

HEATH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

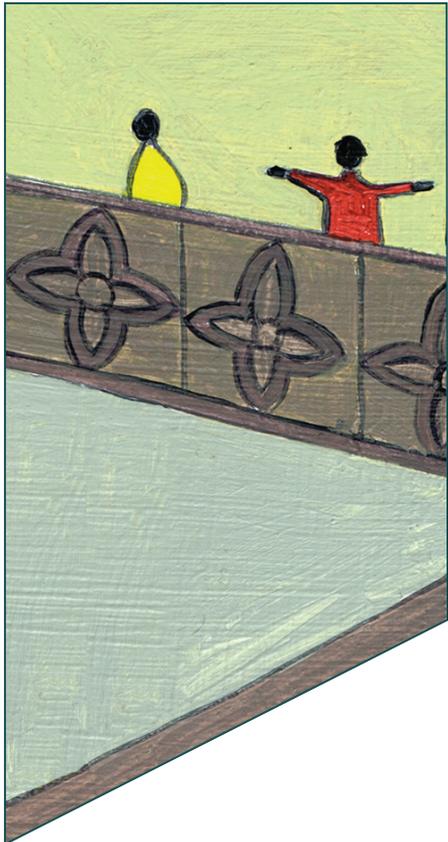
August 2020



Newsletter 1056

A NOTE ON WORSHIP SERVICES

At our recent church meeting, which took place remotely on Saturday 18 July, we resolved that we will endeavour to reopen the church for regular worship on Sunday 6 September, if at all possible. We pray for everyone working to ensure a safe reopening and for all those involved in Heath Street's interim ministries during the church's closure.



WHY MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY IS REALLY RATHER INTERESTING...

I am just coming to the end of my third year of a doctorate wrestling with texts by the philosopher-theologian Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, and thanks to Ewan for allowing me to share with you briefly some of the whys and wherefores (and even whats) of the topic.

Razi was born in Rayy, south of Tehran in modern Iran, in the 12th century but spent a lot of his working life at Herat, in something of a war-zone on the border with modern Afghanistan, where he managed to secure the patronage (in turn) of two rival war-lords, who both regarded having an intellectual of Razi's calibre at court a prize worth having.

He is interesting for many reasons, but a key one is that he represents a creative fusion of two intellectual traditions within Islam. One of these is the home-grown 'Kalam' philosophy-theology, which is a developed form of apologetic (with parallels in the Jewish and Christian traditions). It seeks a rational proof for the soundness of the Islamic faith in the Qu'ranic tradition, beginning by proving the existence of God

and going on to show that God, being the way God is, is bound to send prophets. The other is the Islamic version of Hellenic philosophy expressly owned by Islamic intellectuals like al-Kindi, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina (better known to Westerners than Razi) commenting on and using Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus (among many other authors). Philosophical enquiry is more open ended, is much more interested in science for its own sake, but is also used, particularly by Ibn Sina, to give a holistic account of reality that includes proofs of the existence of God – except on a rather more robust basis and with more powerful logic than that used by some of the older kalam theologians.

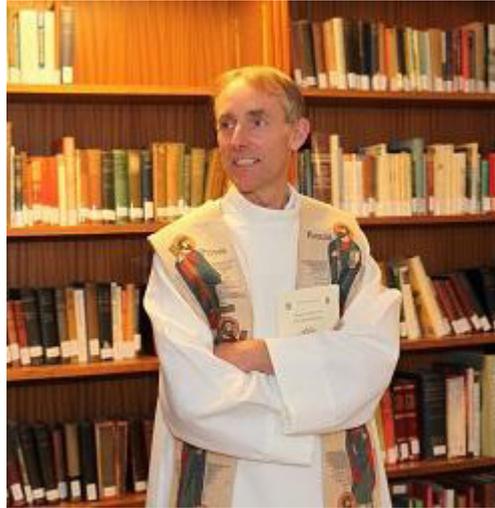
We find familiar tugs-of-war going on between the identity of the intellectual traditions (kalam is 'ours' and is based on scripture, so it's safe – philosophy is 'foreign' and leads to heretical views), the intellectual soundness of the different traditions (kalam logic is deficient, the philosophers have better arguments and give a better description of the world), and the perennial problem facing all

ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

religious intellectuals, suspicion of any reasonable arguments, whether kalam or philosophical, that lead to non-literal interpretations of scripture. (Does God 'see', as it says in scripture?).

Razi defends the pursuit of rational faith. He thinks it is a necessary bulwark for a faith based on traditions and spiritual insights. But he also engages powerfully and critically with both the kalam and the philosophical traditions to produce a distinctive systematic cosmology and theology which avoids some of the 'heresy' charges laid against the philosophers, and is refreshingly honest about the limits of rational enquiry, in a way that has a very modern feel to it.

In fact, as I have been reading the material from this era, and particularly the material processed by Razi, I've been struck by the pre-echoes of philosophical themes that we think of as belonging to the enlightenment and post-enlightenment traditions of the west, from Humean scepticism to Heideggerian existentialism. It is a fascinating story in which it no longer



JOHN MOFFATT SJ

makes sense to tell the history of Western philosophy as if the Middle Ages never existed, or as if inter-cultural exchange was a modern discovery, and in it, faith and reason are only enemies in the minds of the literal-minded and dogmatic.

John Moffatt SJ



FAKHR AL DIN AL RAZI

HAMPSTEAD VOLUNTEER CORPS

Hi my name's Ashley,
and I'm from Hampstead
Volunteer Corps.

We're a group of Hampstead residents who came together to help our neighbours at the beginning of the covid-19 crisis. We have been assisting our neighbours by getting their groceries and prescription deliveries, and on the second of May we extended our efforts to collecting donations of non-perishable food, unopened toiletries, and iPads or tablets. We're so excited we have just relocated our premises to Heath Street Baptist Church, and our Saturday donation drive which is from 10 am to 5:30 pm will be held there from now on. We've been delivering food parcels for approximately forty families per week, and we're also putting together food packages for around nine different local organisations. We're all really excited to be continuing our efforts



at Heath Street Baptist Church, and so look forward to seeing you there for our Saturday donations. Some of the items that we especially hope to receive include non-perishable food like tinned food, pastas and pasta sauce, long life milk, cereal boxes, and unopened toiletries like hand sanitizer gels and soap, laundry detergents. We also look for iPads or tablets to go to families in need. Thank you so much Heath Street Baptist Church for supporting us.

KINDNESS

A T

I T S

P R O P E R

L E V E L

COME RAIN OR SHINE

STORYTELLING

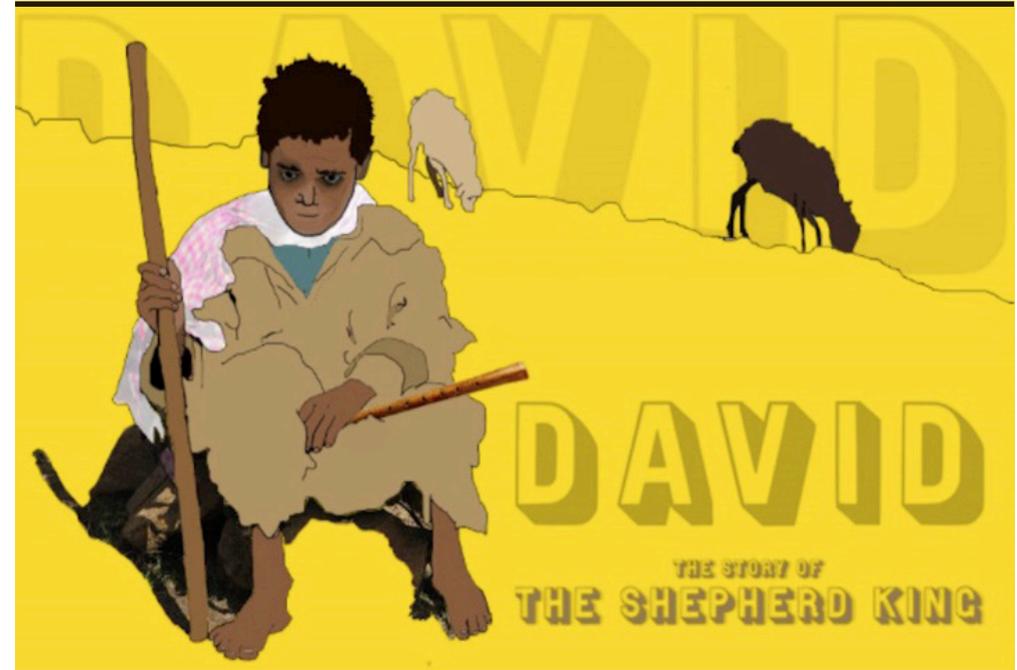
DAVID: THE STORY OF THE SHEPHERD KING.

EPISODE 5: VIOLENCE

It amazes me that I am still working on the same episode of the David story that I wrote about not having completed yet in our last newsletter! It has gone through many changes as I have wrestled with the story and has actually become *two* episodes, both of some length. I will certainly finish (by which I mean abandon) the first of these episodes this week (I really mean it this time), and hand over this remarkable section of the epic to those who would listen. I have chosen to focus on the text's profound meditation on violence, which concerns not just war and its reasons but the way in which domestic politics, and even the politics of the family,

are part of the same fallenness that we (moderns) tend to see starkly illustrated on the battlefield. The contrast between reliance on expedient violence and trusting in God runs through this part of the narrative, but also through the psalms (e.g. 44). It is in David's poetry, more than in the books of Samuel, that I personally have connected with the transformative heart of the epic tale of his life. Many of these psalms, encountered anew in the context of making this podcast, have opened up to me in fresh and exhilarating ways. I'll share just a snippet of 68 here, and hopefully let it serve as a promo for Episode 5.

Wilf Merttens



“The kings of the armies, they flee, they flee!”

The women at home divide the spoil,
though they stay among the sheepfolds—
the wings of a dove covered with silver,
its pinions with green gold.
When the Almighty scattered kings there,
snow fell on Zalmon [a mountain]

READINGS AND PRAYERS

August 2-8

Genesis 32.22-31

2nd	Selena Barrera
3rd	Jeremy Fletcher
4th	Thomas Falardeau
5th	Frida King
6th	Nesa Thorne
7th	Margarite Biadun
8th	Leila Ranjbar

August 9-15

Genesis 37.1-4,12-28

9th	Rhona MacEachan
10th	Sarah Harper
11th	Birgit Leuppert
12th	Ewan King
13th	Isabel Somers
14th	Robin Thorne
15th	Jen Finamore

August 16-22

Genesis 45.1-15

16th	Ottilie Johnson
17th	Theresa Thom
18th	Evelyn Baker
19th	Nathan Biadun
20th	Elya Ghasempour
21st	Nomsa Ndebele
22nd	Gabrielle Falardeau

August 23-29

Exodus 1.8-2.10

23rd	Gaynor Humphreys
24th	Mysie Johnson
25th	Thaddeus King
26th	Susan Le Quesne
27th	Beza Geberegiabher
28th	Coco Ellenbogen
29th	Wilf Merttens

August 30-September 5

Exodus 3.1-15

30th	Annie Fang
31st	Victoria Tjirimuje
1st Sept	John-Henry Baker
2nd	Edward Humphreys
3rd	Ali Ghasempour
4th	Lydia Baker
5th	Francesco Giannoccaro



ONLINE ACTIVITIES

Sundays 11:00am *The Heath Street Home Companion*

Online collective worship.

www.heathstreet.org/activities/the-heath-street-home-companion

11:30am *Sunday morning coffee*

Both Heath Street regulars and first-time 'visitors' are invited to join one another each Sunday for coffee and an online catch-up.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87179878823>

Wednesdays 4:30-6:00pm *Storymakers Club*

An after-school club aimed at children age 7 to 13. Wilf is pleased to announce that Storymakers has moved to the digital realm for now.

Skype wilf.merttens or email childrensworker@heathstreet.org for help.

Wednesdays 7:00pm *The Heath Street Home Companion*

Songs, prayers and news from Heath Street people far and wide.

www.heathstreet.org/activities/the-heath-street-home-companion

Anytime *Storytelling*

David: The Story of the Shepherd King.

Storyteller Wilf Merttens' new storytelling show David: The Story of the Shepherd King retells the legendary centrepiece of the books of Samuel for the 3rd millennium, and finds out it is just as full of shock, longing and ambiguity as it was in the beginning.

www.heathstreet.org/media

ONLINE ACTIVITIES

By arrangement

Oldtime Nursery

If you would like to arrange a virtual session from the Minister's house to yours, please contact Ewan at ewan_king@me.com.

Psalm Memorisation Challenge

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XiRSgpgpdTQ&feature=youtu.be>

Please see the church website for updates: heathstreet.org

For requests regarding church membership, Baptism or opportunities for Christian ministry in the church, please contact the minister.

Copy for the next newsletter should reach Eleanor Patterson (eleanorlaise@gmail.com) not later than Wednesday 19th August.

HEATH STREET BAPTIST



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