

and 27 new seats in Parliament. The fact that the Tudors were of Welsh descent also helped win their loyalty and there were no rebellions in Wales. The reforms, however, were accepted without real enthusiasm. To most Welsh people, worship in English was more strange than in Latin, but when both the Bible and Prayer Book were eventually translated into Welsh, it made the faith more intelligible. Yet if Wales was a Protestant nation and not a nation of Protestants, ironically it was those translations by Anglican divines that helped convert much of the population to nonconformity in the following centuries.

Much of that conversion was down to eighteenth-century Methodist societies, which meant to revive Anglicanism from within, yet bearing the seeds of secession from their inception, because they transcended parish boundaries and were not accountable to the bishops. The intransigence of the latter was to lead to separation. Disestablishment eventually followed as all nonconformist denominations experienced phenomenal growth in the nineteenth century yet their members still had to pay tithes to the Established Church. The latter's response both pastorally and spiritually came too late to avoid the break.

Wales can hardly be called a Christian country today, when less than one per cent of its population regularly attend worship. The nonconformist revival was short lived and by now the disestablished Anglican church has also declined drastically in membership. The Roman Catholic Church has seen some small growth as a result of the influx of Roman Catholics from Eastern Europe. Yet, as this book demonstrates, the Christian faith has ebbed and flowed over the centuries. Rowan Williams reminds us in the preface, quoting the poet R.S. Thomas, that although we may be 'living in the last quarter of the moon of Jesus', it was that same poet who went on to say 'people are becoming pilgrims again' and 'prayer too has its phases'. Who can therefore predict what the future might hold, if the history of the Christian faith over the last millennia is anything to go by?

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Archbishop of Wales, 2003–17

Ann Loades, *The Serendipity of Life's Encounters* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2021), pp. 96. ISBN 978913657574.
doi:[10.1017/S1740355322000171](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740355322000171)

This book is a contribution to the above publisher's 'My Theology' series and is effectively an account of an academic journey, forged by an unwavering determination to engage with higher education and supported by mentors who throughout her career encouraged and facilitated her progress. Here lies the essential characteristic of her journey. It is scholarship in community. Fortuitous encounters with a succession of inspirational figures at school and university sparked, then consolidated, her interests, and Loades is generous in her appreciation of their support. These influential encounters occurred from her formative years at school, where she

was encouraged to immerse herself in music, art and literature of quality and to engage with the fundamental elements of history and theology.

Such a broad range of interests allowed her to become aware of the importance of context in the study of any discipline and alerted her to the element of transcendence in worship, inspired by visits to the great cathedrals whose music and architecture left a lasting impression. It was also during her years at school that she became conscious of the importance of a gracious hospitality and the indiscriminate acceptance of those outside society's rigidly defined boundaries. So was born a social concern which remained a priority in her commitment to the importance of community within academic circles.

Loades recounts in some detail a scholarly journey enriched by encounters with an enviable range of distinguished theologians and writers who directly or indirectly offered guidance and inspiration. She provides interesting insights into the tutorial and lecture arrangements as a student at university, and then the inner dynamics of faculty life, teaching responsibilities, committee work and the rigours and frustrations of office administration. Throughout, her academic horizons were being constantly tested and expanded, and her theological outlook came to embrace both ethics and politics. Her initial concentration on G.W. Leibniz's *Theodicy* broadened to embrace various aspects of theological interest, bearing fruit with invitations to give lectures and papers, including the significance of gender and feminist theology.

Loades makes regular reference to the various awards and recognition she has received, and her satisfaction at having attained goals which no-one had achieved before becomes evident. As the jacket declares, she was the first woman (and only second ever person) to be awarded a CBE for services to theology, the first female president of the Society for the Study of Theology, the first woman to be given a personal Chair at Durham and the first woman to take a seat in the Chapter of Durham Cathedral. Her invitations to deliver important series of lectures is also impressive.

These considerable achievements assume a heightened significance for Loades, given the obstacles that posed a not-infrequent deterrent to the acceptance of women who wished to pursue a career in higher education, let alone a vocation in the ministry of the Church. Her sensitivity to prejudice and to being treated condescendingly as 'a statutory woman' in her early days in academia is more than understandable, and that she remained productively engaged with an academic career and with the life of the Church is testimony to a tenacity beyond the ordinary. So, here is an account of a journey which, as the title indicates, provides an insight into the fortuitous personal influences which gave rise to a life-long engagement with theological interests. It is a journey justly rewarded.

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