



# NUCLEUS



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#### Editorial address

The Editor  
*Nucleus*  
Christian Medical Fellowship  
6 Marshalsea Road  
London SE1 1HL  
Tel 020 7234 9660  
Email [nucleus@cmf.org.uk](mailto:nucleus@cmf.org.uk)  
Web [www.cmf.org.uk](http://www.cmf.org.uk)

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**W**elcome to the first *Nucleus* of 2012. I hope it finds you well – living and speaking for Jesus, abiding in his unending love and peace.

Unity is a powerful virtue for any team or group of people working towards a common goal or purpose. This is especially true for the children of God.<sup>1</sup> When thinking about unity in the body of Christ, one of my favourite scriptures is Psalm 133: 'How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! ...For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore'.<sup>2</sup> Yet sometimes this proves difficult, especially when Christians disagree.

This edition features one of the more controversial subjects among Christians – but one that is central to our calling as future doctors – healing. Of concern, we have recently heard on the news about patients dying because they were told by their pastors to stop medical treatment and 'just pray or have faith'.<sup>3</sup> We see daily many in our hospitals living broken lives and dying in despair. This raises many questions, and highlights differing perspectives on the complexities of health and healing. We have published these articles to encourage, to provoke thought and to challenge misconceptions. CMF members hold a variety of views on this issue and there is no single 'CMF answer'. As always in *Nucleus*, all articles are consistent with biblical truth, but do express authors' own opinions.

Unity does not mean uniformity, and is not mere tolerance. God has designed, rejoices in, and uses diversity.<sup>4</sup> As medics with a basic knowledge of human anatomy, we understand well the diversity of tissue types and organs in the human body. They are structured differently for different functions. Wouldn't it be absurd if, for example, the liver protested that the skeletal muscles should look like it, and refused to work in the same body that the legs are attached to because the legs look and function differently? All organs need each other, being joined to one body and receiving instruction from the head. I believe this is the framework that Christians should also work in – being of one mind.<sup>5</sup>

So enjoy reading all the articles. I encourage you to think critically. For us to be heroes of the faith and not heretics, we should refer especially to the Bible – our ultimate benchmark for truth. We should listen carefully, especially to those with whom we don't agree (checking references). Only then can we understand one another accurately, engage meaningfully and correct each other where appropriate.

May the Lord give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, and may he enlighten the eyes of your heart as you read.<sup>6</sup> If you wish to respond to any articles, write new ones or give general feedback, please write to me – [vongai.madanire@cmf.org.uk](mailto:vongai.madanire@cmf.org.uk) I would love to hear from you. ■

## REFERENCES

1. Philippians 2:1-4
2. Psalm 133:1,3 (NIV)
3. BBC News 17 October 2011. [bbc.in/mZn1Gt](http://bbc.in/mZn1Gt)
4. 1 Corinthians 12:12, Revelation 5:9
5. Ephesians 4:1-6
6. Ephesians 1:15-23

# Joseph, Chief of Staff

Alexandra Roche reports on the 2012 CMF National Student Conference

**A**s medical students, we all have a dream. We dream of being able to alleviate people's suffering and having the privilege of listening to their concerns.

Although we may not want to admit it, perhaps we also dream of power; of white coats, stethoscopes and having other people look up to us and respect us as doctors. These are often the dreams and aspirations that get us through the harsh reality of being a student, from being at the bottom of the ladder on the wards by day and slaving away over mountains of textbooks by night, not to mention the other challenges life throws at us along the way.

Joseph's story also started with a dream. Over three talks at the CMF National Student Conference in February, John Lennox (Professor of Mathematics at Oxford University, Fellow in Mathematics and Philosophy of Science at Green Templeton College, Oxford and Adjunct Professor of the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics) brought the story of Joseph right alongside the lives of us 21st century medical students.

Joseph's journey was not an easy one. He went from being sold as a slave, to becoming head of Potiphar's household, to prisoner, to prison warden until finally he became Vizier of Egypt. As John Lennox said, at the end of Joseph's suffering, the word of the Lord proved him true. Joseph trusted the Lord. Could he have held the same wisdom and integrity without facing the suffering along the way? Likewise, we as medical students should embrace any hardships that come our way, trusting fully in the Lord through it all, for this may be the way that God moulds us



into the doctors and the people that he wants us to be. As an older graduate-entry medical student who has a long-winding tale of my own, the story of Joseph fills me with encouragement to trust God for the future.

John Lennox also unearthed parallels in Joseph's story that illustrate the importance of confidentiality, reliability and integrity. He warned us about favouritism. He made us question the basis of our ethics, our motivations and our attitudes for using our gifts, and took stories of Joseph's family to illustrate how God can use many situations to his glory. There are too many beautiful examples to list fully here - why not download the talks at [www.cmf.org.uk/media](http://www.cmf.org.uk/media)?

Abi Boys, a doctor currently training in dentistry to become a maxillofacial surgeon, frequently travels overseas. Her conference address brought examples of the incredible work that she and overseas medical teams do. While the lack of medical care in the world's poorer nations means that many cases she has dealt with have been heart-breaking, it was mind-blowing seeing the ways in which God has often provided for her patients in these situations.



Alexandra Roche is a medical student at St George's University of London



one moment feel out of place. I found that the teaching was as relevant to me as to any 18 year old, and I was warmly welcomed by the other students.

Everyone came from different places and backgrounds, including 26 international students. We each had a different story to tell, but we all shared a common faith in Jesus. The 'on the couch' interviews also gave us a chance to get to know some of the CMF team.



Following on from what we had been learning about Joseph, it was a more current reminder of the importance of trusting in our Lord.

We were also spoilt for choice in teaching with 15 seminars, ranging from medical topics such as psychiatry and reproductive technologies, to more practical issues such as productivity and



procrastination and the involvement of medics within the church - all geared to help equip us in our future lives as Christian doctors. A question and answer session with John Lennox further helped us think through some difficult questions about our faith.

Whilst the teaching was inspiring, the other ingredients of a great conference are the people, the entertainment and the food (which was delicious)! At the age of 29, I was worried that I would be a fossil. However, I did not for

As for the activities, the snow gave a chilly but stunning backdrop to our afternoon walk across the fields on Saturday afternoon. For those who preferred to stay warm, there were sports in the hall, rugby on TV, board games, a large bookstall to browse and general mingling. For the unfortunate few like myself that had an exam on the Monday after the conference, there was also time to catch up on some last minute revision!

I opted to start with the quiz on Saturday night. The quiz was slightly unconventional (including a doughnut eating competition), but the unexpected is more exciting! Buzzing from the sugary rewards of my team's quiz victory, I then joined the barn dancing and we were stripping the willow until midnight! For those who wanted a quieter evening, there was a film and discussion, and some watched the rugby from earlier in the day.

For my first CMF conference, it was an amazing experience. I came away feeling challenged from the talks and seminars, refreshed and encouraged from being able to praise God with nearly 400 other medical students, and hungry for more. I can't wait to come back! ■

## funding for NHS Chaplaincy

Data compiled by the National Secular Society (NSS) suggests that £29 million is spent annually on hospital chaplains. Using data obtained via the Freedom of Information Act, the NSS claims that if all NHS trusts reduced their spending on chaplaincy to match those who spent the least, £18.5 million could be saved. It is claimed that this could fund 1,000 nursing assistants each year, or a new community hospital. NSS analysis contended that some of the 'best-performing' hospitals were the ones which spent the least on chaplaincy services, leading to a proposal for hospital chaplains to be funded through charitable trusts, supported by churches and their parishioners.

Bishops in the Church of England emphasise that such expenditure is a minute proportion of the NHS budget, yet offers comprehensive care to patients at crucial moments in life (also reflected in the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidelines for dying patients), as well as to relatives and staff. Remarking that hospitals would be 'poorer' places without chaplains, Rt Rev Mike Hill, Bishop of Bristol, has said, 'As with much in life, the true value of our chaplains might only be appreciated if they were no longer present. Every effort ought to be made, and is being made, to resist secularist calls for chaplains to be excluded from the NHS.'

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*dailymail.co.uk, 28 Feb 2012;*

*telegraph.co.uk, 10 Feb 2012*

## abortion equivalent to infanticide?

A recent article in the *Journal of Medical Ethics* has argued that killing babies after birth is no different to abortion. Entitled *After-Birth Abortion: Why should the Baby Live?* the piece argues that 'the moral status of an infant is equivalent to that of a fetus in the sense that both lack those properties that justify the attribution of a right to life to an individual'. Authors Giubilini and Minerva have both worked with the journal's editor Professor Julian Savulescu, Director of the Oxford Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics. Savulescu has in the past famously argued against the doctors' right to conscientious objection.

Savulescu claimed that the authors had received death threats, but also admitted that the article may strengthen the case against abortion, saying that 'many people will argue on this basis that abortion should be recriminalised'.

CMF member Dr Trevor Stammers, Programme Director in Bioethics at St Mary's University College, commented: 'If a mother does smother her child with a blanket, we say "it doesn't matter, she can get another one." Is that what we want to happen? What these young colleagues are spelling out is what would be the inevitable end point of a road that ethical philosophers in the States and Australia have all been treading for a long time and there is certainly nothing new.'

Referring to the term 'after-birth abortion', Dr Stammers added: 'This is just verbal manipulation that is not philosophy. I might refer to abortion henceforth as antenatal infanticide.'

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*guardian.co.uk, 29 Feb 2012;*

*telegraph.co.uk, 29 Feb 2012*

## Christian GP appeals against sacking from Home Office

**M**anchester GP Dr Hans-Christian Raabe has been granted a judicial review against Home Secretary Theresa May, following his dismissal from a voluntary position on the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) in 2011. Having practised in an area where drug misuse is high, Dr Raabe had volunteered for the one day a week post, yet was dismissed before attending a single meeting. He had been clear in his opposition to 'harm reduction' approaches to dealing with drug misuse, which he believed to have failed. He was well known to be a Christian, and was widely involved in his local community.

The reason given for the withdrawal of his appointment was his contribution to a paper published in Canada in 2005, which referred to previous scientific literature looking at a possible link between homosexuality and paedophilia. Ironically, the Home Office had made the same point as the 2005 paper in one of its own documents. Dr Raabe has refused to retract his paper, saying 'I cannot retract scientific evidence...and if I did so, I would have to ask the Home Office to retract its own paper too.'

CMF Chief Executive Peter Saunders commented: 'That Dr Raabe should be sacked from his role as a drugs advisor on the basis of his expressed opinions on an entirely unrelated issue (homosexuality) is itself at very least unfair. But the fact that the data he quoted were actually derived from peer-reviewed scientific journal articles (including one quoted approvingly by the Home Office itself!), and on a matter where experts agree that there is a diversity of learned opinion, makes his dismissal both outrageous and inexcusable.'

In a democratic and multicultural society, people should be free to hold, express and act in accordance with their beliefs and convictions rather than being pushed out of public life.

Dr Raabe has been treated appallingly by the Home Office. I wish him all the very best in his appeal.'

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*dailymail.co.uk 28 January 2012;*

*cmfblog.org.uk 29 January 2012*

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## three banned from carrying out abortions after sex-selection allegations

**T**he General Medical Council (GMC) has suspended Dr Raj Mohan, who was filmed agreeing to authorise an abortion requested solely because of the gender of the baby. The GMC is clear that such action is not only illegal, but puts at risk the registration of any doctors involved. Two other doctors have been barred from authorising or carrying out abortions following similar revelations.

Secret filming at clinics in Birmingham and Manchester uncovered the consultations. In one, a woman who said she was 'not looking to have this baby at the moment' because it was a girl, was told by the doctor 'I don't ask questions, if you want a termination, you want a termination.'

A further case has come to light in which a counsellor working for the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) agreed to book an abortion in the full knowledge that the reason given was the gender of the baby. In this instance, the clinic manager became aware of the case, and the booking was cancelled.

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*telegraph.co.uk 24 February 2012; 11 March 2012*

## Stephen Hawking turns 70

**O**n 8 January 2012, famous scientist Stephen Hawking was preparing to give a 'rare public lecture' celebrating his 70th birthday in Cambridge. 49 years ago, no medical practitioner could have predicted or expected this to happen, given he had just been diagnosed with a form of Motor Neurone Disease (MND). He was given a few years to live, but the Professor of Physics has defied all medical expectations since.

He has continued to work, becoming world renowned in the study of black holes and the early universe. Kitty Ferguson has written about his life and work, describing him as an energetic person with the spirit of fun and adventure. She commends him on his personality and willpower in dealing with his disability; 'The fact that he is able to live with his disability and it's just the most astounding, good-humoured, dismissal of it. It's not as though he's triumphing over it, it's just as though it's not there'.

Professor Kip Thorne, formerly of the California Institute of Technology and a collaborator with Hawking, also spoke of the good that came out of Professor Hawking when he lost the use of his hands. 'He compensated by training himself to manipulate complex shapes and topologies in his mind at great speed. That ability has enabled him to see the solutions to deep physics problems that nobody else could solve, and that he probably would not have been able to solve, himself, without his newfound skill.'

Away from physics, Hawking published *The Grand Design* in 2010, in which he argues against the existence of God. Oxford Professor of

Mathematics John Lennox published a critique of this approach entitled *God and Stephen Hawking: Whose design is it anyway?* in 2011.

*guardian.co.uk 8 January 2012*

## Tony Nicklinson case to be heard

**S**troke victim Tony Nicklinson has been granted permission to go ahead with a legal case in which he hopes to get permission for a doctor to one day end his life. He seeks to establish that a 'common law defence of necessity' would be admissible against any murder charge arising from such action. Having suffered a stroke in 2005, Mr Nicklinson suffers from 'locked-in' syndrome, and can only communicate via blinks.

The Ministry of Justice had tried to stop the case proceeding, arguing that such a decision was for parliament rather than the courts. David Perry QC, representing the Ministry of Justice at an earlier hearing argued that Mr Nicklinson 'is saying the court should positively authorise and permit as lawful the deliberate taking of his life...That is not, and cannot be, the law of England and Wales unless Parliament were to say otherwise.'

Mr Nicklinson's wife said 'If you knew the kind of person he was before, life like this is unbearable for him. He realises as he gets older things are going to get worse...20 years ago Tony would have died. But people are being kept alive with such terrible conditions. Medical practice has become so much better but the law has not progressed with that'. ■

*telegraph.co.uk, 12 March 2012*



# should we all evangelise?

Of course! says **Bernard Palmer**

**A** Christian who is unconcerned for those without Christ is himself in serious need of help. Even atheists understand this. Penn Jillette is an avowed and vocal atheist. He is one half of the famous comic illusionist act, 'Penn and Teller'. One day a polite but impressive man tried to share the Christian good news with him. This is what Penn had to say about the experience:

'I've always said that I don't respect people who don't proselytise. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there is a heaven and hell, and people could be going to hell, or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think that it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward... How much do you have to hate someone not to proselytise? How much do you have to hate someone to believe that everlasting life is

possible and not tell them that? If I believed, beyond a shadow of doubt, that a truck was coming at you and you didn't believe it, and that truck was bearing down on you, there is a certain point where I tackle you. And this is more important than that!'<sup>1</sup>

Archbishop William Temple commented: 'No-one can possess (or rather, be indwelt by the Spirit of God) and keep that Spirit to himself. Where the Spirit is, he flows forth; if there is no flowing forth, he is not there.'

Jesus said, "'Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.'" By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive' (John 7:38-39). ■

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**Bernard Palmer** is a consultant surgeon in Hertfordshire

## REFERENCE

1. Available on YouTube [bit.ly/3Q1toT](http://bit.ly/3Q1toT)

# when Christians disagree

Laurence Crutchlow asks why we disagree and suggests some solutions

**T**hey had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company...'  
(Acts 15:39).

Disagreement is common. We're used to seeing politicians wag their fingers across the despatch box, or to hearing differing opinions about how best to treat a patient. But sometimes we assume that none of this will happen in the Christian world. After all, we have so much in common, don't we?

So we might expect the quote from Acts at the top to refer to those who persecuted the early Church, or to new believers. Does it surprise you to learn that the protagonists are Paul and Barnabas? Yes, the same Paul who wrote 13 New Testament books. The same Barnabas who taught with Paul at Antioch, where the term 'Christian' first arose (Acts 11:19-30).

Paul and Barnabas were not alone. Other famous disagreements in the New Testament include that between Paul and Peter over Gentiles following Jewish customs (Galatians 2:11-21), within the Corinthian church over who followed which leader (1 Corinthians 3), and that between Euodia and Syntyche in Philippi (Philippians 4:2).

## today's disagreements

Has anything changed? After all, there have been nearly 2,000 years of church history to resolve disputes. Yet there seem to be more Christian denominations than ever.<sup>1</sup> Topics raised at a seminar on this subject at CMF's 2012 National Student Conference included women bishops, shopping on Sundays, homosexuality, and rituals in church, along with medical questions such as contraception.



The most obvious modern disagreements are often apparently practical - for example over styles of music, choice of Bible translation, or mode of baptism. Yet often doctrinal questions over the Holy Spirit, or exactly what baptism means, underlie some problems.

Some lifestyle-based differences vary in their importance between different countries - for example on alcohol, appropriate dress for Christians, or watching television. Medics have to deal with some specific questions, such as when human life begins, supernatural healing, or harm reduction (for example giving methadone to heroin addicts), and not everyone agrees on the answers.

## why do Christians disagree?

Sometimes we don't agree on the basis for Christian truth and knowledge. If the Bible is not seen as the supreme authority in matters of faith and conduct, differences are inevitable. We'll consider this first, and then turn to trickier questions over why Christians who do accept the Bible, as the ultimate authority, still disagree.



Laurence Crutchlow is CMF Associate Head of Student Ministries and a GP in London

## do we believe the Bible?

A detailed defence of why we should trust the Bible as God's word is beyond the scope of this article<sup>2</sup> - but, in short, we believe the Bible to be true because Jesus believed it to be, and gave his authority to it. We can be confident that the copies we have are faithful to the originals,<sup>3</sup> and that the words of Jesus were faithfully recorded (John 14:26).

Although we often assume it is just 'liberal' theologians

who don't believe the Bible, we need to ask ourselves whether we really use it as 'the supreme authority in matters of faith and conduct',<sup>4</sup> or whether we quietly discard it when it says something difficult.

## we believe the Bible but we still disagree

There are three main reasons why people who trust in the Bible still disagree - we'll briefly consider each.

### *knowing what the Bible says*

The Bible contains 66 books, written by 40 authors over a period of 1,400 years. There are numerous genres of writing, some of which are rarely seen today (notably apocalyptic writing),<sup>5</sup> and a lot of words (774,747 - though it depends on language and version of course!).<sup>6</sup> So it is not surprising that we don't always know exactly what it says without doing some research.

One common reason for not knowing what the Bible says is that we haven't read it! In the same seminar at CMF National Student Conference, less than a third of participants had read every book of the Bible once, and only a handful had read through it all more than once. Let's at least ensure before confidently saying 'The Bible says ...' that we have read

it all. Four chapters a day is enough to read the Old Testament once and New Testament twice over a year. Free plans to help you are available from the CMF Office,<sup>7</sup> or as part of many Bible apps for smartphones.<sup>8</sup>

### *authorities outside Scripture*

These fall into three categories - church teaching and tradition, reason, and personal experience. All may be helpful in themselves, but are not infallible. If any of these are placed above Scripture as an authority, conflict may ensue.

**Church teaching** covers everything from ancient texts like the Apostle's Creed, through to

modern local and national Church leaders. It also includes Christian books, CMF literature, and discussions with friends and family. Of course the Holy Spirit can use all these sources to help us better understand God's word. But people can of course be wrong - even Peter had to be corrected by Paul (Galatians 2:11). So all teaching needs to be checked against Scripture. In this digital age we need to be particularly careful of teaching posted online where we may have little or no knowledge of who is teaching us.

**Reason** is of course important. God's new covenant will be written on our hearts,<sup>9</sup> and we need to use reason if weighing teaching or prophecy. But as fallen creatures, our conscience can be blunted, and our reasoning may be fallible. 'I have an inner peace about this' can actually mean 'I do this wrong thing so often it no longer bothers me' (cf 1 Timothy 4:2). We can be manipulated - 'I feel convicted of' may mean 'someone keeps telling me I shouldn't ...'. Scripture is again the only yardstick - and reasoning that has come from God will not contradict it.

**Personal experience** encompasses prophecy and 'words of knowledge'. Such things were common enough in the New Testament. Whether or not these things operate today (and if so how) is itself a frequent matter of disagreement between Christians! However we answer such questions, true prophecy will exalt Christ (1 John 4:1-3), edify the church (1 Corinthians 14:4), and be accompanied by a godly life (Matthew 7:15-20). It must be tested against Scripture (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21). Anything claiming to be 'from the Lord' that contradicts Scripture is wrong.

### *Interpreting the Bible*

Usually the subject of whole terms at

theological colleges rather than a single paragraph, this is complex!<sup>10</sup> In short, the Bible is authoritative as originally

The Bible is not exhaustive. Though it tells us what we need to know for our salvation, it won't answer every question we have

given, rather than in one particular translation. Not every action is affirmed - the fact that David was a great leader does not mean that we should follow his example of adultery with Bathsheba (see 2 Samuel 11). The Bible is not exhaustive. Though it tells us what we need to know for our salvation, it won't answer every question we have. Historical and textual context is vital. Not all commands are for everyone at all times. This is most obvious with the sacrificial laws in Leviticus - but similar mistakes can be made with the New Testament, particularly with Acts (about which I've previously written in *Nucleus*).<sup>11</sup> Disagreement is common when interpretation of certain passages is disputed - as is common in debates over women's ministry. In such cases, studying the passages concerned together will at least help us to understand the others' position, even if our opinion doesn't change.

## how do we deal with disagreements?

Assuming some disagreement to be inevitable, how can we continue to worship and witness together when there are problems? There is no easy answer, but the following approaches will help.

### *listen, listen, listen*

Do we actually know what the disagreement is? Labels used to describe people's positions often don't help. Some immediately assume that anyone who doesn't agree with their interpretation of the Bible therefore doesn't respect the Bible's authority, and term them 'liberal' - often offending them, and closing off discussion. Not all words mean the same thing to everyone. 'Creationist' may simply mean someone who believes God created the world, but increasingly it is used to define someone who holds to a literal 'six-day' reading of Genesis 1. We need to ask questions, and genuinely listen to the answers, before going further. At least some disagreements will turn out to be misunderstandings.

### *Levels of disagreement*

Some disagreements matter less than others. Disputes over whether a Christian should play rugby on a Sunday are very different from questions over whether Jesus physically rose from the dead. I would suggest four 'categories' of disagreement, with an example of each:

1. A different gospel - a really fundamental departure from orthodox Bible teaching that puts faith at risk. Paul and Peter's disagreement over Jewish customs in Galatians 2 falls into this category. A modern example might be that of David Jenkins, formerly Bishop of Durham, who famously questioned the physical nature of the resurrection. Many groups like CMF or UCCF have a 'doctrinal basis' that outlines what they believe to avoid falling into this category.
2. 'Brother or sister, you're wrong' - issues where there is a disagreement over something important, but there is no question of 'a different gospel'. Many of the issues addressed in 1 Corinthians fall into this category. Today this would encompass issues where there are clear answers in Scripture, such as sexual conduct - even though we acknowledge that sometimes believers don't agree on what the answers are. The overall rights and wrongs of many medical issues fall into this category; Scripture is clear about the value of life, for example.
3. Issues where disagreements are expected and conscience is important - the discussion in Romans 14 over meat sacrificed to idols illustrates this. The actual issue didn't appear to matter too much, but the response to it was vital. An issue that might seem irrelevant to us may be deeply sensitive for other believers, and we need to respect sensibilities in these situations. Modern examples are drinking alcohol, or exact amounts of financial giving. Medically, practical responses often fall into this category - for example most CMF members would say that abortion is wrong in principle, but may disagree over exactly how

involved a Christian doctor can be in the abortion process.

4. Issues that really don't matter very much - the Bible is not exhaustive. Some issues are just not worth bothering about. This might be 'idle curiosity' issues, such as life on other planets, or simple matters like 'which topping do I order on my pizza?' Yet we've all met people who do appear to try to 'spiritualise' these things. If Scripture is genuinely silent on the matter, then disagreements are likely.

### *common hazards*

Using categories helps us sort out what is important and what is not. But we often get categories wrong. 'Hard-liners' tend to push issues up a category, whilst others may push issues down a category. Paul suggests a relatively small number of things should be in category one:

*'For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.'* (1 Corinthians 15:3-5)

We need to avoid making disputes over clearly secondary issues into 'different gospels'. In medical ethics, a more common problem is assuming that all issues are in category three - 'matters of disagreement'. Although you can't look up cloning or euthanasia in a concordance, the Bible has much to say about the value of human life. So often the underlying rights and

## Want to know more?

CMF held a day conference on this topic in Oxford in November 2011. Links to recordings can be found at [www.cmf.org.uk/media](http://www.cmf.org.uk/media)

wrongs of these issues are in the second category, even if practical details may be in the third.

### *grace and future hope*

Not all disputes will go away! Even if we've listened, looked at Scripture together and realised that maybe the dispute isn't as important as we thought, it may still be there. We need to be gracious to one another. Paul tells Timothy to be kind and gentle in his handling of a very serious dispute (2 Timothy 2:14-26). How much more then, must we display these characteristics when dealing with disagreements between believers who have so much in common.

I often wonder if some of the questions over which I see disagreement will be answered in heaven. Some of them might be of course, but I've increasingly come to see that whether or not I get a perfect answer will pale into insignificance when I see God dwelling with us, and he himself being the light of heaven (Revelation 21:3,23). It is in this context of a future together in God's presence that disagreements between Christians here on earth must ultimately be seen. ■

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2. For a fuller treatment see [cmf.ji/yfXSQF](http://cmf.ji/yfXSQF)
3. For a fuller treatment see [cmf.ji/zjW0e9](http://cmf.ji/zjW0e9)
4. CMF membership basis
5. Much of Daniel, Revelation and parts of Ezekiel [bit.ly/qJ4DWh](http://bit.ly/qJ4DWh)
7. [cmf.ji/x8tZjo](http://cmf.ji/x8tZjo)
8. Blackwood C. The YouVersion Bible App. *Nucleus* 2011; Summer:13
9. Jeremiah 31:31-34
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# healing or cure?



Vongai Madanire is a clinical medical student at St George's, University of London and is the editor of *Nucleus*

**Vongai Madanire** shares a case and some personal thoughts

## case history

*Janet<sup>1</sup> is a 46-year-old accountant, wife, and mother to one boy and four girls. In the late 1990s she was diagnosed with Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD). Subsequently, repeated blood tests have shown a gradual decline in her renal function, though she was clinically well and needed no hospital admissions. She remained on anti-hypertensives and calcium supplements.*

*A marked decline in her renal function arose when she became pregnant with her youngest daughter in 2005. A letter from her consultant two years later said that she had 6-18 months to live, needed a transplant, and needed to receive dialysis whilst waiting. She expected that the burden of medical intervention would diminish her quality of life immensely. Following careful research and discussions with people undergoing the proposed treatment, she was pleasantly surprised by her findings that patients were not riddled with pain in bed or debilitated. Nevertheless, to her this was not healing. Therefore she declined to undergo both dialysis and transplantation.*

*As a Christian, Janet continued to trust and pray for healing. More than three years later, she is still alive and well; enjoying her family and engaging in her normal daily activities (including full-time work). Though she dislikes going for follow up appointments, she always attends and reports that doctors are stunned by her good physical condition and well-being. They say the medical test results do not match the person in front of them.*

*Despite this, one of her consultants has recently asked to speak to her daughter who is a medical student to seek her opinion on her treatment and prognosis. The consultant says*

*Janet will probably not live to see her daughter graduate from medical school, and not live to be a mother to her now six-year-old daughter. The consultant thinks she needs a psychiatric referral because of the decision that she is making: 'choosing death rather than life'.*

## my reflection

The story above is that of a real patient; a mother of a friend who is a medical student. Having explored the subject of divine healing during her Diploma in Christian Ministry, she shared her reflections and struggles on the subject with me. In light of my own experience (of God's healing for various pains and ailments through prayer), I have found this story very real and my friend's reflections useful and interesting in many ways. It brings about many questions: What is healing? Does God heal today? If he does, does he heal some conditions and not others? Does he heal some people and not others?

Is it possible to be healed even when one still physically has a disease? Could Janet be in blissful denial, or just using prayer and faith as a crutch?

## cure and healing

Cure is different from healing. 'Cure' involves bringing a medical condition or disease process to an end, while 'healing' is a movement towards health, which can happen instantly or over time. Health is difficult to define. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as 'a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'.<sup>2</sup> This is useful, but does not reflect the importance of spirituality.

When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. (Genesis 5:1b)

The Spirit of the Lord has made me the breath of life and the unity of living.

For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. (1 Tim. 4:4)

Perhaps the best all-encompassing definition views health as 'strength to be human'. Being human (and therefore healthy) can be described in terms of the relationship that one has with God, oneself, others and the environment. Ill-health would therefore arise when there are fractures and faults in these relationships.<sup>3</sup> Health is therefore linked to biblical concepts of wholeness and *shalom*.

God can bring about healing with physical cure through faith,<sup>4</sup> medicine or both. However some people can be cured without being



necessarily healed (for example a chest infection is cured, though the patient's relationship with God may not be healed). Equally, not everyone who is healed is physically cured. We live in a fallen world; full of evil, sickness, disease and death. The hope of a perfect state of health is in the promise of eternal union with God through Christ Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

Though Janet's renal function is now very poor, she believes she is healed and continues to pray for complete healing. I am not sure whether she means the same by healing as I suggest above, but I think it commendable that she has confidence that God has healed her (knowing fully that PKD is humanly incurable). She trusts that God will preserve her life until it's her appointed time to die, something that she will accept and peacefully rest in.

Janet is steadfast in her faith in God, and his sovereignty in determining what ultimately happens. Affirming her faith is not to say we should not take responsibility for our health wherever possible (indeed Janet still sees her doctors). We should of course keep physically healthy though exercising, seeking medical attention when necessary, and by learning how to deal with stress.

We should also build relationships with other people (for our psychosocial and emotional wellbeing) as well as nourish our spirits by reading the word of God and praying daily.

How will Janet's story affect my future practice?

We should be conscious of professional boundaries, the uncertainties and limits of medicine,

## Want to know more?



Andrew Fergusson's *Hard Questions About Health and Healing*, reviewed in *Nucleus* in July 2011, covers many of these issues in more depth. Normally priced at £8, it is available for just £4 on the CMF **12-12 scheme**.

[www.cmf.org.uk/students/1212.asp](http://www.cmf.org.uk/students/1212.asp)

and take care in carefully communicating with patients, trying to avoid bringing utter gloom or false hope. When a patient with capacity has sufficient information to make a decision, we should respect this, whether the choice has been made for religious or non-religious reasons (or both). Sometimes some patients' informed decisions will appear unwise or conflict with our clinical judgement and beliefs,<sup>6</sup> but patients are entitled to choose - even if it seems an 'unreasonable' demonstration of faith. Christians at all times however, ought not to 'be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

Janet's faith seems to enable her to do just that - God's peace has brought healing to her, even if not accompanied by cure. ■

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- Philippians 4:6-7

# should Christians engage in politics?

Mark Bowers says 'Yes!'

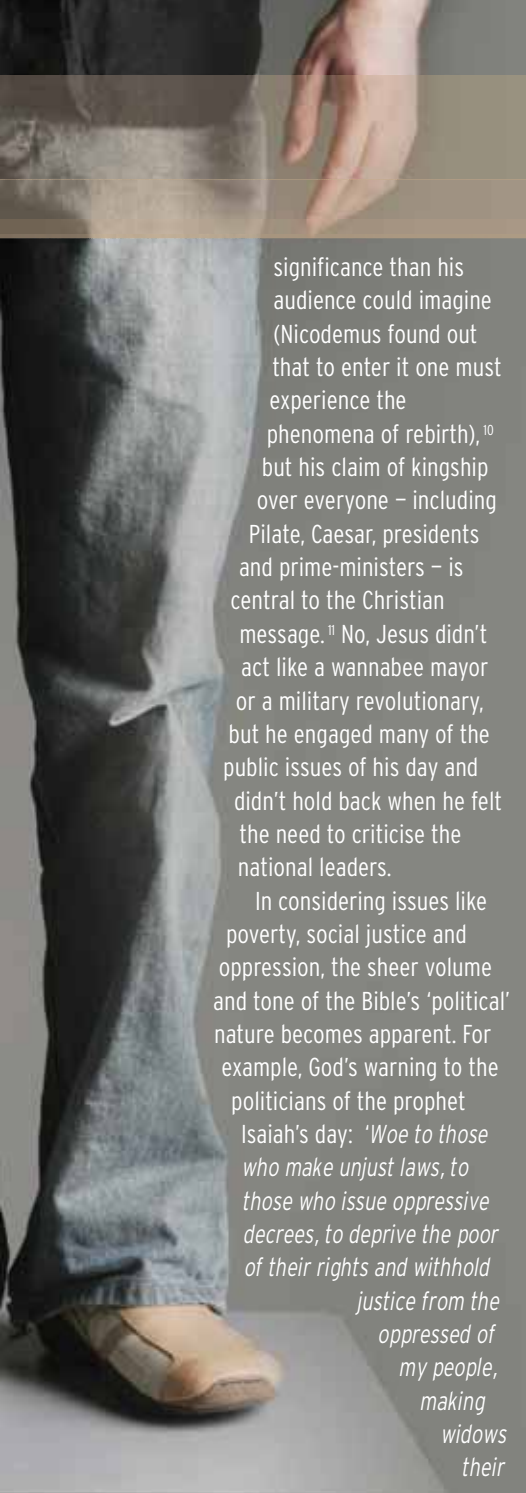
It is somewhat surprising that the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) rarely gets onto the six o'clock news. Its campaigns on behalf of endangered albatrosses and the protection of Devon's wild wetland are left largely unreported by mainstream media. I say 'surprising' because the RSPB has a larger membership than that of all the main political parties combined!<sup>1</sup> Yes it's true: political party membership is at rock bottom; scepticism rules the day, and 'politics' is very much a dirty word.

Despite this, politics continues to dominate the national imagination. Recently, its relationship with religion has come under attack. Some commentators have warned of the supposed lethality of mixing religion and politics.<sup>2</sup> They accuse Christian forays into the world of politics of being endeavours to suppress plurality and curtail freedoms. And surely, we murmur quietly in our pews, they have a point.

As Christians we are told not to become 'so well-adjusted to our culture that we fit into it without even thinking'<sup>3</sup> so before we score out politics from our possible career list, we first must ask ourselves what God has to say on the matter. Is there any foundation for Christian political engagement in the Bible? And if so, what does it look like?

When we study the Bible, we see many instances where things get political. At the time of the Old Testament, ancient Israel was a theocracy. Its society, economy and culture were largely shaped by divine guidance in the form of the *Torah* (the Jewish name for the first five books of the Bible). The Psalmist stated that 'The Lord is King!' And for ancient Israel, he really was!

By Jesus' time the political set up had changed significantly - but the politics was still there. In his early childhood, Jesus had a close shave with Herod the puppet ruler of the Roman Empire.<sup>4</sup> During his adult years, his disciples thought he was a revolutionary.<sup>5</sup> He made radical claims about the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, a significant seat of political power in the old theocracy.<sup>6</sup> Pharisees, Sadducees and Zealots (all political movements with differing visions for the nation) come into contact with the strange, new Rabbi from Nazareth at one time or another.<sup>7,8</sup> Indeed, Jesus' talk of the 'Kingdom of God' must have been very controversial in a land under foreign occupation.<sup>9</sup> Of course, the Kingdom Jesus spoke of was far greater in scope and



Mark Bowers is an intercalating medical student in Leeds

significance than his audience could imagine (Nicodemus found out that to enter it one must experience the phenomena of rebirth),<sup>10</sup> but his claim of kingship over everyone – including Pilate, Caesar, presidents and prime-ministers – is central to the Christian message.<sup>11</sup> No, Jesus didn't act like a wannabee mayor or a military revolutionary, but he engaged many of the public issues of his day and didn't hold back when he felt the need to criticise the national leaders.

In considering issues like poverty, social justice and oppression, the sheer volume and tone of the Bible's 'political' nature becomes apparent. For example, God's warning to the politicians of the prophet Isaiah's day: *'Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their*

*prey and robbing the fatherless.'*<sup>12</sup>

And in case the ancient Israelites were not sure what the consequence was for ignoring the poor, Ezekiel enlightened his listeners with a disconcerting spin on the famous story of Sodom's destruction: 'Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy.'<sup>13</sup>

If politics is about leadership and authority, the ultimate reality of Jesus' spiritual kingship urges Christians to engage with politics. And if politics is about how we relate to each other in society, then God's passion for the poor and oppressed should urge Christians to engage with politics, even if it is only to give a voice to those who have none.

**the call for Christian engagement in politics is clear, then. But what about medics like us? Is there really a political role for us in the careers God has led us into?**

For you, the challenge may be to ask prayerfully *'What am I really passionate about?'* William Wilberforce is best known as a Christian politician who significantly contributed to the ending of the transatlantic slave trade. But did you know he was also a founder of the Society for the Protection of Animals (later RSPCA)? And in his spare time he ran a major campaign for the restoration of politeness in England? Here was a man who had many passions and found himself able to use politics to achieve incredible goals.

One natural area of passion for the Christian medic is resource allocation. At the moment, the UK healthcare system is largely free at the

point of use - but is this sustainable? Are there any real alternatives and how would they affect the poorest in our nation? Besides financial issues, there are myriad concerns about NHS organisation, strategy and morale which all require godly wisdom and good leadership. If anyone should be passionately concerned about the issues that affect the health and welfare of millions, it should be Christian medics.

Then there are the ethical issues that arise in our field. God created each of us, both those who believe in Christ and those who do not.<sup>14</sup> We who have come to know and believe in his love for us<sup>15</sup> must trust that his commands are given with good intent and for our ultimate benefit. To be silent about the gift of his law, then, is not loving! Rather, to be truly faithful to the Great Commission<sup>16</sup> and to genuinely love those around us, we must declare to society everything that our Lord taught us.<sup>17</sup> When appropriate, this must include God's eternal principles about the value of life, the structure of the family, and the image of God in man.

### how can we respond to the call for engagement in politics?

National organisations like Care for the Family ([careforthefamily.org.uk](http://careforthefamily.org.uk)) and Christian Concern ([christianconcern.com](http://christianconcern.com)) send out newsletters

and run events just for students. There's also the fantastic CMF Summer School in June where you can get schooled in ethics, missions and writing.<sup>18</sup> I know I appreciated the ideas I got there about introducing my faith into my conversation, my medical school, and society in general.

But even before you get that far, CMF has a fantastic collection of material that will help you find out for yourself what you believe about some of the big, difficult issues in medicine. For a great introduction, check out Matt Lillicrap's article: Working out a biblical ethic.<sup>19</sup> Or for a more in-depth look, check out the CMF classic *Matters of Life and Death*.<sup>20</sup> It is just possible that knowing what you believe about these issues may be the start of your journey into the world of politics. ■

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# what? where? who?



Giles Cattermole  
is CMF Head of  
Student Ministries

Giles Cattermole considers guidance and God's will

## PART 1: God guides, we follow

This is the first part of a three-part series on guidance. Parts 2 (Godly wisdom) and 3 (Godly decision-making) will be published in the Summer and Winter issues of *Nucleus*, and will give more practical application of the wisdom below.

What sort of things do we seek guidance for? Perhaps for your career, what specialty you should do, or whether you should work overseas in medical mission. Perhaps you're thinking you shouldn't be doing medicine at all; in my first year at medical school I felt so out of my depth that I thought I ought to give up and do maths. Some of you may be feeling the same way, even if it's not maths that you'd switch to. Some of you may have been advised that you're wasting your time in medicine, and should be in full-time paid Christian ministry. Or maybe you want guidance about relationships; who is the right person for me? Should I get married anyway? There are all sorts of things for which we might seek direction: what house to live in; what church to go to; how to balance time between work, friends, church, sport, leisure and how to spend money.

And there are all sorts of ways that you might be advised to look for guidance. After all, in the Bible God spoke 'through the prophets at many times and in various ways' (Hebrews 1:1). He spoke through angels (Genesis 19), dreams (Daniel 2), and visions (Acts 10); to Samuel audibly and directly (1 Samuel 3), to Moses through a burning bush (Exodus 3), and to Balaam through a donkey (Numbers 22). He guided his people in fire and cloud (Exodus 13), and the Magi by a star (Matthew 2). Gideon was convinced of God's guidance by a miraculous fleece (Judges 6); the apostles sought guidance in drawing lots (Acts 1).

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he is both loving and sovereign:  
he loves us, has a plan for us,  
and will carry it out

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But much of God's guidance was also 'behind the scenes', without the person being aware of how God was guiding them. Some of God's plans are revealed, some remain secret (Deuteronomy 29:29). Joseph went from pit to Potiphar to prison to palace ... without any suggestion that he knew what was happening next. Yet he was able to look back at it all, and see that despite the evil of his brothers, God had planned it for a purpose (Genesis 50:20). Guidance was recognised retrospectively, but not prospectively. The same is true for us. I can look back at my life and see how God has led me to where I am now; how he brought me and my wife together; how he led me through different jobs and homes; how one step prepared me for the next. But most of the time, I had little idea of what was coming next. This is especially true of our own conversions: before

we knew Christ, we were spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:5); we didn't know his loving guidance - but looking back, we can see how God used our situations, our backgrounds, the people who spoke to us, the books we read, in order to bring us to salvation.

## God guides

Regardless of whether we perceive God's guidance in advance or not, the point is that our God guides. He is in control, and he cares for us. He is in control of the whole sweep of creation (Daniel 4:35), of his salvation plan (Acts 2:23), and of everyday details like the grass growing, or the hairs on our heads (Psalm 104:10-15, Matthew 10:29-30). What he plans will come to pass (Isaiah 55:11); God is sovereign. And he cares for his people like a shepherd (Psalm 80:1, 23:1-3). He has good plans for our future (Jeremiah 29:11). God is loving. If he were sovereign and unloving, we would not wish to be guided by him. If he were loving but not sovereign, there would be no point in being guided by him. But he is both loving and sovereign: he loves us, has a plan for us, and will carry it out.

## God's goal

If God guides, what's the destination? What is his goal for creation and for his people? Ephesians 1:3-14 tells us that it's all for the praise of God's glory (v6,12,14); that God's will, pleasure and purpose is to bring all creation together under the rule of Christ (v10); and that his goal for us in Christ is to be adopted as his sons (v5), to be redeemed and forgiven (v7), to be holy and blameless (v4), and to receive our guaranteed inheritance (v14). God's plan for us is to be made like Jesus (Romans 8:29), to do the good works he's planned for us to do

(Ephesians 2:10), as we look forward to the inheritance that never fades (1 Peter 1:4). And God will make this happen; he will bring this plan to completion (Philippians 1:6).

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our goals for our lives should be the same as God's. To be in Christ, being made like Christ, as we prepare to be with him for eternity

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## our role

So if God has a good plan for our lives, that he will bring about as part of his restoration of all creation under Christ, to the glory of God, then our role must surely be to trust his plan, and follow it praying that God's will be done (Matthew 6:10) and seeking first God's kingdom (Matthew 6:33). Having praised God's purposes in Ephesians 1, Paul goes on to pray that we would know God and know the hope to which he's called us (v17-18). Knowing God is not passive or merely intellectual - it's active and personal. It means trusting him, and obeying him. Our role is to understand God's plan for us, and live it out! We're to be people of faith and love (v15). We might not understand how God is getting us to his destination, but he is sovereign and we are to have confidence in him; that he will get us there. We know what the destination is and that we are to grow in holiness and maturity, to become more like Christ, as we are made ready for heaven. God is sovereign: he has a plan which he will complete. We are responsible: to know God's plan and follow it, to know God and obey him in the power of the Holy Spirit.

## wisdom

Our goals for our lives should be the same as God's. To be in Christ, being made like Christ, as we prepare to be with him for eternity, when all creation is brought under his rule to the praise of God's glory. But our goals are often quite different: I want to marry the right person, get the right job, and live in the right place. God is of course in control of all those things, and he cares deeply about me and the choices I make. But we need to realise that marriage, career or home are not the end-goals themselves; they are things which might help or hinder us as we seek God's goals.

Understanding how our decisions about the stuff of every-day living fit into God's plan for us, and living accordingly, is what the Bible calls wisdom. Paul asks that we would be given the Spirit of wisdom (Ephesians 1:17). We're told in Proverbs (4:5) to 'get wisdom'. In the next article in this series, we'll think more about what it means to be wise.

In the meantime, keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. Pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe (Ephesians 1:17-19). ■

# praying for the sick

**Bernard Palmer** examines our approach

**J**on Farrar was a very good friend of mine. He loved sport and was an accomplished athlete. Football, hockey, squash, tennis, cycling, swimming, running, 'Iron Man races' and off-piste skiing were his delight. He had become a Christian as a young man whilst travelling the world 'to find himself'.

He met some Christians in Spain who started him thinking about the claims of Jesus. He gradually became convinced and committed his life to Christ. After returning to this country he trained as a primary school teacher. He rose to be a headmaster and his school won a national 'school of the year' award. Then Jon's speech became gradually more slurred. He noticed some twitching of muscles in his legs and arms. He felt that he was getting weaker. He couldn't swallow so easily. The dreaded diagnosis was made. He had progressive motor neurone disease. We prayed for him regularly. He was anointed with oil at his request. He discussed the option of euthanasia but rejected this as not being honouring to his Saviour or to the Church. So many people prayed but his disease relentlessly progressed. He needed a gastrostomy tube so that he could be fed. Significantly, as he became weaker and could only communicate through a voice machine, his passion increased that his old friends should hear the gospel. He became weaker and weaker. What a heart-wrenching sight it was to see such a previously fit athletic, able man become so







Bernard Palmer is a consultant surgeon in Hertfordshire

weak and dependent. Why had God, who according to the Bible is all powerful, not intervened?

Another close friend in our church had married a beautiful girl from the Philippines. Just a few months after the marriage she became very ill. She was diagnosed as having acute myelocytic leukaemia. She received aggressive chemotherapy but the disease affected her brain and she was not the same woman again. The church prayed. Her Filipino friends, who were great believers in the idea that what was claimed would be given by God, prayed fervently. Even when she was terminally ill and comatose they still expected a miraculous healing. But she died leaving behind a bereft husband and puzzled friends. Why had God not intervened? Some suggested that she died because we had not had enough faith to see a supernatural miracle.

I find it interesting that some public faith healers put on a forceful persona when they are 'on stage'. They appear to be acting and appear to be using very strong psychological techniques to influence people. The preaching is emotive and insistent. The speech is confident and forceful. The music is rhythmical and repetitive. People are praying all around, often making strange noises. Claims of supernatural knowledge abound with statements such as: 'God is telling me that there is someone here with a bad back.' Yet when I read about Jesus he did not behave in this way.

There have been documented cases where people have died from treatable conditions after being told they had been healed. One

often-cited US case from 1973, exposed in a 1980s documentary, involved Larry and Lucky Parker, who attended a 'Faith Assembly' that had such teaching. Their eleven-year-old son became ill and weak. Their response was to pray and, when there was no improvement, to pray harder. He died of a diabetic coma. The parents were charged with both involuntary manslaughter and child abuse. Subsequently the parents changed their views and wrote a book called, *We Let Our Son Die* in which they admit that they were wrong.<sup>1</sup>

Philip Yancey tells the true story of a faith healer from the United States who led a healing campaign in Cambodia where there are few Christians. It was very well advertised throughout the country. At great personal cost many sick people travelled to Phnom Penh for the rally. One of the consequences of the Vietnam War is that one in 200 Cambodians has had an amputation because of the many landmines used. Such people flocked to the crusade. However when no amputees were healed a riot broke out in the soccer stadium. The evangelist had to be rescued by an army helicopter. Later the angry crowd besieged the evangelist's hotel forcing him to flee the country.<sup>2</sup> How do such episodes honour the Lord Jesus? Have those attending the crusade learned the Christian gospel that they can be forgiven and put right with God because Jesus came and died for them?

## the benefits of faith

Evidence from over 1,200 studies and 400 reviews show that there is undoubted health benefit resulting from having a faith. 81% of

these studies show benefit and only 4% showed harm.<sup>3</sup> In one such study 21,204 American adults were followed up for nine years. Much information was collected, including religious activities. Income levels and education had surprisingly little effect on mortality, but those who attended church lived seven years longer than those who did not. For black people this benefit was 14 years. The researchers attributed this to a variety of causes. Having a faith is associated with healthier life styles and stronger relationships; those with a firm faith tend to drink less, smoke less, use less drugs and are less promiscuous sexually.<sup>4</sup> These factors are not easy to dissociate, but it is becoming increasingly clear that faith itself does contribute to health. Other studies have shown that those with faith make more rapid recovery from operations and heart attacks.

In the realm of psychiatric disease there is much misunderstanding. It is commonly thought that religion is at the root of many of these illnesses. However the famous psychiatrist Carl Jung felt that it was an absence of personal faith that contributed to many of his patients' symptoms. He wrote, towards the end of his life:

*'Among all my patients in the second half of life - that is to say, over thirty-five - there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost what the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has really been healed who did not regain his religious outlook.'*<sup>5</sup>

Recent studies have confirmed that those with a faith are protected against psychoses and fare better under treatment:

*'In the majority of studies religious*

*involvement is correlated with well-being, happiness and life satisfaction; hope and optimism; purpose and meaning in life; higher self-esteem; better adaptation to bereavement; greater social support and less loneliness; lower rates of depression and faster recovery from depression; lower rates of suicide and fewer positive attitudes towards suicide; less anxiety; less psychosis and fewer psychotic tendencies; lower rates of alcohol and drug abuse; less delinquency and criminal activity; greater marital stability and satisfaction.'*<sup>6</sup>

Professor Andrew Sims, a former President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, is concerned that more attention should be given to this strong association between faith and wellbeing:

*'...for anything other than religion and spirituality, governments and health providers would be doing their utmost to promote it.'*<sup>7</sup>

People need to know the true explanation and answer to life in order to have full, satisfying existences.

## how does faith help recovery?

The health benefit of faith has been known for centuries. This has been called a 'psychosomatic' effect. Today there is a derogatory suggestion in the use of the word that this is somehow 'improper'. This is unfair. The word comes from the Greek words, '*psyche*' and '*soma*' which mean 'mind' and 'body' respectively. The mind undoubtedly does have an effect on the body. Studies at the Cold Research Institute have shown that it is very difficult to infect a person with a cold virus just before they are due to get married and go on honeymoon. In contrast spouses are more likely to die of cancer, heart disease and a variety of other causes in the year after their life partner's death.

Is it therefore surprising that there is a benefit to patients if they are spiritually well? The mind, body and spirit are all closely related. In palliative care 'spirituality' is taken very seriously indeed. Spiritual well-being reduces the feelings of hopelessness whereas spiritual distress, fear of death and lack of purpose are linked with despair and anxiety.

Improvement, at least for a time, is not that uncommon when people with a variety of conditions are prayed for. Dr Paul Brand was a Christian surgeon who spent much of his life treating patients suffering from the effects of leprosy in India. Dr Brand concluded that:

*'... [God] primarily works through faculties of the mind to summon up new resources of healing in a person's body.'*<sup>8</sup>

In my own life as a cancer surgeon based in the UK, I have been looking out for truly miraculous healing of organic disease but have yet to see it. Yet I have not infrequently seen people who have benefited symptomatically from spiritual support. God does sometimes intervene using the natural processes that he built into our makeup. Even some cancers have been known to regress when the body's defences are encouraged. The immune system is remarkable. Pharmaceutical drugs and surgery only support these natural processes. Such healings will take time in contrast to Jesus' healings which were spontaneous and beyond natural mechanisms. Dr Brand wrote an article with Philip Yancey in *Christianity Today* magazine in which he said:

*'...from my own experience as a physician I must truthfully admit that, among the thousands of patients I have treated, I have never observed an unequivocal instance of intervention in the physical realm. Many were prayed for, many found healing, but not in ways that counteracted*

*the laws governing physiology. No case I have treated personally would meet rigorous criteria for a supernatural miracle.'*<sup>9</sup>

The famous French surgeon Ambroise Paré (1510-1590) recognised that God heals through natural means when he said:

*'Je le pansai, Dieu le guérit.'*<sup>10</sup>

There are natural processes that fight against bacterial and viral infections and even cancers. Where has our sense of wonder at this gone? Dr Brand concluded:

*'Those who pray for the sick and suffering should first praise God for the remarkable agents of healing designed into the body, and then ask that God's special grace give the suffering person the ability to use those resources to their fullest advantage. I have seen remarkable instances of physical healing accomplished in this way. The prayers of fellow Christians can offer real, tangible help by setting into motion the intrinsic powers of healing in a person controlled by God. This approach does not contradict natural laws; rather, it fully employs the design features built into the human body.'*<sup>11</sup>

This would explain why no amputees are 'healed by faith' and those people whose backache improves after prayer find that their x-rays have not changed. The improvement these people claim from prayer are real, but may just represent changes in symptoms rather than underlying pathology. God can of course break his own natural laws of nature to alter pathologies (we know he did so in biblical times), but it is wrong to suggest to people that he has done so in any given case without presenting reliable supportive evidence. Jesus was never afraid to have his healings objectively verified. Similarly anyone claiming a healing miracle today should be willing to be properly assessed and examined.

## natural law

There is so much confusion on this subject. God is clearly able to do anything; he could prevent us ageing and dying yet most of the time he does not intervene supernaturally by breaking his own laws of nature. Jesus and his twelve apostles (Acts 5:12), plus Paul (Acts 14:8-10) Stephen (Acts 6:8) and Philip (Acts 8:6,7) performed miraculous signs that broke these laws of nature. Everyone who saw them was staggered. Lazarus was raised from the dead after being in a tomb for four days! Jesus himself, after repeatedly foretelling that this would happen, rose from the dead three days after his crucifixion. Everybody that Jesus said would be healed was immediately and completely healed (with one notable exception).<sup>12</sup> The paralysed got up and walked straight away.

No wonder people believed in him. But in the UK today, we don't see reports of proven pathological conditions being cured in this way. His disciples who followed him for three years were convinced about him. Eleven of the apostles were killed as they travelled the world to tell others about Jesus, talking about him and who he was.

Dr Peter May has made an extensive study of Christian faith healing claims, looking for cases of supernatural organic healing where God has worked outside the laws of nature. In his book, *Healing-The Rift*, subtitled *Does Miraculous Healing Occur Today?*<sup>13</sup> he investigates particular cases of faith healing in detail. Although a committed evangelical Christian himself who believes all the biblical accounts of healing miracles, he did not find evidence of the type of healing miracles recorded in the New Testament (eg immediate, irreversible and



visible reversals of major pathology which convinced even sceptical onlookers) in any of the cases he has studied.<sup>14</sup>

In our church a one-year-old toddler was playing in the garden. He fell into a covered pond and drowned in nine inches of water. When he was removed he was blue and pulseless even though he could only have been immersed for two or three minutes. He was resuscitated by a paediatric nurse who just 'happened' to be in the house at the time, was rushed to hospital and ventilated for several days. Much prayer went up for him. He has now made a complete recovery. Is that a miracle? For the parents it certainly is. They thought they had lost their lovely son and now he is fully restored. To the physician however it is known that if children can be quickly resuscitated then this can happen and, statistically, results are improved by early ventilation for a few days. No laws of nature were broken, but this child's cure was overwhelming for his parents and friends. Unfortunately other parents in similar situations have also prayed, but for whatever reason the results were not so favourable, the child either dying or being brain damaged.

## true miracles

In much of Africa AIDS is a frightening infection; in some areas up to 40% of the population are infected. Churches that had previously taught

a 'health and wealth' gospel are finding that people are not cured of AIDS by prayer. What they need is teaching that to believe in Christ means a new lifestyle. Then Christians will not catch the disease and will care for those who have it. The miracle is that God does change people to behave like Jesus.

In contrast Jesus did restore to life a widow's only son who was being carried out for burial; he healed a man who had been paralysed for 39 years. They both returned to normal living. Repeated miracles such as these by both Jesus and his apostles were independently verified. Indeed, when Jesus healed ten people with leprosy he sent them off to the priest to have their healing verified and authenticated.<sup>15</sup> Oh that this practice were repeated today by churches who advertise a healing ministry!

There is a real miracle God is doing throughout the world today. People are turning from selfish lives to live for Jesus Christ. They turn their backs on sin. They have a peace and joy that helps them overcome the problems of life. They are making major lifestyle changes which will help protect them from many diseases. They have a sure and certain future with God in eternity where they will receive new bodies that will never get sick or die. They have been 'born of God'.

'For everyone born of God overcomes the world...' <sup>16</sup> ■

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15. Luke 17:14
16. 1 John 5:4

# the sovereignty of God and healthcare

**David Jones** reflects on how we talk about God's sovereignty in medicine

## a medical student's confession

I sometimes find it difficult when I hear the way my dear non-medical church family speaks about healing. Whether you are a charismatic or a cessationist, or somewhere in between, I'm sure you can relate. I confess that recently I have taken some comments personally. It's hard not to. After all, undergraduate medicine is long and arduous, as well as immensely mentally, emotionally, and psychologically challenging. Giving grace to Christians who make sweeping statements about medicine can prove difficult for us.

Below are three true stories from my local church, each of which has concerned me.

## a testimony

I recently heard a testimony from someone who told me that a relative of theirs was very unwell and had been prescribed medication. When they heard of their relative's sickness, they paid them a visit and told them 'if pills can heal you, then God can!' They told their relative to stop taking the medication and to 'believe'. They then prayed and, thank God, their relative was healed.

## a prayer

Another story I heard recently came from someone who had prayed for a man in pain. Praise God the pain vanished! Convinced that he had witnessed God's work, the Christian who prayed (who I'm sure had the best intentions) declared 'God healed him...he didn't go to a doctor!'



David Jones is a clinical medical student at St George's, University of London

## a gospel

A dear brother, encouraging a few of us to expect more healings in church, commented on Jesus' amazing healing ministry: 'Everyone came to Jesus. Nobody was in hospital. The hospitals were empty!'

In all three examples, it is claimed that God is glorified specifically because an apparently 'supernatural' healing occurred. But might he not be glorified when someone is healed through medicine? The difference is important, and failure to understand it is frustrating.

## why am I irritated if God is glorified?

I sincerely believe that in the above instances God worked. Why? Because God is sovereign; sovereign over all the Earth, all people, all situations. These events would not have occurred if he hadn't allowed them to.

But, if God is fully sovereign, then he is Lord over conventional medicine also. So why do some Christians propagate the idea that if someone is healed through conventional medicine then God is not glorified? Why does God only get the credit when someone is healed through prayer?

Each of us has dedicated our lives to a ministry called 'medicine'. Indeed, if we examine our history books we will discover that the very idea of medical care for the sick was a gospel-driven initiative. The Church's fingerprints have been all over western medicine since the inception of hospitals, infirmaries, doctors and nurses. Someday, when we graduate, we will inherit this legacy and stand as part of the Church in healthcare today. But, as future

doctors, our ministry does not begin and end in the workplace. There is scope for us to educate the wider Church; to correct faulty thinking around medicine. Medicine is not an alternative to God; it is a vessel for God's glory, if we would only praise him for its success.

If we don't challenge church members who say 'if pills can heal you, then God can', or those who say 'God healed him...he didn't go to a doctor' we allow the falsehood that God will heal through prayer but not through medical treatment.

If we proclaim as a Church that 'Everyone came to Jesus...The hospitals were empty!' we don't even have the Bible to back up the statement. Jesus healed those who came to him, and he told the man cured of leprosy to show himself to the priest for verification of his cleansing. (Matthew 8:4). We should not suggest that God's healing cannot come through modern medicine. Also, it does not show a lack of faith to have medical verification of healing.

Such errors do not reflect an omnipotent or sovereign God! Talking about God in this way denies him the glory he deserves for so much healing that goes on through healthcare. Here, it seems that there is an overlap between our duty to offer health education to the public and our theological beliefs. In love, we need to educate the Church on God's sovereignty, our service through medicine, and God's rightful receipt of praise for all healing.

Our God is sovereign. He heals through prayer, people and pills.

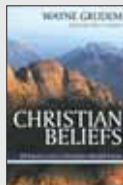
*'Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him'* (Psalm 115:3). ■

## Christian beliefs

Wayne Grudem

IVP 2010

RRP £8.99 (but £4.00 on 12-12 scheme)



**C**hristian Beliefs is a condensed version of the author's in depth *Systematic Theology*, and is definitely a 'must read' as it covers the ground work of what it means to be a Christian. It touches many

of the big and sometimes hard to grasp topics like election and justification in a very readable way. It is not 'all you need to know about...', but instead an opening into discovering more about what the Bible teaches.

The book is split into 20 chapters, each dealing with one aspect of Christianity - for example 'What is the Trinity?' Grudem explains what the different aspects mean, always using Scripture to justify his explanation. One of the most helpful aspects of the book is that each chapter ends with some questions to ponder, which really helps to solidify what you've read.

It is useful for both new Christians and for those not new to the faith as it covers areas that we sometimes don't engage with; with chapters on 'What Is the Final Judgement?' and 'What Are Angels, Satan and Demons?'. It is even a means to engage with friends who are interested in finding out more about Christianity.

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**Emmanuel Oladipo** is a medical student in Manchester, currently spending a year in ministry apprenticeship

## I could do that

Edited by Andrew Fergusson and Steve Fouch

CMF 2009

£5.00 RRP (but £2.00 on 12-12 scheme)



**A** brilliant book - at the same time both easy and challenging to read. The short chapters lend themselves to the busy student who's reading between lectures or clinics, and are written in an

engaging and personal style. With 15 short accounts there's bound to be a story that really touches you, or gives ideas either for working abroad or supporting overseas healthcare workers. It's a real challenge to read this book and not be inspired or stirred.

Qualifying and working abroad may seem far away now but this book has something to say to everyone; from students to qualified doctors and healthcare workers to those who've retired. As a student I feel pretty radical and adventurous, but it's very clear that God's plans are much more extravagant and daring than we imagine. Although I have a heart for working abroad, this book surprisingly also spoke to the part of me that is considering staying in the UK and showed how God can use people dramatically wherever they are. Each story is written by a different person, in a different style and with different adventures; however the recurring theme is that with God all things are possible!

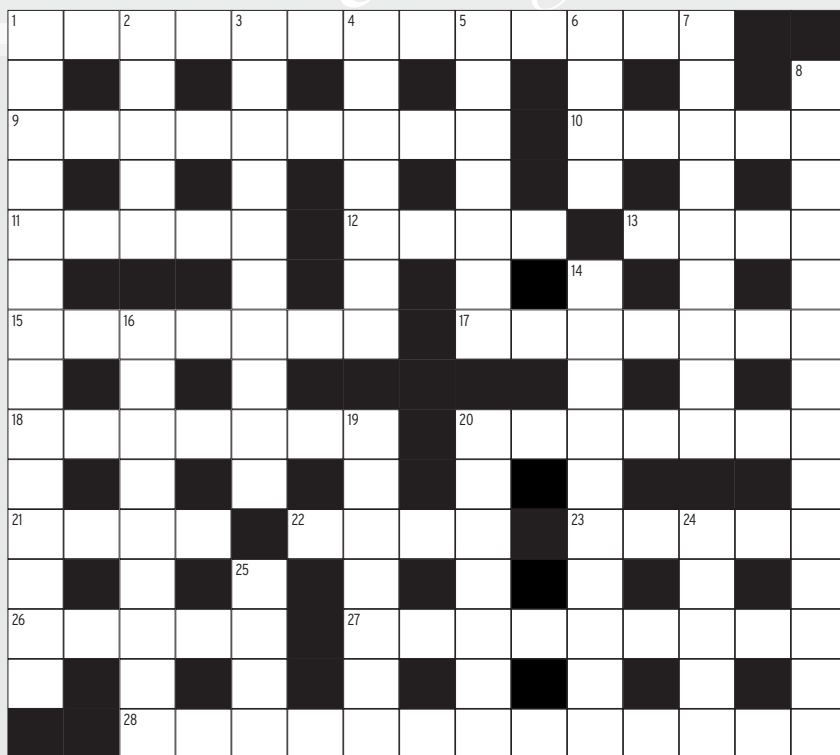
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**Jonathan Sunkersing** is a clinical medical student in Southampton



# cross-word 6 – word

by LACTOMETER (1 Peter 2:2)



## ACROSS

1. 1990s BBC medical drama (7,6)
9. Diagnostic speciality (9)
10. An ..... was issued in Susa [Esther 9:14, NIV] (5)
11. Greet every ..... in Christ Jesus [Philippians 4:21, ESV] (5)
12. Biblical fratricide (4)
13. Person from Bangkok (4)
15. Gruesome (7)
17. Small tube placed in the eardrum (7)
18. Doctor who operates (7)
20. Russian version of 20D (3)
21. Church recess (4)
22. Jog (4)
23. Man in charge of an abbey (5)
26. 44th US President (5)
27. What the Holy Spirit does to help us understand the Bible (9)
28. Mental health specialists (13)

## DOWN

1. Seasonal song (9,5)
2. Forearm bones (5)
3. Often given for anaemia (4,6)
4. Embryological hind-gut structures (7)
5. Sounding the same (7)
6. Biblical garden (4)
7. Epidermal outgrowths in plants (9)
8. Christian denomination (6,8)
14. Could be useful for frostbite (4,6)
16. Poker cheat (4,5)
19. Julian of ..... (7)
20. Girl's name meaning 'birthday' (7)
24. Ezekiel prophesied to them (5)
25. Magdalene (4)

Entries can be submitted by post to the office, or email to [giles.cattermole@cmf.org.uk](mailto:giles.cattermole@cmf.org.uk)

The deadline is 1 July 2012. The winning entry will receive a voucher worth £10 for books from the CMF website, and runners up will receive a CMF pen-torch.

# HEROES + HERETICS

Alex Bunn considers some great reformers

## HERO 8: LUTHER, CALVIN, ARMINIUS AND ERASMUS

The last edition remembered Tyndale, who was strangled and burnt for translating the Bible into English. His dying prayer was that the eyes of King Henry VIII would be opened. Just two years later, the assassin king decreed that Tyndale's Bible should be available in every parish in England. Sadly, the bloodshed continued. Under 'bloody' Mary I, even Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, who left us the Book of Common Prayer beloved by Anglicans ever since, was torched. A fellow Oxford martyr, Hugh Latimer, encouraged another hero to face the flames with these words:

*'Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out.'*<sup>1</sup>

But where did the English heroes gain their inspiration? It started on 31 October 1517, when Martin Luther posted his '95 theses', accusing the Pope of heresy, on the doors of Wittenberg Church. The Reformation had begun. But Luther did not want to launch a new church; they were protesters before Protestants were forced to separate. In a sense, the existence of a Protestant Church today is the legacy of their failure to reform the Catholic Church.

### Luther's conscience

What was Luther's problem? It was the many



abuses of church power which exploited the ignorance of the layman. In particular, the sale of indulgences to buy time out of purgatory scandalised the reformers. The church where Luther pinned his 95 theses contained relics that would shave 1,902,202 years and 270 days off purgatory for visiting pilgrims. One of the most manipulative advertising campaigns of all time used this

catchy jingle: 'When a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs'. Friars would plead for money saying 'the wailing voices of your dead relatives and friends implore you' have mercy! We are in wretched agonies, and you can redeem us for a pittance, but you don't want to'.<sup>2</sup> But if the Pope could release anyone from purgatory, why did he need money to do so? In fact the money was being collected to build St Peter's, Rome, the biggest skyscraper of its day.

So what caused Luther, an Augustinian monk, to turn on the Pope, the superpower of his day and also his employer? Luther's conscience was troubled by his own transgressions. Reading in Romans 1:17 of the righteousness of God only confirmed his hostility to God, and his despair at ever finding peace with a righteous God.

*'I raged with a fierce and trouble conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted...night and day I pondered until I*



Alex Bunn  
is CMF Southern Team Leader  
and a GP in London

*grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, he justifies us by faith. Thereby I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, whereas before "the righteousness of God" had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gateway to heaven.'*

## five emphases

Whereas Augustine had said that God helps us obey his laws, Luther said we underestimate the perfection demanded by them. Rather, God transfers his righteousness to our account when we trust in him, 'at once a sinner and righteous'. It was Paul who first explained justification by faith. But the reformers returned to the Bible with their five emphases: grace alone, by faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone, all truths that we access through Scripture alone. The church authorities were demoted, Luther taught that the church is a priesthood of all believers,<sup>3</sup> under the authority of Scripture. Hence Luther saw a desperate need for Bible translation into the common language.

## a diet of worms

Luther's conflict came to a head at the improbably named 'Diet of Worms' (a council in the German town of Worms). He was forced to defend himself from accusations of heresy by



the Pope's envoys:

*'Your imperial majesty, unless I am convicted of error by the testimony of Scripture or (since I put no trust in the unsupported authority of the Pope or councils since it is plain that they have often erred and contradicted themselves) by*

*manifest reasoning I stand convicted by the Scriptures to which I have appealed, and my conscience is taken captive by God's word, I cannot and will not recant anything. For to act against conscience is neither safe for us nor open to us. On this I take my stand. I can do no other. God helps me.'*

Luther's unlikely protector after Worms was Frederick of Saxony, an ardent Catholic who acquired the questionable relics of Christ's nappy, a branch from the burning bush and milk from the Blessed Virgin. Remembering the treachery of a previous emperor whose promise of safe conduct to Czech reformer Jan Hus ended with a burning pyre, Frederick had Luther kidnapped, given a false identity as 'Junker Jorg', and a comedy beard. Luther was taken to the imposing mountain castle of Wartburg, where he worked on his Bible translation. Like Tyndale's, his translation became a best-seller and the most influential book for German speaking people. Perhaps his hymn 'a mighty fortress is our God' had special resonance for Luther as he thanked God for his extraordinary protection in Wartburg's mountain stronghold.

Freedom to challenge authority had its drawbacks. One Catholic scholar soon lamented that 'tailors and shoemakers, even women and

other simple idiots' were debating texts with priests and monks. And while moderns might cheer, soon every authority was being questioned. Potentially 'every man was his own Pope', each beholden to his own conscience, however little it had been shaped and educated by Scripture. As a result, there were uprisings and revolts across Europe. Schism led to the proliferation of denominations that today stands at 38,000.<sup>4</sup>

The ripples of this revolution are still felt today. When CMF canvassed signatures for a campaign against euthanasia, we frequently met Protestants who said 'I'm not sure what I think about that issue'. This might demonstrate a concern to think through complex issues and arrive at a reasoned position, but it also reflects a Protestant bias to individualism that paralyses collective action. Catholics were on the whole, better informed, united and committed to act on the Church's teaching.

## Calvin: the glory, majesty and excellence of God

Bias towards subjective individualism still affects our spiritual lives today. A missionary returning to Britain remarked:

*'I suddenly saw that someone could use all the language of evangelical Christianity, and yet the centre was fundamentally the self, my need of salvation. And God is auxiliary to that... I also saw that quite a lot of evangelical Christianity can easily slip, can become centred in me and my need of salvation, and not in the glory of God.'*<sup>5</sup>

Calvin was acutely aware of this. He rebuked a Cardinal with these words: '[Your] zeal for heavenly life [is] a zeal which keeps a man entirely devoted to himself, and does not, even by one expression, arouse him to *sanctify the name of God*.'<sup>6</sup> In other words, even the vital

truth about eternal life can be so skewed as to displace God as the centre and goal. He challenged the cleric to 'set before [man], as the prime motive of his existence, *zeal to illustrate the glory of God*'. This was an all-embracing slogan of the reformers like Calvin: the work of grace in the sinner as a mirror for the glory of God.

For Calvin, reformation was fundamentally about putting God's glory back to centre stage. Rome had destroyed the glory of Christ in many ways – by calling upon saints to intercede when Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and man; by adoring the Virgin Mary, when Christ alone shall be adored; by offering a continual sacrifice in the Mass, when the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is complete and sufficient. Wherever a concern for God's glory, majesty and excellence is voiced, Calvin's concern is being expressed.

## deeper reforms

'Reformed Theology', is short-hand for deeper reforms led initially by Calvin. Whereas Luther kept many Catholic practices such as infant baptism and the 'real presence' of Christ in communion bread, Calvinists wanted to strip back tradition further, reducing seven sacraments to two, baptism and communion. The 'puritan' principle took hold in Scotland, whereas the English Anglican reforms were always a halfway house.

## inevitably, Calvin and predestination...

Calvin is often associated with the doctrine of predestination, though it was not his idea or main preoccupation any more than it was Luther's. One critic was the Dutch cleric Arminius, who like Pelagius and Augustine

a millennium before had fought over the issue of human freedom.<sup>7</sup> Just a few years before, Luther had had a similar fight with the humanist Erasmus. Erasmus spoke for many then and today when he voiced concern that the Protestant idea of grace undermined man's dignity, in that it depicted man as a helpless slave without free will. Luther was blunt about the human predicament in *The Bondage of the Will*, published in 1525, as an answer to Erasmus' book, *The Freedom of the Will*:

*'For since, apart from Christ, sin and death are our masters and the devil is our god and prince, there can be no strength or power, no wit or wisdom, by which we can fit or fashion ourselves for righteousness and life. On the contrary, blinded and captivated, we are bound to be the subjects of Satan and sin, doing and thinking what pleases him and opposed to God and His commandments'*

So let's not blame Calvin for inventing a harsh new doctrine of God's sovereignty. He wrestled with the heart of the gospel, at great personal cost. He fled for his life amidst the stench of burning flesh in France, and like Paul was lowered out of a window to escape, on a rope of bed sheets. He taught that once we accept the biblical verdict of our powerlessness to save ourselves, it is down to God's grace to save whom he will. If there was no divine election (God's free choice to save), it would be something in us that affects our redemption, and it would no longer be God's work.<sup>8</sup> Certainly Scripture is clear that God does many things we could not do for ourselves; he enables hearers to



understand a spiritually discerned message (Acts 16:14), convicts people of sin (John 16:8), enables sinners to repent (Acts 5:31, 11:18, Ephesians 2:8), and brings about rebirth (John 3:3-8; Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9). That last metaphor is telling; after all, how much choice and power did we have over our first birth? That still leaves the difficult question of why he chooses some and not others - not a merely academic question when you consider your loved ones who may face judgement. But let's be as clear as Luther and Calvin, God is

right and free to judge mankind for our rebellion.

The mystery is why he chooses to save any at all. The Bible teaches that God is merciful and delays judgment out of mercy, that men might turn to him. But for every verse that affirms man's responsibility to turn to God, there is another affirming God's sovereignty and free choice, often in the same passage. It is tempting to airbrush out one or other of these contrasting truths.<sup>9</sup> Instead we need to submit to what the creator has revealed for our benefit, however hard it is for fallen minds to reconcile. Consider both truths in the passages below and shudder at the awful necessity of judgement. Then thank God for his mercy!

### giants with feet of clay<sup>10</sup>

Luther and Calvin are giants of church history. Yet it is sobering to remember that while they were revolutionaries of their day, they were also products of their times, and inevitably complicit in some of the sins of their age.<sup>11</sup> Having escaped persecution and violence from Catholics, at times they persecuted to bring

## God's sovereignty

Man needs God's intervention to rescue him from sin and death. God is right to judge, and free to choose whom he will

'For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his son...and those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified' Romans 8:29-30

'Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not depend then on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy... One of you will say to me "then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?" But who are you, O man to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it "why did you make me like this?" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath- prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory- even us...?' Romans 9:14-16, 19-24

'For he chose us in (Christ) before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight....' Ephesians 1:4

order to anarchy and dissent. For instance, it was Luther who expressed anti-Semitism in Germany that was later exploited by Nazis in the 20th century, calling Jews 'venomous beasts, vipers, disgusting scum, devils incarnate'. He recommended a pogrom against

## man's real choice

Man is responsible for responding to the grace and mercy of God

"Do I take pleasure in the death of the wicked?" declares the sovereign Lord. "Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?" Ezekiel 18:23

'I tell you in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.' Luke 15:7

"God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us...In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent." Acts 17:27, 30

'The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.' 2 Peter 3:9

'I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for everyone...This is good, and pleases God our saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.' 1 Timothy 2:1-4

them and permanent expulsion:

'My advice is: First, that their synagogues be burned down, and that all who are able toss sulphur and pitch. Second, that all their books- their prayer books, their Talmudic writings, also the entire Bible be taken from them ...that they

be forbidden on pain of death to praise God... their private houses must be destroyed and devastated, they could be lodged in stables... if this avails nothing, we will be compelled to expel them like dogs.'

Thankfully Luther softened and shortly before his death preached: 'We want to treat them with Christian love and to pray for them, so that they might become converted and would receive the Lord.'<sup>12</sup> Likewise, Calvin's reputation is tarnished by his part in the trial of Michael Servetus. A man with unorthodox views on the Trinity, he was burned at the stake by civil authorities after questioning by Calvin, who did have reservations. Perhaps we have to judge by the standards and methods of the day, at a time when violent revolution was in the air. Yet it is hard to claim the approval of Jesus for acts of violent coercion.

It is tempting to feel superior, we who live in a more 'enlightened age'. But we should ask ourselves what these giants of God's household would say about Christians today. What would be our shameful blind spots; practices that we have accepted uncritically from our culture?

## conclusion

Thank God for the reformation heroes who, at great personal cost, turned us back to the gospel teaching of the early church. They

## the reformers' legacy Luther

- honestly faced up to the holiness of God and the wretchedness of man
- wrestled with Scripture as the means to understand God and reform the church
- delighted in the mercy and grace of God, and risked his life to bring it to others

## Calvin

- had a passion for God's glory, majesty and all-surpassing excellence
- faced up to the difficult teachings of Scripture on judgement and man's need of rescue
- risked his life to teach others to turn to Christ whilst there is time

## God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him

Some of the most influential Protestants recently have been 'new Calvinists' such as Tim Keller, John Piper, CJ Mahoney, Mark Driscoll, Don Carson and John Stott. To see how a Calvinist prioritises the glory of God, whilst preaching our deepest joy in him, read John Piper's *Desiring God*.<sup>13</sup>

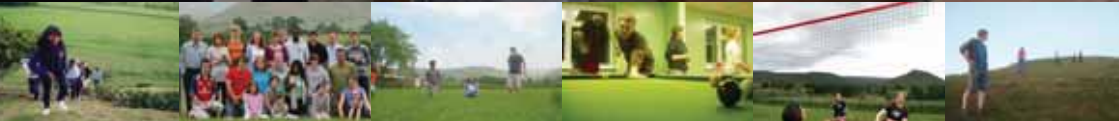
wrestled with Scripture and challenged authority so that the common man might be freed from exploitation and condemnation. Even better, that others might discover and live for the majesty, excellence and glory of God in Christ. Do we have such courage and passion? ■

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