

Theological Education and Libraries in Pakistan, by Freda Carey

Background

I was brought up in an agnostic, scientific rationalist home in Bristol, where religion was just there to mark rites of passage, such as weddings, christenings and funerals. I remember going to church once in my first 10 years, on Christmas Day with my grandmother. But my parents decided to send me to boarding school after my 11+ and they chose a Christian foundation school for me, St. Brandon's School (originally for Clergy Daughters) in Clevedon. I did not enjoy my time in boarding school, but I am grateful for it, because I began my journey into the Christian life there. It was a long slow process, and it was not until the day before my 'A' Level exams began, that I made a definite commitment to follow Jesus Christ 100%, at a rally in Bristol with David Wilkerson, of 'The Cross and the Switchblade' fame. Back home, I had no church connections, and at that time the parish church was going through a very liberal phase, which did not meet my needs. But God intervened, and I had a dismal interview for Bristol University, meaning that I had to go to my second choice of university, Birmingham. There I found lodgings with a wonderful Christian family who attended a lively, charismatic, evangelical Anglican church, St John the Baptist's Church, Harborne, which became my spiritual home for the next four years. I also got involved in the University Christian Union and made some good Christian friends there, many of whom had an interest in missions, particularly to the Muslim world, and I joined the regular mission prayer meeting.

I read English Language and Literature at university, which I found interesting, but I did not work that hard at it. The first year in particular had a very light timetable, and a friend and fellow student and I spent most of our time in the cafeteria, making friends with Arab and Persian students. My friend wanted to learn Arabic, and that was the starting point for many conversations. As the time of our finals drew nearer, the question of what to do next loomed large. When I was younger, I had wanted to be a doctor, like my parents, but when I started the necessary science 'A' Levels, I quit after one term. The theory was not too bad but I was hopeless at the practical work. I had already decided that I would never be a teacher – famous last words – but had no inclination in any other direction.

Then a number of people suggested that I would be a good librarian. At first, that horrified me – stereotypical images of dessicated elderly ladies going "Shh!" – but there seemed to be nothing else, so I began working as a library assistant at the Selly Oak Colleges Library, in Birmingham. At that time, 1975, the Selly Oak Colleges was a federation of various missionary training and other adult education colleges, including the Church Mission Society training College, Crowther Hall, the Methodist Church missionary college, Kingsmead, the Baptist Missionary Society's St. Andrew's College and the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (USPG)'s College of the Ascension. There were also a Quaker college, Woodbrooke, a trades union college,

Fircroft, and Westhill College of Education. All the missionary colleges had centralised lectures under the Department of Mission, and they all used the central library. For the first 6 months. I was able to live in the CMS college, and got to know the people in training for the mission field there. I also joined the CMS as a member / supporter at that time. The college was too full in the next 6 months, so I moved back into lodgings with the Christian family I had stayed with before. During that year, I found that I enjoyed being a librarian after all, and picked up some basics of cataloguing and classification and helping with reference inquiries.

After one year there, I went to the College of Librarianship Wales in Aberystwyth, to do a post-graduate Diploma in Librarianship. There I was introduced to the mysteries of AACR II cataloguing rules and Dewey Decimal and Library of Congress Classification systems. There were several other Christian students there and we had a joint Bible study and prayer meeting with students from the Welsh Agriculture College. It was then that I joined the newly formed Librarians' Christian Fellowship. After completing my training, I went to work in Blandford Forum, with Dorset County Libraries, as Assistant Librarian. I enjoyed my three years there, especially the opportunity to travel around the villages with the mobile library. But public spending cuts hit the library service and it was decided to move the mobile library to another branch and cut staff. So I felt it was time to move on, and I began to think about serving overseas. I knew that a number of mission agencies were looking for librarians and I applied to several, for positions in Pakistan, India, Nepal, Egypt, Lebanon and Zimbabwe. I did not hear back from the college in Pakistan but I had several interviews for other posts, which ended with: "I'm sorry but that post has been filled. We'll let you know if something else comes up." That went on for six months, and I was getting disheartened. Finally, I placed a fleece before the Lord: "Lord, I thought you wanted me to go overseas. If it is your will, then make something happen in the next week, or I'll start applying for jobs in the UK." Two days later I received a phone call from a friend at the Church Mission Society, whom I knew from my university days, when he was at Crowther Hall and used to come into the cafeteria to meet Iranian students before going to Iran. He was now the regional director for West Asia and the Middle East, and when he called, he said, "We are looking for a librarian for Pakistan. Are you interested?" That was such an answer to prayer that I danced around the library for some minutes afterwards. I was then interviewed, selected and attended a short training course back at Crowther Hall and travelled out to Pakistan in January 1981, as a CMS volunteer (self-supporting) for two years, as librarian at Kinnaird College for Women.

Librarian at Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore

Kinnaird College for Women was established in Lahore in 1913 by the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission (now Interserve). In 1919, the Church Missionary Society and American Presbyterian Mission joined them to form a consortium to fund and operate the college. It was nationalized in 1972 by Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto but the

Christian Principal, Mrs. Mira Phailbus, remained in post and managed to retain the Christian ethos, as well as its academic standards. Although she had no say in the appointment of teachers, the boarding hostels were not nationalized, so there were expatriate missionaries serving as hostel wardens, and the college nurse and librarian were other positions over which she had discretion to appoint Christians.

New challenges came under President Zia ul Haq from 1977 onwards, who seized control of the government in a military coup, and proceeded to enforce a programme of Islamization by introducing new laws, such as the infamous Blasphemy Law, and through the state-controlled media. The position of women and religious minorities became very difficult and restricted. Being in the elite college for women, we saw the effects of this. Both teachers and students were required to wear the burqa (veil) in public, when men were present, and were often harassed on public transport. This was called “eve-teasing” and was justified by saying that women should not be out of the home anyway, whether for study or work, unaccompanied by a male relative. One of the Muslim teachers, who taught History and Political Science, was very vocal in speaking out against the regime and took part in rallies of the Women’s Action Forum. Sometimes we feared that she might be arrested and imprisoned along with many other political prisoners held in the old dungeons of the Lahore Fort.

This political situation even affected my work as college librarian. Whenever the college bought new library books – and we did have a budget for this – I had to sign every receipt to say “There is nothing in this book that is against the ideology of Pakistan”. Some of the books ordered by this Political Science teacher might not have fitted the ideology of Pakistan as defined by General Zia ul Haq, but I justified my position by measuring the books against the original ideology of Pakistan as set out by the Father of the Nation, Mohamed Ali Jinnah, whose vision was for a more secular democratic system. When we received new books, I always processed them as soon as possible, classifying, cataloguing, labelling them and getting them out on the shelves. Once, a government inspector visited the library, and he was astonished that I did not have a cupboard full of new books awaiting processing. That indicated what normally happened in other college libraries!

One part of the new Blasphemy Law introduced by Zia ul Haq related to desecrating or disrespecting the Holy Quran, and I almost fell foul of that. The college library followed the Dewey Decimal classification system, with the Quran at 297.12. On one occasion I reordered the shelves in strict numerical order, which ended up putting the Quran and related books on the bottom shelf of the cupboard. It was pointed out to me very firmly that this was highly disrespectful of the Muslim holy book, and I had to shuffle everything around so that they were on the top shelf, where they should be!

As college librarian I had the opportunity to attend some seminars run by the Punjab government and one national conference in Peshawar. I met several Pakistani librarians there, including some from the Punjab University’s department of Library Science, who

were later very helpful to me, as they had the latest edition of the Dewey Decimal Classification, the 21st edition I think, whereas we only had the 15th edition. However, it seemed that most of the librarians from the Punjab province attended the conference mainly for the outing to the Smugglers' Bazaar just outside Peshawar, where duty free electronic goods were available very cheaply! While in Lahore I was also asked to help with the Alif Laila Book Bus, which was a charitable mobile library service for children in slum areas of the city. I met with several volunteer ladies a few times to improve the procedures and arrangement of the book collection. Later a separate Children's Library was established in Lahore by the Provincial government, not far from the main public library in Jinnah Park.

I returned to the UK after two very interesting years in Lahore, with a desire to return to Pakistan some day, but not as a librarian. I knew that the Punjab University Department of Library Science was producing well trained librarians, but my experience with the small Christian Union in the college, and contacts with the Pakistan Fellowship of Evangelical Students, had made me realise that there was a great need for Bible teachers for the Christian community. Since the nationalisation of Christian schools 10 years earlier, most Christian students in government schools opted to do Islamic Studies for their Matriculation rather than the only available alternative for non-Muslims, which was Ethics, which ironically did not include any of the teachings of Jesus Christ, widely acknowledged as the one of the greatest ethical teachers of all time, even by non-Christians. So a whole generation of young Christians had grown up not knowing even the basics of their Christian faith.

Bible Teacher and Librarian at the United Bible Training Centre, Gujranwala

Returning to England, I did apply for various library jobs, but with no success, so I joined All Nations Christian College in Ware, Hertfordshire, where I studied for the Cambridge Diploma in Religious Studies, over two years. One of my tutors was a friend of the Principal of the United Bible Training Centre for women in Gujranwala, about 40 miles north of Lahore. One of my former colleagues, a Scottish missionary who had been a hostel warden at Kinnaird College, had gone to work there as a Bible teacher, but had had to come home when she developed epilepsy, leaving the Centre short-staffed. With my tutor's encouragement, I applied again to CMS to return to Pakistan as a long-term mission partner, to work at the United Bible Training Centre. I was accepted and after six months further training at Crowther Hall, and visits to link churches who would support me financially and in prayer, I arrived in Pakistan in April 1986.

Kinnaird College had been English medium, with all the students and teaching staff fluent in English, so I had not needed to learn Urdu there, although I had had some lessons, in order to communicate with the cleaners, bearers, gardeners and other support staff. But the UBTC was fully Urdu medium, so the first order of business was to attend the language school in the Murree Hills in the north of Pakistan, for four

months over the summer. That was a challenging time, both because of the language study but also the living conditions were fairly basic. I returned to Gujranwala to continue my Urdu study with a local teacher, while beginning to teach some simple Bible courses.

The UBTC had been founded in 1939 to train young women as evangelists and Bible teachers among women, in the highly segregated society of India, where men had no access to the zenana or women's quarters. Until 1966, it ran a two-year training programme to equip women as evangelists in the Christian hospitals and Bible teachers in the churches. After that it concentrated on running short Bible courses of one, two or three weeks, for Adult Literate women, secondary school students, college girls, Sunday School teachers, nurses, school teachers, Bible teachers and hospital evangelists. My first task was to explain the Apostles' Creed to a group of young women who had completed their adult literacy training and, as a reward, came for a three-week course in Gujranwala. I would prepare my lessons with my language teacher, but there was an extra challenge with these girls. Although Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, it is not the mother tongue of most Pakistanis, and the vast majority of Christians are mother tongue Punjabi speakers. These girls had done their literacy training in Urdu, but were not fluent in it, so when I asked my carefully prepared questions in Urdu, I often received the answer in Punjabi, which someone needed to translate for me. Later, after completing my second year Urdu exams, I did 8 months of Punjabi as well, which was very helpful.

The UBTC also ran a part-time three-year course for Pastors' Wives, women who were married to students at the nearby Gujranwala Theological Seminary. Before 1990, the Seminary only took male students but their wives trained with us in the basics, not just of theology, but also household management, budgeting, first aid and child care. When I was first there, the curriculum was quite traditional, and included Church History. As I have always been interested in history, I offered to teach that course, but I found that resources were limited. Almost all the books available on church history were very Euro-centric and largely ignored Asia, and were of limited relevance to my students. For example, most of the textbooks would describe the rise of Islam and its conquest of the Middle East and North Africa, and then turn to the Christianization of Scandinavia, without saying what happened to the Christian churches now under Islamic rule. That would be far more relevant and useful to my students, especially for clues as to how to live as a Christian minority in that context. Another weakness in most textbooks was the absence of women. In one book, for example, covering church history from Pentecost to the Reformation, about 1500 years, not one single woman was mentioned. As a woman teaching women, I found this situation highly unsatisfactory, so I ended up writing my own course, which included several inspiring stories of women. Interestingly enough, when the UBTC conducted a survey to review the Wives' curriculum, most people responded that they did not need to study Church

history – but they needed to know about Creeds and Heresies, so that is what we re-titled the course!

As well as teaching and language study, I was also responsible for the UBTC library. When I arrived, this comprised about three cupboards of English books, mostly donated by departing missionaries, and one cupboard of Urdu books. They were located on the upper floor of the staff house, and used for sewing classes in the afternoons and social programmes in the evenings. I managed to classify these books, using a simplified version of the Dewey Decimal system, cataloguing them manually, using index cards kept in shoeboxes, and later on the computer using Excel spreadsheets. We allocated a small budget to buy books, mainly Urdu books, for the benefit of the students and the Pakistani staff. Most of the teaching staff were expatriates, but one teacher and the hostel warden were Pakistani. Somehow, I found out about the Evangelical Literature Trust, which gives grants to theological libraries in the majority world, to enable them to buy books at reduced prices from a catalogue of evangelical publications. This trust was originally set up by John Stott, which is where it gained its current name of the Langham Literature Trust. This enabled us to buy new books in English, especially reference works for the benefit of the teaching staff. At various times, I trained different staff in library procedures, so that they could continue the work in my absence. When a new building was added to the academic block, the library was moved there, where there was more space and more accessibility.

I mentioned that the two-year full-time training programme for Bible teachers had stopped in 1966, because no new applicants were forthcoming. In 1990, one of the Christian Hospitals, which had been very appreciative of the ministry of their female evangelists, realised that they were coming up to retirement and needed to be replaced. So the hospital asked us to train a new lady for this work, and in this way the Foundations in Bible Ministry course (FBMC) began, an intensive 3 months course for girls with the equivalent of A Levels or college graduation. This proved very successful, and graduates went to work in various Christian hospitals and para-church organizations, including some joining the UBTC as Junior Staff. But there were other potential candidates who did not have the required academic qualifications, so in 1998 we started the one-year Discipleship Course for young women with just Matriculation (equivalent to GCSE). The syllabus was similar, but taken more slowly, and with more opportunities for practical work, including a one-month placement during the summer vacation in one of the Christian hospitals, working under the supervision of experienced evangelists. This has also proved successful, and is still continuing.

The Open Theological Seminary, Lahore - September 2000 – September 2024

After 12 years in Gujranwala, with trips home on leave every third year, I took a year's sabbatical to do a Master of Theology degree in World Christianity at Edinburgh University. This was very stimulating and enjoyable, and I was able to do more detailed research into the background of the Pakistani church for my dissertation. Returning to

Pakistan at the end of the December 1999 – to avoid any risks of flying at the start of the new millennium, I resumed my work at the UBTC, but I was soon invited to join the Open Theological Seminary (OTS) in their Course Development Department. Previously called PACTEE or the Pakistan Committee for Theological Education by Extension, the OTS was established in 1971 to provide theological education at the grassroots, for people who could not afford to take time out from their jobs to attend residential seminary full-time. By the time I joined them, they had a three-tier programme working towards Certificate of Theology, including some basic Discipleship courses, Diploma of Theology and Bachelor of Theology degree. I had been teaching Certificate level courses to groups of women teachers in Gujranwala for about 10 years, so I was familiar with the programme, and often sent in some suggestions for improving their courses. When I arrived at the office in Lahore, one of the first jobs I was given was to act on those suggestions, and those of other tutors, to improve the courses. The other thing I was asked to do was to turn my church history course into an OTS workbook, which was eventually published under the title ‘An Introduction to Church History from a South Asian Perspective’.

I was also given responsibility for the OTS library, which was very well used by staff, especially when writing new courses, tutors, students, local pastors and students from other theological education institutions. When the Punjab University started a new Department of Comparative Religions, several of their Muslim students began coming to use the library for their research into Christianity and Judaism for their dissertation topics. There is no formal system of inter-library loans, although the OTS makes its catalogues available to other institutions and bona fide students of other colleges may become members of the OTS library on payment of an annual membership fee.

This library also uses a simplified version of the Dewey Decimal Classification system, and has a stock of over 11,000 books, about 8,000 in English and 3,000 in Urdu and other local languages. In 2019, we had a donation from Langham Literature of 1000 books from the library of a deceased theologian. Fortunately, that summer I had help from three interns, students from two other Bible colleges, who had a crash course in ‘Cat and Class’ and helped me classify and catalogue all the books within a couple of months. We developed a new database for the computerised catalogue, using Access, which can generate various types of report including Author and Subject catalogues in English and Urdu, lists of missing books etcetera. One problem we face is standardising the transliteration of Urdu and similar languages into Roman script. The library’s non-print media is also catalogued, videos, DVDs, and books in pdf format. We did not take a large selection of journals, but we had a lot of back issues of good publications, and a visiting Australian librarian gave us a lot of help in indexing all of them. After that, I tried to add the topics from new journals into the index, and encouraged the students to use journal materials in their research assignments.

The OTS also benefits from the Langham Literature Library grant, usually focussing on Bible commentaries, Asian theology, subjects of special interest to the Director (especially hermeneutics) and other senior staff, topics about which new courses were being developed, and other gaps perceived by the Librarian. The sections on women in ministry and creation care have particularly benefitted.

The importance of the library was recognised because the OTS is one of only two institutions in Pakistan to be accredited by the Asia Theological Association, the main evangelical accrediting body for Asia, affiliated with ICETE (the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education). The ATA has various criteria for library provision, not only the number of books and journals, but also an interest in Asian writers, publishers and topics. The Certificate and Diploma of Theology had been accredited by the ATA before I joined the OTS, but I was very involved in the work of preparing and presenting the case for accreditation for the Bachelor of Theology degree. This included upgrading the course content in a number of older courses, and commissioning several new courses, following a Curriculum Consultation. As Course Development Coordinator and later Theological Education Consultant, I was involved in writing, editing and mentoring course writers for this level.

I was also involved in the development of a new Christian Education for Teenagers, or rather 11-17 year-olds in secondary schools and churches. All the courses were written by local writers, but I helped in developing course objectives, outlines, learning activities and in mentoring the writers, advising and editing the final product. Since my retirement I have finalised the translation of three of these courses into English.

In 2020 the OTS launched a new programme, the Master of Arts in Christian Studies (MACS), a modular programme mainly intended for our own graduates and those of other Bible schools. It is based on six intensively taught residential modules, one week each, with required reading beforehand, class participation and group work and a research assignment afterwards. I taught the introductory module on Research Methods to each of the first four cohorts, which included sessions on how to use the library, how to use journals and reference books, and how to make footnotes and bibliography. I also taught a module on Christianity and the Environment to the same four cohorts, so I was very glad that our library coverage of that topic had improved. We went into lockdown in 2020 soon after beginning this programme, so the first time I taught the Creation Care module, in May 2021, it was all online. That was a steep learning curve for me! Just before I left Pakistan in September 2024, the first MACS cohort graduated, and this programme has also been accredited by the ATA.

Helping other institutions with their libraries

Although, as I mentioned before, the Punjab University is training librarians, none of the theological education institutions had a trained librarian when I went to Pakistan, and I was invited to help at various times. There are around 40 theological education institutions in Pakistan, and other para-church groups which carry out training in

specific fields, such as Sunday School Teachers Training or Evangelism. Most are quite small, with about a dozen of reasonable size, in terms of faculty and student enrolment, and most of them have libraries, of varying qualities. While I was still in Gujranwala, I spent a couple of weeks in Karachi helping in the library of the Saint Thomas Theological College there, mainly classifying and cataloguing. At that time the college had quite an extensive collection, but much of it was on loan from the Bishop of Karachi, who was quite a scholar. But the Bishop took all his books back when he retired, and when I visited some time later, the collection had shrunk!

One of the professors at the Gujranwala Theological Seminary, a CMS missionary, had developed a unique classification system, based on his analysis of the theological curriculum, so that numbers were not wasted on general subjects. He made a computerised catalogue to replace the old card catalogue, and the system worked very well while he was there, and during the time of those he had trained to succeed him, but in recent years all the computerised data seems to have been lost. The books are still there, more recent books in the lending section, and older books in the stacks. There is always a problem with termites, who love books, especially if they have not been disturbed for some time. In a previous era, someone liberally dusted the stacks with DDT powder, which not only deterred the termites but humans too. A major problem that library faced was with faculty borrowing books and never returning them, and at least one student, who tore out a relevant chapter for his assignment and then replaced the book on the shelf!

The Full Gospel Assemblies Theological College (FGATS) is a residential seminary in Lahore, offering a two-year Diploma in Theology and three-year B.Th. They also have a good library, and one of the British teachers adopted the Gujranwala classification system for the library. After he left, however, there was no record, soft or hard copy, of the classification system or the catalogue. So I was asked to help the young librarian, a recent graduate of the seminary. We reverse engineered the classification system, by looking at the numbers already allocated to the books on the shelves, and made a computerised catalogue in Excel. A few years later, while that librarian was away in the Philippines, doing further study, a Swedish volunteer came to help in the library. He decided to adopt the system that his Bible college in Sweden used, and rearranged everything again. Unfortunately, he did not leave a copy of his system either, so I was called back in to work with the new librarian, who had so little understanding of classification principles, that he had begun numbering the Urdu books from the last number of the English books, regardless of their subject matter. This was rather sad, especially as by now, there was a good library training programme available from the Allama Iqbal Open University, which offered a two-year post-graduate Diploma in Librarianship. A former colleague at the UBTC had done this course, and it looked very similar to what I had studied at CLW many years ago.

Not far from the FGA Theological Seminary in Lahore is the Brethren Institute of Theological Education, and they also asked me to help with their library. This was a much smaller proposition, starting from scratch. The books were arranged in rough subject categories but not catalogued in any way. It was easy enough to apply a simplified form of Dewey to the collection, and enter them into an Excel spreadsheet. In view of the need, the Theological Educators' Forum, which shares an office with the OTS, arranged a two-day training workshop in Lahore in June 2021, on Library Management. 25 members of staff attended, from various theological education institutions around the country, mainly from Lahore, but also from Quetta, on the Afghan border, and Faisalabad. I tried to introduce the basics of library procedures, accessions, classification, cataloguing, circulation, etcetera. The OTS already includes a session on using the library in its student workshops, on Study Skills, Research and Writing and Thesis Writing. We have also held similar thesis writing workshops in other local seminaries, especially FGATS, BITE and GTS.

I mentioned earlier that the OTS is one of only two institutions in Pakistan to be accredited by the Asia Theological Association. The other is the Zarephath Bible Seminary in Rawalpindi, about 200 miles to the north of Lahore. This library also uses the Dewey Decimal system. A German professor introduced a fully computerised system for the library using KOHA library software, and he trained the library staff himself. Personally, I feel that the level of detail required in the cataloguing programme is too much for their needs, but it worked well. After the German professor left, I did some follow up training, especially with new library staff, after the previous librarian left, who had taken the Open University course. I already had a relationship with several of these colleges, as I was invited to teach church history there on a regular basis. Of all the theological education institutions in Pakistan, only one is accredited with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan and that is Forman Christian College University in Lahore. It is accredited with the HEC and also with an accrediting agency in the United States. It has an excellent library and can afford to pay a subscription to online journal provider EBSCO. As well as teaching general subjects, it has a department of Biblical Studies, and offers an M.Phil. in Old Testament and New Testament Studies. Some OTS graduates have also done their M.Phil. from FCCU.

Church in Pakistan - summary

- **Minority** - less than 2% of population (officially) (but that is about 5 million people)
- **But across central Punjab - 10%-15% of population**
- **Vast majority are Punjabis, even in other provinces**
- **Growing numbers of ex-Hindu tribal believers. Small numbers of BMBs in the big cities**
- **Marginalized** - most Christians are poor, e.g. brick kiln labourers and sanitation workers. **But also many middle-class professionals**
- **Smaller churches are active in outreach – Brethren, Baptist, Evangelical & Pentecostal**
- **Effective para-church ministries, e.g. Pakistan Bible Correspondence Institute, Scripture Union, Pakistan Fellowship of Evangelical Students, OM Team**
- **Mainline churches are riven by division & litigation - Presbyterian Church of Pakistan**

- **Church of Pakistan (union of Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists and Church of Scotland Presbyterians) since 1970. 8 Dioceses**