

Preface

“Gospel Poems” is a project in which the author considers a selection of ‘Bible stories’, and fashions a narrative that draws on elements of that story from the various Scriptural sources. Each Gospel Poem consists of three parts.

Firstly, there is a prose narrative of the story.

Secondly, there is a poem of that narrative. The poem is written in the “epic style”. Each line has ten syllables, an iambic pentameter. The lines are organized in rhyming couplets, the ‘heroic couplet’, and each pair of couplets forms a quatrain. Poems are best read out aloud, so the reader is urged to speak it aloud even if just reading the poem on their own. Alternatively, an mp3 voice recording is presented as a download for the reader to hear a recitation by the author.

Thirdly and finally, there is a set of notes. The notes explain what elements of the Bible story were drawn from which Scriptural or other texts, and why other elements were omitted. Some notes just give some specific piece of relevant information.

The author is not a Bible literalist. Rather, he sees the Bible as a mixture of history, myth, allegory, metaphor, and parable. Thus, the narrative presented in each Gospel Poem may not exactly match the reader’s version of the narrative. Furthermore, the narrative presented in each Gospel Poem does not necessarily represent what the author views as the historical truth. As stated above, history is only one component of the Bible stories!

Jim Palmer is a theologian who describes himself on his website thus:

“Jim Palmer Bio

“Jim Palmer is the Founder of The Center for Non-Religious Spirituality. Jim is a certified Spiritual Director, and a member of Spiritual Directors International. He is a Chaplain with the American Humanist Association. Jim's background includes a Master's of Divinity from Trinity Seminary in Chicago. He is a professor of Comparative Religion, Philosophy of Religion, and Ethics. Jim is a trained religious trauma and spiritual abuse counselor. Jim is a published author, speaker, podcaster, and retreat leader.”

(<https://www.jimpalmerauthor.com/> Retrieved 11 March 2024, 1444
Australian Central Daylight Time)

In an essay, Jim Palmer lists the “15 things the misguided religious establishment doesn’t want you to know”. At number 4 in his list is the following.

“The stories in our sacred books aren’t history, nor were they meant to be. The authors of these books weren’t historians but writers of historical fiction: they used history (or pseudo history) as a context or pretext for their own ideas. Reading sacred texts as history may yield some nuggets of the past, but the real gold is in seeing these stories as myth and parable, and trying to unpack the possible meanings these parables and myths may hold.”

The author of the Gospel Poems endorses Jim Palmer’s assertion.

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