

THE NEW GLADSTONE REVIEW

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*Informal commentary, opinions, reviews, news, illustrations and poetry
for bookish people of philanthropic inclination*

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Editorial

This Issue is a little late for autumn and a bit early for winter. But everything seems so awry at present that it hardly seems to matter.

The currently unrelenting turmoil of life – from crises of political, economic and constitutional nature, and from environmental, international military and cost of living challenges – leave many throughout the world utterly perplexed. But for most of us in the UK nothing is as bad as our ancestors have endured in the past – in wartime, at times of severe social unrest, and even during the plague years of the seventeenth century. In deciding what to include in this Issue I have sought to suggest how, in reasoned deliberation that has political implications, constructive ways might be adopted to promote a more secure, prosperous and sustainable future. And although not a member of any religious group, in a short poem, I intimate that I believe mankind's universal and indomitable spirit is a source of strength in times of adversity.

I am most grateful to my son, Jim, for adapting for a general readership an article he wrote earlier for a professional educational journal. I imagine his insights will be of much interest – and especially for readers with young children at school.

For amusement, I include images of pages of two of my treasured antiquarian books – one from the 17th and one from the 18th century: glimpses of *another country*?

The last page is an advertisement which, by publicising examples of feedback from customers and readers, aims to increase interest and book sales at Gladstone Books. Clearly, this is most relevant to people living in the East Midlands area, but some sales have recently been made to customers much further away, including some visiting from the USA.

BM

1. Reflections on Growth

A personal view inspired by two important books by Tim Jackson:

***Prosperity without Growth* (2017) and *Post Growth: life after capitalism* (2021)**

The current convergence of several global crises – including the Covid pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the rapid increase in the cost of living and the drought and impending famine in Somalia – has led to attempts to come up with solutions that will break the deadlock seemingly gripping humanity in a vice. An alleged recipe for Britain to address these concerns was promoted by Ms Liz Truss, whose time as prime minister broke all records for its brevity. I certainly don't want to expand on the resulting socio-economic consequences, but closely associated with her precipitate downfall was her Conservative Party conference speech, in which she uttered the mantra ***Growth, Growth, Growth*** to symbolise her convictions concerning the economic salvation of the nation. This is an objective not only espoused by Conservatives but by others of different political persuasion – as a sound way of achieving the high standard of living that is considered to characterise a prosperous society. And yet the flawed reasoning behind the relentless pursuit of growth has recently been challenged by a new breed of distinguished economists. In this article, inspired by, among others, the two books cited in the above subtitle, I want to provide a concise summary of their claims.

GDP The very word ***growth*** may be an unfortunate one, although in biological terms growing food to sustain our health and wellbeing is a noble intention, and growing trees has both practical and aesthetic value. But when it simply means 'bigger' and 'more of,' the point of growth's indiscriminate objectives is not obvious. For example, the growing number of cars on the roads, or the vastly growing number of food banks for low paid families, or governments' growing arsenals of weapons of mass destruction – are these good examples of growth's contribution to a raised standard of living? The diversity of such objectives has led economists, eager to put their theories on a more scientific basis, to use average GDP (***gross domestic product per person***), as an index of a country's standard of living. But using that metric has a number of problems.

For example, (i) GDP doesn't account for the distribution of goods within society, since a high average GDP may result from a few very rich people and a vast majority of poor people; (ii) in some cases, money is spent on *bad*s rather than *good*s e.g. restoring damaged buildings that have been flooded; mitigating the effects of environmental pollution, or having to increase the number and size of prisons; (iii) GDP takes no account of leisure which, with fewer days at work, may enhance people's standard of living, e.g. through artistic, craft and social pursuits; and (iv) GDP only accounts for goods and services that are involved in official, organised markets – ignoring home-produced goods (and indeed transactions in the black market). In brief, GDP omits much, includes problematical data and distorts the overall picture by crude averaging.

HDI Some years ago, the realisation that GDP failed to encompass many contributions to most people's standard of living led to alternative formulations, notable among which was The Human Development Index (HDI) proposed by Amartya Sen, a Nobel Prize winner in Economics and former Master of Trinity College Cambridge. Others developed Sen's concept to include the *capabilities* that enhanced personal wellbeing, e.g. for philosopher Martha Nussbaum such capabilities included life span, health, freedom from violence, imagination, access to the natural world, political participation and property rights. Acknowledging the virtue of identifying such capabilities, aggregating them in a single HDI number is clearly problematical in that the criteria included are somewhat arbitrary and their relative importance contentious. Despite these constraints, the *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*, an agency tasked with helping countries *eliminate poverty* and *achieve sustainable economic growth and human development*, has adopted the HDI as a means of assessing

changes occurring over time in a country, and between different countries. The index (see box below) combines economic, social and demographic data.

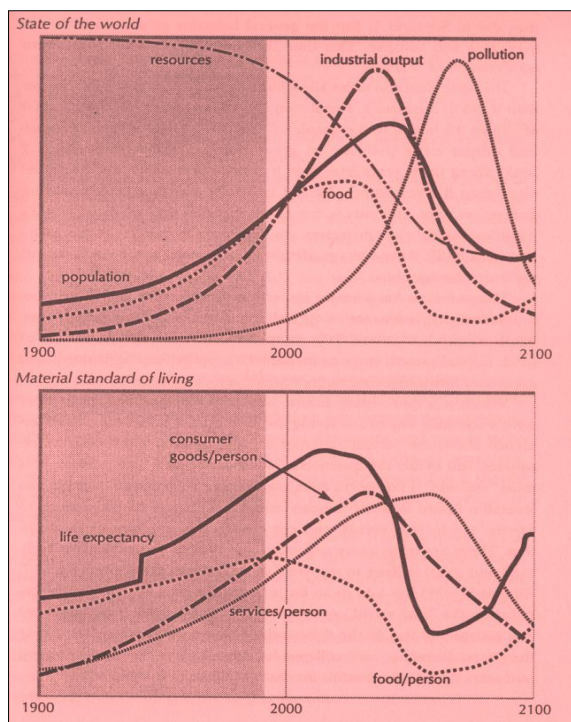
The Human Development Index (HDI) is an index that measures key dimensions of human development. i.e..

A long and healthy life– measured by *life expectancy*.

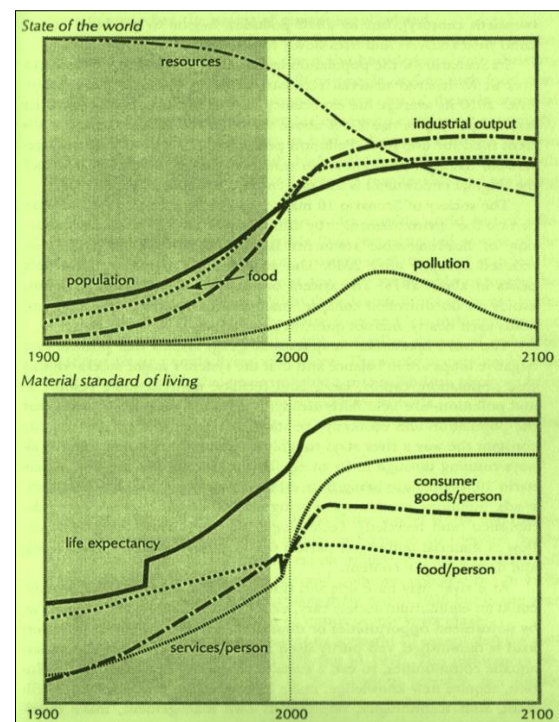
Access to education– measured by *expected years of schooling* of children at school-entry age and *mean years of schooling* of the adult population.

A decent standard of living– measured by *Gross National Income per capita* adjusted for the price level of the country.

The discussion so far has focused on the need to enhance (grow) those social and political factors which are anticipated to achieve increased standards of living. But to the extent that they depend on exploitation of material resources they are clearly subject to limits because we live on a finite planet. If we all lived as average citizens of the USA live, we should need *four* planet Earths to support the world's population (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-33133712>) – an indication that to equate GDP with standard of living is either seriously flawed, highly unjust or both.



Scenario 1 (Standard Run)



Scenario 10 (Stabilized Population & Industry)

Limits to Growth It was only just over 50 years ago that the idea that there might be physical limits to growth became apparent, even to scientists. A report in 1972, *The Limits to Growth*, edited by Dennis Meadows & colleagues, revealed the dire global consequences of humanity's use and misuse of natural resources. It was a salutary warning that the Earth was not a bottomless pit of valuable resources and a sink into which all our wastes and pollutants could be tipped with impunity. Twenty years later the same authors updated their data, with more sophisticated computer programmes and an awareness of the impact of greenhouse gases, which has more recently become of such justifiable global concern.

Two of their several of scenarios are illustrated above. **Scenario 1**, the standard computer run, indicates the anticipated results of continuing to use resources and produce wastes at the-then current rates – with the global population and life expectancy beginning to decline sharply, in the early half of the 21st century, as food supplies drop, pollution peaks and industrial output declines. **Scenario 10** suggests that, by maintaining food supplies per person, curbing population growth and moderating consumption of consumer good/person, a steady-state population is envisaged. The authors stressed that neither outcome was inevitable, but radical differences in our habitual lifestyles would be necessary to even approach Scenario 10. In fact, considerable developments in the last 30 years have delayed the onset of the worst outcome in Scenario 1. But for how long?

Tim Jackson's role in the debate.

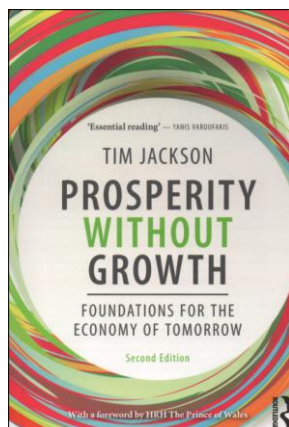
The fact is that, far from being simply an intellectual construction, economics is embedded in ecology and subject to biological imperatives. And no one has been more perceptive in drawing attention to this than Tim Jackson, a professor of sustainable development at Surrey University, to whose recent accounts in two books I now turn.

Jackson's (2017) book is a detailed scientific analysis, which grew out of the deliberations of the UK Sustainable Development Commission of which he was the Economics Commissioner. For example, the real problem of *economic* growth, almost universally pursued in so-called developed countries (DC), is that it has profound *ecological* effects. This is evident from the simple equation:

$$I = P \times A \times T$$

where *I*, the *environmental impact*, is the product of *population* (*P*) and *affluence* (*A*), which represents the average sum of each person's material possessions and the effects of making, using and disposing of them. One strategy for reducing *I* is to develop novel technologies (*T*) that are designed to diminish the energy needed to produce each unit of economic output. Although major changes in life style have been made over the 30 years since the 1992 report was published, some have promoted environmental sustainability, while others have been highly detrimental. Crucially important has been

the recognition that many concerns that were simply not appreciated then – because 'below the radar' – are now known to have critical effects on environmental sustainability.



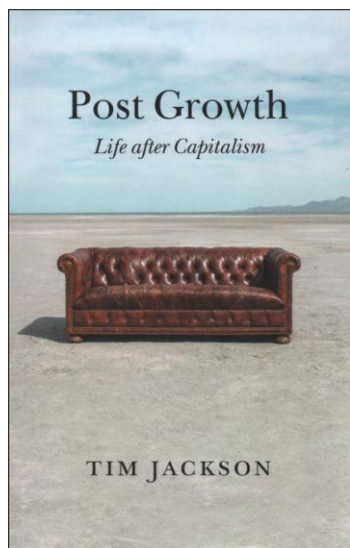
The central problem is that increases in wellbeing have been equated with increased affluence, an assumption that has fuelled the ambitions not only of people in less economically developed countries (LEDC, where they are doubtless often valid) but also of those in DC, whose improved material living standards rarely appear to provide the anticipated sense of enhanced wellbeing (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). Moreover, *On the average, each citizen of the U.S., western Europe and Japan consumes 32 times more resources such as fossil fuels, and puts out 32 times more wastes, than do*

inhabitants of the Third World (Diamond, 2012). Protection of environmental resources has been largely neglected. If economic and social development is allowed to grow unchecked, eroding natural life support systems, it will threaten the very persistence of human life.

Jackson's (2021) book breaks new ground by appealing, not only to reasoned utilitarian calculations, but also to our emotions and our humanity. The notion that rigorous statistical analysis (of the sort which can be reliably delegated to powerful computers) can ever be the route to solving political and economic problems is exposed for its naiveté and flawed assumptions. Each of us is inevitably

influenced by our individual mindset, the metaphorical *prism* through which we assess the world we live in, and consequently the ethical judgements we make. The contrasting perspectives of Darwin and Kropotkin on the principal factors determining evolutionary developments (competition and cooperation, respectively), which I discussed in Issue 15 (July, 2022), are a graphic illustration of the inability of economics to arrive at the rigorous scientific laws that typify physics. The question then becomes one of deciding which of the, often unappreciated or unstated, metaphors provides the soundest basis for an economic theory which will promote universal prosperity – generally expressed in terms of GDP. This is, after all, the principal criterion that underpins capitalism.

Reviewers' responses to Tim Jackson's approach have been fulsome in the extreme. For example: *Utterly inspiring...A thrilling intellectual journey...Extraordinary, powerful and beautifully written* and *Economic wisdom wrapped up in poetry* – of which the poems of Emily Dickinson feature prominently. By stirring the imagination in ways generally dismissed as sentimental or emotive the reader is stimulated to acknowledge that it is irrational to ignore such an approach. Leavening his



arguments by several biographical vignettes, for example, of philosopher John Stuart Mill, ecologist Lynn Margulis, and physicist Ludwig Boltzmann, Jackson weaves a remarkably coherent case for responsible economics. And chapters headed *The Myth of Capitalism* and *Love and Entropy* will doubtless attract attention out of curiosity if nothing else. After such an inviting *hors d'oeuvres*, it seems appropriate to quote the author's own words in opening the book's final chapter.

Capitalism is a catalogue of system errors. It has overturned the principle of balance in human health – relentlessly insisting that more is better. It has denigrated care – continually depressing the value of the carer. It has over-stimulated consumer appetites – ruthlessly arousing dissatisfaction. It has accelerated material throughput – dangerously undermining the integrity of the natural world.

Capitalism has overturned the world-building task of work. It has tipped our unending search for security into a relentless and inevitable insecurity. It has transformed investment from a canopy of hope into a dystopian gambling casino. It has systematically privileged the returns to capital over the livelihoods of ordinary people. And in doing all this it has destabilised finance, accelerated inequality and compromised our health.

These are clearly not the conclusions of an unhinged zealot, but have been reached from a careful and thorough academic analysis that has not been confined to financial balance sheets. Although the book was written before the recent dramatic events in the UK Conservative party, it might serve as poignant comment on the way modern capitalist economic theory has deviated from the vision of its founder Adam Smith, in the 19th century. Eschewing hyperbole, I commend this book for the cogency of its central thesis, and its confident appeal to human sensibilities as vital elements in formulating a wiser economic theory than that which has for too long dominated international politics.

Principal sources of reference

Meadows D N et al (1992) *Beyond the Limits*, London, Earthscan.

Jackson T (2017) *Prosperity without Growth*, 2nd edition. London Routledge

Jackson T (2021) *Post Growth: life after capitalism*. London, Polity

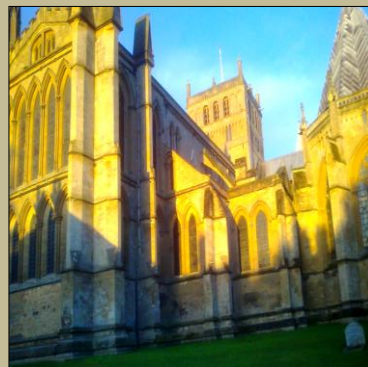
2. The Minster and the Mind's eye

*The daily ritual of a morning walk
has become a prelude to meditation
a silent dialogue with my soul's wisdom;
for at this early hour the only sounds
are the chirping of birds and the
whispering of leaves in the still air*

*Near the walk's end by the Minster's west arch,
I settle on my habitual bench
attached to which a brass plate records
an old man's wish for the longed-for
post mortem reunion with his sweetheart,
absent for thirteen long years*

*I can't affirm belief his hopes were realised
but the Minster's neat pyramidal towers
its architectural simplicity
and almost tangible aura of spirituality
induce a deep sense of timeless serenity
and my gratitude for losses now regained*

*The sun's rays are absorbed by
the warm Mansfield stone
and warmth is also transmitted by the antiquity
of this monument to mankind's enduring spirit,
affirming our inherent bonds of kindness
amid a world beset with grief and rancour*



Two views of Southwell Minster: *absorbing* the sun's rays

3. Teaching with Moral Purpose

Jim Mephram

The author recently retired after thirteen years as head of a Bristol primary school and thirty years teaching in state education. The article is based on one published earlier this year in the Headteacher online journal. Looking back on this experience, his considered opinion on the purpose of education is that while we clearly want children to know things and how to apply that knowledge, it is crucially important that they also understand themselves, others and the world around them. He has come to believe that the purpose of education cannot simply be about academic success. - for we have a duty to see learning in schools as a moral enterprise.

Since my recent retirement, I have been reflecting on what I have learnt about teaching and learning, pedagogy and the purpose of education. I do this from the standpoint of having immensely enjoyed both the successes and the challenges of my career.

Over the years, I have seen many different initiatives introduced into primary education. These have included strategies to develop the curriculum, changing approaches to classroom pedagogy, and changes to the classroom environment and behaviour, all of which have been rooted in research. I am not disparaging of these changes, as they all have something to offer. However, sometimes changes or new approaches are held up as a *holy grail* and they are imposed on the profession with little discussion.

One set of practices is adopted, followed shortly by another. We obsess about Bloom's Taxonomy, then the skills-based curriculum, then Rosenshine's principles, then the knowledge-based curriculum. The reality of my experience is that the thesis that one model of pedagogy is universally better than any other model is clearly not supported in research. This is because classrooms are highly complex environments in which there is an increasing range of pupil needs, a wide range of interactions, and teachers with a range of different styles of teaching and different character traits.

You simply cannot drop a principle into a classroom and expect it to transform pupil learning. Learning does not function this way or operate in an empty vacuum. For Gary Keogh, in his book *Pedagogy of Purpose* (2021) the current thinking about education is dominated by what he calls the *mechanist approach*. This is based on strategies, systems, measurement, and box-ticking. All these are designed to improve and accelerate rates of progress.

Attempts to improve teaching through inspections, incentives or performance management often lead to a focus on *performance* rather than on *learning*. What seems to be missing from this mechanist model is that classroom learning has a huge social and moral component, and that none of these strategies addresses the question of the purpose of learning.

As a head teacher, when I have appointed new teachers I have prioritised two things. First, the candidate's need to have a clear vision and values – i.e. they can articulate why they want to teach. Second, I look for teachers who can form strong relationships with pupils and motivate them. For, I contend that skills and competencies can be learnt, *but teaching that is only grounded in subject knowledge and skills does not capture the real meaning of the occupation* (Jubilee Centre, Birmingham University, 2015). It is the character of the teacher that is of crucial importance. Good teachers establish strong relationships with pupils, they have clear expectations, they develop trust with children and understand their pupils' needs. They have good intra and inter-personal skills.

The research analyses in the Educational Endowment Foundation's *Teaching and Learning Toolkit* show that the most powerful element of learning is feedback. Effective feedback occurs in classrooms where there is a high level of trust between the teacher and pupils and between pupils: positive social relationships and classroom climate are key.

The *Statement on teacher education and character education* (Jubilee Centre, 2015) states that *the single most powerful tool that (teachers) have to impact on a student's character is (their) own character*. In the same publication, Professor David Carr states: *It is often that we remember teachers as much for the kind of people they were (as) for anything they may have taught, and some kinds of professional expertise may be understood as qualities of character*.

As Socrates, in ancient Greece, declared: *Education cannot simply be about filling empty vessels with knowledge and information*. Teachers today have to respond to the complexity of classrooms with a bewildering range of needs – attachment, autism, ADHD, speech and language difficulties, and mental health concerns. Teachers need to have the character traits that equip them to be resilient, empathetic and able to forge relationships that will support and motivate learners. Teaching is about navigating complex interactions that are social, emotional, moral and, sometimes, conflictual.

According to *Ofsted*,* *the purpose of education is to make an alteration to long-term memory*. This seems a shallow and one-dimensional definition. The aim of education has to go beyond the acquisition of knowledge and such judgements. It has to link to education for happiness and wellbeing. The teacher has a key role in exemplifying values and getting children to reflect on the values that will help them become future citizens. As well as knowledge, children need to develop courage and compassion, fairness and tolerance. Schools have an important role to play in fostering children's characters to equip them with traits that will help them to be resilient in later life.

Of course, it is important that children develop knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum. However, they also need to develop key social and moral dispositions before they can learn. If children cannot self-regulate, concentrate or take turns, if they have no resilience or lack empathy, if they have no feeling of self-worth or do not respect others, they will struggle in school and in adult life. On a *mechanist* view, South Korea has one of the most successful education programmes in the world, but the country has the highest suicide rate of all OECD countries. One wonders whether this startling statistic is related to the educational approach in which pupils and staff are under such pressure and are drilled to perform well.

Surely, we want children who know things and can apply this knowledge, but we also want children who understand themselves, others and the world they live in.

*The UK Government's Office for Standards in Education

Further information & reading

Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues: Statement on teacher education and character education, University of Birmingham, 2015: <https://bit.ly/3wUMX9L>

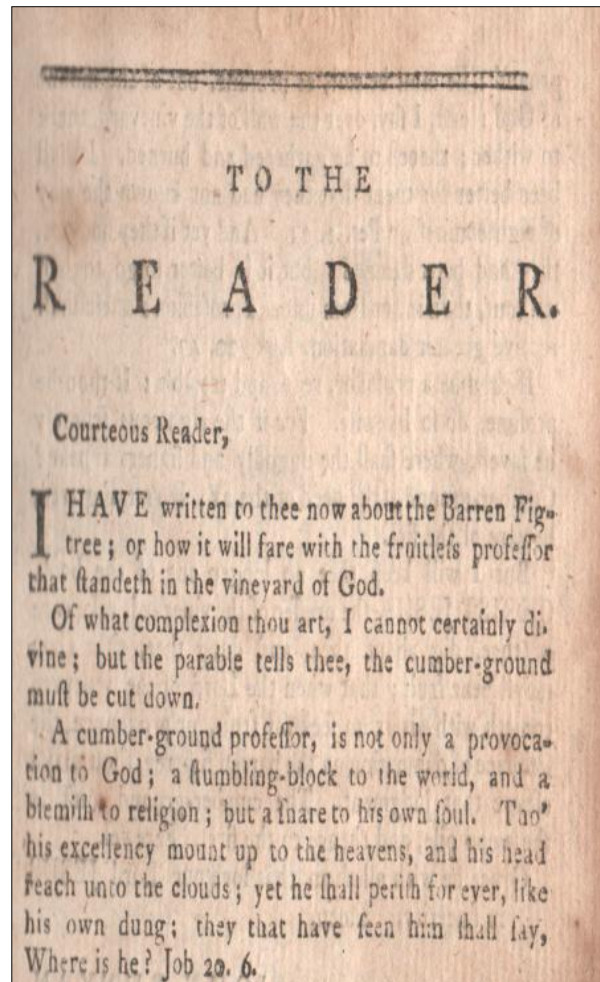
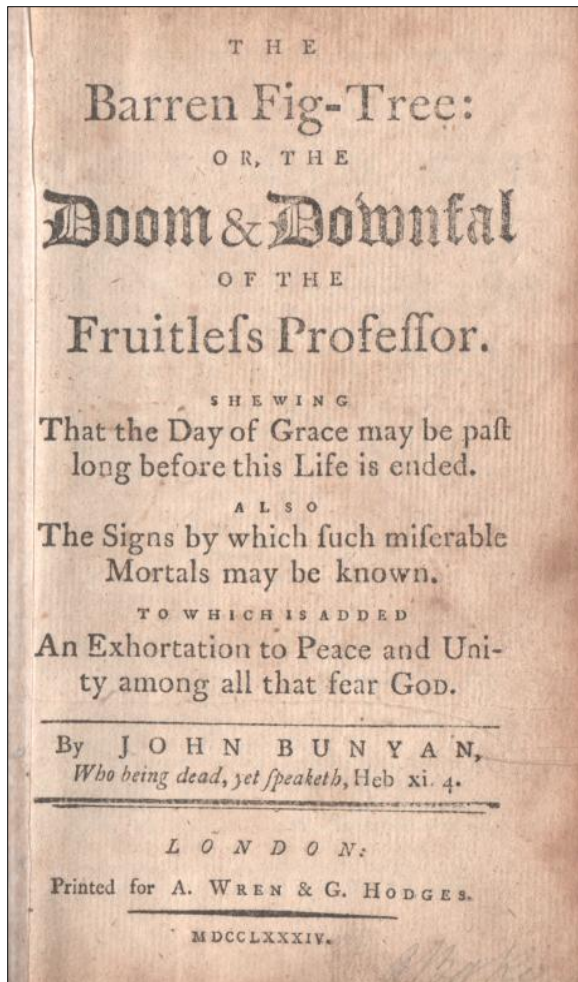
Mepham J: What school leaders can learn from Stoic philosophy, Headteacher Update, November 2020: <https://bit.ly/3bOcGbK>

Mepham J :A culture of ethical leadership: Five approaches, Headteacher Update, March 2022 <https://bit.ly/3OMyTpl>

4. Antiquarian curiosities

As an inveterate browser in second-hand bookshops, I occasionally chance on books that compel purchase (albeit usually for only a few pence) not only because of their age but because they serve as a window into a long-forgotten world. In L P Hartley's immortal words: *The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there.* Here are two examples from my personal library.

John Bunyan's *The Barren Fig-Tree* (1784)

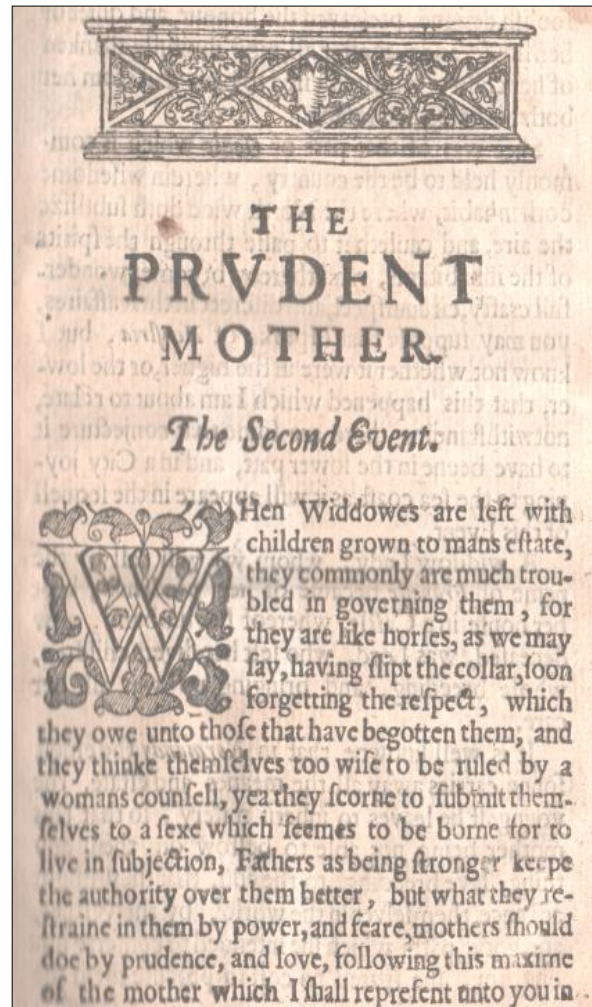
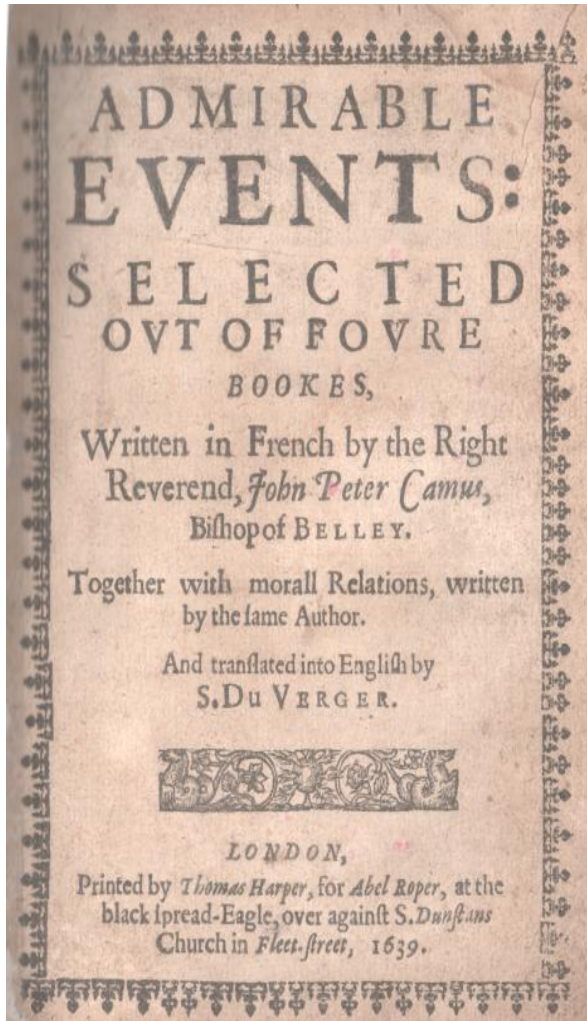


The title page and page 1 is unforgiving in condemning the *cumber-bound professor*, who *Tho' his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach into the clouds; yet he shall perish for ever, like his own dung.* In 'To the Reader' Bunyan also wrote *If thou be a professor, read and tremble: if thou be profane, do so likewise.*

Not much Christian charity here from Mr Bunyan!



Rev J P Camus' *Admirable Events* (1639)



Translated from the French, this is a volume of 357 pages, comprising 39 stories, the title page of one of which *The Prudent Mother* is shown here.

All convey a distinctly moral message – and severe warnings, as in *The Honorable Infidelity*, *The Long Vengeance* and *The Unlucky Word*.

Not recommended for bedtime reading!

BM



5. Feedback from readers is always welcome and appreciated

The following are excerpts from five emails received after publication of Issue 15

- ❖ *It's a lovely issue, Ben and I shall enjoy reading it fully.*
- ❖ *Many thanks for this. Much to enjoy as usual. I entirely agree with you on Ukraine - it seems to me that some western politicians are trying to box the country into a no surrender/victory or death approach which is not realistic or desirable*
- ❖ *Another thoughtful, interesting, and entertaining issue; thanks Ben.*
- ❖ *Many thanks. I enjoyed everything in this edition of your Review. That's a great little introduction to Kropotkin.*
- ❖ *As always, thanks for this Ben. I think your service [of caring dedication] is most worthwhile. Your Review newsletter always has several [at least] articles well worth the reader's pondering and reflecting on*

Comments from some recent visitors to the book room

- *A warm, comfortable room in which to browse at leisure. A real pleasure*
 - *Your home is lovely and your book collection remarkable. Thank you*
- The identity of correspondents is never revealed without their express permission.

6. Examples of recent book sales

Because I don't issue a catalogue, prospective customers at **Gladstone Books** may be unaware of the range of books I sell. The following random selection of books sold over recent weeks will give some idea of the book stock. All were hardback and in good condition.

Author/s	Title	Date	Publisher
T H Huxley	Lectures and Essays	1931	Watts
M Bowra	Poetry and Politics	1966	Cambridge UP
Charles Dickens	A Christmas Carol (A C Michael: illus)	1925	Hodder & Stoughton
N Mitchison	The Chinese Revolution	1971	Bodley Head
G Simpson	A Day with Mozart	1910	Hodder & Stoughton
F S Brereton	Clothing	1931	Batsford
A A Milne	Very Young Verses	1929	Methuen
A Kaplan	The New World of Philosophy	1961	Collins
Aristotle	The Masterpiece	1860?	The Bookseller
Thomas Paine	The Rights of Man	1937	Watts
Robert Frost	A Witness Tree (poetry)	1943	Jonathan Cape
E Nesbit	Children's Stories from Shakespeare	1912	Raphael Tuck
Eric Williams	The Wooden Horse	1950	Reprint Society
J Ramsay MacDonald	Socialism: Critical and Constructive	1921	Cassell
Herman Melville	Selected Poems	1943	New Hogarth
J Ward	Brasses	1912	Cambridge UP
Gordon Fraser	Thomas Bewick's Birds	1981	MIT Press
J Eastoe	Hen Keeping	2007	National Trust
Ellison Hawkes	The Microscope	1919	T Nelson
A Eddington	Science and the Unseen World	1939	Allen & Unwin
G Sanders	Tile painting	1981	Victoria & Albert Museum
Aldous Huxley	Science, liberty and peace	1947	Chatto & Windus
A Schweitzer	More from the Primeval Forest	1950	Adam & Charles
Charles Dickens	Martin Chuzzlewit (authentic edn)	1901	Chapman & Hall

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