

# Jane Austen and the Gospel

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Preacher: Irena Tippett

[ 0 : 00 ] Nice to see you all here. I do recognize that you're here for Jane Austen more than for Erin Tippett. And I think you're right in doing that. I feel a little brazen in speaking of this topic for a number of reasons. Firstly, that my field is not literature, it's our history. And secondly, that my century is not the 18th century, it's the 15th and 16th century. Also, it's a little frightening to speak about a topic about which people feel so passionate. And Jane Austen is definitely one of those topics. One author said that half the world is made up of Janeites, and the other half is made up of non-Janeites.

And I don't know whether I'm more afraid of the non-Janeites than the Janeites. Because the Janeites, you see, can recite her books backwards and forwards and know every single word she's read, written, well, I've read. And I can't put myself in that category. Anyway, let's just carry on here. I can work with the machine. This is just a little sketch of what we're going to do. I'll give you a short introduction. That's self-explanatory. A chronology, or a bit of a chronology biography of Jane Austen's life. A large section here of her religious background. It's got a couple of aspects to it which I think are interesting. And then I'm going to move into her novels. I say novels, but actually I'm really going to talk about *Pride and Prejudice*. Because I think it's the novel that most people know, either from reading the book or from watching the television drama, the A&E production, which was so excellent from a few years ago, which people still watch and watch and watch. And even a recent film, *Pride and Prejudice*, a year ago with Keira Knightley. So people do know this story. And although I did consider all of her books in relation to this topic, this was the one I felt fit the best. And conclusion is self-explanatory. And one more thing. The quiz that you saw cycling around at the beginning, which I don't know all the answers, to which I don't know all the answers, will be at, we'll show you them at the end of the talk.

[ 2 : 34 ] I like this, we had to do the quiz, because as Carol Shields in her recent biography of Jane Austen said, wherever three or four come together in Jane Austen's name, there's bound to be a trivia quiz. I had to do that.

All right. This is the beginning of *Pride and Prejudice*. It is the truth universally acknowledged that a single man in the possession of good fortune must be in want of a wife.

The topic of all Jane Austen's books is marriage, which is why I put this here. She was born into an eventful century, which saw all kinds of things happening, the American and French revolutions. For example, her cousin's father, the Comte de Spagyde, was actually guillotined in the aftermath of the French Revolution. For the Canadians among us, Jane Austen was born in the same century as General Wolfe's storming of the citadel of Quebec, where he met his death on the plane of Abraham Antier. I had to throw in some art history.

This is not terribly related to Jane Austen, although she did like a painting by me, which is why I thought of this. This is a famous painting in the National Gallery of Ottawa by the American expatriate Benjamin West, who, because of this painting, gained a position with the Prince Regent, later George the Fourth, as the royal painter.

The 18th century in which she was born, of course she went over into the 19th century, but the 18th century in which she was born was also the age of reason. Another slide, just to throw in some art history. This is by Goya.

[ 4 : 30 ] The sleep of reason produces monsters. I think the century was very keen on reason, and was afraid of other things, really. But Jane Austen, born in 1775, died not that long afterwards in 1817.

Not an old woman, but she died. We don't have a lot of images of her. I don't think we have very much. This is the main one. This is a simple drawing by her sister Cassandra, with whom she had a great relationship, the two of them, very close.

Most of her letters that we have extant are written to Cassandra. All right.

Let's just change this here. Well, let's give a little chronology here of Jane Austen here. Oh, yeah. I guess I've gone ahead of myself here.

The 18th century also saw Edward Jenner's invention of the cowpox vaccine, which was used to immunize against smallpox.

[ 5 : 39 ] I mention this because the Austens did know him. And also, England, in Jane Austen's lifetime, was embroiled in the Napoleonic Wars, again, a personal interest to Jane Austen, as two of her brothers were in the Navy and involved in it.

Jane Austen was never married. There was some chance of a happy match with her neighbor Tom Leifroy, but his family sent him to Ireland to make a more advantageous connection.

So, yes, a busy century. But the unmarried Jane Austen really does just write about marriage. As one writer says, Jane Austen can, in fact, get more drama out of morality, he says, I make that marriage, than most writers get from shipwreck, murder, mayhem, or battle.

So, I think that's true. All right, to the biography. Jane Austen, born in the village of Steventon, to George and Cassandra Austen, 1775.

Her father was the rector of Steventon. Her mother's family, a slightly higher class than George, actually has quite a prestigious ancestry and progeny.

[ 7 : 01 ] If you go back to Jane Austen's grandfather, I think then you can work your way down to Sir Winston Churchill later on. Jane Austen was encouraged to write by her father, and her extant juvenilia are a sign of his encouragement.

These works are largely satirical, but do demonstrate her knowledge of the 18th century novel.

During the time in Steventon, she wrote the beginnings of *Northanger Abbey*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*.

*Susan* was *Northanger Abbey*. *First Impressions*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Eleanor and Marianne* were the beginnings of *Sense and Sensibility*. Yeah, well, let's move on.

When her father retired in 1801, the family, that being really just the girls, Cassandra and Jane and their mother, and their father moved to Bath.

Bath figures in a couple of her books as a recreational town where one could lose oneself in plays and dances and social interaction. This was not a very positive time for Jane Austen for more than one reason.

[ 8 : 32 ] Not much writing was accomplished, and during that time her father died in 1805, and leaving the family with even less money than they had before.

They became reasonably poor, moving down to lesser dwellings. Finally, in 1809, Jane's rich brother, she had her very rich brother, Edward Knight, provided this, what's called a cottage, but I think it looks pretty good, more than a cottage, provided this cottage for Jane and her mother and sister.

The reason why Edward was very wealthy is that he had been adopted by a very rich family who had no children, and therefore when they died, he gained their estate.

God knows him. And he then took on the name Knight, which is why the name is different as well. Now this time was a very, very busy time for Jane.

She really basically wrote all six of her published novels during this time. *Sense of Sensibility* was published at the beginning of the time.

[ 10 : 00 ] *Pride and Prejudice* was published two years later. *Madfield Park* published as well. and she wrote *Emma*. All these favorites.

*Emma* was published and dedicated to the Prince Regent who personally asked her to dedicate it to him. I don't think she cared for him much, but there it was. And on she went.

*Persuasion* as well was written at that time. When I turned, do you hear me? Yes. I should just be looking at my thing here.

So you see that a little bit of security, a little bit of privacy away from the noise of goth was very much what Jane Austen was happy with.

We have a letter from this Chawton time period, 1814, written to her niece, Anna Liefroy, one of two nieces who also tried their hands at writing.

[11:07] As one person wrote, well, if Aunt Jane can do it, so can we. So in her letters to them, we get some insight into Austen's way of thinking about writing. And she said, you are now collecting your people delightfully, getting them exactly into such a spot that is the delight of my life.

Three or four families in a country village is the very thing to work on. And I hope you will do a great deal more and make full use of them while they are so favorably arranged.

I think this is a good description of many of, well, probably all of her books. Well, religious, religious background.

Jane Austen's father, this is going to be a boring slide for a while, so just don't look at it. Jane Austen's father was, as we heard, an Anglican minister, rector of the parish of Steventon, where Jane was born.

Jane Austen's criticism of the state church of the Church of England, implicit in her portrayals of the clergy in her books, like Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*, shows she knew, through her father's connections, the weakness of the mainline church of her era, its threadbare morality, as she calls it, and its lack of dedication to the caring of the flock, which is the real work of the church.

[12:31] Mr. Austen's children would have been raised in a rationalist environment, which is the age of reason, and I think in all Jane Austen's books, you can see the importance of reason and right thinking based on observation.

You'll see a lot, she speaks about the eyes a lot, and glances, and observations. It's through the eyes, the observations cause right thinking, or at least understanding comes from that, from observation.

The age of reason had produced its own heresy within that, within the 18th century, the heresy of deism, but Reverend Austen's rationalism was not of this flavor, and it maintained a high view of Christianity and scriptural revelation.

From her letters, though Jane Austen doesn't talk a lot about her faith, it is evident that she considered church attendance, family prayers, and scripture reading, and even the reading of sermons, an essential part of her life.

There are three prayers that she herself wrote and which are preserved, and if there's time at the end, I'll read one to you. They would fit very nicely into the Book of Common Prayer, lending credence to the belief that the bulk of Jane Austen's reading was actually scripture and the Book of Common Prayer.

[13:51] Among the sermons she would have read, she noted a preference for those of Thomas Sherlock, who preached in the first half of the 18th century. From what I can gather, this teacher was an apologist for the resurrection of our Lord, a kind of Josh McDowell, who was willing to endure ridicule for his position.

I don't know if you know, Josh McDowell evidence demands a verdict, that kind of thing. He was famous for his book, *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus*, and for a later set of sermons republished in 1812, to which it's to these sermons that Jane refers in her letters.

So she read these and enjoyed them. From all this, I think it is apparent that Jane Austen was Trinitarian, Anglican, and serious about her faith.

In the past, most literary criticism of Jane Austen has largely ignored her faith, and this has changed recently, most notably with a book by Michael Giffen called *Jane Austen and Religion, Salvation and Society in Georgia, England*.

Very interesting book. In this book, Giffen stresses convincingly the rational aspect of Jane Austen's Anglicanism, but I think there's another side as well to it.

[15:10] She gives hints of that. In the novel *Sense and Sensibility*, if you've read it, you'll know that Jane Austen compares or contrasts sense or reason with sensibility, which is feeling.

And the novel describes two sisters of alternate temperament, Eleanor, who is the reasonable self-controlled one, and Marianne, who relies exclusively on her feelings, true romantic.

And of course, they fall in love and are eventually married. It's always about marriage. Both sisters have a notable difference in literary taste. Marianne, sensibility, prefers the poet William Cooper.

Looks like Cowper, pronounced Cooper, apparently. And loves the picturesque. This is from *Sense and Sensibility*. Thompson, Cooper, and Scott, she would buy them all over and over again.

She would buy up every copy, I believe, to prevent their falling into unworthy hands. And she would have every book that tells her how to admire an old twisted tree. That's Marianne.

[16:19] By contrast, Eleanor prefers the essayist Samuel Johnson. As we know from Jane Austen's letters and from references to authors in her books, she herself actually admired both authors equally, and maybe Cooper more.

So we can say that together, the sisters are a good representation not only of balanced reason, but also of not only of balanced reason but feeling, and also a good picture of Jane Austen herself. This brings me, the connection may not be obvious, to the subject of Jane Austen's relationship to the evangelical movement, which began with the Wesleys and Jonathan Edwards in the earlier 18th century.

The revival was associated mostly with the lower classes, but Dr. Bruce Hindmarsh from our congregation tells us in his book, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, that by 1800 there was a recognizable evangelical party in the Church of England.

The converted slave trader and author of *Amazing Grace*, we all know, John Newton, was a notable leader in it. With this in mind, one of the first questions I asked myself was, where did Jane Austen stand in relation to this movement in her church?

[17:42] She had to know about it. Well, the next two slides are epitaphs. The first one will be Jane Austen, the second one will be John Newton.

I want you to look at it and compare them. Jane Austen, this is another painting, they think, also by Cassandra of Jane Austen. I think that's all we have of portraits of her that I know of.

In memory of Jane Austen, youngest daughter, blah, blah, blah. After a long illness, supported with patience and the hopes of a Christian, the benevolence of her heart, the sweetness of her temper and the extraordinary endowments of her mind obtained the regard of all who knew her and the warmest love of her intimate connections.

Their grief is in proportion to their affection. They know their loss to be irreparable, but in the deepest affliction they are consoled by a firm though humble hope that her charity, devotion, faith and purity have rendered her soul acceptable in the sight of her Redeemer.

I don't know. Want to comment on that? Alright. Now, John Newton. John Newton, clerk.

[18:52] Once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.

I think by comparing these two you kind of get a feel for Jane Austen a little more traditional language and salvation by faith maybe not quite as understood.

Mind you, she didn't write her epitaph. Alright. Here's another fly, another something from a letter to Cassandra written near the end of her life in Chilton.

We do not much like Mr. Cooper's new sermons, she says. They are fuller of regeneration and conversion than ever, with the addition of his zeal in the cause of the Bible Society. So, Jane Austen's not doing well here.

Another one. This is the one that everybody quotes. I do not like the evangelicals. Well, these slides here may consider her, make us consider her altogether anti-evangelical, but I don't think it's so and there are some tantalizing objections to this.

[20:16] The thing about Jane Austen is you're not always sure she's humorous and she has an undercurrent. And sometimes she says the opposite of what she means. She probably meant those things.

the quote about Mr. Cooper, I think one could explain a little bit. Mr. Cooper was actually a cousin of hers, first cousin, whom she didn't care for.

So, I think she wasn't wanting to like him. So, this quote here is actually the extension of the I do not like the evangelicals quote, which everybody uses.

you have by no means raised my curiosity after Caleb. Now, Caleb is refers to Caleb's *In Search of a Wife* by Hannah Moore.

That was a novel that was written. I believe in a novel. Anyway, my disinclination for it was before it was affected, but now it's real. I do not like the evangelicals.

[21:15] Of course, I shall be delighted when I read it, like other people, but till I do, I dislike it. So, you can see that kind of playing around there.

People quote the middle thing, but I don't think out of the context, maybe it means something.

Whoops, never mind, back to this. So, the question is, is there another side to the evangelical question?

Fanny Price of *Mansfield Park*, if you've read that book, Fanny Price is seen by at least one recent author as an evangelical heroine, based on this book by Hannah Moore.

Hannah Moore, it turns out, was a member of the Clapham sect, along with the more famous William Wilberforce. The evangelical sect is famous, of course, for its efforts in the abolition of the slave trade, and in fact, though Jane Austen avoids political references in any of her books, the one exception is the mention in *Mansfield Park* of this topic.

So, I think that lends to that. So, that's the first thing, Fanny Price. The second objection, Jane Austen's favorite brother, Henry, eventually joined his brother and father in becoming a clergyman, after Jane Austen's death, but still, according to William Austen Lay, the family biographer, Henry had become, quote, a zealous preacher of the gospel, according to the religious views of the Calvinist portion of the evangelical clergy, and so consistently remained until the life's end.

[ 22 : 52 ] So, you can see the discussions might have been going on in the family. Third objection, Jane Austen mentions in her letters, having enjoyed the writings of Claudius Buckinen, the eminent Indian chaplain, who was converted by a sermon at St. Mary Molneth, where John Newton was incumbent from 1780 to 1807.

Buckinen was here at Under Newton, and later kept up regular correspondence with him. So, another connection, something she liked. The most interesting connection to my mind is her favoring the poet Cooper, whom we've already mentioned.

Bruce Highmarsh includes William Cooper as one of the three influential figures in the evangelical movement within the Church of England, along with John Newton. At Olney, Newton invited Cooper to contribute to a hymn book, which Newton was compiling there.

The resulting volume, known as the *Olney Hymns*, was published in 1779. Most of us will recognize the words of this hymn by Cooper, which is still found in our hymn book today.

And there are other ones as well. I'll just give you one example. So, kind of lovely. I'd like to shine upon the road that leads me to the land.

[ 24 : 15 ] Lovely. Now, Jane Austen seemed to associate evangelicalism with feelings, it seems. Cooper is related to feelings. And there was a lot of emotion involved in the evangelical movement.

This is the last bit of evidence for her in terms of evangelicalism. Another letter to my other niece, Fanny Knight, who was also willing to be a writer.

Fanny was considering a gentleman who was a suitor, and Jane Austen was giving her advice.

Think of all this, Fanny, Mr. A. has advantages which do not often meet in one person.

His only fault indeed seems modesty. And as to there being any objection from his goodness, from the danger of his becoming even evangelical, I cannot admit that. I am by no means convinced that we ought not all to be evangelicals, and at least persuaded that they who are so from reason and feeling must be happiest and safest.

Do not be frightened from the connection by your brothers having most wit. Wisdom is better than wit, and in the long run will certainly have the laugh on her side. And don't be frightened by the idea of his acting more strictly up to the precepts of the New Testament than others.

[ 25 : 33 ] I don't know. So this more than meets the eye, I think, here. One thing we can conclude then is that at any rate, Jane Austen was aware of some of the aspects of evangelicalism, that she disapproved of some, but that she approved of others.

Well, okay, that's as much as we're going to know. She's not going to let us know more, I don't think. Well, what, what, do we see anything now? We're going to go to her books. What, do we see anything of the gospel in Jane Austen's writing?

Do we see the Christian faith appearing in her books? Now, you know, I do think, I think so, or I wouldn't be speaking on the topic. On the other hand, although she sees that Jane Austen's books are crowded with clergy, Carol Shields, her recent biographer and Vancouver author, does not think so.

She points out that there are plenty of clergy, but she doesn't see real faith in the books. One of the widest areas of absence in her books, she means, is the religious life, and this has led some to believe that Austen was an unbeliever.

A daughter of the man, a person who attended church with great regularity and took part in family prayers, Austen says not a word in her novels about the consolation of spiritual life.

[ 26 : 56 ] No one prays, no one blesses, no one is caught in the midst of worship. Well, I don't know what you think about that, but I actually think that the lack of mention of prayer, worship, whatever, indicates that Jane Austen is writing her books not as just a description of the times, but that she is

intending, by writing the book, she's intending to project something else.

Dr. Jerem Barr's professor at the Francis Schaeffer Institute agrees with me, which is just as well. So I can tell you that. He says, her stories are subversive and work like Jesus' parables, the humor and the ironic insight into human sin, get under your skin, and then you find yourself on board for the ride as you enter further into her very serious journey of understanding into the human condition.

Jane Austen was most certainly a Christian believer. I think it's pretty apparent that she is. Carol Shield, I think, Shields was maybe looking for justification.

I think we Protestant Christians are used to thinking subversively, as he puts it. Besides Jesus' parables, we also have books like *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, where we would be most surprised to find any mention of prayer or worship or Jesus.

It's our glory, I think, Protestant art, to hide the truth, to have it revealed slowly. Well, we're going to advance *Pride and Prejudice*, the most popular of Jane Austen's novels.

[ 28 : 41 ] Many of you know it, as we've said, the book or the film versions. And though one could talk of the subversive element in any of the novels, I've chosen to concentrate on *Pride and Prejudice*, because it's the most popular and the most known.

I think it also fits better, too. I think it's pretty clear, to me, anyway. You'll remember that the story deals with four different couples who will be married, but mainly, it is the story about Elizabeth Bennett and Mr.

Darcy. That's the main plot line. In order to see the gospel in this story, I'm going to tell it as Mr. Darcy's story, although it is Lizzie's response to Darcy and her subsequent repentance, which is the main plot line.

So, from Darcy's point of view, there's been a recent book called *Mr. Darcy's Story*, and I have not read it, and I didn't want to ruin my idea here. I think it'll be different.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, the rich and handsome Mr. Darcy, from an ancient highborn English family, quite unexpectedly falls in love with Lizzie Bennett.

[ 29 : 49 ] Now, Lizzie is a lovely, a bright young woman, and in many ways a good match for Darcy. There are problems, though. First of all, because she had felt slighted by him on their first meeting, she is totally biased against him.

Secondly, and this is Darcy's agony, he knows that in marrying Lizzie, he has to attach himself to the poor, ill-mannered, and largely silly family to which she belongs.

Now, the tension of *Pride and Prejudice* requires an understanding of the class system in England, and I know we don't approve it, I just spoke with Dr. Packer ahead of time about this, but I think it has a teaching point related to it.

Now, according to the recent anthropological book *Watching the English*, the class system is still alive and well in England, so the English in this room will, I think, understand, but probably the rest of us won't.

There are many aspects of the class system which we are well rid of, but in James Austen's time, gentility, or good breeding as she called it, was synonymous with authority, self-control, dignity, honor, moral rectitude, all based on Christian moral principles.

[ 31 : 05 ] It wasn't a democratic society, and it was fluid only to a degree. To some, like Lady Catherine de Bourgh, it was morally unthinkable that these boundary lines of nobility should be crossed.

Now, in our egalitarian society, we're all pretty well equal. We've likely lost some understanding, which could be useful not only in the reading of *Pride and Prejudice*, but also in our understanding of the Gospel.

As we learn both in the Nicene Creed, in the Book of Common Prayer, and in Scripture, like, for example, the second chapter of *Philippians*, the incarnation of Jesus required of him two things. First, he had to be willing to leave the majesty of highest heaven to come to us. And secondly, in being made man, he had to join himself permanently to our weak human family.

In effect, he was marrying down. Well, think about it. Well, we left Mr. Darcy himself struggling with the concept of marrying down.

[ 32 : 19 ] He decides, nonetheless, that because he loves Lizzie, he'd like to marry her, and when finally she looks as if she might just comply, things get worse. Lizzie's silliest sister, the youngest, Lydia, threatens to bring great shame to the whole Bennet family by running off unwed with the

wicked Mr.

Wickham. Now, here's the predicament. How could Darcy's noble and respectable family ever be united with the shameful Bennets now? If he marries Lizzie, he not only brings shame to his noble family, sorry, he not only brings to his noble family name an association with the foolish and laughable Bennets, but in addition, he brings to it the taste of immorality or sin.

Can you see that this dilemma, in a very small way, parallels the dilemma facing Christ in heaven when he decided in the incarnation to join himself with us?

Now, the good news for us is that Jesus was, in addition to bearing our bodies, was also willing to bear the degradation of our sin, and he died on the cross to bear that cost.

He did this for us when we, quote, from Ephesians, had no hope and were without God in the world. At our most hopeless point, he did this.

[ 33 : 49 ] Well, Lizzie, going back to Lizzie, has no hope in her situation. She says to Darcy, But nothing can be done.

I know very well that nothing can be done. How is such a man that is Wickham to be worked on? How are they even to be discovered that is Lydia and Wickham? I have not the smallest hope. It is every way horrible. Well, Darcy made no answer. He seemed scarcely to hear her. It was walking up and down the room in earnest meditation. What was he thinking about?

His brow was contracted, his air gloomy. Elizabeth soon observed, and instantly, she thinks, understood it. Her power was thinking.

Everything must think under such a proof of family weakness, such an assurance of deepest disgrace. The institutional church, represented by Lizzie's cousin, Mr. Collins, also offers no hope.

[ 35 : 01 ] He sends the Bennets these sentiments in a letter. You are grievously to be pitied, in which opinion I am not only joined by Mrs. Collins, but likewise by Lady Catherine and her daughter, to whom I have related the whole affair.

What a rat. They agree with me in apprehending that this false step in one daughter will be injurious to the fortunes of all the others, for who, as Lady Catherine herself condescendingly says, will connect themselves with such a family.

Well, so thus, Lydia, this one person, is able to bring down the fortunes of the whole family. Where have we heard this before? I can think of Adam.

Well, we leave Lizzie sitting at home, sadly thinking of her lost chance of marrying Darcy, and living in Pemberley, his beautiful estate in Derbyshire. Meanwhile, and this is without Lizzie's knowledge, Mr. Darcy is tramping the dirty streets of London, looking for the lost Lydia, and paying a very large price for her honour to the wicked Wickham.

Why is he doing this? Not for Lydia, certainly not for Wickham. All this he does because he loves Lizzie. And of course, we can get this part, once the price is paid, he will be free to marry Lizzie and take her back with him to beautiful Pemberley.

[ 36 : 36 ] Now, in Mr. Darcy's generous act of love, I don't know if you can see it, but it does, there are many things in the book to imply it was a very generous act of love. No one else had the wealth to pay for it.

Nobody else could pay for it. In this very generous act of love, maybe we can get a little glimpse of the generosity of Christ towards us in the gospel.

Well, okay. Repentance. It's the other side of the story. Lizzie's side of the story. Just like our side of the story is one of repentance.

Now, in many of Jane Austen's characters, there is a repentance which goes to past behaviours. And in others, more significantly, there is an overthrow of the self-centred worldview.

And this looks an awful lot like conversion. In Austen, perfect characters are avoided. Self needs to be dealt with, and immature characters come of age.

[ 37 : 39 ] The coming of age is usually precipitated by a crisis. Full-blown repentance is necessary, and a choice is posed. A decision is necessary in response. Well, Lizzie Bennet also needed to experience this repentance crisis.

George Wickham and Darcy, it's an interesting combination of men who came into the small village that Lizzie lived in.

Lizzie's change of heart has to do with her response to these two men. Both of these men had grown up in idyllic Kimberly, under the care of generous old Mr. Darcy.

Wickham being the son of old Mr. Darcy's steward. It's when Wickham tells Lizzie of his enmity with Darcy, that her initial dislike of Darcy becomes full-blown.

She hates him. Look at the deep irony in the following interchange between Wickham and Lizzie. Wickham of Darcy. The fact is, we are very different sorts of men, which they are, and he hates me, which he does.

[ 38 : 53 ] Lizzie, he deserves to be publicly disgraced. Wickham, sometime or other, he will be. Well, Lizzie's repentance or a change of heart only comes about after Darcy reveals Wickham's falsehood and bad character to her.

It is only once she responds to Darcy and believes what he says that her eyes are open to the truth. As one author in theology today puts it this way, says that this conversion from belief in Wickham's virtue and Darcy's treachery to Wickham's perfidy to Darcy's integrity echoes in a striking manner the process of Christian conversion.

He spends a whole article saying that the letters that Darcy writes are like written in the form of epistles. Like epistles. I don't know. So here is Lizzie at her point of conversion.

She grew absolutely ashamed of herself, of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling, that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd. Better watch for evangelical language here.

How despicably I have acted, she cried, I who have prided myself on my discernment, and I who have valued myself on my abilities, who have often disdained the generous candor of my sister and gratified my vanity in useless or blamable mistrust.

[ 40 : 25 ] How humiliating is this discovery, yet how just a humiliation. Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly.

Pleased with the preference of one and offended by the neglect of the other on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance and driven reason away where either were concerned.

Till this moment, I never knew myself. You can see there's an old throw of Lizzie in relation to Darcy.

It's interesting that Wickham at one point is referred to as an angel of light. I think you can see the words in here, blindness and never knew myself and the humiliation.

Well, now we're coming to the end here, but Lizzie's sister Jane, it's not just elicit a conversion, so to speak, that happened in this book.

[ 41 : 35 ] Darcy does become the point of conversion for Jane as well. Jane is the most naturally rational and good character in the book.

She believes well in everyone. But she also needs to go through a conversion crisis. And Lizzie is the bearer of the truth to her sister. Lizzie says to Jane, this will not do.

You will never will be able to make both of them, Wickham and Darcy, both of them good for anything. Take your choice. But you must be satisfied with only one. There is but such a quantity of merit between them, just enough to make one good sort of man.

And the blade has just been shifting about pretty much. For my part, I'm inclined to believe it is all Mr. Darcy's. What you shall do is you choose. Jane has to make a choice too, between the two. Well, I've heard it said that *Pride and Prejudice* is a fairy tale. But I think in my opinion, I think this is misleading. I think Parable fits better.

[ 42 : 46 ] She wasn't really, imagination, unbridled was not something she proved of actually. So she has a reason for everything she does. And you see, Jane Austen doesn't end her novel with a perfect happily ever after either.

Yes, Lizzie and Jane come to a deep understanding and both are married well. Lizzie to Mr. Darcy and Jane to his friend Bingley. But the characters who chose wrongly, Lydia, Wickham, Mrs. Bennett and Mary, the other sister Elizabeth, continue to be unchanged by the grace they received. The coming of true nobility to Hertfordshire did not work on them. And even the lives of Lizzie and Mr. Darcy, though happy, continue to be grieved by the connection with Lizzie's family and worse, the consistent connection with Mr. Wickham.

So for Jane Austen's characters in all her books, there's either a coming of age and repentance or there's a confirmation in the blind way of destruction. I really only discuss *Pride and Prejudice*, her lack of time, but because I think it's the clearest, but I do think it's the clearest case of the presence of the gospel.

However, in her other novels like Emma, Persuasion and Mansfield, most obviously Mansfield Park, I think you can see a kind of testing of the characters as they make their choices.

[ 44 : 14 ] So I encourage you as you read these books, and they're also wonderful to be read and read and read, I encourage you to keep an eye open for this aspect the next time you read them.

Well, was Jane Austen evangelical? This is Jane Austen's answer to the question. I can't suppose we differ in our ideas of the Christian religion, which I think is true.

You have given an excellent description of it, she says to Fanny Knight. We only affix a different meaning to the word evangelical. Oh dear.

And I'm persuaded that Jane Austen did understand Christian conversion and the gospel, and that she would agree in her own genteel way with the words of her contemporary. Thank you.

... I once lift the light, but now I see. Thank you. Thank you. That's good. Thank you.

[ 45 : 17 ] Okay. Yes? I thought you said if you had time, you would read her... The prayer? The prayer. Should you do that? Yeah. What do you want to just point it?

Very Angleton. Give us grace, Almighty Father, so to pray as to deserve to be heard, to address thee with our hearts as with our lips.

Thou art everywhere present. From thee no secret can be hid. May the knowledge of this teach us to fix our thoughts on thee with reverence and devotion, that we pray not in vain.

Look with mercy on the sins we have this day committed, and the mercy make us feel them deeply, that our repentance may be sincere and our resolution steadfast of endeavouring against the commission of such in the future.

Teach us to understand the sinfulness of our own hearts and bring to our knowledge every fault of temper and every evil habit in which we have indulged, the discomfort of our fellow creatures and the danger of our own souls.

[ 46 : 20 ] May we now, and on each return of night, consider how the past day has been spent by us, what have been our prevailing thoughts, words, and actions during it, and how far we can acquit ourselves of evil.

Have we thought irreverently of thee? Have we disobeyed thy commandments? Have we neglected any known duty, or willingly given pain to any human being? Incline us to ask our hearts these questions, O God, and save us from deceiving ourselves by pride or humanity.

Give us a thankful sense of the blessings in which we live, of the many comforts of our lot, that we may not deserve to lose them by discontent or indifference. Be gracious to our necessities and guard us, and all we love from evil this night.

May the sick and afflicted be now and ever thy care. And heartily do we pray for the safety of all that travel by land or sea, for the comfort and protection of the orphan and widow, and that thy pity may be shown upon all captives and prisoners.

Above all other blessings, O God, for ourselves and our fellow creatures, we implore thee to quicken our sense of thy mercy in the redemption of the world, of the value of that holy religion in which we have been brought up, that we may not, by our own neglect, throw away the salvation thou hast given us, nor be Christians only in name.

[ 47 : 36 ] Hear us, Almighty God, for his sake, who has redeemed us and taught us thus to pray, our Father which art in heaven. Amen. So you. Yeah.

So, were you suggesting that Carol Shields said that Jane Austen wasn't a Christian, or that her writing didn't look to Christian? No. She's saying she was, she's suspecting she wasn't a Christian. Would she have been aware of that letter? Probably, yeah. Yeah. Or that prayer? She knew about it. Oh, wow. Yeah. But I think sometimes we, maybe I've done this too, I don't know, read into things what we want to see.

Carol Shields, it was very interesting, but she's got a lot of perceptions that are excellent. But she makes Jane Austen a non-believer, which I think is a real stretch. What's the other thing?

Something else like her. Oh, yeah, she makes her a feminist, which I think is kind of, you know, just not the right time period for it. Jane Austen did, women did have problems, and so on.

[ 48 : 36 ] But I think Jane Austen would never consider that the feminist rebellion kind of attitude. And the other thing that, just to prove the point, Carol Shields, there's, I can't remember, there's a disease that they figure that Jane Austen died from, but she says, no, no, no, it was breast cancer.

Well, you know, it's Carol Shields. Oh, yes. You know, we can see how we read ourselves into, into other people's work. in other people's lives.

But maybe I've done that too, so I don't know what you think. Thank you. This has just been absolutely delightful. I've enjoyed every minute. You seem to be suggesting, and I'm not sure if I'm hearing this correctly, that these references to repentance and so on could be found in a Christian context intentionally in the things that she wrote.

Is that what you meant me to hear? Because I am not sure it was intentional writing. Intentional writing because repentance, that's intentional repentance. I mean, there are lots of people that change their minds in literature.

And in Jane Austen, I'm thinking of Emma, who has to be told that she has sinned at the picnic. And this was not well done or something like that, Mr. Knightley says to her. She does not amend, but there isn't actually a hint of overt repentance.

[ 50 : 02 ] She never apologized to Miss What's-Her-Name, the poor lady. Instead, she took baskets of food and so on. And I think repentance, if it's real, is going to involve something that is experienced in the heart and expressed with the lips in most cases.

And so I'm wondering, did Jane Austen, because of her belief, more or less accidentally write characters that did this? Or did she actually intend to make a point of Christian virtue here?

I think Emma's a good example. I think in *Pride and Prejudice* and in *Emma* particularly, that it's the marriage, it's the relationship with the one they're going to marry, which is the kind of gospel core.

There's a very beautiful, I probably can't locate it now, but there's a very beautiful bit where Emma's realizing, she thinks that Mr. Knightley is going to be marrying Miss Smith.

And she realizes that this is the one, she's being first for him, but now he has to be first for her.

[ 51 : 14 ] It's that sense of first, no other, you know, just the only one. And that seems to be the thing that makes her realize her total foolishness, how she's lived her life and not recognize this wonderful, wise, and I think in some sense Christ-like man, right, who's being right next to her, who's being her neighbor, speaking to her her whole happy life and not realizing who she was with.

A lot of Christians are like that. You know, you live your happy life with the knowledge in some ways of a good gospel happening, but never actually relate to it in a personal way.

And I think she does that. So, it's not so much repenting for things you've done wrong. I think it's that overthrow of your life which sends you to one, to one, one lover in her case and one husband.

And I think in our case it's an overthrow in our lives which sends us to one Lord and Savior. So, yeah, Emma's a good example of that as well. The other novels, you know, there's a bit of, let's play around with the myth.

I think that the *Pride and Prejudice* is most clear that Darcy's definitely a Christ figure. Although people generally don't like him which is interesting. I thought they like calling for it.

[ 52 : 28 ] Oh, yeah. If you're using the analogy of Mr. Darcy being a Christ figure, how would you square the rejection that he exhibits to Elizabeth in the beginning?

For example, he, he, her beauty, I would assume call her mother a wit. Yeah, you can figure that. Yeah.

You know, a very overt rejection of her in the beginning. Yeah, I thought about that. I think that if we look at the parables of Jesus, you will sometimes have, I mean, a parable doesn't have to be consistent, consistent, one-on-one correspondence.

And he has, at one point, the God, or praying to God, what's the word, you know, not picking up and just sort of hanging on persistent care to God, thank you, as a widow praying to an unjust judge.

You know, well, God is not an unjust judge, but I think that the story gives the point without its, and Jane Rossum could not stand perfect character.

[ 53 : 46 ] she says they make, I can't remember the way she put it, but basically, in our language, they make me crazy, perfect characters. And the 18th century did, a novel did have some perfect characters.

There's one, and I haven't read this, so I'm speaking just for secondhand information, but I think it's Charles Grandison, in a novel by Richardson, who, she makes quite a lot of fun out of sports with him.

He's the patrician hero, very similar to Darcy, but perfect. And she makes fun of him in one of her juvenilia, Charles and, oh, I can't remember, a Jack and somebody, anyway, I don't remember, it's just two names again, a woman and a man's name.

But she, I don't know, if I can drag it out, it's really quite, it's really quite funny. I might have one of my notes here. Oh, yes, here he goes.

I put these in short notes, just in case I'm leaving. Oh, yeah, here she says, she says, pictures of perfection, she once wrote, made me sick and wicked, she said, in 1817, and that's just before she died.

[ 54 : 55 ] Here we go, they can't, ba-da-da-da-da. Okay, Charles Adams, her character, was amiable and accomplished, a bewitching young man, and of so dazzling a beauty that none but the eagles could look him in the face.

At the masked ball, at Johnson Court, she says, of the males, a mask representing his son was the most universally admired. The beams that darted from his eyes were like those of that glorious luminary, though infinitely superior.

So strong were they that no one dared venture within a half a mile of them. He had therefore the best part of the room to himself. Its size now amounted to more than three quarters of a mile in length, and half a mile in breadth.

The gentleman, at last, finding the fierceness of his beams to be very inconvenient to the concourse by obliging them to crowd together in one corner of the room, half shut his eyes, by which mean the company discovered him to be Charles Adams in his plain green coat without any mask at all.

He's just making fun of the glorious hero that is way beyond anything reasonable. So, there we go.

[ 56 : 06 ] I don't know if that's that's interesting. Yeah. Beverly? I have a couple of firmless questions and a couple of most extensions. All right.

Which of the novels do you think fits the screen best? And on the chance that your answer is *Pride and Prejudice*, who played the best Mr. Darcy? Oh! Well, I think most of us will agree on Colin Firth, Beverly.

We know that you would accept any other answer. Well, you've given the right answer. Yes. I know. Most importantly, I think novelists write up their own world view rather than a John Banyanish desire to inform and proselytize.

I agree. I think a little bit of trouble with your analysis. I think it's very hard to figure out the context culturally.

We live in such a different culture. And so my question would be, at the time, was she seen as a Christian writer before we learned these things on her?

[ 57 : 23 ] Well, I still know that. I have to... The reviews were... I have read reviews of her work. They... The one, the first one that was published in *Sensibility*.

Maybe... I'm not sure what they were referring to. She had a few published, as you know, four before she died. They wrote things like, this is quite a moral novel, good for young women to read, blah, blah, blah.

They could see that it was good. But I don't think that these gentlemen probably read it seriously enough to look beyond that. And actually, I think that the novel reads perfectly...

I think she's a great novelist, but I don't think she... That's just it. I don't think she is John Bunyanish. That's why I put her... I would describe her along with Durham Barth as a writer...

That is a kind of parable, this story. I don't think she wrote... She started intending to write a parable and she fabricated it this way. I'm not saying that. But I do believe that as she worked on it, she worked very carefully over every detail of her books.

[ 58 : 27 ] I can't put it at my fingertips but a very famous quote about two inches of ivory. She paints like a miniature. Carefully, carefully, carefully. Every word is important.

She doesn't just write a good story although it's a good story. I think she's a needle. But I think C.S. Lewis, nobody said... I think he's not John Bunyan when he writes *The Lion, Witch, and The Wardrobe*, but I think that lovely second level...

It's not a level as in this means that and that means... I can't stand that kind of thing to tell you the truth. The one-to-one correspondence thing. But to kind of get the feel of the main message, the main thrust of something through a story is wonderful.

Anyway, long-winded answer. Sorry. No, it's a good answer. Yeah. All right. Thank you. Thank you. Did you say that the portrait of Lizzie was a self-portrait?

Oh, I'm Lizzie. Right. I think it was a self-portrait. It comes up pretty well, doesn't it? Yes, she sure does. Possibly. Yeah, I think that Jane Olsen was a fairly spunky character.

[ 59 : 42 ] If you read her letters, sometimes you're going, oh my goodness, she's a little bitter. Not bitter, but sharp about people. I mean, her observation skills were beautiful. And she was writing to her sister, Cassandra.

Jane Olsen, pretty well, there's not much we have other than Cassandra's letters. And they are letters that Cassandra actually vetted and edited fairly severely. Got rid of stuff she didn't want. But in these letters, and maybe she is just playing to Cassandra, there's a little, you know, little gossipy, sharp things to be said.

She says, I think in every letter I will be able to send you new news of the death of the Duke or something. I mean, when people die, she's kind of, she's a little bit light about things that you wouldn't expect from me.

But it's a private letter. She wrote pretty well every day, you know, twice a week, I think. It's a kind of gossip session. I wish there were more letters to other people. The ones that are to other people have much more substance to them.

[ 60 : 47 ] Which makes me think that maybe Cassandra was the person she was speaking of the group. Trying to please, didn't she? Here's another question. Why do they keep reaching into the United States for female actresses to play the part of these?

Virginia Woolf and... I don't know. Somebody else can answer that one. I don't know. I just want to probably work.

I just put you in hand. Harvey. Is irony a Christian virtue? Is irony a Christian virtue? I think Jesus was ironic at times.

I don't know. What do you think? I think so. I don't think meanness is a Christian virtue. But I think... I don't know.

I think that the amount of irony in Jane Austen, I thought about this a fair bit and I'm wondering, well, how do you think your own thoughts if A, you have no privacy, people are always around you, B, you always have to be polite to everybody.

[ 62 : 00 ] So basically, I think you kind of express yourself in subversive ways. So maybe not a Christian virtue, maybe just a result of her time. But irony can be, I think, used very well.

And they were so articulate. Pardon me? They were so articulate. They were so articulate. That's right. Yeah. And you didn't let yourself say just any old thing to anybody.

You responded even at night. There's an amazing part in Mansfield Park where Sir Thomas Bertram, the head of the manor, has gone off to the West Indies to sort out his problems.

And he's away quite some time. And his family, the one fairly wild son, I won't say the name, I think it's Thomasville, but I won't say the names, I'll forget them all.

Two sons, one of whom is going to be a minister, and he's sort of a good guy in the book, and his two daughters, a little bit frivolous, but well brought up, and neighbors, relatives of the minister, who the rector who lives down the road, all get together with another couple of friends to put on this little bit risqué play.

[ 63 : 15 ] And Thomas Bertram comes home just before they're doing it. They've changed its study, they've moved all the furniture, they've put up green curtains, they've done all kinds of stuff.

And knowing full well that he did not approve of it, and Fanny Knight is the one character who doesn't agree with it, doesn't want to go along with it, sees the heroine. Anyway, he comes home, and he's furious, but he's extremely polite.

You don't hear him, and one fellow who's visiting doesn't understand that this man is ready to chirp him up, but he's just so polite, and eventually it all gets cleared up and everybody knows what he's thinking, but he's not expressing it.

He's very polite. It's an extremely interesting social picture. Anyway, there we go. I don't know. I think it was Bev that was mentioning how we read things back into novels, and I think that's a huge temptation with Jane Austen, because we can't stand it that she has ignored the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, the American Revolution, the slave trade, except for the and the real part, and this whole business about feminism, of course, I think the English department has been sort of deconstructing and reconstructing a lot of female characters in literature for the past at least two decades, and I think one of the reasons that her novels have lasted with a very popular audience, you know, is that she's given us a microcosm that other people did not give.

We understand. I mean, we toss it off by saying these are novels of manners. Yes, they are that, but, you know, the human condition does not change, and we can probably see equivalence.

[ 65 : 07 ] I don't think I totally agree that they were always polite. They managed to be insulting. This is actually the characteristic that the English have found. As long as their vocabulary and syntax is perfect.

Right. You can get away with some dreadful insult. No, there's probably going to be ironic insult. Nobody else does it, but you know what it's like.

Thank you for this. I just want to say thank you as well for this work. I've never read any of it. My wife has read most of her stuff, I think, and I've never really been very interested in it, but I'm much more interested now, especially when you talk about that, the way you described sense and sensibility.

It reminds me of C.S. Lewis in his Pilgrim's Regress when John meets at one time Mr. Reason and then next time Mr. Sense and it's the same play that you just described.

I find it fascinating. and as well, you mentioned maybe how we should use our emotions to help us with, like, where there emotions and reasons interplay.

[ 66 : 26 ] And one of my favorite books is Uncle Tom's Cabin. And much of the criticism against that book was saying that it was such an emotional book, and yet it had such an important message to write about and the criticism was, well, Harry features so and used emotion.

But I've always answered that for myself, that the reason comes first and then your emotions are to follow along. It's almost, I guess, maybe how we talk about our relationship with God, revelation, and then worship.

Once you realize who God is, you want to worship, and you realize the truth of the matter, then your emotions come along and support that rather than the other way around.

Anyway, I've really enjoyed your whole presentation. Well, thank you. Can I say one more thing? Do I have time? Do we have time to say one more thing? Yeah?

Thank you. Just back to the emotion thing. One thing that I found very interesting about Dr. Bruce Heinmarsh's Evangelical Conversion Narrative book, he talks about these revivals in England, and my goodness, they sound like the Toronto Vineyard talk about them.

[ 67 : 46 ] I could see that, you know, I mean, some of it, obviously, the solid stuff ended up producing wonderful stuff. Obviously, we're evangelical, so we're in agreement, but a lot of it is a lot of emotion, a lot of bad theology and a lot of funny stuff going on.

But the life is there, and so I recommend it. It's a bit of a, I'm going to be rent a dollar still. It's expensive, but I'll lend it to you. It's a pretty good end of the day. Anyway, sorry.

Really? Yeah, finish. Oh, right, does anybody want to see the answer to the quiz? No, we can finish. How do you do? Well, you can actually do finish.

We'll put the end of the job. Sorry, don't. I'm not sure how I finished on this one, but... take it and stay behind.

Everybody should finish the quiz. My main concern is the chairs are put away. Yeah, you can look at the answers while you put the chairs away. Thank you.

[ 68 : 44 ] Thank you. Thank you.