MARK'S MESSENGER

The Parish Magazine of
St Mark's Church, Broomhill and Broomhall, Sheffield

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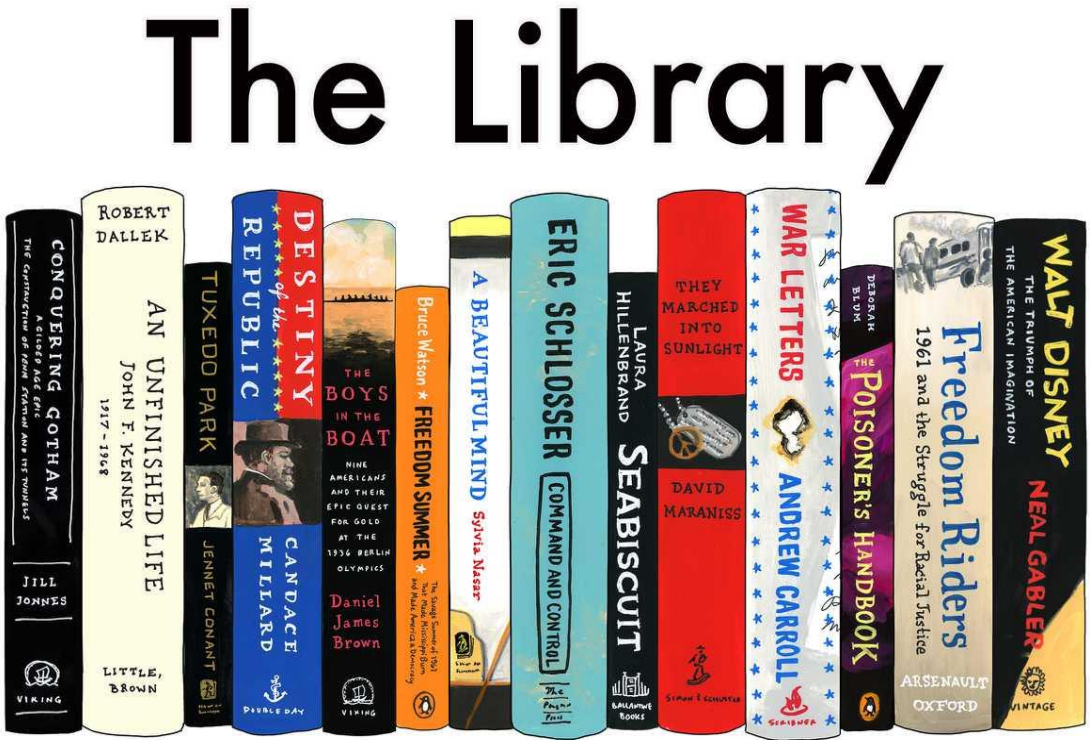
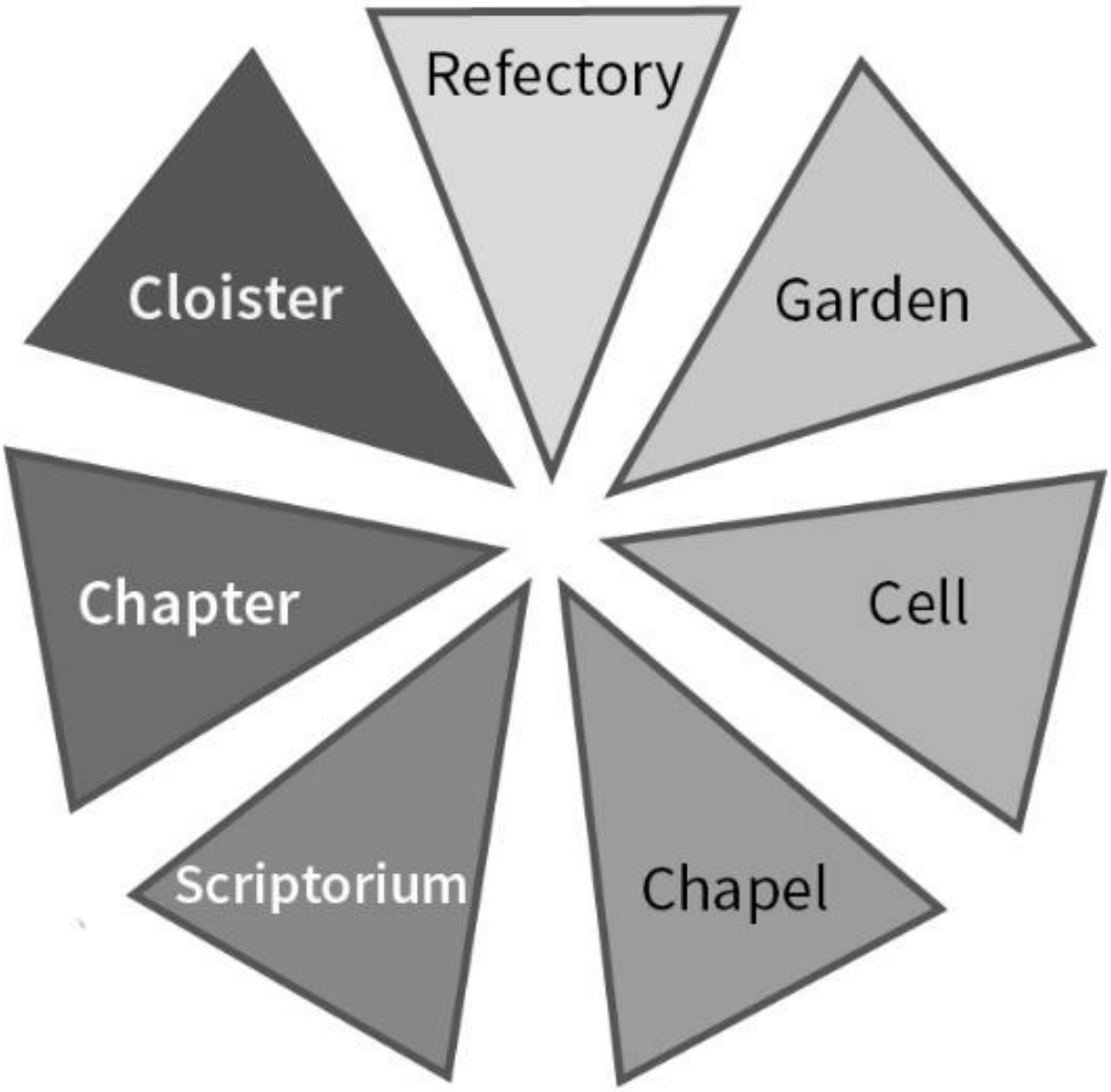


SEVEN SACRED SPACES:

A reflection on the church as a place for spiritual and intellectual growth

In the monastic tradition, particular practices were conducted in distinct areas of the monastery. Private prayer happened in the cell (the monk's bedroom), and corporate worship in the chapel. The community made decisions in the chapter house, and the garden was the place of work. Hospitality and community meals took place in the refectory, with informal and impromptu meetings happening in the cloisters. Finally, study and the passing on knowledge happened in the scriptorium.



Sometimes our understanding of ‘church’ can be reduced to corporate worship, when our church community life is so much more than our gatherings on Sundays. George Lings, from the Northumbria Community, in his book *Seven Sacred Spaces,* examines monastic communities and by looking at these seven sacred spaces, he explores how these seven aspects can enrich church life. He describes these different aspects as follows:

Cell is where a person meets privately with God and their inner self, so it takes courage. It happens in seclusion, through prayer, reading and sheer silence. This is the only private place out of the seven; all the others are shared. It reminds us that faith is lived both alone and together.

Chapel is the venue for public, corporate, liturgical worship. This kind of worship is intentional, structured, measured, and educative. It includes prayer with, and for, others. Its rhythms and regularity create a familiarity, to be passed through, and not get stuck with. It brings together the widest selection of the church community and so requires some level of compromise. The virtue needed here might be patience.

Chapter is the place where decisions are made and how they are made. It is what we would refer to as the Parish Church Council or PCC. The term chapter comes from the chapter of the Bible or Rule being read. Here communities make decisions together. Leaders and members communicate, discuss, debate and disagree, and are accountable to each other. The virtue needed is humility – to listen and not condemn.

Cloister connects. It links up the other places, and it is the place of passing. It can be a space to change gear, say from eating to worship. The traffic makes it the place of surprising encounters. We may meet the person we try to avoid, needing virtues of temperance and charity, but also bump into a beloved friend, which may be a joy.

Garden is historically the place of work. It balances the other two classic aspects of monastic ‘work’, which are prayer and study. Good work satisfies. Garden also provides food for the table. It provides exercise and a balance for too much mental work. Its classic virtue could be diligence.

Refectory is the eating place. It beats at the heart of community. It benefits the faith community, and nourishes wider society through the extension of hospitality beyond the community. The delights of food and drink require temperance, but eating together also needs the virtue of generous serving.

Scriptorium is about learning to pass on knowledge, more than acquiring it for its own sake. Scribes wrote by hand, from the only books that existed at that time, to enable others to worship, to learn and to pray by themselves. The style of learning matters too. Slow, thoughtful, spiritual learning is about humble transformation of the heart, not just information for the head.

This edition of *Mark's Messenger* is focused on study as one aspect of our church life. You will find various articles around the theme of learning. We are blessed at St Mark's with our lending library, and our online library, and a fabulous team of volunteers who look after them. We also have seminars fairly often, and other opportunities to study through Lent Groups, sermons and LOGOS.

I hope you enjoy this edition, and it sparks your interest to delve into a new area of study. Perhaps you could browse the lending library when you're next in church. The library team are around on Sunday morning and very happy to help you find a book and can offer recommendations.

If you would like to browse our online resources you can find them on our website under resources: (https://www.stmarkssheffield.co.uk/Groups/397550/Resources.aspx). We also send out a termly email, highlighting new articles or seminars. If you would like to receive this, email me (beth@stmarkssheffield.co.uk) and let me know.

But let me leave you with a few questions to ponder…

- What do you think is the point of learning?
- Is there a book, or podcast, that you have come across recently that has changed you?
- How do you ensure that you keep learning?
- What knowledge do you think you have passed on to others? How did that happen or how might it occur?
- What is the book, film or play that has helped you most in your spiritual life?

Perhaps you could spark up a conversation with friends about these sometime soon.

Revd Dr Beth Keith,
Associate Vicar & Liberal Theologian

A CHURCH LIBRARY SUPPORTING A LIVING, THINKING, FAITH

Joe Forde

My wife, Carole, and I became Church Librarians in late spring of 2023. Before then, we had been members of St Mark's Library Group for a number of years, led by Maureen Bownas. We knew that Maureen would be a hard act to follow, as her organisational and interpersonal skills are exceptional. However, when she asked us to take over that role, we were delighted to give it a go. We had been attending St Mark's for a little over 15 years, and, during that time, had used the library on a number of occasions.

In the summer of 2023 we were given a bequest of over 300 books. Some were sold at the summer fair to raise money for insulating the Church windows, and some were incorporated into the Church Library (see the appendix to this edition for the list). Frankly, we get given more books than we have space to accommodate, so we have had to be discerning in the ones that we have chosen to include in the library, taking advice as appropriate from Library Group members. Our approach has been to try to include a wide a variety of books, offering different theological, political, literary, historical and cultural perspectives, whilst also including some more light-hearted offerings that make us laugh and enable us to have fun. The remainder of the books have been taken to the Oxfam shop in Chesterfield (it now has one of the best stocked theology shelves in the

country!). We also have a small library budget for purchasing newly published books, and are always open to suggestions on which ones to acquire.

Carole Forde

Another part of our role is to support the occasional library evenings at St Mark's, when we invite authors to talk about their books, and provide them with an opportunity to sell a few, too. These have tended to be well supported in the past, and we intend to keep that tradition going. St Mark's also runs occasional whole day conference events, and, on these occasions, the library is often a facility for attenders to access during breakout times and lunch periods. In addition, for anyone interested in publishing material, St Mark's has, within its congregation, a number of published authors, who may be able to offer you valuable advice on how to get your work into print. Carole and I would be happy to connect anyone up to this advice, if they wish to seek it.

In our role as joint Church Librarians, Carole and I also intend to utilise the library facility on the Church's website, for commissioning and writing book reviews and for posting updates or write-ups on library related events. Should you wish to know more about the library, please don't hesitate to ask us.

Carole and Joe Forde

THE OTHER LIBRARY

St Mark's library is one of the best church libraries I have come across. And I'm proud that for many years St Mark's Centre for Radical Christianity, of which I was once Chair, and which had many members in the St Mark's congregation, contributed financially to its purchasing power.

Now I realise that the thrust of this edition of Mark's Messenger is to promote the physical library. And I don't want to detract from that (especially as I have recently gifted it a book). But I also want to draw attention to a second library which we have.

Towards the end of its life, St Mark's CRC was given a grant by the Cotter Trust – Jim Cotter had many connections with St Mark's during and after the time he lived in Sheffield. It was at Sue Hammersley's suggestion that we decided to create an online library of resources that are purposefully written from an open, questioning and inclusive perspective.

We did this partly because we sensed that there was a paucity of such material online, and partly to demonstrate that liberal theology is neither wishy-washy nor even dead. After CRC's demise, a small group project – answerable to the PCC through the Study and Learning Group – managed the continuing life of the website, CRCOnline. We were very fortunate in having Nicky Woods as our paid curator and researcher. Over the years we invited many people to submit material for the website under three main headings: Questioning Church, Deepening Spirituality and World of Diversity.

We received articles from academia, reflective pieces, a response to Patriarch Kirill's support for Putin from an Orthodox priest and many pieces reacting to the pandemic and its consequences for the Church in a digital age, and not least from members of our own congregation, as well as sometimes from people who had accessed the website and made their own contributions. It's a superb collection, with most pieces not exceeding a couple of thousand words – so easily read at one sitting.

Eventually the grant ran out, and, as is commonly the case, finding grants for continuation is a whole different ball game to getting start up money. So when our own parish website was rebuilt, the CRCOnline resources were migrated to the resources section. And there they are, waiting for you to access them. It is also the intention that this will not simply fossilise but be added to – a continuing expression of robust and challenging liberal theology.

You can find it at
https://www.stmarkssheffield.co.uk/Groups/399751/Online_Library.aspx.

John Schofield

MEMORIES OF MICHAEL ADIE

*Written by **Ann Lewin,** who arrived at St Mark's a few weeks after the new building had been consecrated and was a member of, and later secretary to, the PCC, as well as being a member of Synods, and the **Revd Michael Bayley** who arrived with Fleur and their family in 1966 and became an honorary assistant priest.*

The Revd Michael Adie

Visitors to the church were greeted by the vicar, Michael Adie, who used to stand in the narthex before services to greet people, always with the words 'Who are you?' It was quite an abrupt greeting – he didn't waste words, but he always remembered the answer.

In the early years of Michael's time the style of worship was quite old fashioned. But the move to the new building from the Parish Hall where services had been held after the destruction of the old church in 1940 provided the opportunity to move to new styles of worship. The Parish Communion movement was gaining ground, and Michael introduced a

Sung Communion every Sunday, which preceded Sung Matins for some years. Matins was not to everyone's taste, and it wasn't long before the choir opted out. There were some unpleasant accusations made about the Vicar not being interested in the loyal few who had helped to keep worship alive when there was no church-shaped building to meet in. Actually he cared very deeply about them, and probably spent more time in discussion with them than with anyone else, and Matins wasn't abandoned until some time in his successor Michael Paton's incumbency.

The old church building had catered for quite an elite congregation, and there were vestiges of that when the church was rebuilt. The congregation was home to number of consultant doctors and senior nurses – the new Hallamshire teaching hospital was being developed nearby. (It used to be said that if you were going to have a heart attack, the best place to do so was in St Mark's on a Sunday morning, where you would get instant expert attention). There were Head teachers as well as those who were lower down the ranks – the local schools whether LEA controlled or private were highly sought after. Sheffield University just down the road was home to highly qualified staff, including Prof David McClean in the Law department, who became the Lay Chair of General Synod and was responsible for producing the legislation which brought about the ordination of women to the priesthood, when Michael Adie, by then Bishop of Guildford, steered General Synod as it made its Church – and world – changing decision, after years of struggle, to open ministry fully to women. There were managing directors of a variety of industries too. Gradually the church attracted a more diverse body of people and became more like it is today.

There was a great sense of community as the congregation settled into the new church building. There was quite a lot of work needed to improve the grounds, and working parties were invited to shift soil and build up the slope between the Green and the church, with refreshments provided. I remember one occasion when Michael's toddler son discovered how to turn on the tap on a keg of beer set up in the vicarage drive, and then couldn't turn it off. People saved the day with a fine turn of speed… The Adies had four children, who joined in many of the activities in and out of church.

Michael and his wife Anne were very hospitable, and used to have regular coffee evenings in the vicarage to which people were invited so that they could get to know each other. One or two of the regular congregation were invited to join the other guests, and part of their job was to say to others at their table, at about 9.30 pm, that it might be a good time to start moving, because Michael always had an early start to the day. He was very good at managing his time. He was always in the Lady Chapel

at 7am for half an hour's silent prayer before the daily Eucharist. People who joined him learnt a lot about being still and listening.

Preaching was of a high quality, and as well as the resident clergy, many distinguished visitors came – Michael had many contacts from his previous time as Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher's chaplain. One of these was a Bishop who had attracted adverse publicity in the Press for blessing a replacement Nuclear submarine. Michael arranged a meeting in the Upper Room for anyone who wanted to learn more about the Church's stance on Nuclear Warfare. He was always keen to make sure that important issues were dealt with on these occasions. In order to get as fair a discussion as possible, he briefed one of the congregation to ask the Bishop if he had blessed the Submarine (supporting nuclear war) or the people who had to man it. The Bishop expressed gratitude for the way the question was put, and replied with a comprehensive exposition of the problems raised by possession of nuclear weapons, and possible attitudes for Christians to take in trying to resolve them.

Prayer and study were the backbone to Michael's ministry and his sermons were always well crafted, memorable, and brief. He encouraged people to join in study groups, which offered an opportunity to explore how the Christian faith might inform attitudes to social questions as well as encouraging people to deepen their relationship with God.

Relationships with the diocese were not always easy after Bishop John Taylor, who had unfortunately had a stroke between his consecration as Bishop and his enthronement, tried to establish his authority by being very autocratic in his dealings with clergy. One example of this was in relation to Michael's introduction of 'modern' forms of worship at the Sunday Eucharist. The Bishop told Michael that if he persisting in using the booklet he had produced, he would never visit the parish. He was never invited. On another occasion the clergy were all summoned to go away for a residential conference, and parishes were told to cancel any meetings they had planned while the clergy were away. Prof David McClean responded with Michael's full knowledge by setting up a meeting which was very well attended. I can't remember what we discussed, but there was a distinct feeling that we were not going to be treated so cavalierly by the Bishop.

Michael could be quite formidable, and one had to be quite firm in countering some of his decisions, but he was also a good pastor, and was always very kind when people were in need. He had a good sense of humour and could be quite outrageous at times. When he arrived at Guildford Cathedral for his enthronement, the car park attendant wouldn't let him in, even after Michael explained that he was the new Bishop. 'I

don't care if you are the Queen of Sheba,' he said, 'there's no room'. I don't know where Michael parked on that occasion, but at his farewell service, Michael cycled down the Nave accompanied by Handel's music *The arrival of the Queen of Sheba.*

Michael Bayley has particular memories of working with Michael:

I had the good fortune to be a member of the congregation at St Mark's from 1966 to 1969 while Michael was there. The thing I remember most is the incisiveness of his sermons. I can still remember some of them. He was very kind and helpful to me. I had just completed a four-year curacy in a challenging parish in Leeds and was doing a diploma in social studies at Sheffield University to work out the shape my ministry should take. In the event I did some research and then taught at the University. During that time I was an ordained member of the congregation. Working with Michael in this role was immensely fulfilling and I learnt a lot.

Michael's wife Anne was a tower of strength and a formidable presence in the church and in the parish. She was immensely helpful to us and our small family. It was tragic when she was smitten with cerebral meningitis after they left Sheffield and became a shadow of her former self. One of the things I admired most about Michael was the unstinting way he lavished love and care on Anne for so many years. I wrote a booklet for the Church of England social policy committee about the care of people with learning difficulties. When it was published it was debated at the General Synod in York which I attended. Michael gave a most tender and moving speech based on his experience of caring for Anne.

When he was Bishop of Guildford I stayed with Michael and Anne overnight when I was giving a talk in Guildford. Michael was out that evening conducting a confirmation. When he arrived home quite late Anne was having some problems with her knitting. Before he did anything else he sorted it out for her.

It was good that Michael was able to join the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the building of the new church on line because by then he was quite frail. In retirement, after living in Scotland for a while after Anne's death, he moved to live near Rosamund in Walton on Thames, and was able to live more or less independently until a few weeks before his death, aged 94. His was a life of loving service, and his ministry touched a great many people in the places where he served. May he rest in peace, and rise in glory.

Michael Bayley

SACRED PLAY

My understanding of liturgical worship changed dramatically after reading the acclaimed psychoanalyst and paediatrician Donald Winnicott's book, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock, 1971), in which he develops a theory of how play contributes to childhood development. He observes that playing creates 'transitional space' for children in which they begin to engage with the outside world. Within the safety of a game they often create (e.g. 'role-play'), children feel able to inhabit different roles and experiment with different ways of relating, gaining in confidence as well as competence, thereby facilitating engagement with reality beyond their imagination and control.

As someone who grew up in a climate where the kind of preoccupation Winnicott has in mind was considered childish and inconsequential, something to 'grow out of', I found his reappraisal both insightful and challenging. It also set me thinking about whether his insights might inform the dynamics of liturgical worship. For one thing, like children's play, worship is an end in itself, requiring imaginative engagement as players adopt their roles. What is striking about liturgical role-play is that it can be performed at different levels. Superficially, the parts are obvious enough – president, preacher, reader, intercessor, congregant, organist, chorister, etc; but, at a deeper level, all participants are invited to inhabit what the Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor, describes as an 'enchanted world', infused with the sacred (*A Secular Age*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University, 2007). And, within this 'social imaginary', to explore what life beyond the stained glass would look like for us personally, as well as for every level of social engagement, were it illuminated by divine light – justice tempered by compassion, truth enlightened by wisdom, forgiveness animated by grace.

Pushing deeper still, within a Christian act of worship, members of the gathered community fulfil another role as followers of Jesus who meet in his name, attend to his example, learn from his teaching, commune at his table, experience his peace and forgiveness, share his intercession for the world. That is to say, drawing on Winnicott's insights above, within the safety of a church building where a Christian social imaginary is assumed and reinforced, worshippers play at being disciples, gaining confidence and competence, so that they are more able to live out this newly-acquired 'baptismal' identity and vocation within a world ambivalent, if not hostile, towards Jesus and his vision for creation transfigured by the glory of God.

I wonder if there is wisdom for us here to embody in our worship? I wonder what impact it would make if we did?

Ian Wallis

If you would like to discover more about this approach, I commend James K A Smith's *Cultural Liturgies* trilogy: *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, vol 1; *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, vol 2; *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology*, vol 3 (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Academic, 2009, 2013, 2017).

THOUGHTS ON *L'ÉTRANGER* by ALBERT CAMUS[1]

When I started to write this article a little while ago, two of the headlines in the morning paper were: "Woman stabbed in Bradford" and "Two men sentenced after stabbing in Birmingham". The following day the front-page story in *The Star* was "Boy stabbed in underpass". I'm sure you, like me, have come across similar news items and asked yourself: "Why do people act like this? What can we do about it?"

Camus' novel L'Étranger doesn't offer us much in the way of answers but, substitute a shooting for a stabbing, and it does give us a remarkable insight into the mind of someone who commits such an attack. Meursault, the main character, is the 'étranger', or stranger, of the title, though the French word can also mean 'excluded' or 'outsider' (and several of the English translations of the work use 'The Outsider' as the title[2]). He is also the narrator of the story and his opening words – "My mother died today. Or maybe yesterday, I don't know." – indicate the difficulty he has in processing the day-to-day events of life. He also struggles to relate to other people. He never reveals his first name to his readers and on the bus taking him to his mother's funeral he "slept for nearly the whole journey. When I woke up, I was leaning against a soldier who smiled at me and asked if I had come a long way. I said 'Yes' so I wouldn't have to talk any more." He has a habit of answering people's questions with his objective view of the truth, not with the conventional response which courtesy and his interlocutors expect of him. When the caretaker of the old peoples' home where his mother has just died offers to unscrew the lid of her coffin, Meursault stops him. "'You don't want to?' he asked. I replied 'No'. He stopped and I was uncomfortable because I felt I shouldn't have said that." When the caretaker asks him why, he says 'I don't know.' This is his stock response to all sorts of questions – his boss asking him if he would like promotion, his girl-friend asking him if he'd like to marry her.

We do learn in the opening chapters what an effect weather conditions have on his state of mind. On the bus journey to the old people's home he complains about "the bumpy road. The smell of petrol, the sun's glare reflecting off the road." The room at the home where he spends the night seems "...dazzling white. There wasn't a single shadow and every object,

every angle, every curve stood out so sharply that it hurt my eyes." Such conditions seem to make it particularly difficult for him to function normally.

Back in Algiers after the funeral, Meursault bumps into Marie, formerly a secretary at the firm where he works. The two spend the day together at the beach swimming and in the evening they go to see a comedy film and then begin to have an intimate relationship. He also spends time helping a neighbour of his called Raymond who suspects his girl-friend of cheating him. Eventually, Raymond tries to throw her out, she slaps him and he beats her. The police get involved but Meursault helps Raymond out by testifying that the girl has been unfaithful and Raymond is let off with a warning.

One weekend, Raymond invites Meursault and Marie to a beach cabin owned by Masson, a friend of his. On the way they see the brother of Raymond's former girl-friend and another Arab, who Raymond says has been following him round. The Arabs confront Raymond and Masson and the brother wounds Raymond with a knife before running away. Later, Meursault finds that Raymond is carrying a revolver and takes it off him to prevent him using it rashly. Feeling the effects of the heat and the sun, Meursault then goes off for a walk by himself. He encounters the brother of Raymond's ex girl-friend. He writes: "The Arab pulled out his knife and raised it towards me in the sun. The light flashed off the steel… All I could feel was the sun crashing like cymbals against my forehead, and the knife, a burning sword hovering above me… It was then that everything started to sway… The sky seemed to split apart from end to end to pour its fire down upon me. My whole body tensed as I gripped the gun more tightly. It set off the trigger."

I

"I gripped the gun more tightly…"
Still from *Lo Straniero (The Stranger)* by Luchino Visconti, 1967.

In the second part of the novel, Meursault describes his imprisonment, interrogation and trial. He now begins to understand the absurdity of the world he inhabits and the reader realises that his inability to fit into the society in which he lives is as much due to its often meaningless rules as it is to his behaviour. In his trial he tries as he always has to tell the truth as he sees it and accepts his guilt but the prosecution's case is built not around his shooting of the Arab but his previous behaviour – he has put his ailing mother in a home, he did not cry at her funeral, he smoked in the room where she lay in her coffin, he took a girl to the cinema to see a comedy the day after her funeral. The defence lawyer asks: "Is this man on trial for having buried his mother or for having killed a man?" The prosecutor replies: "I accuse this man of having buried his mother with the heartlessness of a criminal." Eventually, the judge reaches his final verdict; as Meursault puts it: "...that I would have my head cut off in a public place in the name of the French People."

At the end of the book, the priest, whom Meursault has refused to see several times during his imprisonment, comes to talk to him. Again, we see Meursault's basic honesty; he won't see the priest because he doesn't believe in God. The priest, however, almost seems to be bribing him: he is sure Meursault's appeal will be granted if he turns to God. At this point Meursault loses his temper for the first time. The guards lead the priest away from Meursault who calms down and lies thinking: "...I opened myself for the first time to the tender indifference of the world… So that I might feel less alone, I could only hope there would be many, many spectators on the day of my execution and that they would greet me with cries of hatred."

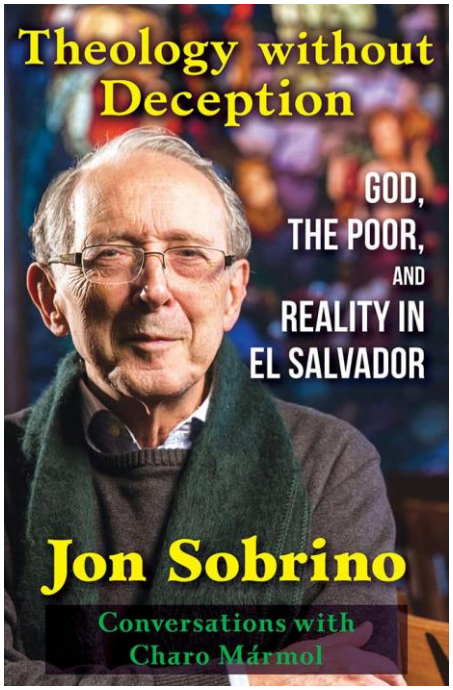
One critic has written: "*L'Étranger* is a study of the themes of alienation, in the sense of Meursault being a 'stranger' in his society." When we are considering why stabbings and shootings occur in our society, should this be our starting point: why do people feel alienated by society? Is it their behaviour or ours which makes them feel like outsiders? Can we expect them to follow our rules if we don't attempt to look at things from their point of view as well? And as I write this last sentence I am conscious that I am already dividing society into 'them' and 'us'.

Dez Martin

[1]*L'Étranger* by Albert Camus, publ. folioplus classiques, first ed.1942. ISBN *978-2-07-030602-2*
[2]*The Outsider* by Albert Camus, transl. Sandra Smith, publ. Penguin Classics, 2015. ISBN 978-0-141-19806-4 (All quotations in this article are taken from this edition.)

THEOLOGY WITHOUT DECEPTION

God the Poor and Reality in El Salvador
by Jon Sobrino — Conversations with Charo Marmol
(Orbis Books)



The development of Liberation Theology in the late 1970's and early 1980's was a significant contribution to theological debates during this period. Jon Sobrino made an important contribution to the debates and discussions which had a limited impact in the UK, though for a brief period had an important place in creating a theological understanding, that took seriously the importance of recognising the challenge of endemic poverty and the ministry of the Church.

The chapter in *Faith in the City* (1985) was especially influenced by its approach. As is the way with developments in theology, in the years that followed the Church of England shifted its emphases to a concentration on mission and the creation of new disciples. The challenge of Liberation Theology, whilst not fading away seems to have become less important.

In *Theology without Deception*, Jon Sobrino through conversation explores the history and contemporary relevance of Liberation Theology. In each of the chapters, Sobrino responds to questions, with answers that explore his personal history and the key theological themes that influenced his thinking. In particular the importance of Jürgen Moltmann with particular reference to *The Crucified God,* (1973).

Sobrino is autobiographical in that he describes his early life in Spain, and how he was drawn to the Jesuits and how through the order he was sent to Central America, whilst also spending time studying theology in Europe, North America and Cuba.

His grounding in European theological thought, spending seven years in Frankfurt where he was influenced by the work of Karl Rahner, who in his published work had shown solidarity with the persecuted Christians of Latin America.

Sobrino describes meeting Rahner with the words "…. *I went to greet Rahner and thanked him for his support for persecuted Christians and churches in Latin America. 'What less could I do?' he replied*."

Words that challenge all those who fail to see the importance of critical theological thinking on issues of how governments and those with power turn a blind eye to political reality.

In many ways this gave Sobrino a basis for developing his approach that was influenced by his ministry and teaching in El Salvador; in which country the realities of poverty and oppression challenged his theological development.

The importance at the time of the second Vatican Council was beginning to be realised and is a key influence in his thinking and ministry in the years that followed, as was his membership of the Jesuits. This is particular important given the massacre in 1989 of six Jesuit brothers and a cook and her daughter in El Salvador. All of them were known to Sobrino, and this appalling act is central to how he goes on to develop his theological thinking. The eight are not the only Christians massacred. Archbishop Romero is another important figure in this book.

A key element of much of the discussions in this book is the importance of challenging the problems of endemic poverty and the oppressive state that allows for assassinations and the cruelty imposed by those who hold power in the state.

At the heart of the book is the importance of understanding the power of the cross and the death of Jesus. It is from this understanding that Sobrino develops a liberation theology that is grounded in the everyday reality of life in the communities he serves.

It is truly a theology without deception that challenges both the religious and political status quo and is rooted in his everyday life and experience of conversations with fellow theologians and the people he lives among.

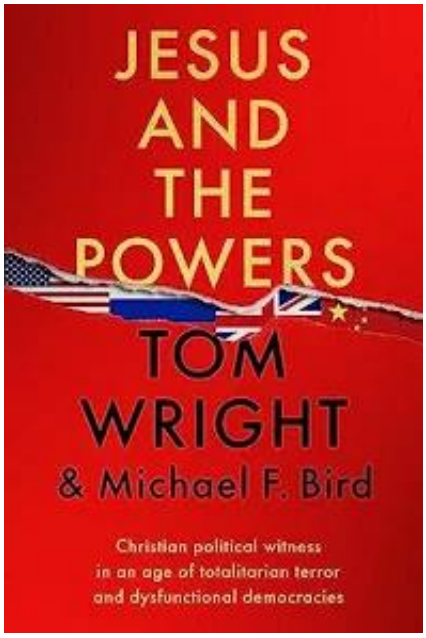
The book is a reminder of the importance (that seems to have been lost in the UK) of Liberation Theology, that puts the message of the crucified Jesus alongside the suffering of the poorest, in Latin America and every other part of the world. It is a theology of hope that challenges the seeming insular nature of so much theology.

In a very real sense it is a theology that begins in the cross and is affirmed by the resurrection that works for a better world and a theology which addresses the importance of creating a better and more equal society.

Terry Drummond

BOOK REVIEW:

Jesus and the Powers **by Tom Wright & Michael Bird,** (SPCK 2024)



Tom Wright will be familiar to many readers of SOTT* as a former Bishop of Durham and a New Testament scholar. Here he has joined forces with Michael Bird, a Baptist Pastor and Deputy Principal of Ridley College, Australia. An avowed aim of the book is to consider how, in these turbulent times, Christians can engage with the politics of the day and remain true to the teaching and example of Jesus.

There are interesting insights into the ruling powers of Jesus' time and of the very early Church – Paul's understanding of the secular powers in relation to the nascent Church, of the Gospel writers as well as the apocalyptic visions of Revelation and of St John. With Jesus' death and Resurrection Christ is victorious over the Powers of his day. (See chap. 3's section 'The new vision for Church and world' for Paul's use of Isaiah, pp.60-3.)

What is the role of the State and the role of Christianity/the Church? If God gives power to the State, does that mean that the State should always be obeyed? Christians have not always agreed. Chapter 6 for example is good on the dangers of Christian nationalism. In chapter 7 the place of Western democracy is considered and while there is some emphasis on the influence of Christianity, reference is also made to the role of Plato in our understanding of democracy.

The use of "We" reminds readers that there are two authors, but comes across as a bit clumsy and we can see that the two authors do not in fact share a common social/religious background.

Unsurprisingly in a book about Powers, there is much reference to the Kingdom of God – how did Paul and the early Church see the Kingdom; how did Jesus himself understand the Kingdom? What is the role of the Christian in promoting the Kingdom of God? Will God's Kingdom only be fully realised at the apocalypse? What of Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom being here and now?

There have been times when Christianity has been more concerned with who gets to Heaven and how they get there, but Jesus himself seems to give priority to the people who make up God's kingdom here on earth. The modern mind struggles with too much talk of the apocalypse – do many Christians today wrestle with visions of apocalypse, I wonder?

Some of the language I found rather alienating, particularly the references to Jesus the King – I am comfortable with the Christ, the Son of God, the Incarnation etc. but I am not sure what we understand by 'King' in the modern world. Chapter 4 concentrates on the Kingdom of God and on p.83 the authors do admit that "Many people have an allergic reaction to this language of 'building for the kingdom'". They press on to say "God builds God's kingdom. The kingdom is not manufactured or constructed by human hands." They suggest that a better image to use might be of a stonemason working on part of a great cathedral – the architect has the plan in mind and has passed on instructions to the team of masons who all have their own tasks. Thus we are to 'build **for** the kingdom' not the kingdom itself.

I didn't find this distinction particularly helpful, and I thought more could have been made of the Christian calling to care for the needy, the prisoner, the refugee etc., not so much to build the kingdom, but rather to care for and love the Christ we see in our neighbours and fellow humans.

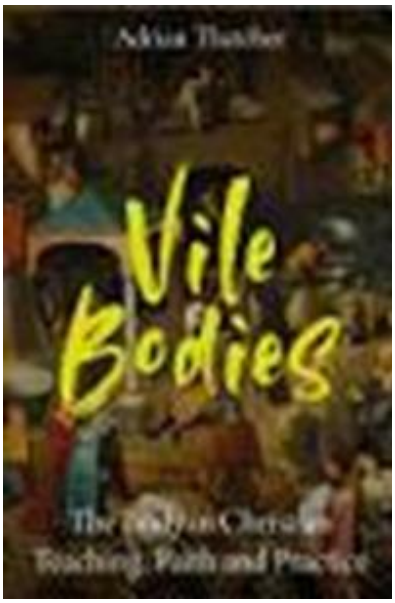
This is not a long book and the authors cover a lot of ground. There is much food for thought in a world where it is too easy to feel helpless in the face of powerful forces which seem to be working against God's plans for the earth and our spiritual lives. It is grounded in the present day with references to present-day politics. It could certainly be used as a starting point for a study group.

Rosalind Lund

*SOTT: *Signs of the Times* – *A* monthly magazine originally published by Pacific Press, a Seventh-day Adventist publishing house.
SOTT.net: An online alternative news site providing independent journalism and analysis.

BOOK REVIEW:

Vile Bodies: The Body in Christian Teaching, Faith and Practice
by Adrian Thatcher (SCM Press, 2023).



Professor Adrian Thatcher was Professorial Research Fellow in Applied Theology at the University of Exeter. His research focuses on sexuality and gender in Christian doctrine and ethics.

Amid same-sex marriage debates, he is a strong ally of LGBTQIA+ people, an activist theologian, and an untiring advocate of marriage equality. He is also Editor of Modern Church's academic journal *Modern Believing.*

In his new book, Thatcher broadens our understanding of the theology of the body. He does not begin with the glorious Body of Christ in a sacramental or ecclesiological sense. Instead, he begins the other way round. He draws our attention to those bodies that have been subject of people's disgust, that have been hated, abused, oppressed, controlled, lynched, violated and traumatised throughout Christian history.

Through his attentiveness to bodies that have been seen as vile, Thatcher shows us how misogyny, homophobia, racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, colonialism, sexual and spiritual abuse and the failure to support same-sex marriage are intersectional and connected.

Thatcher's persistent argument focuses on at least 21 different kinds of vile bodies. Chapter by chapter he explains how the structure of dominance and control over those bodies has been constructed in order to abuse and exclude them.

Although Thatcher does not explain how he developed his thoughts, the book's structure suggests that his starting point was feminist criticism. Agreeing with other feminist activists, misogyny is seen as the primary and fundamental oppression but, in Thatcher's view, the female body is not the only vile one.

In the early parts of the book, Thatcher explains how ‘female’, ‘effeminate’ and ‘feminised’ bodies are identified as vile, inferior, sinful, unclean, demonic and dangerous. Considering these vile bodies that can be both *contaminated* and *contaminating*, the Church – which journeyed from patriarchy to homophobia, colonialism, whiteness and power abuse – has a reason to purify ‘herself’ by expelling and excluding them.

The whole rationale – born out of fear, insecurity and an attempt to protect its superiority – consolidates the hold of controlling power and authority and continues to add more bodies to the ‘vile list’. The same misogynist structure is then fortified and reproduced in additional structures that discriminate against Jews, Muslims, slaves, black people and LGBTQIA+ people.

In the final part of the book, Thatcher critically examines the Church itself as a vile body. Based on his active involvement and experience in the Church of England (which is of course similar to the experiences of many across a broad spectrum of Christian communities), Thatcher reminds us how vilely the Church has failed to repent, to protect the vulnerable bodies of children and to call for a turning-away from abusive theology. He further points out how and why the true ‘vile’ body is both misguided and disguised:

> “Any theology that encourages self-hatred, shame, guilt, and so on, is abusive because it saps the ability to self-affirm and diminishes the requirements to love God and neighbour. It locates sin in the body’s desire instead of in the wider structures that shape and inform sinful individuals.” (Pp. 238)

Thatcher’s analysis of the Church and his theological discourses on ‘vile’ bodies gives us a rich understanding of how *vile* Christian doctrine and history can be. On a personal level, I feel affronted and, yes, defiled when reading about all these abusive theologies page by page. But it is a historical fact that all Christians need to recognise and face up to.

As Thatcher says, ‘There will be no more vile bodies’. Thank God for that.

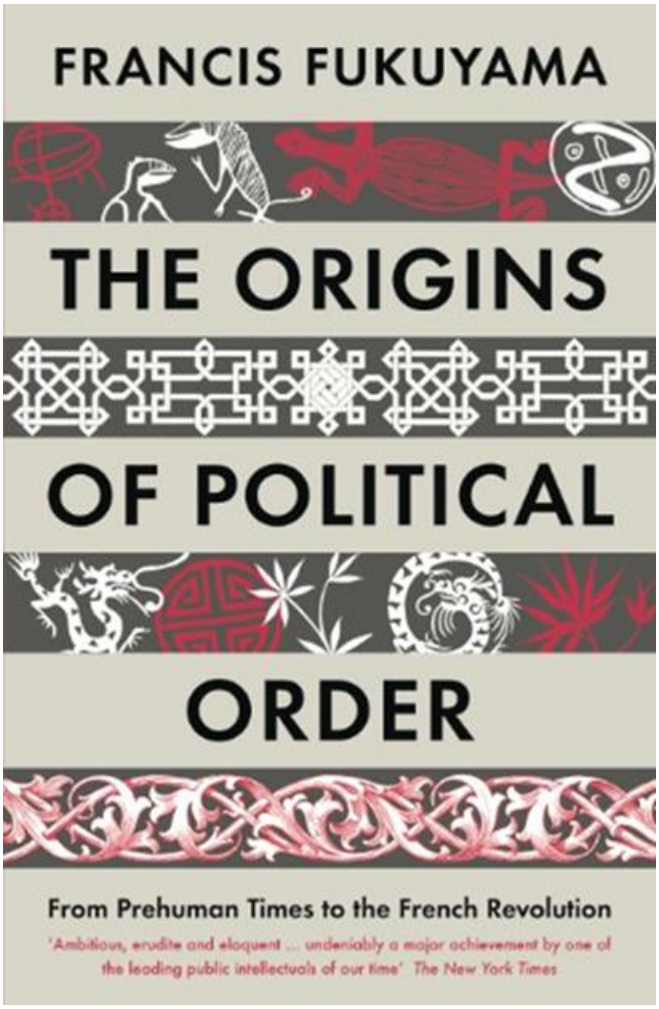
Yin-An Chen

BOOK REVIEW:

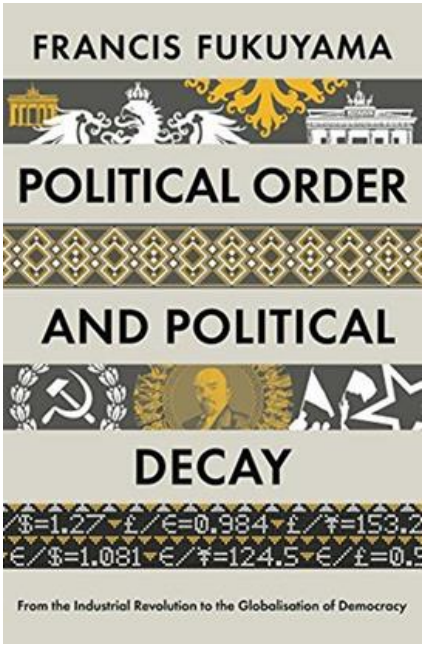
The Dynamics of Political Order – Francis Fukuyama

The Origins of Political Order:
***From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*[1]**

Political Order and Political Decay:
***From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy*[2]**



Francis Fukuyama is (in)famous for declaring 'the end of history' in 1992 after the Soviet Union and its Empire collapsed. Recent events alone have demonstrated the untruth of such an assertion with the invasion of Ukraine and the unmistakable rise of Russian imperialism. Of course, such a sophisticated and knowledgeable political philosopher as Fukuyama was far more nuanced and sophisticated in what he said, but history will nevertheless remember him for this failed prediction. But this not only misjudges Fukuyama (a professor at Stanford University), but also deflects from the enormous contribution of this Japanese-American political scientist to the historical and philosophical study of political order, not least his magisterial, magnum opus that will rank alongside all the other major political philosophers that preceded him.



Fukuyama's two volumes trace how humans have organised themselves from prehuman times to the present and analyses what works and what doesn't:

In these volumes, he demonstrates that political order requires: the state, the rule of law, and accountable government. However, he knows that these have not been, and are not, easily achieved. Indeed, he indicates how a "complex concatenation of circumstances" [I: 326] is involved noting that "social outcomes are inherently multi-causal" (I: 452]. In doing this, he profiles and contrasts different nations and their fortunes, e.g. Ghana with its strong state and India with its strong society [I: 188]; the different political choices made by Costa Rica and Argentina [II: Ch. 18]; and the differing ways oil rich developing countries, such as Indonesia and Nigeria, have fared (II: Ch. 15]. More importantly, perhaps, he notes:

(a) certain regularities, e.g. powerful states without checks become dictatorships, whereas weak states checked by multifarious forces become unstable [II: 35];
(b) important principles, e.g. "The principle of effective government is meritocracy, the principle of democracy is popular participation" [II: 202]; and
(c) social defaults, such as "reliance on friends and family, even in democracies" (II; 209].

This vast survey, with meticulous detail, is not only engaging but vital to understanding how political order works, now and in the future.

Francis Fukuyama deserves to be recognised for his giant contribution to the understanding of politics and its dynamics.

Ian K Duffield & Robin Pagan

[1] *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* by Francis Fukuyama, Profile Books, 2011-2012

[2] *Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy* by Francis Fukuyama, Profile Books, 2013-2014

HOW HAVE SHEFFIELD PEOPLE BECOME READERS?
— *Mary Grover*

Sheffield Central Library

As we celebrate St Mark's fine library with this special edition, we can endorse the splendid Michael Palin quotation on display at Sheffield Central Library: "There is no institution I value more in this country than libraries." Among other things, libraries promote reading. But how do people get into reading? This is the question which Mary Grover addresses in her important new book *Steel City Readers*[1].

Mary Grover is a member of our sister church, St John's, Ranmoor, a former teacher and senior lecturer in English literature at Sheffield Hallam University. Unusually, her focus is not on the English classics but on popular reading. She led the Reading Sheffield project to record the reading memories of Sheffield men and women who came to adulthood in the mid Twentieth Century. Her book describes the findings of this project.

Mary writes:

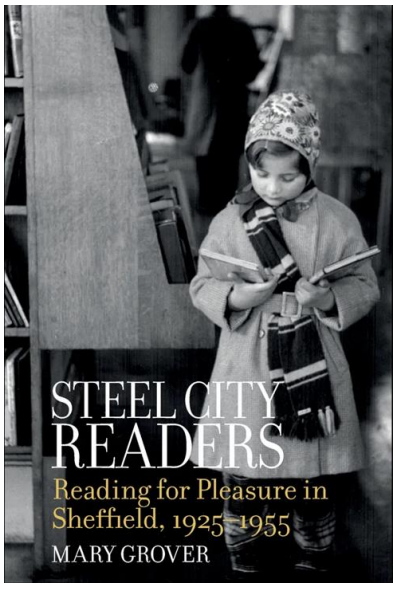
> "I started this project angry: angry that people of my educational background had conspired throughout the Twentieth Century to undermine the confidence of men and women to read what and how they wanted."

Mary is critical of pundits like F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, who I recall in the 1950s dominated the Cambridge English faculty and were influential in condemning 'popular' literature. Encouragingly, on her last page, Mary writes:

> "Our readers' eloquence, discernment and sense of delight stand as a testament to the transformative power of books and of the act of making reading choices… the dominant tone of our interviewees is one of wonder. The books our readers chose opened up intellectual and imaginative spaces that seemed for a time all their own… This exceptional opportunity to exercise personal autonomy was as precious as the books they sought..."

Mary and her team interviewed 65 people – 52 women and 13 men. They were from a wide variety of social backgrounds. The book sheds an interesting light on class backgrounds in Sheffield. Sheffield was England's largest working class city and not a bookish place at this time. Some children grew up in houses full of books, but most children were in working class homes where there might be no book other than the Bible or –surprisingly – a complete set of Dickens' novels, provided cheaply by newspapers as part of a circulation war. Parental attitudes were important. A child might be told to 'put that book down'. There were peer pressures. One man said that 'going to the local library wasn't the thing for a young lad to do in our neighbourhood.'

Fortunately, there were valuable countervailing forces, such as education. Secondary education was restricted for youngsters who did not get into the grammar schools but interviewees recalled teachers who encouraged them to access reading material. In the 1930s the Council found money to appoint young teachers who would make learning and books a source of pleasure. Quite often however poverty restricted the opportunities of keen young readers. Schooling might be cut short because the family needed the youngsters to become breadwinners.



A second force in support of reading was Sheffield's library system. Mary describes this as becoming 'one of Europe's finest municipal library services' and praises Joseph Lamb, Chief Librarian from 1927 to 1956. Thanks to Alderman Graves, the fine art deco Central Library was built in 1934. Lamb also developed the network of local libraries, which Mary says could be 'a noisy social space'. Readers grew from 365,000 readers in 1925-6 to 3,750,000 in 1945-6. Lamb created children's libraries in many parts of Sheffield but, being himself largely self-educated, he did not believe in directing children's reading. So he had no problem with children choosing Enid Blyton or Richmal Crompton's William books. I recall my mother's disapproval of Enid Blyton.

Today books and periodicals face huge competition from TV and social media. The under-funding of local government has greatly damaged public libraries, though volunteers in Broomhill and elsewhere have nobly stepped in to fill the gap. The Central Library building needs major investment. None the less, many of us retain the reading habit which we acquired in childhood. We delight in reading. In this book Mary has given us a fascinating insight into how this valuable habit can be formed.

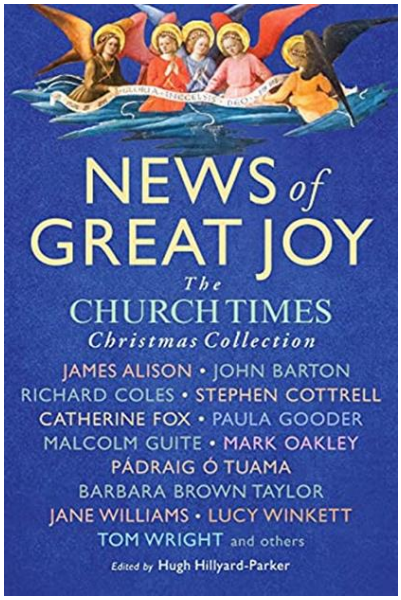
David Price

[1]Mary Grover: Steel City Readers: Reading for Pleasure in Sheffield, 1925-55. LiverpoolUniversity Press, 2023.

BOOK REVIEW:

News of Great Joy: The Church Times Christmas Collection

Ed. Hugh Hillyard-Parker, Canterbury Press 2021



This anthology offers a selection of pieces which appeared in the *Church Times* between 2000 and 2020 and covers the season between Advent and Candlemas. There are essays on the theology of the incarnation, reflections on the narratives around Jesus' birth, ideas suggested in works of art and music, accounts of the origins of Christmas customs, and a few poems and short stories.

This is the ideal collection for someone looking for ideas or themes at a season when time may be short, and the preacher or magazine writer is looking for a fresh way to frame what they could say about the birth of Jesus. So here you have Professor John Barton explaining how Jesus just didn't fit any previous image of a coming Messiah. You have Barbara Brown Taylor reflecting deeply on God's communication with us, through Torah, Wisdom, Word and Holy Spirit. You have Richard Coles writing humorously about Christmas in his parish of Finedon, but also ruefully about secularisation and the decline in the number of worshippers. You have Sister Wendy Beckett recommending that you should find a space apart truly to focus on God's gift of love in Christ. And there are many other deep thoughts, imaginative approaches and scriptural interpretations here: everyone will find something to stimulate mind and heart.

To be critical, I would say that the anthology is theology-heavy, with perhaps too many theological articles and not enough freshly-minted poetry or imaginative prose writing or reflections on Christmas art or music. The *Church*

Times tends to be read mainly by clergy, and that may well explain the predominant character of the pieces in this book.

A further result of that fact is, I believe, a theological conservatism of approach to the Christmas biblical texts, in which the majority of writers do not question the status of the accounts in Matthew and Luke. What you then get is an excessive dwelling on the merest details of the angels' appearances, the stable at Bethlehem or the star of the Magi. The reader of this collection must begin to feel that such tiny scraps of text cannot bear the weight of symbolism and theological meaning that is piled on to them. This is, of course, acceptable as long as the writer remains within the world of theological symbols or history as derived elsewhere, but when, as some writers do here, they begin to draw *historical* conclusions from mythic narratives, we have a serious category mistake. I recognise that the mainly clerical writers don't want to 'rock the boat' at Christmas and say bluntly that this is Matthew and Luke doing theology in symbolic narrative form, but there are, I think, too many articles that feel like castles in the air.

I must, however, salute Professor Tom Wright, who states bluntly that the nativity narratives play no role in the developing theology of the New Testament and pleads that in our thinking, liturgies, symbols and preaching we should avoid reinforcing the impression that Christmas is the centre of Christianity. And at the end of the anthology is an excellent piece by James Allison in which he says clearly what many of the other writers skim over, that 'the infancy narratives in Luke and Matthew are the reading back, by authors close to the apostolic circle, of elements designed to enrich their hearers' understanding of Jesus's death and resurrection.'

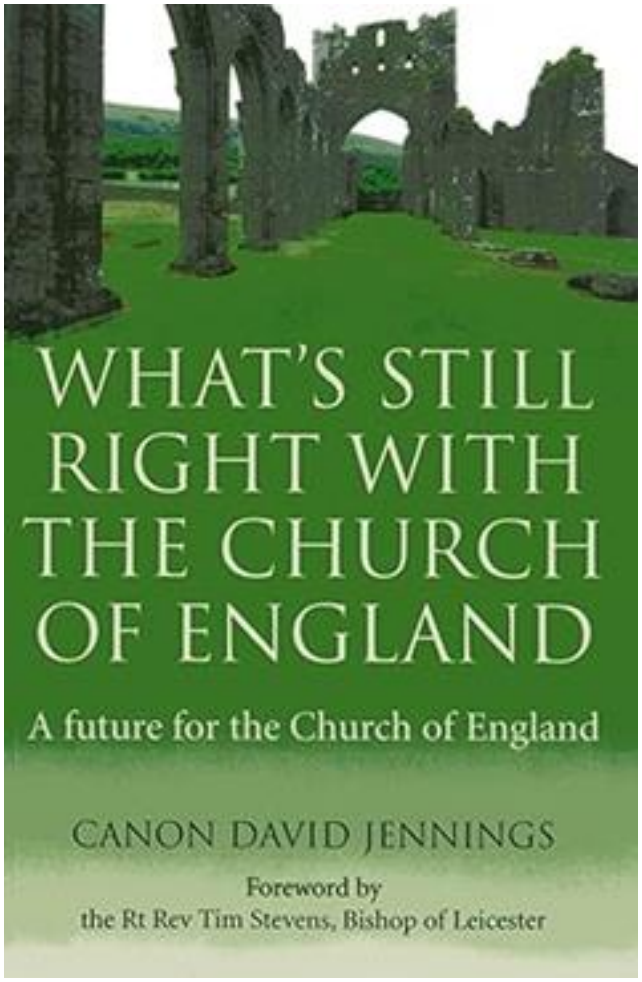
In spite of this, the profoundest meditation in the book was, for me, one on the symbols of Christmas by the sociologist, David Martin. 'Christmas is a kind of sign language,' he writes, 'for [the] extraordinary juxtaposition of joy and desolation, glory and beggary, almighty power and total vulnerability to wind and rain. The extremes are held together so that the light dawns even as the people walk in darkness; universal peace and holy stillness are proclaimed in the midst of clangour and inveterate hostility; the redemptive child is born, even as the principalities and powers hold the world in thrall; the angelic choir bursts out singing in spite of the realities of destitution and exclusion; an exchange of gifts occurs directly counter to the searing reciprocities of abuse, death and violence.'

'Christmas,' he says, 'cannot be argued, but only enacted in sign language.'

Nick Jowett

BOOK REVIEW:

What's Still Right with the Church of England
by Canon David Jennings (Circle Books,2013)



This is a slim volume, necessarily you might say. Yet that would be unfair as the author seeks to cover the vast span of the theology and practice of the Church in a succinct and readable form and to identify its strengths, but with no illusions about corresponding weaknesses and dangers.

The title is based on a book *What's Right with the Church of England,* written in 1966 by Ronald Williams, then Bishop of Leicester. Williams was one of the last be-gaitered bishops who rejoiced in being addressed as 'My Lord Bishop' even after the Lambeth Conference had suggested a humbler form of address might be more appropriate

in the egalitarian 60s. He ordained and also conducted my wedding and had a generous heart behind a very traditional and sometimes forbidding exterior. It is therefore of personal interest to see both how much and yet in some ways how little has changed between his time and this new work.

For Jennings the chapters of Williams' book provide convenient pegs on which to expand their themes as he sees them today. These vary from the eminently practical such as how can the Church pay its way with declining congregations and increased demands, to broadly doctrinal issues such as the place of the creeds today, so Williams wrote, surprisingly to those of us who saw him as an arch-traditionalist, that 'The modern Christian is not expected to look on the Creeds as infallible, in the sense that no phrase in them should possibly be better expressed. It would be incredible if statements drawn up sixteen hundred years ago expressed perfectly the thoughts of those who live in a totally different world.'

Jennings's book is unashamedly partisan. Almost all his well-chosen quotations are from those with liberal credentials, including our own Adrian Thatcher and John Saxbee. Those who see the Church as a counter-cultural separated community have got it wrong. We have to choose between being a Church or a sect, the latter seeing themselves, in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's analogy, 'travelling in a sealed train through enemy territory,'unwilling to engage with modern culture and for whom theology and ethical questions were all done and dusted by the time of the New Testament canon, or the writings of Thomas Aquinas or John Calvin – take your pick.

Two major themes run through the book. First, that the parochial system and localism are good things and worth fighting for against the odds, and secondly, that theology, ethics, and practice must be in continual dialogue with society and must, if to be relevant at all, share something of the zeitgeist.

On the former, Jennings gives wise advice. Make sure that there is a priest in each parish and that church buildings are kept and used imaginatively. This clearly is more easily said than done, and he does not shy away from the financial and personnel implications, but how much better than the 'managed decline' which seems so often to be the order of the day and which gives out all the wrong signals.

On the latter, among much else, he considers the Richard Dawkins phenomenon, and especially the often disproportionately aggressive attempts to rebut him, with the Church in the process inadvertently showing itself as a threatened species fighting for survival, for sadly the religion which Dawkins attacks is by no means always a caricature. Jennings adds: “There are many within the Church who dismiss this atheist scientist with a vigour that is often inconsistent or at odds not only with basic human respect, but also in such a manner that is profoundly opposite to the pursuit of open and free enquiry.” (p.32)

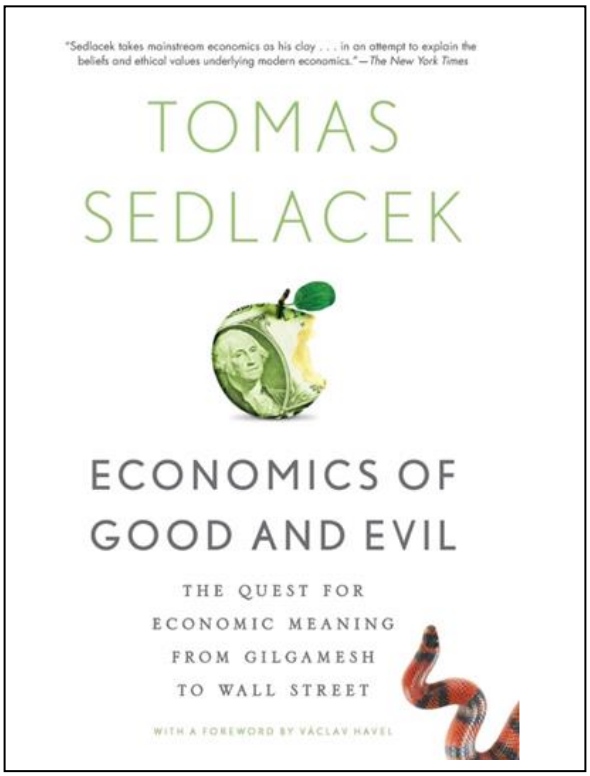
I suppose the biggest issue for all of us is how to live with those with whom we profoundly disagree, who see the Church in very different terms from those espoused by Jennings, and often seem to be extremely successful in marketing their brand. His response is not to suggest a dialogue which would almost inevitably be fruitless, but to match it with liberal success. For Jennings this means showing that the Church is really engaged with its local communities, treating people with intellectual respect, offering inclusive and well-designed worship and providing real care and. through all this. realizing again that the whole parish, not just churchgoers, has an investment in the church even if they darken its doors seldom or not at all. “Churches will grow when they are perceived and experienced as having relevance and significance with the life of the parish, confronting and addressing both individual and corporate needs and issues.” (p.119)

This may seem quite an old-fashioned agenda, certainly for the ‘covens’ – his word – which seek to manage the Church. But Jennings makes his point well that, though we need to change, yet we must not do so too much, and there is also much which can be recovered from the thought of half a century ago. The liberal agenda of the sixties, even when refracted through a seemingly reactionary figure such as Ronald Williams, is worth re-visiting. This would make a good book for the PCC or for a church study group looking for both affirmation and inspiration.

Richard Truss

BOOK REVIEW:

The Economics of Good and Evil:
The Quest for Economic meaning from Gilgamesh to Wall Street
by Tomas Sedlacek (OUP, 2011. 352pp)



In 1998, the Queen asked some of the assembled economists at the London conference on the banking crisis, why none of you saw it coming? An ironic reversal of the story of the emperor who had no clothes! Of course some economists had indeed seen a crisis looming in that all good things have to come to an end, and sooner or later the debt bubble had to burst, but they were the eccentric few who still held to economics' role as the 'dismal science'. Most had long since moved beyond that to a far more upbeat view that capitalism was now universally acknowledged and proven as the instrument of continuous enrichment. Things could only get better.

I am not aware of their response to the Queen, but the events of the crash and ongoing crisis, have since led to a lot of questioning of the established economic orthodoxy. One of the best known is a new book by Tomas Sedlacek, a leading Czech economist and advisor to Vaclav Havel, *The Economics of Good and Evil*.

In it he revisits the sources of human wisdom – the ancient myths of Gilgamesh and the Garden of Eden, the Bible, the insights of ancient Greek philosophy, the teaching of Jesus and Christianity, and then the beginning of modern economics, with Bernard Mandeville and his Fable of the Bees, Adam Smith and of course, John Maynard Keynes among others. We only need to return to our sources and find what is needed now.

So, with the myth – myths he defines as what never happened but always are – of the Garden of Eden, the 'original sin' is consumption for its own sake, not being satisfied with what one has. So the repeated "ate" sums this up. We are insatiable creatures, or so at least mainstream economics assumes, forgetting that most of our desires are artificially created, today largely through the power of advertising. So economic progress has become a self-evident unquestioned good and the GDP figures and credit ratings of nations are signs of national virility and patriotic pride. Just look at the hurt and anger in the United States at their recent credit-rating downgrade.

The institution of the Sabbath is another reminder that economic growth is not the be-all-and-end-all of worthwhile life. Work is so that we can enjoy it and its fruits, not an end in itself. This concept, Sedlacek suggests, is foreign to today's economics –'Today we only know growth for growth's sake, and if our company or country prospers, that does not mean a reason for rest but for more and higher performance. If we believe in rest at all today, it is for different reasons. It is the rest of the exhausted machine, the rest of the weak, the rest of those who can't handle the tempo.' This is because economics today is all about the 'How' rather that the 'Why'. To ask why we need to have more and more, or to ask what is real utility (or better still what is really for the best for society as a whole) risks bringing the whole system crashing down.

And what of the current debt crisis? Here Sedlacek turns to the first mention of the economic cycle in human history, and that is Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream about the seven fat and seven lean cows. Joseph's response in his new exalted post is to build barns and store the grain left over against the forthcoming lean years. Just what western governments should have done, but singularly failed to do, in the good years up 2008. The first example of Keynes' anticyclical fiscal policy.

The New Testament also has much to say about our current predicament, with its central message of the free, undeserved grace of God. So we saw this echoed in the recent bank bail-outs. Huge sums were poured out on

what most would see as undeserving recipients. Those who sin most are forgiven most, just like the woman in the gospel with the precious jar of ointment. The aim was of course to recapitalise the banks so it could be business as usual, but in fact what has happened should change everything. The bankers themselves are now indebted and dependent on the public largesse, which surely means that we can now see things differently and challenge many of the previously unchallengeable assumptions. One of these goes back to the father of modern economics, Adam Smith, that there is an Invisible Hand which in an almost mystic way controls economic affairs, and that this Invisible Hand will somehow always bring good from the evil and mess of selfish individuals. This latter view goes back before Smith to Bernard Mandeville's Fable of the Bees – public benefit comes from private vices. All this connects, says Sedlacek, to a form of social Darwinism, where markets select the best, i.e. the most adaptable, players and eliminate the bad ones, so that the fittest survive. And all this happens with little or no external control. So Lehmann Brothers was allowed to go the wall, whilst totally against this modern economic nostrum all the other banks were bailed out.

All ways of seeing the world begin with a dream, vision or intuition, and then a leap of faith, whether the dreamer be Joseph in Egypt, Isaac Newton under his apple tree or Adam Smith and his Invisible Hand. Each dream is then reasoned upon and hardens into unquestioned orthodoxy. But then soon or later along comes an Einstein and our whole way of seeing the world changes. Perhaps now we at that point of transition in our economic world-view

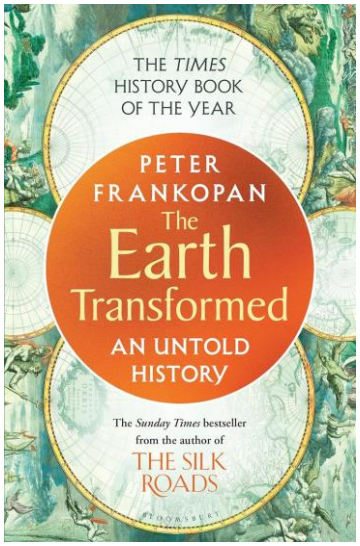
If the lesson of the present crisis is that some of the fundamental assumptions of economics are bogus or at least inadequate, then we need no longer be in thrall to them, and no longer see economists as infallible modern priests. Instead economics can resume its proper role an invaluable servant in our quest for a more fulfilled and sustainable life, taking its place alongside the other social sciences, but also with the humanities. It was reassuring to read in Sedlacek's book that John Maynard Keynes himself looked forward to this moment –'the day is not far off when the economic problem will take the back seat where it belongs, the arena of the heart and the head will be occupied or reoccupied by our real problems – the problems of life, of human relations, of creation, and behaviour, and religion.'

Richard Truss

BOOK REVIEW:

The Earth Transformed, An Untold History

by Peter Frankopan, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023)



This is a big book in every sense. It is 658 pages long – and Professor Frankopan has mercifully saved the reader having to hold an even bigger book by putting a further 200 pages of notes online. It is also big in the story it tells, the untold history of Earth.

Peter Frankopan is the Professor of Global History at Oxford. And this is certainly a global story he tells. It is not a political history, a social history, an economic history – though it contains elements of all three. Here are a few random example:

- Aridity, and the competition for better pastureland, as well as the overextended Roman lines in the western Empire contributed to the Hun invasions.
- The introduction of potatoes to Europe not only increased agricultural productivity, but also led to a decrease in conflict (and if that sounds bizarre, he nevertheless makes a compelling case).
- The contribution of a cold winter and consequent grain price rises in 1787/8 led to the unrest which culminated in the French Revolution.

As you will have intuited from these examples, this is the history which foregrounds other forces which have also shaped Earth. Systems such as El Niño, La Niña (which we have become familiar with over recent decades), the Southern Oscillation, the North Atlantic Oscillation, volcanic eruptions which for longer or shorter periods transformed the atmosphere, reducing temperatures; the Younger Dryas, a period of sudden

temperature drop roughly between 12900 and 11900BC, which was followed by the emergence of the Holocene; the lack of mineral resources in the Fertile Crescent which led to rivalry and migration (he doesn't mention Abraham, but…), to name but a few.

There are insights galore: how marmots as well as rats contributed to the spread of the Black Death; the exacerbating factor of poor harvests in the 1330s which caused many to migrate to towns thus providing fertile ground for disease; how the gene pool of Europe was almost completely replaced in 'one of the most comprehensive movements of people ever recorded' in the centuries around 3000BC; how there were concerns (that sound all too familiar to us) voiced by Seneca and others about the oppressive and polluted atmosphere of Rome as well as worries about ecological depletion and resource exploitation.

Coming nearer to our time, he spells out the experiments in weather control and climate manipulation and modification, including cloud seeding, which have been a potentially dangerous feature of recent decades, about which we should be very concerned. He also reminds us that climate cooling and a new ice age, rather than global heating, were the concerns as recently as the 1970s. How things change.

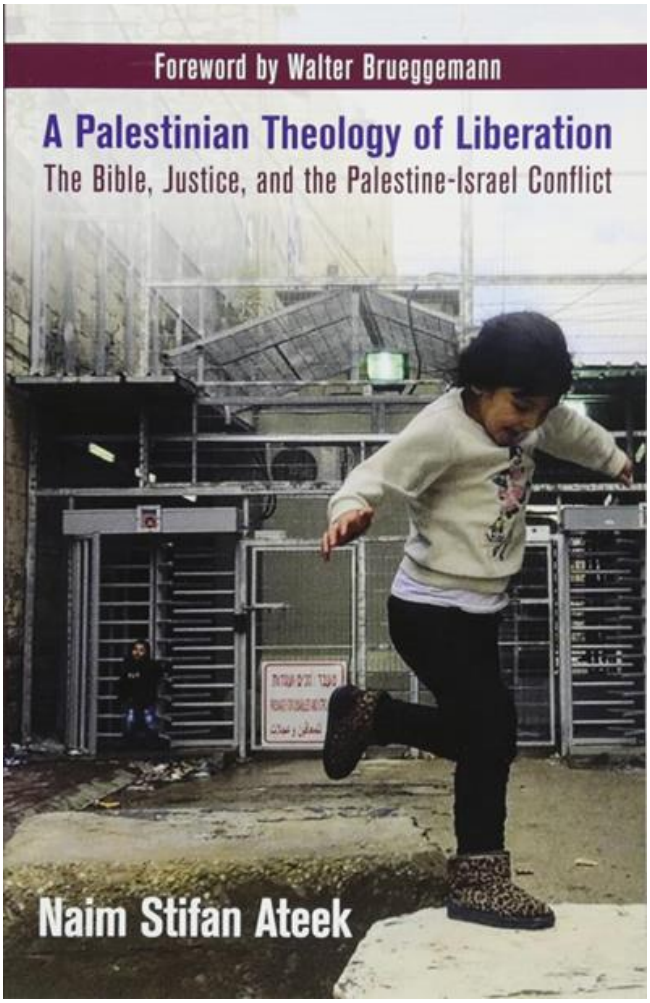
The penultimate chapter, entitled *On the Edge of Ecological Limits,* is, as I have written elsewhere, one of the most terrifying things I have read, sparing no detail in setting out the impact climate change has had and could well have. An almost incidental fact is that China used more concrete in the years 2011 to 2013 than the United States used in the whole of the twentieth century, part of the 'jaw dropping' increase in urbanisation and cities since 1980, with all the concomitant problems associated with the process such as the use of resources and the need for food production and transportation. Then there's the fact that in the UK 10 million metric tons of food is thrown away each year. This is not just a shocking fact in itself, but is a huge waste of energy, amounting to between eight and ten percent of global greenhouse gases. And a similar amount is produced by the global fashion industry.

The final chapter, Conclusions, does offer some examples of hope, though concludes that we are still, as a planet, living well beyond our means – we would require 1.6 earths to maintain our present standards of living! 'It will be nature, rather than human action, that ultimately brings net emissions towards zero. It will do so through catastrophic depopulation.'

We have been warned! ***John Schofield***

BOOK REVIEW:

A Palestinian Theology of Liberation:
The Bible, Justice and the Palestine-Israel Conflict
b Rev. Naim Ateek (2017)



As I am writing, the Israeli Defence Force are using all the power of a technologically advanced US ally to batter a fraction of the Palestinian people – those displaced into Gaza – while trying to neutralise permanently what IDF PR officers refer to as Iran's proxy – the Hamas terrorists. Naim Ateek, the Palestinian theologian, has written a theological examination on the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis and Palestine and Israel, the focus being on how applying justice for Palestinians in this relationship can lead to a lasting peace for both parties.

I met Naim Ateek at St Mark's. Ateek is an Anglican priest, a Palestinian, and the founder of the first Palestinian Christian theological institute,

Sabeel, which now enjoys an international reputation. To be precise, we met in our coffee lounge in 2009 when he was a speaker at the Biblical Studies conference at St Mark's on 'The Land'. The book follows the paradigm of contextual theology, providing information on the Palestinians, the Palestinian Christians, and how history has developed since the large scale Jewish Zionist immigration to Palestine from the 1870s, the founding of Israel in 1948, and forced population movement and land appropriation in 1947 and 48, known to the Palestinians as the Nakba. This context will, sadly, be unknown history for some of his intended audience; however, ever more frequent Gaza conflicts means a summary of this history is now used by broadcasters to preface analysis of causality in recent conflicts.

Ateek briefly identifies the three factors that have influenced Israeli successive governments' policy since 1967, away from seeking an agreed two state solution. These are: the post Holocaust Israeli understanding of its security; the control, since the 1967 victory, of nearly all the The Land of Israel with Zionist maximalist ambitions; and a new Israeli religious nationalism that helped create the Settler movement and continues to sustain it.

Settler land theft and successive oppressive Israeli governments have inevitably led to the Palestinian civil uprisings in the Occupied Territories, *the Intifadas*, the first in 1987. At the centre of the book is this orientation Ateek takes to these injustices and their denial of life for a people: 'Liberation theology is realised when we are able to answer the question what does God expect us to say and do about the injustice and oppression that we see happening before us?' The guide to behaviour is set: 'For Palestinian Christians liberation theology is anchored in Jesus Christ as liberator … Christ centred theology that focuses directly on the Palestine Israel conflict'. Unlike other theologies of Liberation which locate justice in the Exodus narratives, here the judgement of the world of Jesus is the central hermeneutical key. Ateek applies Jesus' words from Isaiah 61's prophetic promise of release and the Lord's favour in Luke 4 18-18 to the Palestinians. He sees, in the story of the widow and the unjust judge in Luke 18, a parallel with, and promise for, Palestinians today. The widow persists in calling for justice even when the judge – identified with 'empire' – refuses to listen. In this context 'empire' can be seen not just in successive Israeli governments' treatment of Palestinians, but also in their international allies' resistance to giving her justice through effective pressure on Israeli policy.

How does Ateek address Torah texts that require the separation of Jews and non-Jews in the Land and with texts that align Yahweh's will with the

expulsion or annihilation of non-Jews in the land? Ateek does not examine the relationship of Christians to the Mosaic Covenant. His approach is to critique – using Christological hermeneutics – Bible texts, which he identifies with historical ethno-nationalism. He gives examples from Leviticus, which he contrasts with Jesus' use of Torah. Jesus, he reminds us, never quotes Numbers, Joshua and Judges. Ateek quotes Richard Rohrs' formulation: 'Basically Jesus doesn't quote from his own Scriptures when they are punitive, imperialistic…classist or exclusionary. In fact he teaches the opposite in every case.'

Does this Christian Liberationist theology use Supercessionist arguments to either spiritualise the Land or dismantle Jewish claims to the Land? Jews, for Ateek, are partners through Christ in the Land, and his concern for the actual land as support for the people is fundamental to his theology. Ateek shows the ontological shift through Ezekiel into Ezra, and also developed in the remaining books of the Jewish bible, of Jewish theologies that believe that God seeks justice for peoples in the Land who are not Jews. God's justice and concern is not limited to one people. However, the centre of his theology, and of the Sabeel Kairos, is based on a universality of Salvation that does not privilege one group – while accepting Judaism as a world religion with insights of continuing value.

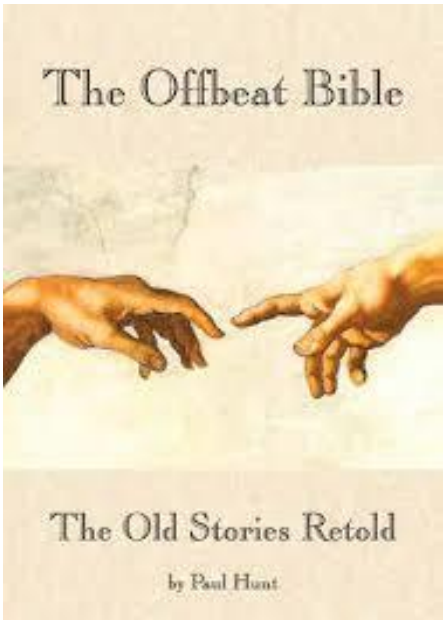
Ateek deftly sets out how texts have been used in practice to support the oppression, on the ground, of Palestinians. These are used as quasi-religious support – or even claimed as 'obligations' – for Israeli Settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem to take over by force and own Palestinian farming land and properties. Ateek cites international law, including on Human Rights, to help clarify acts of oppression, but the underlying critique is a Christ hermeneutic.

This significant statement of Palestinian Christian theology preceded the call to the wider Church to act on this injustice. In 2020 a collaboration by a number of Palestinian theologians created a call for Churches to support justice for Palestinians. In so doing justice also flows for Israelis because justice is the condition for a lasting peace. This is *Cry for Hope: a call to decisive action. We Cannot Serve God and the Oppression of the Palestinians*.

Marc James

BOOK REVIEW:

The Offbeat Bible: The Old Stories Retold
by Paul Hunt (Sheffield: 2019)



In this book Paul Hunt, a South Yorkshire based author, provides a humorous and sometimes hilarious retelling of some of the biblical accounts. As the cover blurb points out: "There are many characters given only a brief mention in the Bible: whose individual outlooks and personal experiences were never recorded. This book sets out to give each their own voice, and to let them describe their experiences of God or events around Jesus from their own point of view." To be able to pull this off requires a pretty good knowledge of the Bible, as well as a vivid imagination and a sound sense of characterisation, and the author demonstrates these attributes in his approach and delivery. Yet, though the book is intended to make the reader laugh, and contains language which some readers may find quirky, the author does not mean any disrespect to anyone, and I found the book to be generally sympathetic to the Christian message and the tradition in which it has been voiced. This is hardly surprising as the author is a practising Quaker.

The biblical characters that are 'fleshed out', have been taken from both the Old and the New Testaments, and they are presented in the chronological order in which they appear in the Bible. The literary standard is high throughout, and there are plenty of signs of perceptive characterisation. Perhaps this is because Paul Hunt is a Clinical Psychologist by profession, and has spent many thousands of hours listening to people's stories. He feels that this has given him an 'ear' for the voices of different people, and this is reflected in the way he depicts them.

If you would like to purchase a copy of the book, you can do so by emailing him at paulhunt47@talktalk.net (the cost is £10.00 and the postage is included in the price).

Joe Forde

BOOK REVIEW:

Logics of War: The Use of Force and the Problem of Mediation
by Therese Feiler (T & T Clark, London, 2020)

Frederick Russell once wrote that 'warfare has been one of man's most distinctive activities'. One might expect, therefore, that the Christian Church would have given its members unequivocal and consistent guidance in the matter. Yet this is not what we find.

Jesus seems to have repudiated violence. He called peacemakers blessed. He taught his followers to turn the other cheek. He told Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world, otherwise his servants would fight. It is hardly surprising to find, therefore, that the Early Fathers followed Tertullian when he wrote that in disarming Peter in Gethsemane, the Lord 'unbelted every soldier'. Down the centuries that has continued to be the inspiration for some Christians. Today, it remains the position of some denominations, such as the Quakers and Mennonites, and some individual theologians, such as Stanley Hauerwas.

But as Christianity began to make its way among those who held positions of authority in the Roman empire, there was a growing realisation that while war might be seen as a great evil, the pursuit of justice would be seriously set back if force had to be repudiated altogether. Drawing on Cicero as well as the New Testament, Augustine, and then Aquinas, set down ethical principles for *bellum iustum* – when it is justifiable to take up arms and what criteria should be followed in its conduct. In recent years, certainly since the Vietnam war, both secular and religious apologists for, and critics of, military interventions, have taken the principles of just war as their starting point.

There are, then, deeply opposed stances and a continuing debate. Therese Feiler seeks to show how these different 'logics of war' are the result of different theological assumptions, implicit as well as explicit, in the writings of both secular ethicists and theologians. (She follows Karl Barth who said 'There is no philosophy that is not to some extent also a theology'.) Specifically, the logic is about how ethicists depend on an understanding of the nature of God and who or what mediates between God and humanity in a violent world.

The focus of the book is on the idea of 'mediation', by which Fieler means the way in which ethicists and theologians, given their theological assumptions, formulate their response to the seeming abyss between a loving God and a violent humanity.

She takes five writers who are representative of different responses to this tension and explores the extent to which they offer the possibility of mediation

and ultimate reconciliation. The argument begins with the two principal approaches to war in contemporary debate – realism and idealism – the just war of the sovereign state and the just war authorised by a supra-national authority, such as International Law. It concludes with a consideration of attempts to sustain a practical just war ethic through explicitly theological-ethical logics of mediation.

This is not a book for the general reader. But it will be of interest to those who have an acquaintance with at least some of the recent debate about the ethics of war.

Alan Billings

Library Catalogue Update:
New books from July 2023 to December, 2023

1 Jenkins David, The Calling of a Cuckoo, 2nd copy, N
2 The Psalms – a new translation for Worship, publisher Collins, B
3 Beckett Sister Wendy, Saint Paul in Art, Q
4 Hugget Joyce, Listening to God, F
5 Childers Alison, Another Gospel, F
6 Warren Robert, Life Attitudes, B
7 Davis Kenneth C, Don't know much about the Bible, B
8 Lord Dowding, Many Mansions, E
9 Breadley Ian, God is green, K
10 Marsh Pat, Whispers of Love, Q
11 Pace Peter, The Architecture of George Pace, A 2nd copy
12 France-Williams A.D.A, Ghost Ship, Institutional Racism and the Church of England, I
13 Jennings Willie James, Belief, A
14 Theological Commentary on the Bible, Acts B
15 The Church of England Living In Love and Faith, I
16 Threlfall-Holmes Miranda How to eat bread, B
17 McLaren Brian, Do I stay Christian, F
18 O'Tuama Padraig, Poetry Unbound, Q
19 Rundell Katherine, Super Infinate, The Transformations of Transformation, John Donne, Q
20 Hinchcliffe Henry, The Stained Glass Windows of Harry Stammers, D
21 Forde Joseph, Before and Beyond the Big Society, O, 2nd copy
22 Brown Taylor Barbara, An Altar in the World, F
23 Cole Reverend Richard, Bringing in the Sheaves, F
24 Low Christine, Shattering Glass Ceilings, P
25 McLaren Brian, Faith After Doubt, F
26 Nouwen Henri J M, With Open Hands, F second copy

27 Hunt Ruth, The Book of Queer Prophets, P
28 Johnston William, Being in Love, F
29 Child John, The Rise of Islam, H
30 Temple William, Christianity and Social Order, K
31 Merton Thomas, The Power and Meaning of Love, E
32 Rogerson John, Oxford Illustrated History of the Bible, A
33 Ann Lewin, Waiting for the Kingfisher, Q
34 Runcorn David, Love Means Love Means Love, P
35 Green Marcus, The Possibility of Difference, P
36 Evans Held Evans, Searching for Sunday, F
37 Swamy Muthuraj, Reconciliation, B
38 Winn Raynor, The Salt Path, N (replacement copy)
39 Jones David Albert, Angels: a very short introduction, E
40 Hengel Martin, The Four Gospels & the One Gospel of Jesus Christ, E
41 Lama Dalai and Desmond Tutu, The Book of Joy, H
42 James Eric, World Over All, E
43 Gough Janet, Churches of the Church of England, D
44 Bakehouse Janet, The Lindisfarne Gospels, D
45 John Jeffrey, Living the Mystery, F
46 John Jeffrey, Living Tradition, F
47 Byrne Lavinia, The Hidden Voice P
48 Ramon SSF Brother, The Way of Love, F
49 Williams Rowan, Christ on Trial, E
50 Brown Michelle, The World of the Luttrell Psalter D
51 Renshaw Tim, The World of the Luttrel Psalter, D
52 Holloway Richard, Signs of Glory, E
53 Rogerson J, The Art of Biblical Prayer, G
54 Jenkins David, The Glory of Ma, E
55 Robinson John, Can we trust the New Testament, E
56 Jo Flinders Carol, At the Root of this longing,
57 Keeble Daniel Paul, A collection of Memories of Daniel Paul Keeble, N

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