononoke' (1997).

"Epics and quests" featured themes of heroism, conflict and adventure, and illustrated how modern writers retell old tales from different perspectives.. The costumes worn by Nureyev and Fonteyn for The Sleeping Beauty ballet were surrounded by manuscripts such as MacDonald's 'Lilith' and Le Guin's 'A Wizard of Earthsea', Sindbad, the 'Epic of Gilgamesh', 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' (1400), 'The Iliad' (14c), 'Beowulf' (11c). The Grail quest can be traced via Malory to 'The Hobbit'.

"Weird and uncanny" fantasy works evoke fear and uncertainty, unsettling but also raising questions, using creepy towns and bizarre beings. It features the architecture of Peake's 'Gormenghast', games such as Dungeon and Dragons, the film 'Twin Peaks'. Books in the "Gods and monsters" section included Poe's 'Tales of mystery and imagination', Chesterton's 'The man who was Thursday', Shelley's 'Frankenstein', Kafka's 'Metamorphosis', Milton's 'Paradise Lost'.

"Portals and worlds": world-building is a distinctive element of modern fantasy, illustrated by the mss of 'Alice's adventures under ground', 'The Lion the witch and the wardrobe' and Lewis's map of Narnia. I was intrigued by a Japanese manga, 'Ascendance of a bookworm: I'll stop at nothing to become a librarian!' 'Tom's midnight garden' illustrated the timeslip idea. The section "Forging realms" dealt with maps and languages, featuring a map of Pratchett's Discworld; More's 'Utopia' (1516), Gulliver's travels, the Bronte siblings' 'Glass Town', the Wizard of Oz.

The world of fandom closed the exhibition, with live action role play costumes.

I felt there could have been a lot more of Tolkien and Lewis, and other authors I knew were not included, but of course space was limited, and the intention was to show modern fantasy and its roots.





Sleight's 'Ancient Mappe of Fairyland' (1918)

Janice Paine





George Verwer: 3rd July 1938 – 14th April 2023

‘Therefore, my beloved brothers be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain’. 1 Corinthians 15:58

George Verwer, founder of pioneering Christian organisation ‘Operation Mobilisation’, died peacefully on Friday, 14 April 2023, at his home near London, surrounded by his family. He was 84. George had been diagnosed with sarcoma, a cancer that attacks the body’s connective tissues.

We’ve used the very good article, but abridged version from - <https://billygraham.org.uk/p/spiritual-giant-george-verwer-has-died/> - The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association of the United Kingdom (BGEA UK) who said: ‘Verwer was born July 3, 1938, to Eleanor Caddell Verwer and George Verwer Sr., a Dutch immigrant to the United States, who worked as an electrician. He was raised in Wyckoff, New Jersey, outside New York City. The family belonged to a Reformed Church in America congregation.

A Christian woman named Dorothea Clapp, to start praying for him, that he would find faith in Jesus. She gave him a copy of the Gospel of John and she put him on her prayer list, which she called the “Holy Spirit hit list.”

Three years later, Verwer felt compelled to attend a meeting in Madison Square Garden. He and a few friends took the bus 30 miles to hear Billy Graham preach on March 5, 1955. At the invitation to commit his life to Christ, 16-year-old Verwer went forward. He was moved, he said, by the message that God loved him and could use him.

By the time of Billy Graham’s 1957 Madison Square Garden Crusade, Verwer was showing Billy Graham films in his area, selling Christian books door to door, blitzing New York City’s subway system with thousands of Gospel tracts—and chartering buses to the Crusade.

When the Crusade was over, George and two other college students went to Mexico on a mission trip, which they had organised. The next summer a larger group returned to Mexico to open book shops, to start radio broadcasts and correspondence courses, and to do prison and street evangelism. The Mexico trips were the seed of what was to become ‘Operation Mobilisation’.

Verwer went on to have immeasurable global impact - that lifelong “Verwer fervour” for missions moved untold numbers of Christians to cross borders, cultures, and continents to proclaim the Good News of God’s love. OM became one of the largest mission organisations of the 20th century, sending out thousands every year on short- and long-term trips.

In his later years, Verwer began to speak at every opportunity about how and why God works in and through a church filled with human mistakes and sin.



George published "*Confessions of A Toxic Perfectionist and God's Antidote*" (2020), "*Messiology*" (2018), "*Drops from a Leaking Tap*" (2008), "*Out of the Comfort Zone*" (2000), as well as a number of other titles.

All these PDF's are available from: <https://verwerhessiontrust.org/verwer-books.html>

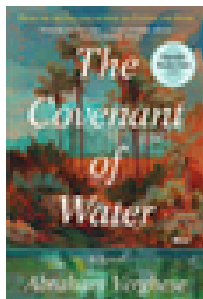
George Verwer is survived by his wife, Drena, their three children, Ben, Daniel and Christa; and a number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

ENDS





The covenant of water by Abraham Verghese



My top adult fiction pick for 2023 is *The covenant of water* by Abraham Verghese, published by Grove Atlantic and distributed in the U.K. by Atlantic Books. It is primarily set in Kerala, the lush South Indian state interwoven with rivers, lakes, ponds and streams. The book follows several generations of a St Thomas Christian Orthodox family beginning with a child bride in 1900. The family of the widower she marries is afflicted with a mysterious condition which causes at least one family member from each generation to die by drowning. Mariamma's prayer that someone in her family will become a doctor and find a cure seems impossible. The author is a well-known American physician and integral to the story is fascinating medical information adding richness to the account. There is even a visit to the hospital founded by the Scudder family at Vellore. As a teenager Verghese spent his holidays with relatives in Kerala and he infuses the book with authentic detail, memorable characters and intriguing events. One reviewer reckoned that the book was humourless. Do not believe it; I particularly enjoyed the chapter in which the translator for a visiting American speaker at the annual Christian convention is faced with translating culturally inappropriate content. I am not normally a fan of family sagas, but this subtle and hope-filled book is special. Don't be put off by its length. I was number 284 on the library waiting list when I first reserved the title and by the time it was my turn to borrow a copy there were probably as many behind me. I worried that I would not get it read in the allocated month, but in the end I gobbled the more than 700 pages in four days (yes, I am retired). I enjoyed it so much that I plan to re-read it when there is less of a waiting list.

Reviewed by Eleanor Neil, who spent almost a year in India with her husband in the mid-1980s. She now lives north of Auckland in New Zealand, and is overseas secretary for CLIS. Last year her first children's picture book *Shoe trouble* was published by Upstart Press.





Bloomfield, Jem. *Paths in the Snow: a literary journey through The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2023.

Another book on Narnia? Yes, this volume, written by a Professor of Literature at Nottingham University, discusses the deep well of literary sources from which C.S. Lewis draws in the first Narnia book he wrote, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, first published in 1950 by Geoffrey Bles.

Bloomfield travels through the text, exploring the textual allusions in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, exactly as the subtitle indicates. The author cites sources from medieval dream poetry and Dante, Dorothy L. Sayers, J. B. Phillips, Kenneth Grahame, and many more authors in this enriching read. Walking through, chapter by chapter, Bloomfield draws out meaning, historical background, breadth and depth of sources, like a yarn created from an immense fleece. In Chapter One, Bloomfield begins by highlighting the power of 'Once', 'Once there were' (p. 29). He indicates how this first sentence invites the reader (of any age), into the story, in the expectation of all the elements that make up a fairy tale, with its magic and danger. Bloomfield briefly discusses the question of Lewis's presentation of time, bringing the chronotope of historical time and place, into that of mythical time.¹

The section on food, in Chapter Seven, points out the importance of food in children's literature but sadly does not indicate the enormous amount of work done on this subject from many angles, for readers to follow up. It 'whets the appetite' without giving the opportunity to find out more.²

If there is one major criticism of this accessible and engaging book, it is that it has no index, a frustrating omission. The innumerable typos, a proofing issue, can be accepted.

It is altogether an enjoyable and informative read which is recommended to anyone interested in the thought of C.S. Lewis, and/or the writing of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. (Rachel Johnson)

¹ A full discussion can be found in Nikolajeva, Maria. *From Mythic to Linear: Time in Children's Literature*. Lanham, Md. & London: The Children's Literature Association and the Scarecrow Press Inc., 2000.

² For example: Edited by Keeling, Kara K. and Scott T. Pollard. *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*. London: Routledge, 2009



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