



# Christian Librarian

## February 2026





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*Freda Carey – ‘Open Theology’*

*a talk on theological libraries and education in Pakistan*

*and*

*Rosslyn Johnston (Yarnton Manor)*

*The opening of a new theological library*

Venue: Wesley Euston Hotel, London on 18 April 2026 from 10.30

To book a place email: [dhquthrie@btinternet.com](mailto:dhquthrie@btinternet.com)

*(Zoom participation also available)*





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# Contents

First word: Fifty Golden Years (Richard Waller) .....3

Speaking truth in a world of misinformation (Ben Chang) .....6

Recollections of a librarian (Sue Rutt) .....16

Celebrating 70 years of ABTAPL (Christine Love-Rodgers).....25

The future of CLIS (Robert Foster) ..... 29

Traherne and theophily by Robert Hudson (Rachel Johnson) 32

The kind librarian by Helen Rimmer (Winette Field).....35

Annual Report for 2024 (Robert Foster) ..... 42

Statement of Accounts for 2024 (Diana Guthrie) ..... 44

## Next events:

- Visit to Imperial War Museum, London for ‘Emergency Exits’ exhibition.  
23 February – meet at 10.15
  
- CLIS Annual Conference  
Wesley Euston Hotel  
18 April  
(see inside front cover)





First word

# **Fifty Golden Years**

by

**Richard Waller**  
**(President, CLIS)**

Fifty years of LCF/CLIS! Looking back to the autumn of 1973 when I was one of a group of post-grad students at the College of Librarianship Wales, drinking coffee in a college hall of residence and looking at a letter in a Christian magazine suggesting that anyone interested in forming a fellowship for Christian librarians should write to a certain Elizabeth Barber at an address in Oxford.... what has happened in the 50 years since is quite amazing!

Volunteering to help set up the Fellowship, I served as secretary and editor for a few years until Graham volunteered first to be editor and, a bit later, after we had found out how good he was, he became secretary. I took over as Chairman (as it was called then) of the committee as Elizabeth had to quit working in libraries to take over the family music shop in St Albans.

We have been a voice for the Lord in libraries for many years now. The LA and then CILIP never failed to notice what we were doing, even if they didn't always appreciate it! It would be



true to say that this was mainly Graham's doing, as he seemed to know everyone. This was recognised when he was given a very much deserved honorary FCLIP for his contribution to the profession.

I have always felt that apart from my role in getting the fledgling fellowship off the ground and organising the first conference in 1976, my main task for over many years was creating, and for 20 years heading up, the library assistance programme. This involved helping a selection of Christian organisations to establish or rescue their libraries, from the first in 1976-7 at the then South Wales Bible College (now part of Union Theological Seminary, Bridgend), to the most recent, where we helped UCCF organise their archives and sort out their book collection into something where they could at least find things, in 2018. The one I have the happiest memories of is the Northumbria Bible College in Berwick-upon-Tweed. All these projects were very rewarding in themselves, but also I made many friends in the course of the intensive activity of the working parties, with whom I have kept up over many years.

Of course, the chief thing that LCF ever did for me was to find me a wife as I married the first membership secretary, Norma! We have supported each other in the work ever since.

More recently CLIS has been helping theological training colleges overseas by providing grants of books to support their library stock, staff training and, in one case, finance to enable them to install a library management system. Given the explosive expansion of the Church in Africa and South America



the need is huge and anything we can do is truly worthwhile. Some of the folk we help live in very dangerous places and need our prayers as they seek to carry the Gospel forward.

However, the world is changing, the card catalogues I trained on have vanished into the limbo of history and are not missed, the needs of training institutions have changed, and the world of print publications is very different to the days when we set up a quarterly magazine, the LCF Newsletter, and what was then our annual journal, the Christian Librarian. It is a time of change and our traditional structures are not fit for purpose any more. So this, our golden anniversary, marks the end of an era and the opening of a new way of doing things more in keeping with the society we live in.

However, we should not let the old-style CLIS expire with a whimper, let's make our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference a real celebration of everything we have achieved as we gather together in April, remembering the past with gratitude to God but also looking to the future as to how to serve him in the different society we now face.

*Richard Waller*





# Speaking Truth In a World of Misinformation

by

**Ben Chang**

One of the defining features of our social media age is the degradation of truth and the omnipresence of misinformation, fake news and conspiracy theories. Social media sites such as YouTube, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram are driven by powerful intelligent algorithms that harvest the data we generate when we click, scroll and post online, and then use these to feed us personalised content specifically selected to keep us scrolling. The result is an “attention economy” where tech companies are constantly competing for the most valuable and lucrative currency in the modern world- human attention.

However, in the race for clicks, scrolls and user attention, one thing that has had to be jettisoned is *truth*. Content gains traction online when it is shocking, inflammatory, salacious or in some other way attention-grabbing. What is largely irrelevant is its veracity. In the attention economy, truth has lost its currency.

A 2018 study published in *Science* investigated the spread of 126,000 news stories on Twitter<sup>1</sup>. The authors concluded that ‘falsehood diffused significantly farther,





faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth in all categories of information'<sup>1</sup>. For example, true stories took six times as long to reach 1500 people than false stories, and falsehoods were 70% more likely to be retweeted than truth. These differences were most marked amongst political posts. As the authors wrote: 'False political news travelled deeper and more broadly, reached more people, and was more viral than any other category of false information. False political news also diffused deeper more quickly and reached more than 20,000 people nearly three times faster than all other types of false news reached 10,000 people'<sup>1</sup>. These findings should not greatly surprise us. Fiction is more likely to be dramatic, exciting, surprising or salacious than fact, and therefore predictably gets more clicks. Our social media world is built on attention, not truth.

The picture has been further complicated by the arrival of open-access generative AI. Today, social media users can not only type anything they want online; with a few clicks they can also generate pictures and videos that depict completely fabricated realities. Many social media platforms are now deluged by a constant stream of AI-generated material, sometimes termed "AI slop". In today's online world, anything we see with our own eyes might turn out to be totally fabricated.



## **It's All a Conspiracy**

However, political falsehoods and AI-generated videos are just the tip of the post-truth iceberg. Below the surface, social media is teeming with a vast subterranean ecosystem of conspiracy theories and their zealous adherents.

Some conspiracy theories are decades old but nonetheless have established large online communities such “flat-earthers” or believers that 9/11 was orchestrated by the US government. Others conspiracy theories have emerged more recently, such a QAnon, which originated in 2017 on the anonymous online imageboard 4chan, and has since grown into one of the most active conspiracy groups. QAnon beliefs centre on the idea that the world is controlled by a global cabal of Satan-worshipping paedophiles and that Donald Trump is the messianic leader of the resistance.

In 2020, as the COVID pandemic gripped the world, online conspiracies exploded. All sorts of unfounded theories ripped through social media including that the pandemic was planned by the pharmaceutical industry, that COVID infection was linked to 5G mobile towers, and that COVID vaccines contained digital trackers. Such misinformation posed major problems for governments and public health professionals particularly in the US and parts of Europe. Even in Britain, where vaccine uptake and compliance to social restrictions



were relatively high, there were at least 90 attacks on phone masts motivated by 5G conspiracy theories<sup>2</sup>.

## **Cover-Up in the Kingdom**

Online conspiracy theories are a major subterranean part of our social media world. But perhaps even more disconcertingly, there seems to be a specific susceptibility of Christians to be drawn into conspiracy theories. For example, a survey by the Public Religion Research Institute found that in 2021, 23% of white evangelical protestants in America were QAnon believers, compared with a national average of 16%<sup>3</sup>. Similarly, a 2023 study found that belief in the authority of the bible was correlated with beliefs that the government is hiding information about alien encounters, 9/11 and the moon landing<sup>4</sup>.

We need to be careful about drawing too broad a conclusion from these studies. I suspect there are lots of confounding variables, such as educational levels and political views, and the above studies focus solely on Americans. However, there are some plausible explanations for why Christians seem slightly more prone than others to succumb to conspiracy theories. Christians, by definition, believe in an unseen higher power at work in the world. Therefore we are potentially primed to more naturally accept the idea that the world is not as it first appears. Similarly, Christians around the



world are used to defending beliefs that the majority of their fellow citizens do not share. Perhaps this leads to Christians being less likely to assume that widely-accepted views, such as scientific consensus, are correct.

There is more research needed in this area. However, we must acknowledge that Christians are not immune to misinformation and conspiratorial ideas. If anything, we may be at greater risk than our secular friends.

### **All Your Words Are True**

I think that the degradation of truth is one of the most troubling features of our social media world, because it confronts the core of the biblical worldview. The word “truth” occurs 137 times in the NIV translation of the bible (and that is without including the converse references to falsehood and deception).

Truth is at the heart of the character of God. In Psalm 119:160, the Psalmist praises God because ‘All your words are *true*; all your righteous laws are eternal’, and in Romans 2:2 Paul writes: ‘Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on *truth*’. Truth is also central to the mission of the incarnation. John describes Jesus as ‘...the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and *truth*’ (John 1:14) and later in John’s gospel, Jesus



pronounces Himself ‘the way and the *truth* and the life’ (John 14:6).

The truth of God’s character is then meant to be mirrored in the behaviour of His people. The prohibition of lying forms one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:16), and in Psalm 15:1-2, we read that truthful words mark out the righteous person of God:

‘Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent?

Who may live on your holy mountain?

The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous,

who speaks the *truth* from their heart.’

Whilst truth is central to the character of God and His people, lies and deception are at the root of evil. In Genesis 3, the serpent tempts Eve by bare faced lying: “You will not certainly die... For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:4-5). In Revelation 13 we see the Satanic image of the great Dragon alongside his two beasts. The first beast attacks the church through conquest and persecution (13:7), whilst the second through *deception*. This second beast mimics Jesus in its appearance and actions (13:11-14) and gives life to the image of the first beast (13:15). In other words, it makes the fake become real. Lies and deception are at the root of the Fall and are powerful weapons that Satan deploys against the Church of Christ.



Christians should therefore find the notion of a post-truth world dark and spiritually troubling.

## **Pursuing Truth**

How then can we practically live as Christians in our online post-truth world?

I think we must first acknowledge our own vulnerability to lies, misinformation and conspiracies. We are all fallible human beings with the propensity to be deceived. Therefore, followers of the God of Truth must strive to seek truth and protect ourselves from deception.

One practical step we can take is to attempt to break out of our online echo chambers by engaging with a range of different views social media, including opinions we disagree with. If we only ever see online content that reinforces and amplifies our pre-existing views, we risk being driven into echo chambers where the validity of our opinions are rarely challenged. Exposing our beliefs to scrutiny is essential in the pursuit of truth. And so as uncomfortable that it often is, I think it is beneficial to deliberately follow and engage with social media content that we disagree with.

Furthermore, we must be aware that our social media echo chamber is not the whole world. What we see on social media is not a representative sample of society but simply what the intelligent algorithm has selected for us. So when we encounter views that challenge the





consensus that we see online, we should not simply presume that the online consensus is right or even representative of views in the real world. Someone else's online consensus may look very different to ours.

In fact, in light of the data we looked at earlier, we should probably have a healthy suspicion of *all* claims that we see on social media. If falsehoods are 70% more likely to be retweeted than truth<sup>1</sup>, then the chance of something we see online being untrue is likely higher than we naturally presume. Perhaps we need to develop a similar sort of automatic scepticism that we have for emails from unknown senders. Whenever we receive an email from an unknown sender offering us money or requesting personal details, most of us naturally assume that it is fraudulent until proven otherwise. It may not be, but we have a necessary default scepticism. With the continued degradation of truth in our social media world, perhaps we need to develop a similar default scepticism to everything we read online. And with the rise of AI deepfakes, the same probably applies to pictures and videos too. This major cognitive shift may prove widely necessary if truth continues to lose its currency in our social media world.

## **What Is Truth?**

As we close, it is worth reminding ourselves that in God's world, including on social media, truth matters. In



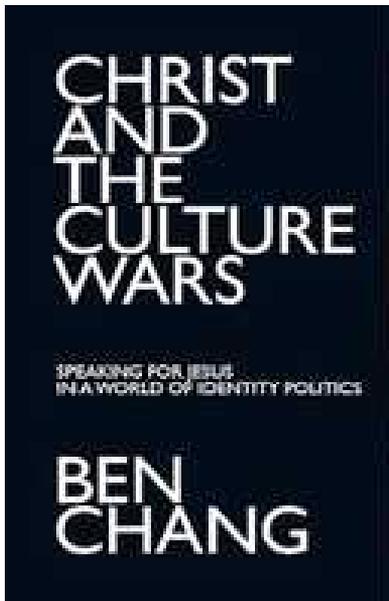
John 18, Jesus stands before Pilate and declares: ‘...the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me’ (John 18:37). Pilate retorts ‘What is truth?’ (18:38) and does not wait for an answer. The irony is that Pilate questions the reality of truth whilst staring at the face of truth incarnate. In fact in John 1 we see Jesus described as the *Logos* become flesh (John 1:14). In Ancient Greek thought, the *Logos* was the divine reason or rational principle behind the universe. Jesus is the ultimate and universal Truth from whom all truth is derived.

Therefore Christians are people of truth. We believe in the reality of truth because we trust in the source of all truth. This should motivate us on to seek the truth, whether on matters of theology, politics, science or any other discipline. And it should spur us on to defend the place of truth particularly in our post-truth online world.

*Dr Ben Chang is a writer, speaker and emergency medicine specialist doctor. He is author of the book ‘Christ and the Culture Wars- Speaking for Jesus in a World of Identity Politics’ and is currently working on a new book about social media. His website is [www.benchang.co.uk](http://www.benchang.co.uk)*



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# Recollections of a Librarian

by

**Sue Rutt**

I found Philip Hayworth's article in the Christian Librarian, a while back, very interesting - sadly he has since died, but it made me think a lot about the changes in librarianship and libraries since I started myself as a junior - intending to train as a librarian - in the 1960's.

I actually joined as a local government trainee, so initially spent some time also in other departments before concentrating solely on the library - in the Clerks Department, the Record Office and in Education, which included the Awards section, Youth Opportunities and Youth Service. With lectures and visits over a six month period, this gave me an insight into how local government worked - for instance, until then, I did not realise that the Clerks Department was the legal department of the County Council. We were introduced when we started to the Clerk of the County Council, the legal representative of the Council and the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire - the Queen's representative in the County, both very nice people, though as young people I suppose we were rather



overawed. Since my father was a civil servant, working in London, plus two years abroad, I also gained some idea of central government I suppose. All of which was interesting when considering public library provision and to some extent library provision involving education.

Public libraries were then building up their provision and many libraries were in older buildings, until purpose-built ones could be presumably afforded. I was able to see this change in action as the County Council building, with its Library and Record Office one side, and the Council Chamber the other was being built and by the end of a year we were installed in it, in 1969. Previously the County Council had inhabited the old Shire Hall buildings that included the County Courts and also was in other buildings scattered around the town, so by 1969 they were separated from the Courts and with most departments coming under one roof. I mourned the passing of the old library though, as the old library was a building full of character. No matter that it had been decreed a fire hazard by the Fire Service! Formerly it had been a gentlemen's club and there were still holes in the doors through which people could see who was in the room, perhaps there were people one wanted to avoid! The lending library was on the ground floor with a



central room with issue and discharge desks and a children's library in the space by the window and the two rooms each side, reached by archways, held the fiction and non-fiction books. Upstairs was a wonderful reference library room which overlooked the river - so quiet and serene: it was a great draw for the many characters who frequented it, with its chairs and tables dotted around. An ante room was used as a small workroom. The Librarian's Office and other offices, toilets and staff quarters (in the middle of stacks of "pool stock" incidentally,) where one sat to have one's tea or lunch, with a small counter on the side for kettle and so on) and school library department extended out to the back. On the second floor was the Accessions Department and Special Collections. There was only a service lift, so a disabled lady went valiantly up to the top floor on her bottom each day to the Accessions Department where she worked, with the wheelchair following. (In the new library the Accessions Department was better placed for her). The original County Librarian, who had started with the secretary in the 1940s making up boxes of books and sending them around the county to designated places - our primary school was one and a torch depicted on the building showed there was a library collection - had not long retired, and was held in great



esteem. Likewise the former assistant librarian, who had died young and whose friendly ghost was supposed to walk the floors at night! No such thing of course would ever happened at the new library!

The staff were a motley collection of professional librarians, juniors and holiday- and short-term staff often either at university or just finished and needing work. One undergraduate dropped a tray of Brown(e) issue on the floor on a busy Saturday scattering its contents - so there was chaos for while. He was thereafter banned from library duties of any responsible nature (although he was at Oxford!) but later found himself allowed to write overdues to his astonishment. But this too could be tricky as one had to do them while near the counter and leap up if a customer came in, so that one lady got addressed as “Mrs Duck End Lane”, in the confusion of both writing them and attending to customers at the same time.

A lady on the phone had it seemed stentorian tones and I quailed when asked to get some books ready for her - “not too light, not too heavy” on various subjects by two o’clock in the afternoon. I did think I might be able to get something somewhere in the middle! - and by the time she came in, she was such a sweet diminutive elderly lady and



immediately thanked me, I then became her devoted slave. She turned out to be a pioneer headmistress of the High School.

Juniors had to do tea and post on a rota of once in every four weeks. The tea was awkward as not much information was given as to number of spoons (no tea-bags then) in the pot for such a crowd and when I posed this question at the issue desk, a number of borrowers joined in with the Lending Librarian as to how to make a good cup of tea! Even so one male member of staff still asked “Who made this tea?” in a rather rude tone, so I said “I did”, rather crossly which shut him up.

Post was done in the room near the secretary’s office - she was near retiring age. But we both rejoiced, old and young together, when she was listening to the Wimbledon Ladies Final of 1969 and came out and said “Ann Jones has won!”, “Anne Jones has won!”. Anne was such a popular player at that time.

We were usually on our best behaviour with borrowers, although occasionally letting off steam when together. Since we worked mainly in the lending library, most issues were over whether people owed on books or even had them in the first place. The Lending Librarian was a bit of a



martinet on this - she had to be sometimes. To the extent that when we moved and she saw a small room, the purpose of which was unclear, she remarked that it could well be “a penitential cell for recalcitrant borrowers”!

One of the lovely things though that she did do was to allow those of us who had Art A-level to do exhibitions - I remember doing a cookery exhibition at the old library and a children’s exhibition at the new library with books and artwork to match (and props for the cookery).

Other characters in the library included an academic who dressed like a tramp and neglected his self-care but who was working on a language dictionary at the time. Despite his appearance, he was treated with great respect. He had the most books out - 70, I believe. Occasionally there was a cull on the number of books staff had out - but this story may have been apocryphal.

Another borrower, an elderly gentleman, asked me at a branch library I occasionally did relief work in - another old building - for “Deeper Profunders” by Oscar Wilde. I was perplexed as I divined it was “De Profundis” which I thought a psalm and not by Oscar Wilde! - not realising it was the letter written by Oscar Wilde from prison to his friend. But the request went in and he got it, I presume. It amazed me



that one could request almost anything - there seemed very few things unavailable to readers. The branch library, that had been a Primitive Methodist chapel, a cinema and now a library, reminded me of the library Philip Larkin started his career in as it was very basic - just a large room with a sink and toilet round the back. Philip Larkin we met as library students when we did a tour of Hull university library where he was the librarian.

I had an interest in art, languages and history as non-fiction subjects and read classics and some modern novels (though I wasn't into crime - 'whodunnits' came a bit later in life), but I learnt a lot about the type of books people read and the most popular novels around. Also the area of children's books was fascinating then. (One tended to lose touch with both these areas when leaving public libraries.

Time moved on, library college came and went, time on a mobile library also and later in academic libraries and in between other work and one realised that one was on to computers from Brown(e) issue and photo-charging and cataloguing similarly. (The British Library took so long to build that apparently the original idea of a huge card catalogue in the centre had to give way to the King's Library" so I was told). The latest in cataloguing before I



went to library school was a revolving card catalogue where you pressed a button and a drawer came up. A far cry from separate drawers to wade through at the old library! And later even greater ease to search for information simplified the process.

To me, there seemed a period of building up in public libraries, a plateau period of wonderful provision in public libraries for many years, and then contraction in recent years of services, along with all these other changes taking place. Though it hasn't got to the point of 'blow up librarians' as a 'token presence' as someone jokingly remarked might happen in the 1990s! Indeed there are many new ideas for libraries as a space for groups - one such group I joined got so big, it eventually outgrew the library - and libraries are seen now as another "warm space" for people to be in.

But (although it seems a bit like ancient history now, some 56/7 years later!) they were happy days in my early years in the library, and I did feel that despite buildings that were not purpose-built and more work involved searching for information and dealing with borrower's problems and requests, they were fulfilling years. Just as I had done retail work as a Saturday job, and the customer was all important,



the borrower in libraries was too, and it was good to be able to help them in various ways.

Finally, I should pay tribute to CLIS. When I met Graham Hedges at the NEC Birmingham, I had no idea I was on a near 30-year journey where I would meet other Christians in library work, go on visits and read the interesting 'Christian Librarian' newsletter periodically (I have found recent issues very interesting too). I was in favour of Christian groups in work as my father had benefitted from such a group in the Civil Service. Sadly I was not able to be involved as much as I would have liked, ill-health has dogged much of that time, as well as parental illness and death. But I would like to highlight two visits: to "The Kilns" in 1998 and "Wesley's Chapel" and "Bunhill Fields" in 2010, where it was lovely to part of a group and have a meal together and which I so enjoyed. Obviously one must pay tribute to all Graham did - he is sadly missed - but also of course include others who have worked hard to make CLIS what it is. Now many of us are retired, which was not the case when I joined, so perhaps the future of CLIS is uncertain but whatever happens it has been a very valuable organisation over quite a long period of time.

Sue Rutt (2025)





# **Celebrating 70 years of ABTAPL**

(Association for British Theological and  
Philosophical Libraries)

by

**Christine Love-Rodgers**

If this is the first time that you have heard of ABTAPL (pronounced Abtapple by those in the know) then let me introduce you to the Association for British Theological and Philosophical Libraries.

It all began in 1956, when in the bright post-World War 2 world the Library Association in the UK was keen to develop co-operative library schemes[1]. Westminster City Library was allocated the fields of Philosophy and Religion and began to contact other libraries with substantial collections in this area. This initiative led to the formation of an ecumenical group of librarians, multi-faith in fact, including the Jewish Historical Society and the Buddhist Society. Notable leaders of the group were from Dr Williams Library and Heythrop College Library, homes to very significant religious collections. By the late 1970s, regular meetings had developed into annual conferences[2] and a journal, the ABTAPL Bulletin[3] was established, which continues today. International links were made with BETH (Bibliothèques Européennes de Théologie) and ATLA (American Theological Association) which remain strong and vital.



Fast forward to 2026, and ABTAPL is looking forward to its 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. Although it has members from large university libraries and tiny historical libraries, ABTAPL's character owes much to the small theological libraries that make up the bulk of its membership. Many ABTAPL Member librarians are solo librarians and all share information, mutual support and practical help, including an interlibrary loans service and journal holdings directory[4]. An active JISCMail list is the go-to place for cooperative conversations [5]. ABTAPL members can benefit from a regular programme of online training sessions, and monthly online catch ups. Twice a year, ABTAPL meetings and conferences allow librarians to meet up in person).

### **70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary plans**

#### *Theological Libraries in the UK & Ireland*

We're delighted to announce our forthcoming volume, *Theological Libraries in the UK & Ireland*. This edited monograph is a celebration and a reflection of ABTAPL and theological libraries in the UK & Ireland over the last 70 years. Twelve chapters include diverse topics such as the impact of ABTAPL, Common Awards and the library, Cathedral libraries, classification in theological libraries and much more. It contains much original research into the landscape of religious libraries and information in the UK today. Due to be published open access and freely available online by ATLA in February 2026, there will also be print copies available to purchase on demand via Amazon.



### *Libraries of Faith*

New for 2026 is our planned seminar series, *Libraries of Faith*, an online seminar series which will be open to all. Seminar topics include *Theological Libraries for Alternative Spiritualities*, *Theological Libraries in Ireland: past lessons, present strengths, and future challenges* and *Jesuit libraries: Campion Hall Library & Heythrop Library*.

### *Annual Conference*

We are planning to celebrate our 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a conference at Wycliffe College, Oxford, 26-28 March *Leadership and Advocacy : celebrating 70 Years of ABTAPL*. In time honoured fashion our conference starts with library visits to Oxford theological libraries, including the new home of the Oxford University Theological Library, the Stephen A. Schwartzmann Centre for the Humanities Library. Conference presentations include sessions on teaching with special collections, integrating theological collections, and delivery of theological library services online, as well as three presentations on our keynote theme of leadership in theological libraries. On the Saturday morning, we'll hold our AGM and then a panel session to launch our new book, followed by Teachmeet presentations sharing member experiences. Early bird bookings open in December for as little as £250 for ABTAPL members to attend the full residential conference. We also have free day places for students and professional development grants are available to help ABTAPL members attend. Finally, the Saturday morning of the conference on March 28 will be completely free for all to attend online.



Come and join us – you are welcome! To find out more and to sign up for events, please follow our announcements on the ABTAPL JISCMail list and on our website

<https://www.abtapl.org.uk/>

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Christine Love-Rodgers is Deputy Chair, ABTAPL & Academic Support Librarian for Divinity, University of Edinburgh.



## The Future of CLIS

Some notes by the Committee Chair, Robert Foster.

*(The following text is taken from the New Year letter recently circulated to members)*

I am sure that many of you will be wondering what the next step for CLIS will be. The Committee has been discussing this for some time now along with members who have joined us at online events.

The first thing to say is that we will be having a conference and AGM on Saturday 18 April 2026 and I hope many members will be able to join us. This will be our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference and it will be an in-person event in London.

However, we are expecting that this will be our last conference. We are also expecting that issue of Christian Librarian- when it appears- to be the last one or perhaps the penultimate one.

I am sorry to write this because CLIS has been significant in the professional lives of quite a number of people, myself included. Thanks to the events and opportunities afforded through our organisation I was able to include such things in my application for chartership 20 years ago.

The situation though is that we have some committee posts unfilled. For example, we have no publications officer ; and we have an acting secretary (John Wickenden). There are also members of the Committee who either wish to stand down or who will have to stand down soon. Most of the Committee are



retired members. I myself feel that I would like to be able to hand over the role of Chair during the next year.

Personally speaking I would rather find a way forward than close up completely. There are good things happening. In recent times members have come forward to help with a library project at All Nations College. We have been in a position to give significant gifts from our reserves to libraries in Nigeria and South Sudan as well as the donation to Tyndale House, Cambridge, which supports Christian researchers all over the world. And we have continued to enjoy meeting together both in person and online, such as the recent session on contemplative worship.

Assuming that we do not wish to end all activity completely, it seems to me we have two ways ahead of us:

1. Continue with membership but with a reduced committee for as long as we can. Communication would be by e-Newsletter, which would be printed for those who prefer a hard copy. The website would be maintained for as long as we can to enable people to use the archive of Christian Librarian there. As we would still need to pay for the website, postage, Zoom subscription, Information Commissioner's fee etc we would still need to have an AGM, as we would still have to approve accounts and to elect a chair, treasurer, secretary and a membership secretary. Subscription costs would be low unless there is a return to printing a magazine and running a conference. However, this set-up is likely to be a temporary one.
2. Vote to close CLIS in its present form and agree to distribute the remaining funds to appropriate organisations. Re-start



(possibly under a revised name) without formal membership but with informal ties. Communication would be via social media (e.g. Whatsapp, Telegram or other) and email. Two people would act as moderators of the discussion group but they would not be formally elected. There would be no membership subscriptions and so no central bank account.

Whilst we may not have further conferences, in-person lectures and printed publications organised by a committee, we hope that Christian librarians will continue to meet up, perhaps at a CILIP event, Spring Harvest, CRE or similar larger event (similar to what the US Christian libraries group FOCLIS does). We will still be able to share articles and news via a blog and release a newsletter to highlight anything coming up. And there is nothing to stop people meeting on Zoom as well. The CLIS archive is currently being stored at the Evangelical Library, should anyone wish to do research on that.

The aim would be to make it possible so that should there be people able and willing to rebuild in the future, there is something in place to work with.

I realise this is not a perfect situation. I very much hope that a way can be found to allow Christians in the profession to share with each other. However, the above will need to be voted on at the AGM. If you cannot be with us on 18 April, please can you let us know as soon as you can – ideally with the membership form – so that we can issue you with a postal vote.

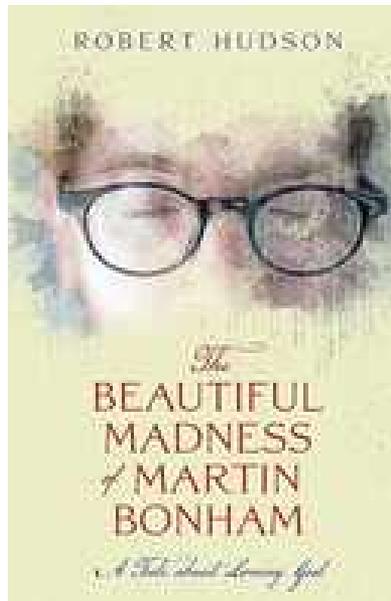
Robert Foster  
Chair



## Book review

### Traherne and Theophily? A Short Review of:

Hudson, Robert. *The Beautiful Madness of Martin Bonham: a Tale about Loving God*. Hannacroix , NY: Apocryphile Press, 2023.



*'There I saw that Logic, Ethics, Physics, Metaphysics, Geometry, Astronomy, Poesy, Medicine, Grammar, Music, Rhetoric, all kinds of Arts, Trades, and Mechanisms that adorned the world pertained to felicity; ... I saw into the nature of the Sea, the Heavens, the Sun, the Moon and Stars, the Elements, Mineral, and Vegetables – all which appeared like*





*the Kings Daughter, all glorious within.'* (Centuries of Meditations, III, 36).<sup>1</sup>

In chapter 1 of this enjoyable and uplifting book, Thomas Traherne makes his entrance as the inspiration for the 'Department of Theophily', dreamt up by the protagonist, Professor Martin Bonham, and a questioning student, Katie Westcott. The premise was that the Department of Theophily would cover, 'all the spiritual territory that the seminary doesn't – literature, art, drama, history, philosophy, sociology, science, psychology ..... about ninety-five percent of the rest of human experience'.<sup>2</sup>

Katie, a particularly bright student is troubled because she doesn't think she loves God, therefore, as a seminarian, believes she must give up her course and leave. Bonham, is an English professor delivering a 'two-semester senior seminar on the 'Writings of the English mystics': 401 (Fall) - Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries' and '402 (Spring) – Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries'.<sup>3</sup> Katie is one of the students who opted for the course – and realised to her horror that she did not love God. The resulting discussion led to a canvassing of both staff and students (mainly staff), posing two questions 'Do you ever feel like you love God', and 'When do you most feel like you love God?'.<sup>4</sup> The responses from a variety of faculty professors led to the inauguration of 'The Department of Theophily', but not without some serious opposition .....

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<sup>1</sup> From: Notes on the Text p. 239, *in* Hudson, Robert. The Beautiful Madness of Martin Bonham: a Tale about Loving God. Hannacroix , NY, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Page 12

<sup>3</sup> Page 3

<sup>4</sup> Page 7



Sadly, some of the Professors of Theology, and especially the Chair of the Seminary, saw this development as encroachment onto what they regarded as *their* territory, and by amateurs no less, which led to not only conflict but also attempted sabotage of the Department before it was even 'signed off'.

Fortunately, the Librarian, a thoughtful, sensible, intelligent person, and a long-standing friend of Bonham eventually brings the two warring parties to, if not exactly friendship, a mutually benign understanding.

In this book, peppered with wonderful quotations ranging from obscure 15<sup>th</sup> century English poets to Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Hudson has addressed the challenge of what 'loving God' means, as he traces the establishment, development, and success of the Department of Theophily, in which students could major on 'loving God'. With a humorous touch the author explores this deep question in the setting of a fictional university.

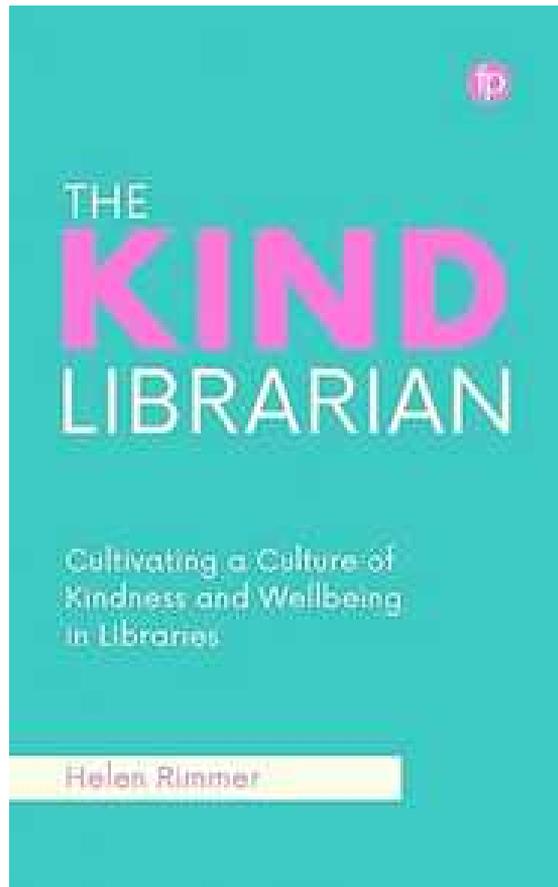
Note: Given to me by a good friend, it was a delight to discover that the opening quotation was by Thomas Traherne. It transpires that the author is a member of the Traherne Association, and the Librarian based on the friend who gave me the book. She was at college with the author.

*Rachel E. Johnson (October 2025)*



## Book review

Rimmer, Helen (2024). *The Kind Librarian*.  
Facet Publishing: London





Looking back over my professional life I find it interesting that things which were termed of a spiritual nature have spread into the mainstream. Thus during 2024 US scholars Dr. Darlene Ann Parrish and Simone Clunie reported that LIS journals had very little in them about servant leadership, the subject of the 1970 seminal book by Robert Greenwood (*Servant as Leader*). Rimmer does mention it. Similarly, other authors have published books this year on the kindness: Graham Allcott's *KIND: the power of kindness at work* and Kathryn Waddington et al's "*Developing Pedagogies of Compassion in Higher Education: A Practice First Approach*."

Why now?

Probably because of the critical issues facing our world: intolerance, fear, stress, isolation, loneliness, and economic uncertainty amongst other things. Of course, although the aforementioned writings have things in common, faith-based and the secular approaches are rooted in different things; none-the-less Rimmer has a solid professional background in University and Education Library sectors. Previously Head of Library and Archives Service at the University of Westminster, with experience working at both Royal Holloway University of London and Cass Business School. Today Rimmer runs "The Kind Brave Leader" a firm that specialises in systematic team coaching and culture building.

Kindness and wellbeing in the workplace are rooted in chapter 1 *The library as a nexus of community wellbeing*



and surely there cannot be one without the other. The overall direction of the work is *Kind libraries for a kind world* the last chapter. Rimmer is very honest emphasising that kindness is not just being nice. Difficult decisions have to be made, but these can be done in a kind way. In fact, sometimes the kind thing is to do the hard thing.

Over 3 sections, and 19 chapters, the topic is unpacked from the perspective of:

- Understanding
- The impact of workplace culture
- Practicalities
- Creating a culture within Libraries
- Dealing with toxicity
- Data management
- Recruiting
- Change
- Flexible working and beyond

I liked the fact that the book is not just about theory, there are questions to inspire reflection about one's context and practice. This is not really a dip in and out of text, but one which can be read as part of a secular examen. To that end pages 34 – 36 look at the PERMA, ASSET and JD-R models as part of redefining wellbeing in the workplace.

The subject of job-crafting, pages 41-42 and chapter 13, is raised and one could say that is elitist. Afterall generally only those whose work is within their own control have these options, however the counter to this is that managers do have it within their remit to empower team members to incorporate some aspect into their day to day. As chapter 4



puts it there is a place for meaningful work in Libraries. For Rimmer the point is the creation of work which aligns to the strengths of those employed. Page 68 helps readers identify what those might be.

Section 2 of the book, chapter 5 – 11, focuses on the actual cultivation of kindness using policy, prioritising self-care, investing in personal development of team members, working out what kind communication looks like, and discussing flexible working as a means of growing wellbeing and productivity.

Nay sayers regarding the latter, might again raise the point that not all roles allow for hybrid working. Dr. Lynn Silipigni Connaway, speaking at the American Theological Library Association Conference 2024, countered that by asking for mixed roles in which each member of a team has some aspect of their work they could do at home and some aspect which had to be done in the office. In this book the solution to the dilemma *The Fair Library Jobs: Kindness, Empathy and Equity in Library Recruitment* chapter 11, pages 187-198, is written by Kirsten Elliott and Darren Flynn.

Fair Library Jobs is an organization aiming to improve both recruitment and employment practice in the UK. To this Elliott and Flynn, along with Harriet Notman, took personal experience and used it to craft the Fair Library Jobs Manifesto. Whilst not included in full in the book, the chapter covers various power dynamics and a number of case studies. For the disillusioned a plus is that there is a statement re the experiences outlined being possibly



atypical, although being real for all those involved, and that some existing practices exclude.

As I was writing this review, I noticed a job advert stating that they had the right to close the call out for applicants or extend it if they felt the need to do. I mention this because it relates directly back to some of the unkind incidents noted by Elliott and Flynn. There was a time when such things were fixed and if that led to a bumper crop of applicants one took the rough with the smooth and simply worked through the winnowing process to identify the best. Perhaps that was a fairer system?

Another chapter written by a guest author, found in part 3, is *Kind Use of Data for Wellbeing and Leadership*, chapter 16 pages 271 – 284, by Amy Stubbing. Obviously, we adhere to the precepts of Data Protection but how many of us view it through the lens of Christian virtues let alone kindness? Too often data is used to drive decisions, which can have long term deleterious impacts, but perhaps we need to ask, “how kind is the impact?” and too whom just as we ask, “what is the environmental impact of this decision?”

Care for fellow library staff or team members is a core feature of the book so is it useful for solo librarians or non-managerial staff? Yes, the reflections and exercises provide a means of reinterpreting organizational behaviour. It is valuable for all to be able to do that whether they are in a Library or thinking about applying for a new post. How cool would it be to have questions of how kind is this organization at the fore front of one’s mind when being interviewed?



Some of you may remember the film *Legally Blonde 2*. In it the central character, encountering a dispiriting workplace, creates a system in which colleagues place praise notes about fellow staff into a jar. The idea being they get hear good things other colleagues have to say about each other. A similar exercise is suggested by Rimmer in what she calls the Kindness Ripple – there is nothing new under the sun after all – so does this mean the dismissal of the book as saccharin?

No, the book is about being committed to a difficult task and there is a bravery in that which has to be admired. Overall, this is a book best utilised in community. It has the possibility to be triggering to those who have had bad work experiences.

From a faith perspective transformation of an organization cannot be done solely through human means, but "A candle is a protest at midnight. It is a non-conformist. It says to the darkness, 'I beg to differ.'" Samuel Rayan<sup>5</sup> and so perhaps that is what this book is, a candle saying no to the dehumanization of each other. Certainly, Rimmer calls it a revolution.

For non CILIP members the hardback price is a very disturbing £100. £50 for the paperback. There is an e-version available from [hive.co.uk](http://hive.co.uk) for £40. Some internal information notes that Facet uses the money to fund CILIPs advocacy work and accredited training.

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<sup>5</sup> [S. Africa's Bishop Storey visits Michigan - The Michigan Conference](#)  
see Storey, Peter, *Protest at Midnight*, Cascade Books, Eugene, Oregon 2022, page 83



Facet publishing does an excellent job in crafting texts therefore it is fully indexed and referenced providing details of further resources. Despite this the book does read like a piece of research at times. What is missing is a section which specifically covers being kind to our users. It is implied every step of the way, and very much the focus of the case studies, but there is no reference to them in the index. That is particularly interesting as when I first heard of the book that is what I felt the primary focus would be. Potential users and existing users are there e.g. Crafty Wednesdays led by library staff involve the hospital staff from any part of the trust (page 34) or kind policies leading to better workplaces and thus kinder services for users. The approach is just more oblique.

Another point of interest is that Christians are encouraged to be “modest” re their virtues. Better for someone else to notice kindness than to stand on a platform of kindness. There is thus a tension and perhaps readers should simply use the ideas as a lens to look at the world about them.

Overall, it is worth giving it a whirl. Try it in a reading group or with a soul friend. Although it is aimed at libraries it would work with any organization seeking to change its culture indeed people from different organizations might want to work together and reflect on their practice. But remember be kind to yourself too, boundaries are important – and yes that’s covered in *The Kind Librarian* too.

Winette Field BA(Hons) MA MCLIP  
William Booth College Librarian



## **Annual Report for 2024**

by

**Robert Foster (Committee Chair)**

Although there were few actual CLIS events in 2024, this turned out to be a year to remember.

We held an in-person conference in London at the Christian Medical Fellowship centre in Marshalsea Road, London SE1 on 13 April. Our title was 'Integrity, truth and standards in public life'. Although the attendance was not high, we were joined by others on Zoom, our acting Secretary John Wickenden performing heroics as ever to make the various bits of technology work. Our two speakers for the day were Ben Chang and Robert Dimmick. Ben gave the morning talk "Speaking for Jesus in a Post-Truth World", looking at the subject of how we operate in a world where facts are often hard to establish. (An article by Ben on a similar topic is featured in this issue of CL). Robert tackled the question "Can politics be honest? – a Franciscan approach". Robert has had some experience of working as a councillor as well as being a member of the Third Order of St Francis, and was able to give a personal view of the challenge of faith and politics. We were grateful to Janice Paine for organising both speakers and the venue, which turned out to be excellent. Richard Waller, as always, produced a superb booklet for the day, and also acted as compère.

We remembered Donald G. Davis, a long-term member of CLIS, who spoke at conferences and regularly contributed to our magazine. An overseas member – he lived in Texas





for much of his life – his care for CLIS was evident to all who read his articles and spoke to him, as we did on Zoom during the pandemic. We also gave thanks for the life of Parthe Ward, a librarian at the House of Lords, and also a Christian.

There was no autumn event in 2024 but in August we received the news that our gift of books for the Chaima Christian Institute, Maridi, South Sudan, had finally arrived, done in liaison with Langham Partnership and with the help of Mission Aviation Fellowship. It had not been a straightforward process getting the materials there and thanks must go to Eleanor Neil, our overseas Library Assistance officer for never giving up.

Similarly we were delighted to be able to support the implementation of KOHA library management software at the Karl Kumm University in Nigeria. (An article about the University appeared in the previous issue of CL.) Our support for these projects would not have been possible without the bequests of Graham Hedges and Philip Hayworth, and it is gratifying that we have been able to use their financial gifts in this way.

In October, members were able to visit and meet informally at Christian Resources Exhibition at Milton Keynes.

At the end of 2024 there were 93 members and 3 subscribers. There were 97 subscribers to the e-Newsletter.

My thanks to all the members of the Committee. The statement for 2024 by our treasurer, Diana Guthrie, follows.



## STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2024

(accounts for 2025 will be submitted for approval at the 2026 AGM)

### INCOME

Subscriptions	1144.72
Donations	735.00
Annual Conference 2023	222.35
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£2102.07</b>

### EXPENDITURE

<i>Christian Librarian</i>	1140.60
Operating expenses (membership, publicity, postage, Zoom subscription)	268.71
Annual Conference 2024	737.00
Annual Lecture 2023	0.00
Donations:	
CILIP Benevolent Fund	200.00
Speaking Volumes	200.00
Transform Work UK	200.00
Soldiers' and Aviators'	
Scripture Readers Association	200.00
Evangelical Library (for hosting CLIS Archives)	200.00
Karl Kumm University, Nigeria	4000.00
Total Donations	5000.00
Miscellaneous:	
Website	204.30
Insurance	233.26
Information Commissioner	40.00
Stopped cheque	12.50
Air-freight charges for books to Chaima Christian Institute, Southern Sudan	<u>180.39</u>
Total Miscellaneous	670.45
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£7816.76</b>

Deficit for 2024 (Expenditure over Income)	- £5714.69
Balance brought forward from 2023	£11,242.33
<b>CLOSING BALANCE at 31 December 2024</b>	<b>£5527.64</b>

### ASSETS (at 31 December 2024)

<b>Barclays Community Account</b>	<b>4516.42</b>
<b>PayPal Account</b>	<b>1011.22</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>5527.64</b>





# Are you going to Skegness?

Transform Work would like to invite you and / or members of your Christian Workplace Group to join us at Spring Harvest 2026 in Skegness, where we will be running a seminar series over 3 days helping people bring their faith authentically into their workplaces. We also hope to organise additional events and meet-ups for Christians who are part of the wider Transform Work network.





# SPRING HARVEST 2026

**SKEGNESS 30 MARCH - 3 APRIL**

**MINEHEAD 6 - 10 APRIL**

**Gather. Grow. Go.**

Spring Harvest is a vibrant, all-age Christian 5-day event bursting with **powerful worship**, inspiring **Bible teaching**, and **unforgettable moments** of joy, faith, and community...all within a fun-filled Butlin's resort. This could change everything!

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