

NUCLEUS

A young woman with long brown hair, wearing a black graduation cap and gown, is the central figure. She has a look of stress or worry, with her right hand pressed against her face. She is holding several papers, some of which have red stamps that say "OVERDUE". The background is a solid, deep red color.

the student journal of the christian medical fellowship

summer 2009

student debt

bible overview

hippocrates

heavenly bodies

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editorial...

As the new *Nucleus* student editor let me welcome both new and old readers to this summer 2009 issue. As Hugh Ip has reluctantly put down his pen to focus on the business of passing finals, I have, with more than a little trepidation and excitement, become the first non-London student editor – an achievement for the north in our age old feud!! I can honestly say it is already a challenging and enriching experience that I am very grateful for.

Throughout my time as a student reading *Nucleus*, I have always been encouraged and inspired by the articles written. They seek to kindle a desire for Christian medical students to be pro-active in letting their commitment to Christ impact on their medical lives. Laurence Crutchlow (pp 28-34) acknowledges that a day to day struggle with finances is a reality for us medical students. He considers how we may be prudent stewards of our finances and offers real hope that if we develop wise habits with our spending, we really can glorify God with the little money we have to manage as students.

Continuing the practical theme, final year student Laura Quinton offers preclinical students some advice about how to thrive and excel as clinical students and impact our new environment for Christ (pp 4-7). This makes great reading for those looking to lay down solid foundations at the outset of their clinical career.

Those of us who have been studying medicine for a while may have subconsciously adopted a non-biblical view of the human body. Alex Bunn (pp 22-27) contrasts a secular view of the human body with a biblical one, which may challenge you to re-think your assumptions in accordance with biblical truth.

Practical advice from those who have trodden the path before us is certainly valuable. However, I find that when I am seeking advice, all too often I consult the Bible last, forgetting that it is one of the primary ways in which God reveals himself to us. Knowledge of him gives us 'everything we need for life and godliness' (2 Peter 1:3). I therefore welcome anything that helps us understand the Bible better. Mark Meynell's comprehensive overview of the great story of the Bible (pp 14-21) does just that. So often we pick and choose which parts of the Bible to read, skipping over difficult portions for our favourite uplifting passages. It is important not to be overly critical of ourselves but recognise that perhaps we need more help if we are to tackle these more difficult biblical passages. This is why Rob Radcliffe's article helping us to apply the Old Testament law to our own lives (pp 38-39) is so timely and I hope you'll find it as useful as I have.

As ever at *Nucleus*, we would be delighted to receive your comments and views on the articles we publish and hope to publish some of your letters in the next edition.

Pete Mackley

how to survive as a clinical student

Laura Quinton offers some practical hints

There are times in life when we need to put theory into practice, where 'the rubber hits the road'. For a medical student on the brink of clinical placements this is such a time. Many, like me, may feel a nervous excitement. Being a clinical medical student is very different from the life of a preclinical student. It is wise to consider what will be required to live for Christ on the wards and use the gifts he has given you before you are actually let loose! I offer some pointers to help you not just survive, but enjoy and excel in your clinical years.

Clinical studies may be your first glimpse of what the life of a hospital doctor is like. Many of your expectations and beliefs about clinical life will no doubt be confirmed, but be prepared for more than a few surprises! Spending time on the wards, in clinic and teaching sessions with doctors and other health care professionals is the mainstay of life as a clinical medical student (not forgetting the numerous interspersed coffee breaks!).

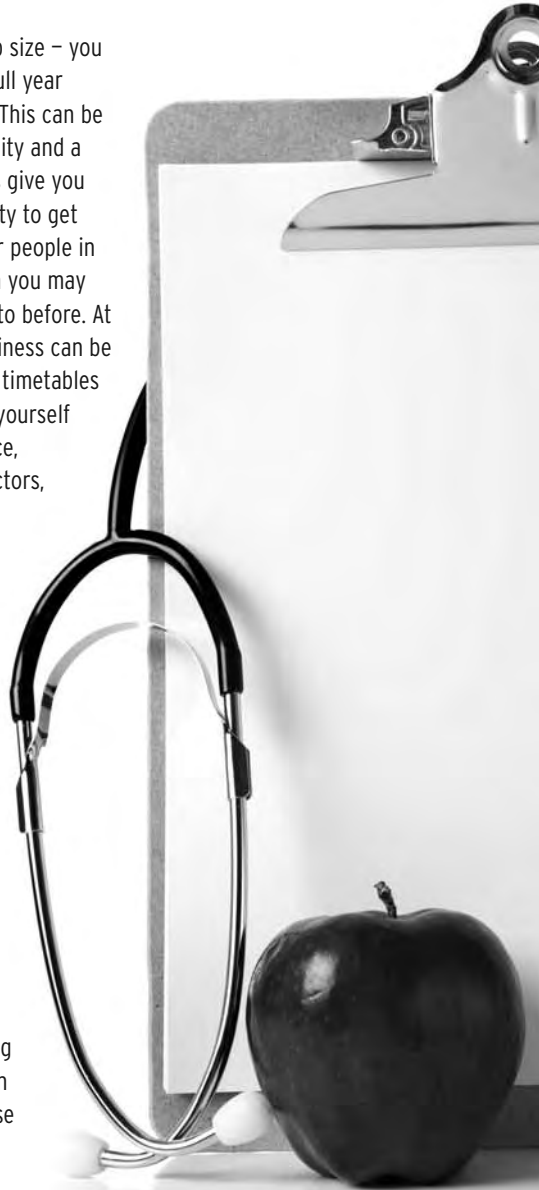
One of the major differences encountered on placement is

the smaller group size – you will not see the full year group every day. This can be both an opportunity and a challenge. It does give you a good opportunity to get to know the other people in your group whom you may not have spoken to before. At other times loneliness can be an issue as often timetables involve being by yourself in a different place, with different doctors, every day.

how to prepare

organisation

Obtain a diary or organiser if you do not already have one. With a constantly changing timetable, sometimes with random teaching and clinics interspersed during the week, this is an invaluable purchase to keep you sane and on the right track. It is also a good plan to write in your diary when you are going to do self-directed





learning and student selected components so that you are not working through the night just before the hand-in day. Get the contact details for other people in your group on the first day of placement. This means that it is easy to find out from them what you are meant to be doing if you are unsure, or if you need to pass a message on to the whole group from your consultant (who might assume that you all know each other really well).

know your goals

At the beginning of the placement you should have an induction or explanation of how the firm works, what you should be doing, and who everyone is. This does not always happen! Find out exactly what you need to have done by the end of the placement. Knowing what is expected and how you will be assessed is very important and means that there are no unpleasant surprises further down the line. Make sure you have determined what you personally want to get out of the placement, for example, becoming better at taking histories or becoming more confident at skills like phlebotomy or venous cannulation. Once determined, think about how you can achieve these goals and then go for it!

don't be afraid to ask

Most placements will be in hospitals where staff are used to students being around on the wards. Most are very willing to help, and you should never be afraid to ask a question. Foundation year 1 doctors can be especially helpful because they have just finished the process of being a medical student and have a good idea of what sort of standard you should be at. If they graduated from your medical school you have even more in common and they may be a very useful allies on the wards - do ask them for any tips they have. Nurses are also often happy to help with any of their skills that you need to learn - but may be very busy themselves at times, and have their own students to train.

'know what is expected of you and avoid surprises'

be enthusiastic

This is not always easy. However, it is true that the more you put into something, the more you will get out of it. If you consistently turn up to your placement, look interested and are willing to do things asked of you, you are more

likely to be able to watch or perform procedures. This increases both your skills and your confidence, for which you will thank yourself in the long run.

'make sure your entire life doesn't revolve around medicine'

know where to get help

Make sure you know before you start who to talk to at the medical school should anything go wrong with a placement. If personal issues arise that may affect your studies it is important to seek help sooner rather than later as much more can be done to help you at an earlier stage.

keep a balanced life

Make sure your entire life does not revolve around medicine. Though it is important to have close medic friends for companionship and camaraderie, having friends who are not medics is vital as they keep you in the real world and make your life more rounded and whole. During exam periods make sure that you make time to see these non-medic friends and enjoy a space where no-one

but yourself understands what OSCE or MTAS stand for. They may also be good people on whom to practise medical examinations as they will not pre-empt your next move, making them more realistic patient substitutes!

how can I be a good Christian medical student?

worship in all you do

Remember that everything we do should be worship to God,¹ using the gifts he has given us to bring him glory. When you remember this your perspective really changes. I find that it can be so easy, especially during exam time, to focus upon myself and my own abilities. This is where it is important to remember that you are taking these exams as a way of glorifying God. It is not about proving yourself, but rather about using gifts that God has given to you.

remember God's provision

One of the names used to describe God in the Bible is 'Jehovah Jireh' which is translated as 'the Lord will provide'.² In the gospels Jesus emphasises that our heavenly Father will provide for our needs.³ These needs are not

just material but also relational. The Lord gives us people to form close relationships with, to help and mentor us and to give us encouragement. We must remember to trust in his provision knowing that he helps us whenever it is needed.

One of the main ways I have experienced God's provision is by receiving peace from him during exam periods. We must be encouraged by God's promise that we will never be given more than we can cope with. We need to pray for his strength and help, knowing he is faithful to answer.

made in God's image

We must remember that everyone is made in God's image, created and loved by him.⁴ Every patient who comes through the doors of the hospital or GP surgery is in some ways a picture of God. It is all too easy to forget this, even though we have the privilege of learning how to treat their body. There will always be patients on a ward who you wish were not there because they are drunk or abusive or unhelpful. However, remembering that they are made in the image of God reminds you to treat them to his standards, regardless of

their behaviour towards you. Let us rejoice that God does not treat us as our behaviour demands and attempt to follow his example of unconditional love and care. Jesus taught that whenever we help somebody in need, we are serving him.⁵ Working in a hospital gives a chance to live this out every day, and experience God giving you his heart of love for the patients you come into contact with.

*'time with God
needs to be
a priority'*

make church a priority

Throughout your clinical years make sure you are involved in a church, as well as any local CMF group. This is fundamental for growing as a Christian and for personal and pastoral support. Attending church should be a high priority throughout the year. Joining a small group helps to keep you involved, and provides you with people to support you and to anchor you into the church. But just like medicine, church can take over your life. It's good to serve in church, but if you are doing worship one week followed by children's work the next, and

doing youth every Wednesday as well as attending a small group, it is easy to neglect your studies, and paradoxically not spend enough time with your creator. Although medicine should not take up your whole life, some input of time is needed. Learning to say no is an important skill for both medical and church life.

spend time with God

Having regular quiet times is something a lot of people struggle with, and being a clinical student can make it even harder. Routines are more difficult as you can have a busy timetable which is constantly changing.

However, time with God needs to be a priority; he is the reason we live, the reason we are here and the reason we are doing medicine, and if we are going to live for him we need to be spending time with him. Either leave time in the morning or make sure that you have time when you get home. There may also be time in a break during the day where you can find a quiet spot in the hospital to spend time with God.

Use situations you have come across during the day to prompt you in your prayer. Pray for the

patients you have seen in clinic or on the ward round that day or week, and pray for the other students you are on placement with.

be an ambassador for Christ

Paul talks about us being Christ's ambassadors⁶ which means that we have been chosen to represent God to everyone we meet. We are sent into the hospital as representatives of God, so must act in a way that pleases him. Be someone who shows a glimpse of what God's love is like, who stands out from the crowd, who has integrity in all they do.

Laura Quinton

is a final year medical student in Leeds

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fertility expert attempts reproductive cloning

A fertility expert claims to have implanted cloned human embryos into the wombs of several women with the intention of producing live offspring.

Operating from a secret laboratory thought to be somewhere in the Middle-East, Dr Panayiotis Zavos also claims to have created clones of several dead people, including a ten month old baby killed in a car accident – not for implantation but for the purposes of study. None of the implanted embryos, created in a similar way to Dolly the sheep, produced viable pregnancies.

Scientists disputed Dr Zavos's claims, which are supported by an independent documentary maker. Lord Robert Winston of Imperial College London dismissed the reports as 'yet another one of his claims to get repeated publicity'. Studies in other species, including primates, suggest that producing live births is potentially feasible but difficult to achieve, and associated with major safety and ethical concerns; these concerns have also been expressed by scientists.

In the UK the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act (2008) allows the creation of cloned embryos for therapeutic and research purposes only, not for the transfer into a woman's womb; such reproductive cloning remains illegal in most countries.

Dr Zavos's scientifically unsubstantiated claims may well prove to be a hoax but are a reminder that there remain individuals determined to break one of the greatest 'ethical taboos' in biology. (*independent.co.uk* 2009; 22 April, *guardian.co.uk* 2009; 22 April)

christian employee suspended

A support worker at a hostel for homeless people in Southampton was recently suspended for explaining his views on homosexuality during a conversation with a colleague.

David Booker, a committed Christian, maintains that he is not homophobic but expressed his opposition to both same-sex marriages and actively homosexual clergy during the conversation. He says that he was not aware of having caused any offence and was shocked to be suspended: 'Can I not have a private conversation with a colleague about my personal beliefs without getting suspended?'

'discussion on religion is being twisted to silence the Christian voice.'

The Society of St James, who run the hostel (and do not have a religious affiliation), wrote to Mr Booker to inform him that he was suspended ahead of an inquiry into gross misconduct. Their letter claimed that he had broken the charity's code of conduct by 'promoting your religious views which contained discriminatory comments regarding a person's sexual orientation'.

Andrea Minichiello Williams, director of the Christian Legal Centre who are advising Mr Booker, said: 'This case shows that in today's politically correct, increasingly secularised society, even consenting reasonable discussion on religion between two employees is being twisted by employers to discriminate and silence the Christian voice and freedom of expression'. (*ccfon.org* 2009; 11 April, *telegraph.co.uk* 2009; 11 April)

restoration of female fertility a possibility?

Research by scientists in China has suggested that the ovaries of female mice contain stem cells capable of growing into eggs that can be fertilised to produce healthy offspring.

The report in *Nature Cell Biology* states that female germline stem cells were isolated from mouse ovaries and grown in culture. Eggs in the ovaries of adult mice were killed, replaced with the cultured stem cells and tagged with green fluorescent protein (GFP) to allow their identification. The sterilised mice produced new eggs which were fertilised and gave rise to offspring, some of which carried GFP.

There have been suggestions that researchers failed to prove that the eggs used to produce offspring were grown from stem cells; it is possible that some of the endogenous eggs remained following sterilisation or that the GFP plasmid could have transfected these remaining eggs causing them to express GFP, resulting in its presence in some of the offspring.

At present it is unknown whether such stem cells are present in human ovaries. Their discovery would be highly significant and challenge the long-held principle of reproductive biology that women are born with their full complement of eggs. Moreover, isolation and culture of such cells would raise the possibility of prolonging female fertility and restoring it following the menopause.

The reported findings are, however, controversial and much more work will be required to understand the nature of these cells and to verify the researchers' claims. (*timesonline.co.uk* 2009; 13 April)

nurse struck off for secret filming

A nurse who secretly filmed the neglect of elderly patients in a hospital for a television documentary has been struck off.

Margaret Haywood, 58, was found guilty of misconduct at a Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) hearing for filming at the Royal Sussex Hospital for a BBC *Panorama* programme in 2005. The NMC's fitness to practise panel ruled that Mrs Haywood had prioritised filming over her obligations as a nurse and had breached patient confidentiality.

Mrs Haywood admitted to breaching patient confidentiality, although all patients had consented to appearing on the programme after they were filmed, but denied her fitness to practise had been impaired. She said she had agreed to film undercover to highlight conditions on the wards. The hospital had received a number of complaints before filming began and the programme's producer told the hearing there had been 'an over-arching public interest' to produce the footage.

Following the programme, concerns about standards of care were raised in the House of Commons and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust issued a public apology admitting 'serious lapses in the quality of care'.

Mrs Haywood's actions have been defended by representatives of the National Union of Journalists, Patient Concern and Action on Elder Abuse. (*timesonline.co.uk* 2009; 17 April, *bbc.co.uk* 2009; 16 April)

new diet pill no 'magic bullet'

The UK's first over-the-counter weight loss pill is now available at pharmacies around the country, but its makers warn that it may not be the 'magic bullet' for obesity that the public is hoping for.

Alli has been marketed as a weight loss capsule which, when added to a reduced fat diet, can help people lose 50% more weight than by dieting alone. It contains orlistat, a lipase inhibitor which until now was available by prescription only. The drug acts on the gastrointestinal tract to reduce absorption of dietary fat and so can cause unpleasant side effects such as flatulence, oily leakage from the rectum and liquid stools after a high-fat meal.

However, nutritional expert Dr Donald Hensrud from the Mayo Clinic warns that exciting results from tightly-controlled clinical trials on obese patients motivated to lose weight may not be predictive of the drug's efficacy in the real world. The pill will not work without accompanying lifestyle changes he says, and patients who are looking for a pill that will make them slimmer with minimal effort on their part will be sorely disappointed.

Alli is intended for over-18s with a BMI of 28 or more, requiring the individual first to consult a pharmacist who will confirm if the buyer is a suitable candidate for treatment; a two-week supply costs £32 (at Boots). (*bbc.co.uk* 2009; 21 April, *timesonline.co.uk* 2009; 20 April)

patients refused pre-implantation genetic tests

Couples at risk of passing on inheritable genetic diseases to their offspring are being denied funding

to screen their embryos, experts have claimed. Such individuals are eligible for IVF in order to produce embryos that can be tested for abnormalities via preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD). However, such procedures may cost a total of £7,000, which is not always funded by local Primary Care Trusts.

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust have used the recent opening of a new Assisted Conception Unit, which will run the largest preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) programme in the UK, to highlight these issues.

Alison Lashwood, consultant nurse in genetics and PGD at Guy's, gave examples of cases of couples affected by inheritable conditions who have had their applications for funding of PGD denied. Some of these cases choose not to have children, or conceive an affected foetus which is stillborn, aborted, or born with the disease.

Josephine Quintavalle, head of Comment on Reproductive Ethics, stated that since PGD ultimately involves the destruction of affected embryos it cannot be viewed as an alternative to abortion.

Each application for funding is judged on a case by case basis which can take up to a year. (*bbc.co.uk* 2009; 22 April, *telegraph.co.uk* 2009; 22 April, *guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/news* 2009, 23 April)

scientists compete with biological 'Lego'

Over 100 scientists from around the world are preparing to build machines out of microscopic biological components.

The teams, most of whom are students, will be competing against each other and have three months from June to build their machines. The competition, in its sixth year, is run by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston, who will provide the registry from where teams will order components; the registry details 3,200 biological parts and is the equivalent of a hardware store. These parts are known as 'biobricks', hence the first prize trophy will be a metal Lego brick the size of a shoebox.

Competition organisers aim to accelerate progress in synthetic technology, and in previous years potentially useful machines have been created. However, critics have concerns that dangerous new organisms may be accidentally created, or that terrorists may pick up the knowledge to engineer deadly viral strains.

Meagan Lizarazo, assistant director of the International Genetically Engineered Machine Competition, said: 'Our mission has been to see if we can use biological parts to build things and operate them'.

One of Britain's best hopes this year is headed by Paul Freemont, co-founder of the Institute of Systems and Synthetic Biology at Imperial College London. They have yet to decide what to build, but one idea involves using vats of bacteria to make clothing. (*guardian.co.uk* 2009; 15 April)

every penny counts

During 2007-8 the NHS *underspent* by £1.7bn.

We are so used to hearing news of outrage at NHS deficits that you may have to read that line again in disbelief. Could it be that the NHS has actually

delivered on improving its economy? It seems that the simple answer is yes. As *The Times* commented: 'It does appear that the NHS surplus has been generated with no cost to service quality'. The Chairman of the parliamentary committee for public accounts, who published the financial report, also stated that the service quality actually improved.

The news demonstrates a rapid change in finances; just three years ago the NHS recorded a £500m deficit. The money has been saved in several areas including 'a fall in the price of generic medicines' and 'the underuse of contingency funds' according to *The Guardian*.

However, some suggest that such a surplus may negatively impact patient care and demonstrates a lack of financial planning.

The Department of Health has committed to putting some of the money back into the NHS in future years, suggesting that the unspent funds will still be used to benefit patients and may help provide cushioning in the current economic downturn. (*guardian.co.uk* 2009; 21 May, *BMJ* 2009;338:b2082, *timesonline.co.uk* 2009; 25 May)

catholicism, condoms and controversy over HIV

The Pope has outraged many in the international AIDS prevention community on a recent visit to Africa with the bold claim that HIV:

'Cannot be overcome through the distribution of condoms, which can even increase the problem'.

The president of the International AIDS Society labelled the Pope's words as 'irresponsible and

dangerous' and many have called for a retraction of the statement.

However, there are some experts who have, at least in part, supported the Pope's stance. This is not due to their own moral objection to contraception but because of evidence from areas like Uganda – where the HIV prevention campaign slogan was 'Zero grazing' to emphasise the importance of fewer sexual partners – showing greater success in reducing the spread of the virus than the distribution of condoms alone. Edward Green, director of the AIDS Prevention Center at the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies said:

'We have found no consistent associations between condom use and lower HIV-infection rates'.

This does not, however, indicate that condom use *increases* the infection rates of HIV. One school of thought that *does* suggest that condoms may 'increase the problem' is that condom use encourages more risky sexual behaviour and thus an increase in the likelihood of infection transmission; a second theory is that condoms are not a barrier to viruses, since viruses may be able to pass through pores in the latex structure.

Whatever the truth, it seems many groups working in HIV prevention feel the Pope has been rather insensitive in his words; yet his comments do not appear to be entirely unsubstantiated. (bbc.co.uk 2009; 17 March, timesonline.co.uk 2009; 17 March, timesonline.co.uk 2009; 27 March, *The Lancet* 2009; 373(9669):1054)

non-invasive post-mortems for those with religious objections

The Government has announced that non-invasive post-mortems will be available to those who object to conventional post-mortems on religious grounds.

The announcement is part of an overhaul in the Coroners and Justice Bill and has arisen after the success of a pilot scheme in Salford and Bolton, where individuals could opt for an MRI post-mortem to determine cause of death. Coroner Jennifer Leeming, in charge of overseeing the project, concluded that the results with MRI have been 'more than 99%' accurate.

The Bill does, however, give coroners the right to switch to the conventional method should there be difficulty determining the cause of death.

The scheme is open to members of all faiths, but at £500 per scan, patients' families are currently asked to foot the bill. Nationwide funding has not yet been decided upon.

Muslims and Jews object to invasive post-mortem procedures, as it conflicts with beliefs on sanctity of the body and teachings that the body should be buried as quickly as possible after death. The former general secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain, Sir Iqbal Sacranie, said: 'This announcement will certainly be welcomed in the Muslim community. It has always been an issue of some concern.' (timesonline.co.uk 2009; 21 April, telegraph.co.uk 2009; 21 April)

*Tracy de Castro, Sophie Hooper,
David Randall, Helen Reay, Rachel Taylor,
Stella Woodfield*

medic to medic

Pete Mackley describes an initiative to help medical students in the developing world

A first year lecturer once solemnly impressed upon me how fortunate and privileged I was to be receiving a medical education. How many able students in the developing world would give their back teeth for the chances I had been given? As a nervous first year, I wondered whether this wasn't wasted talk as I was sure I wouldn't get the grades and would be out within a year! Yet here I am four years later, having benefited from comprehensive medical education and with every prospect of finishing the course. My fellow students and I have been truly blessed to reach this point and all too often we don't remember it.

Medic to Medic¹ is a charity born out of an elective experience of the realities of medical education in the developing world. It recognises the opportunities that we've been given as UK medical students and seeks to alleviate the inequalities amongst our fellow students in the developing world. The charity employs the familiar 'sponsor a person' method, but instead of a child or a family we are given

the opportunity to sponsor a medical student through medical school. Medic to Medic currently operates in Malawi and Tanzania, and is looking to expand its work into India and Sri Lanka in the near future.

Many in the West blame a lack of national doctors in developing countries on the so called 'brain drain' or exodus of these professionals to richer countries. Yet according to the World Health Organisation, sub-Saharan Africa is simply not generating enough doctors to supply a minimum standard of health care regardless of the brain drain.² As Medic to Medic has found, the talent and ambition exists, but the resources are often lacking.

Out of all those in the west, medical students should be best placed to relate to a prospective student, every bit as bright or able as ourselves, but unable to enter medical school because of a matter of £9 a month. It makes us see how privileged we are that such barriers do not stop us from entering or indeed graduating from medical school. Donating to Medic to Medic

represents investment in a long term future for developing countries. While short term solutions to medical crises are clearly vital, ensuring these countries eventually have the required local doctors to provide for their own medical needs will clearly take considerable time and effort. Faced with this task as a small charity, Medic to Medic could be said to be just a drop in the ocean, but it is a step in the right direction.

The Bible exhorts us to care for the poor and provide for those in need.³ Often we are willing but overwhelmed by the sheer volume of global poverty. Medic to Medic provides a way in which we can help those with whom we have so much in common and with whom we can perhaps best empathise.

Pete Mackley is Nucleus editor and an intercalating medical student in Leeds

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hope in a despairing world

Mark Meynell overviews the Bible

If asked to explain how to sustain hope in our despairing world, I suspect few would respond with a potted summary of the Bible; and yet, according to the apostle Paul, that is precisely what we should do! He wrote about the Jewish Scriptures in these extraordinary terms:

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.¹

That is a provocative statement: the Jewish Scriptures were written for *us* with the clear intention of encouraging us to endure to the end; and you only endure to the end if you know what's at the end. But then

confidently knowing the story's end is precisely what Christian hope is all about.

kingdom foundations

a divine story

This is crucial: the Bible starts and ends with God. God, and not human beings, is the heart of the Bible. This will be true of every Bible study one ever does. So in Genesis 1, we see that all the initiatives to create and order are taken by the one, true living God – or as Francis Schaeffer called him, 'The God who is there'. He made the world and everything in it.²

This explains the Bible's selectivity. There is so much that we might wish was there – but the Bible was not written to answer all our questions, or to explain every detail of human history. It was written to teach us of God!

a human story

Of course, this is not to say human beings are irrelevant. Far from it! We have an inherent relationship and value to God because he made us. So in Genesis 2, God creates, provides for, and relates intimately to the people he made. *Everything* that is good in life we have because of him. Furthermore, the Garden of Eden provides us with the

divinely established template for his creation purposes: he is forging a new kingdom of people.³ The plan is

***God's people
in God's place
under God's rule.***

It is of course entirely possible to draw the biblical themes together in different ways. However, God's kingdom is one of the most significant, and it will form the basis for this article.

Of course, after Genesis 2, it doesn't take long for the Eden idyll to be shattered. The man and woman both doubt God's goodness. Notice the subtle distortions of God's instructions during the serpent's dialogue with the woman⁴ leading to a flat denial of God's word. This rebellion against God inevitably leads to the breakdown of their relationship with God. But that was not the only relationship to be damaged. All human

relationships are profoundly affected (the sex war began in Genesis 3 not in the '60s!), as is our relationship with creation. From now on, all human beings are born out of Eden and revel in rebellion – what Bible calls sin. Sin is not about individual misdemeanours; it is about rejecting a relationship with our creator. However, the problem at the end of Genesis 3 is not so much our sin. Tragically, our problem is God. He is holy and must judge if there is to be any order and morality in the universe – hence the events of Genesis 3:14-24.

a rescue story

So far, so bad. God could easily have ended the story there. In the same shoes, we might well have done. However, God clearly did not give up – we've only covered the first 3 chapters of 66 different books! Genesis 1-3 is the explanatory prelude. The rest of the Bible unpacks God's plans to get the world out of our mess. From Genesis 3:15 onwards, there are hints that a very special individual is on his way – the 'serpent-crusher'.

The huge narrative arc from Genesis 4 to Revelation 19, then, for all its peaks and troughs,

triumphs and setbacks, along the way, is a rescue story. Its culmination will be a final judgment and righting of wrongs,⁵ followed by a new creation of the world⁶ and the vision of God the Father ruling with his Son surrounded by his people forever.⁷ This is not so much Eden regained as Eden improved! It is a garden city that is even better than the perfection of Eden! The Bible's story is not circular but linear – it is going somewhere new:

***God's people restored to
God's place under God's rule.***

In a nutshell, therefore, as God restores his kingdom, we can see four elements that make up the narrative structure of the Bible:

CREATION

REBELLION

RESCUE

NEW CREATION

The fascinating thing about these elements is that they are played out on the grandest as well as the smallest of levels. This summarises the sweep of

Genesis through to Revelation, just as it can point to the key moments in an individual believer's journey. Its implications for philosophical worldviews, medical ethics and personal discipleship (to name but three) are enormous.

**kingdom promises:
abraham - the beginning
(Genesis 12, 15, 17)**

A nomadic, well-to-do businessman had a good life in the heart of what is now Iraq. Suddenly, without even the

advice of a good travel agent, he ups sticks and carts his entourage thousands of miles round the Fertile Crescent. Why? The answer is as simple as it is important: because the living God made some promises: a God-given land,⁸ a God-established nation⁹ and a God-established covenant to govern them.¹⁰ Most significantly, these promises were to have *global* impact.¹¹ Abraham's God is no parochial, private God – he is the cosmic creator with a global mission.

Things start slowly, though; one miraculous birth at a time. But by the end of Genesis, Abraham's descendants number 70. They hardly constitute a nation – but it's not bad going after four generations. The challenge lies in the fact that they are not living in God's promised place – they are in Egypt rather than Canaan – and they hardly live consistently under God's rule. Even Abraham had feet of clay.

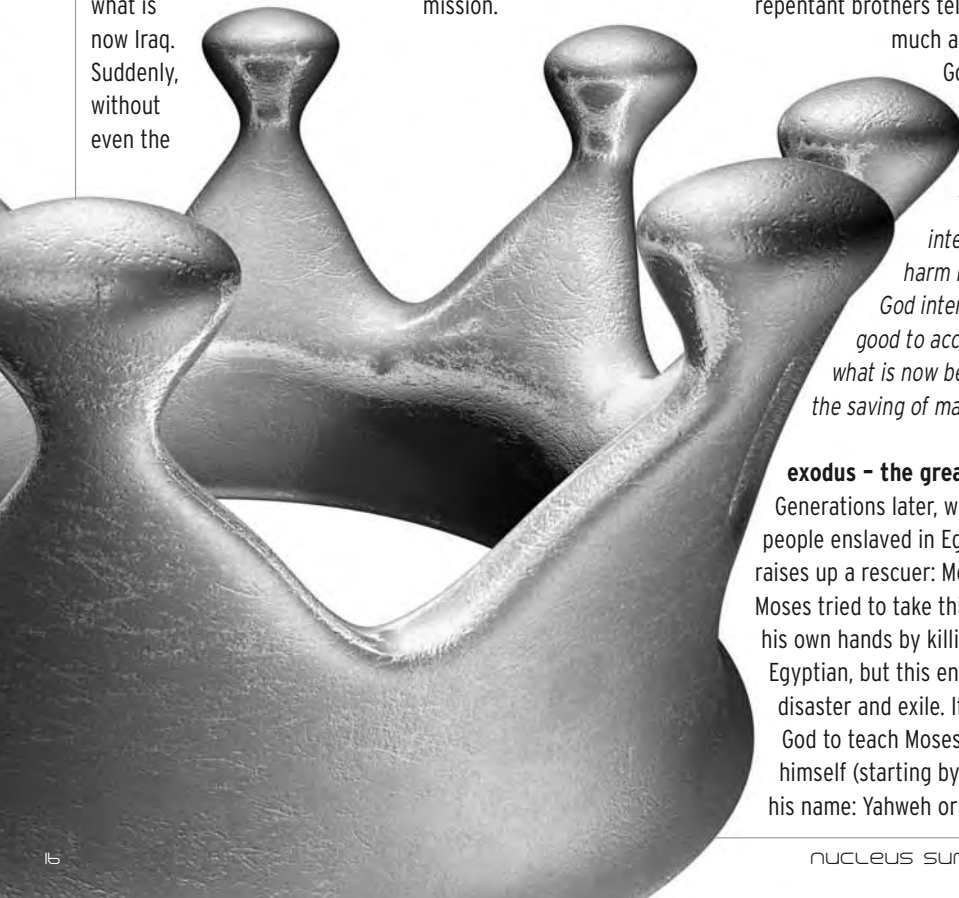
Still, what Joseph says to his repentant brothers tells us

much about how God works in his world:

You intended to harm me but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.¹²

exodus - the great escape

Generations later, with the people enslaved in Egypt, God raises up a rescuer: Moses.¹³ Moses tried to take things into his own hands by killing an Egyptian, but this ended in disaster and exile. It takes God to teach Moses about himself (starting by revealing his name: Yahweh or 'I Am')



and to rescue his people. Because God is also beginning to reveal his holiness, it becomes clear that he cannot be partial when he comes in judgment. This is why at the passover,¹⁴ there is a death in every home. But for those who take Yahweh at his word, they will sacrifice an animal in the place of the first born son. Thus the pattern of rescue by substitution is established. That was only one half of the job: the people still needed rescue from Egypt as well. Hence the crossing of the Red Sea and the journey to Mount Sinai, where God had first met Moses at the burning bush.¹⁵ Then at Sinai (also known as Horeb), Yahweh reveals how rescued people should live.¹⁶ They are saved not by keeping the law, but for keeping the law.

Thus the journey to bring God's people to his place under his rule has begun. However, the journey is inevitably not straightforward. The first generation under Moses refuse to trust God's promise of the land. So God condemns them to a lifetime of nomadic desert existence. Their children, under Joshua, will be the ones to enter.¹⁷ Yet again, God again is the only one who takes the initiative and the credit. After

all, no one could ever claim that blowing trumpets at city walls (as they did at Jericho) is a sound military tactic. Only Yahweh could do that.¹⁸

Victory depended entirely on taking God at his word. In other words, faith has always been the key to living for God.

kingdom shadows

The subsequent Judges period was turbulent – the people repeatedly sank into rebellious idolatry but God graciously rescued them by raising up leaders (or 'judges'). In fact, this cycle repeated twelve times.

Eventually, we reach the time of the last judge and first prophet, Samuel, and the people's demand for a king. Despite the people's rebellious motives – they wanted to be like other nations¹⁹ – establishing a monarchy was paradoxically integral to God's plan.

the golden age: David & Solomon

After the false start of King Saul, David is the unlikely man for the job; not even his father thought he was up to it.²⁰ Yet, by 2 Samuel 7, the people are united, the capital established at Jerusalem and everything seems to be in place. However, there are still surprises;

through Nathan, God reveals there is still more to come.²¹ God's Kingdom will be built around David's line and it will last forever! David's suggestion of a permanent temple for God is not in God's plan for him – but it is for his son Solomon (by Bathsheba of all people!) to dedicate one in 1 Kings 8. This is a glorious reminder of God's presence with his people.

David is the unlikely man for the job; not even his father thought he was up to it

Two chapters later²² comes the climactic moment of the Old Testament. A pagan, African monarch (the Queen of Sheba) visits Solomon and is overwhelmed to the point of praising Yahweh for his purposes. Truly, God's people living in God's place under God's rule is a blessing to the nations (as personified by the Queen).

the golden age: the not-so golden reality

The Bible will not allow a sanitised view of history, however. David had feet of clay (his adultery and act of murder were in some ways far worse

hope in a despairing world

than Saul's behaviour). Then as soon as the Queen of Sheba departs, we discover Solomon's true colours (despite his God-given wisdom). The irony is painful - after centuries of God getting the people out of Egypt, we find that Egypt is still within Israel, as epitomised by Solomon's marriage to

'writing' prophets had to minister. They explained that according to the covenant with Moses, expulsion from the land had always been a possibility.²⁴ Judgment should never have been a surprise to them. What was extraordinary was that God still had plans for them.

| where? | northern | southern |
|--------------|---|---|
| Name | Israel / Ephraim | Judah |
| Capital | Samaria | Jerusalem |
| Key prophets | Elijah & Elisha (9th Century) Amos & Hosea (8th Century) | Isaiah (8th Century) Jeremiah & Ezekiel (7th / 6th C.) |
| Judgment | Falls in 722 BC to Assyria: 'the Lost Tribes' | Falls in 597 & 586 BC to Babylon Exile ends 538 BC |

Pharaoh's daughter!²³ This leads to the worship of false gods – the ultimate kick in the teeth to the creator and rescuer God. Consequently, the kingdom is split in two under Solomon's successor Rehoboam, and the Northern kingdom is never again ruled by a Davidic king.

After both kingdoms are toppled, the obvious question is, 'where do God's promises stand now?' It was into this context that the so-called

God's rescue – the prophetic promise of a new exodus

The scope of the prophetic hope is huge, which is why we can only highlight some elements here:

- A New Covenant: there is continuity (same God, same people, same purpose) and radical discontinuity (the law will now be written on people's hearts bringing total forgiveness and access to God).²⁵

- A New Restored People²⁶
- A New Temple²⁷
- A New David²⁸
- A New Sacrifice²⁹
- A New Creation³⁰

It would take an almost impossible leap of imagination to foresee that the vision of a Davidic king called 'Mighty God' and 'Everlasting Father'³¹ should be combined with that of the suffering servant who presents *himself* as a sacrifice for sin.³² Yet that is precisely what

**kingdom coming
the gospels:
the king has come**

Matthew opens his gospel with a genealogy. For many, the Bible's genealogies are its least exciting components – and yet for the gospel

scriptures (the Old Testament).³⁵

For all the many breathtaking things he did, like preaching, healing and exorcism, the heart of his mission lay in his obedience to

happens when we get to the New Testament. Perhaps the serpent-crusher is still on his way?

After the Persian empire under King Cyrus sends the exiles home,³³ the people trickle back. What they rebuild, however, is a mere shadow of past glories rather than the expected upgrades and improvements on the old way of life. Those who could remember were bitterly disappointed³⁴ and the post-Exile prophets like Malachi and Zechariah have to preach a depressingly similar message to that of their pre-Exilic counterparts. The people have not changed much, and so the Old Testament ends without resolution.

writers, they were thrilling and decisive. In fact, after Matthew 1 and Luke 3, there are no more genealogies in Scripture. Their job is done. For the king is here, and his people will not be drawn from those racially connected to him, but from those connected by faith.

Jesus is descended from Adam (and therefore human, of course), Abraham (and therefore Jewish) and from David (and therefore royal). Everything about him – his character, his actions, his teaching and above all his mission – is governed by and understood through the

the Father at the end of his life. As he predicted at least three times³⁶ and explained on the Emmaus Road,³⁷ Jesus had come to die on a cross and then rise again. The Davidic King had come to be the Temple Sacrifice and Passover Lamb.³⁸ He had come to die as a substitutionary sacrifice in order that sinful people might have access to God. Only this would reverse the tragedy of the Fall.

*Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.*³⁹

acts: kingdom spreads

After Jesus' ascension, Peter preaches to Jews from all over the then known world in Jerusalem.⁴⁰ Within days, the church is numbering thousands. As Luke tells the story in Acts, God spreads his message far and wide, from Jerusalem to Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the world.⁴¹

*through Jesus
we will be reunited
to the Father who
made us*

Luke's focus is primarily on Peter and Paul (with cameos from Stephen and Philip) – but we are meant to imagine that all the others are involved in extending the kingdom, as the gospel ripples out from the epicentre in Jerusalem. Within weeks, these first Christians are grappling with the challenges of reaching out to and then integrating Gentiles⁴² into what is fast becoming a trans-cultural phenomenon.

epistles:

living in the now and not yet

Summarising the impact of the New Testament letters is difficult. They are as diverse as the men who wrote them. However, it is

possible to say this: they guide and lead the early church as she grapples with the challenge of being subjects and co-heirs of God's kingdom in a hostile world and culture. By God's Spirit, believers are grounded, equipped and sustained in the marathon that is the Christian life – and the letters help them along the way.

This challenge is epitomised by Romans 8, where Paul explains the joys and confidence we have as Christians (eg no condemnation, having the Spirit of Christ, assurance of nothing separating us from Christ), together with the frustrations and sufferings that derive from divine promises as yet unfulfilled.

The crucial thing is that this is no indefinite state or endless cycle. The moment when all God's kingdom promises will be consummated is on its way.

kingdom forever

In Revelation 21-22, the story ends – or rather just begins! For the whole point is that God's people now live for eternity in the presence of God, unencumbered by sin because of Christ. All that stood in hostile opposition to God has been condemned and expelled



(hence there is no sea, a Hebraic metaphor for chaos and rebellion). All that is God's is renewed and restored. The New Jerusalem comes *down* to earth and all inhabitants enjoy the wonders of Eden as illustrated by the Trees of Life.

The key, though, lies in what is central to the vision: Jesus the Lion and the Lamb (the King and Sacrifice). It is through him, by the Spirit, that we are reunited to the Father who made us – and that is why

eternity will be spent in joyful praise and service of the great God of the cosmos.

It is this hope that uniquely pierces through the despair of our world and generation. The Bible demonstrates, over centuries, God's track record in making and then keeping promises. It illustrates repeatedly how human sin will never throw God off course. It encourages us that trusting God is always the best way to live in the end.

*Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving towards all he has made.*⁴³

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heavenly bodies?

Alex Bunn asks 'what is the human body'?



BODY as machine



Medical schools teach students to treat the body as a self-regulating machine. Medics are merely body mechanics, hired to repair. It's a useful model when learning about hormones or kidneys, but less satisfying for describing whole people. Am I really just a computer made of meat? Am I really no more than a sum of my parts, 43kg oxygen, 16 kg carbon, 7kg hydrogen, 1.8kg nitrogen and a few trace elements? Is my body simply the vehicle for my selfish genes?

If my body is just an organic machine, what is its future? When any other machine malfunctions, it becomes scrap, like an obsolete mobile. No wonder our culture is hopeless about the future. Our bodies are like the larger mechanism of the universe in miniature, winding down until they reach maximum entropy, cold and dead.

VERSUS

BODY

as living soul



I want to contrast our culture's view of the body with a Christian approach. Contrary to popular opinion, the Bible is far more positive about the body than pagan thought. Firstly, the Bible does not reduce a person to an automaton. To separate body and soul would be extraordinary to the Hebrew authors, even miraculous.¹ We do not have bodies, rather, we are living bodies. The Hebrew word *nephesh* refers to a living unity, a soul fleshed out. Moreover, God is not the Grand Engineer winding up the mechanism and disappearing from the scene. Rather he is the potter, the tailor, or even the chef, an artist caught up with his physical creation:

*Remember that you moulded me like clay,
Will you now turn me to dust again?
Did you not pour me out like milk
and curdle me like cheese,
clothe me with skin and flesh
and knit me together with bones and sinews?*²

He is even described like a Great Physician performing the kiss of life:

*God formed Man out of dirt from the ground and blew into his nostrils
the breath of life. The Man came alive – a living soul!*³

But whilst animals are also *nephesh*, man is different, unique in bearing the image of God:

*So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*⁴

The distinctiveness of man, the image, is not an extra circuit board that generates mind, or a design feature like opposable thumbs. Rather it is the family likeness to our creator, all that makes us human that images our creator.

And just as the Heavenly Father exists eternally in family relationship, we are not made as individual units off the assembly line, but as mutually interdependent family. Adam found this out when Eve was surgically removed from his thorax!

So when God looks at you, he does not see a disembodied soul, but an integrated whole.

BODY as meat



How else does Western culture describe the body? Just as a cow can be seen as steak on the hoof, so the human body can be seen as so much meat. Our bodies respond stubbornly to our requests, they are easily fatigued like a beast of burden. The body needs taming, sometimes by piercing and tattooing, which taken to extremes can dehumanise. We stab, mutilate and brand human flesh, like we would cattle.

And like all meat, our bodies are poised to putrefy, the moment the heart stops. Bertrand Russell lamented 'when I die, I rot'. The artist Mark Quinn captured this in a sculpture of his head made with his own frozen blood. If left to thaw for just a moment, it would melt away into a gooey mess. Such is the fragility of every human body, yours and mine.

VERSUS

BODY as tent



The authors of the Bible did not shrink from hard realities, the transience of man's life, which sometimes feels as insignificant as an animal's: *But man, despite his riches, does not endure; he is like the beasts that perish... Like sheep they are destined for the grave, and death will feed on them.*⁵

All the same, we are not to despair. We are made for eternity, even if we are only en-route. Our destination is what defines us:

*He has made everything beautiful in its time.
He has also set eternity in the hearts of men.*⁶

Paul puts it this way:

*Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.*⁷

The longing for permanence, the sense of nakedness, of being out of place, the groaning of our ageing bodies, these are signposts to a far off place. We are homesick for a place we have never yet been, an eternal home on the farthest horizon.

BODY as playground



VERSUS

BODY as temple



A less morbid modern attitude is to treat the body like an amusement park. It may not last for ever, but you may as well enjoy the ride. For instance, James Dean tells us to enjoy it whilst we can: 'live fast, die young, leave behind a beautiful body'. Our appetites regularly offer us a menu of thrills. And no-one has a right to tell me what to do with my play centre, it's all mine. But we fear the consequences. A sedentary lifestyle and the joyrides of junk food and chemical fixes turn the amusement park into a junk yard. Hence our papers are full of advice for prolonging the joy ride, extending youth whatever the cost.

Our predecessors had a very different perspective. Their Bibles told them that their bodies were temples, honoured places. The creator of the universe might even make a personal visit:

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."⁸

Bodies are therefore unique entities, points at which heaven touches earth. We are not created for our own pleasure, but for his. It's an awesome privilege to host the divine presence:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.⁹

Privilege brings responsibility. Imagine being given a top of the range sports car: an Aston Martin or Lotus Elan. Or imagine you're given a Versace outfit with Prada accessories. You'd cherish your gift, and therefore take great care of it. It's an honour to be made human, as the ancient song lyrics go:

What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour.¹⁰

An embodied human being is part of an extraordinary cosmic drama, even if we can't always perceive it. CS Lewis warns us not to treat human life flippantly:

It is a serious thing, to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare.¹¹

BODY as a prison of the soul



It is often said that religion denigrates the body. Yet it is pagan philosophy and pessimism that does it the greater disservice. Western civilisation was founded on Greek thought, which at times sadly diluted and corrupted the biblical understanding. Their philosophy often separated body and mind. Mind was seen as superior to the body as it can transcend the body into a heavenly realm of perfection. The body, with its appetites, sensations and flux, distracts us from the work of the soul: rational contemplation. Hence the body imprisons the soul, a vehicle for the real me trapped inside.

Harsh bodily treatment was used to punish the enemy of the soul, and death was seen as release for the soul from its cage, into a disembodied heaven. Some body-hating Christians still give this impression, as does talk of 'going to heaven', leaving behind redundant bodies on a redundant earth.

VERSUS

BODY as seed



The Bible, however, regards the present body as a glorious ruin in need of repair. Ruined because of the rebellion against God that led to degeneration, disease and death. But glorious because of its latent potential, the hope of eternal life. It's a flawed masterpiece that is not going to be discarded.

Paul used the picture of a seed. Just as a seed looks lifeless, and betrays little of its future glory from its outward appearance, so the present body is a weak and corrupted thing that awaits transformation:

*The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*¹²

The reason for Paul's and the early Christians' confidence is that they witnessed the first resurrection of this kind:

*On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.*¹³

The disciples were not expecting Jesus to return. But their surprise was two-fold. Firstly, men don't normally walk through walls:

*They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.*¹⁴ But it certainly was 'the old Jesus' whom they recognised, and he carried the

scars from his crucifixion. And secondly, he digested food, like any physical body must:

Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.¹⁵

So the disciples witnessed the first appearance of resurrected humanity: fully human, but fully transformed: imperishable, glorious, powerful and spiritual. The question then is, which reality is most real? At first the disciples thought that Jesus belonged to a ghost world. Could it be that it is we who live in the ghost world? That compared with the resurrection body, solid walls are but thin air?

The God of the Bible is not done with the earth either: far from scrapping redundant bodies on a redundant earth, he will restore and renew that glorious ruin too. Heaven will be 'fleshed out' as heaven comes down to earth, to transform not just our bodies, but the entire physical creation, where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain:

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God... He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"¹⁶

In conclusion, the Bible is frank about the shortcomings of the human body: earthbound, obstinate, decaying and distracting. But God's word to man offers hope: our bodies (tents) are signposts to an eternal destination. They can be honoured homes for the divine even now (temples). And they are glorious ruins that he wants to restore and renew: 'imperishable, glorious, powerful and spiritual' (seeds). Only in Christ is there such a hope for the human body.

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student finance

Laurence Crutchlow explores an age-old issue

A look back into the archives of *Nucleus* soon reveals that money has been a concern for students since the inception of the journal in the 1970s. The first article published predates the birth of the present author, and there have been numerous items printed since. A significant amount of Jesus' recorded teaching is on money, so *Nucleus* makes no apology for revisiting an important issue that often looms large in the concerns of medical students of all faiths and none.

Many students anecdotally claim to struggle with money on a day-to-day basis. Learning to be financially independent may be difficult in any case, but the pressures of low income during the university years make this more acute. There are wider concerns that increased levels of student debt may make those who are more debt averse less likely to study medicine. This may lead to a narrowing of the social groups from which future doctors are drawn.

rising debts

An interesting exercise is a comparison of levels of student debt reported by the British

Medical Association (BMA) student finance survey in the past. The average debt incurred by the time someone left medical school in 1995 was reported as £4,273.¹ Adjusted for inflation, this would have represented £5,854 at 2007 values.² However, the same figure from the comparable survey in 2007 (the last year for which figures are available) is £21,057. This represents a near fourfold increase, or an annual rate of 11.3% in real terms.³

Given that spending on education has increased over recent years, why should this be? The government has set a target of 50% of school-leavers undertaking higher education.⁴ Increased student participation means that available funding is more thinly spread. The abolition of student grants, coupled with the introduction of tuition and now top-up fees has significantly increased the costs of being at medical school, even though some costs are deferred until after graduation.



Many would argue that medical students face specific pressures. Longer courses mean more years at university where borrowing may be needed. Long hours during term-time (and shorter holidays later in the course) reduce the scope for part-time work. Professional clothes for the wards and perhaps a car when on far-flung attachments all increase costs.

Salaries for UK doctors have not kept pace with increases in debt. The current basic starting salary of a foundation year one doctor is £21,862.⁵ This is just slightly higher than that offered to teachers and nurses, who spend fewer years at university, although may face similar financial pressures during their courses. Out-of-hours supplements often increase this salary substantially, but trends to reduce junior doctors' working hours have left an increasing number earning just this basic salary for at least part of their first foundation year.

Although the situation for medical students in the UK has worsened, it is still better than for many others. Average final year medical student debt in the

USA was recently reported as \$139,517 by the American Medical Association.⁶ The figure for Canada is little better at around C\$100,000. Although starting pay is comparatively low in medicine, considerably higher final salaries are achieved by many doctors than would be available in teaching or nursing.

how do we respond?

Such figures may make grim reading, but also raise questions for today's student. What does the Bible have to say about debt? How can I minimise the debt I build up? How can I pay it off quickly once I am earning? How can I help future generations of students who might be worse affected? Is there anything I can do politically?

It should not surprise us that there are times when we have less money than others. The Bible is clear that there will always be some inequalities.⁷ Debt crises are not new. Nehemiah came upon such a problem whilst rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.⁸ Here it appears that lending was being undertaken on unfair terms, breaking the rules set out previously.⁹ Nehemiah was quick to act. The clear ban on the taking of interest from fellow Jews was being ignored. It is



clear that taking on debt in difficult times was permissible.¹⁰ Although the Bible sets terms for lending within ancient Israel, we are not given any choice about the terms on which we borrow from the Student Loans Company. Although not necessarily in accordance with what we see in Leviticus, student loan terms are more generous than those available commercially.

we can exercise some control over borrowing

Although we may not be able to avoid some degree of debt, we can exercise some control over the amount we borrow. The huge variations in amounts of debt reported by the BMA student finance survey suggest that it is not only parental income and city of study that influence total debt. Some undoubtedly choose to borrow, assuming that they'll have plenty of money later. An anonymous student quoted by the BMA states 'I felt I'd rather live well as a student and borrow from the bank knowing I should easily afford repayments when I start working'.¹¹ It is easy to take this mindset, feeling that as we are likely to end our

student days in debt in any case, we shouldn't take too much notice of the total amount.

how can we reduce our debts?

increasing income

This may be possible even as a student. There are relatively long holidays early in the course - at least part of which could be used for paid work. Some may find that studies permit part-time work at evenings and weekends, but this needs to be considered carefully, and may be difficult in the clinical years. Working as a medical secretary or as a nursing auxiliary may make use of skills being learnt during the course.

It is important to ensure we are receiving the maximum support available in terms of loans and grants - particularly by re-assessing this if ours or our parents' circumstances change. There may also be other sources of money such as prizes or scholarships available. Sometimes charities or trusts at our home location may offer support.

reducing expenditure

Not all students spend sensibly.

I had one friend at medical school whose telephone bill whilst on elective ran into four figures, and another who paid every morning for a two minute bus journey to avoid walking the short distance from halls to campus.

Rent and travel are often our biggest outlays. We need to consider our choice of accommodation carefully in the light of cost. It may be possible to cycle rather than use the more expensive bus. If we have to run a car in the clinical years, we may save several hundred pounds by shopping around for insurance.

Avoiding smoking and being sensible about alcohol intake will help our budgets considerably. Pooling expenses with others (particularly on food) may make a big difference. Keeping a careful record of expenses is simple enough. We may be surprised what we are spending, and identify areas in which to cut back if there are problems.

borrowing carefully

There are limits on the amount of money that can be borrowed on favourable terms from the student loans company. Particularly for students who

are older or have already done a degree, there may be a need to look at other sources. The BMA and some banks will lend money specifically to medical students - at higher rates than those of the student loan company, but often more cheaply than would otherwise be available.

we should give according to what we have

Most banks will also allow students a considerable overdraft at little or no interest. Credit cards are often available to students, but remain a very expensive way to borrow, so should ideally be used as a last resort.

The amount and type of debt we incur will have implications for the future. Debt owed to the student loan company is only paid back if our income is over a certain threshold. However, other debt has to be paid back regardless - which may pose problems if we want to spend time at bible college after medical school, for example. This means that we should be especially careful about taking on further debt once we have

exhausted our student loan, and plan carefully how we might pay it back.

where does giving feature?

We may ask whether we should be giving at all if we are struggling financially, and when much of our money is borrowed. Although poorer than some around us, we are also richer than many in other parts of the world. We see that the Levites tithed their own limited income,¹² and many churches today do the same.

Certainly any actual *income* (as opposed to loans) we have should be considered something that we should give from, generously and cheerfully. We should not feel guilty if this is only small amounts, but should give according to what we have.

Giving away borrowed money is a different matter. Although our student loan may feel like income, we will have to pay it back eventually, and it is someone else's money rather than our own. There is little benefit in putting ourselves in debt to help others, and perhaps then needing help ourselves in repaying the debts.

Although we may have little money that we can give as students, we often have more time than many people who are working, particularly during holidays, and should use this precious resource in God's service.

after graduation

It may seem strange in an article for medical students to touch on our attitudes to money after graduation. However, our behaviour as students will shape what we do later, and attitudes formed now under relative financial pressure are likely to stick with us if better off in the future.

There can be two near opposite approaches to finance for the Christian. One is to take a very careful approach - clearing debts quickly, giving willingly but not necessarily extensively, and ensuring we have the money ourselves to finance everything we want to do. This type of person may not necessarily give staggering amounts, but is unlikely to need the support of others in the church either.

The opposite is to take a very day-to-day approach to money - living for the day and giving

away all that is surplus. Although the amounts given may be large, this type of person will often need gifts from others in the church to manage in more difficult times, as no money has been put aside.

what does the Bible say?

It may be surprising to report that the Bible actually affirms both of the models set out above.

*Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.*¹³

The value of planning independently is clearly affirmed. There are times when it is right to store things in expectation of future need. Joseph's story shows clearly the necessity of this.¹⁴

Yet we also see affirmation of the opposite model:

*Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.*¹⁵

In the context of a discussion about worry, we are told to trust in the Lord. The birds are given as an example of something that *doesn't* plan, and we are exhorted to follow their example. In the New Testament, we see affirmation of the Macedonian church, who had given beyond their ability.¹⁶

earthly wealth has a guaranteed zero eternal return

How then are we to choose between these models? What should be our attitude? Just how much wealth is it right for us to own? Given that many people are less likely to discuss personal finances than even medical problems, it may not be surprising that this often isn't well understood by Christians.

warnings about wealth

There are many biblical warnings against building up wealth. It is all too easy for material wealth to become an idol, displacing God from his true place.¹⁷ We often value stability, and savings and insurance are an important part of that for many of us. Yet they will never provide absolute

certainty for the future – only the Lord can do that.

As with other idols, wealth fails to deliver. It is never risk free – as recent crises in banking have reminded us. Hence we never accumulate quite enough wealth to feel safe. Our wealth of course will make no difference beyond the grave. The Bible is clear that worldly wealth will be of no worth in the new heavens and earth.¹⁸ Such wealth is the ultimate bad investment - there is a guaranteed eternal return of zero.

In the face of such evidence, should the Christian save or insure at all? Many traditions have been inherently suspicious of savings, with some monastic rules (such as that of St Benedict),¹⁹ renouncing individual ownership altogether.

prudence

Yet there is clear biblical support for wealth under some circumstances. There is no evidence that either Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea were expected to give away their possessions to become disciples of Jesus. Although the poor are said to be blessed by Jesus,²⁰ poverty is never positively advocated – and indeed the

Christian is urged to relieve poverty.

Prudence is championed.²¹

To avoid debt, we will inevitably need to save for some purchases. We are also exhorted to fulfil our duties to our families.²² Living on a hand-to-mouth basis may be acceptable when single, but it is very difficult to provide support to dependents in this way.

We are clearly to avoid dependence on others.²³

Victorian Christians in particular were very clear about such a 'work ethic', some seeing saving as liberating from day-to-day dependence on money.

Dependence upon charity was frowned upon. Although much charitable provision has been replaced by state systems in the UK, the principle of self-sufficiency would remain the same.

living within our means is vital

resolving the conflict

How should we live, given these conflicting ideas? It is perhaps simple enough to reject the extremes – either of fatalism (where any exercise of planning

In the USA, Medsend²⁶ was set up at the request of our sister organisation, CMDA. Medsend offers student loan repayment grants to healthcare professionals who are working with a recognised mission agency towards a career of missionary service. Over 360 grants have been made which have enabled healthcare professionals to train for and work in the mission field much earlier than might otherwise have been the case. Given that student debt in the UK is inexorably rising, might there soon be a need for a similar project here?

is seen as not trusting God's providence – ie we shouldn't look before stepping out into the road!) – or of protecting oneself against all possible eventualities (in practice indistinguishable from trusting in our own wealth above God – and probably impossible to do anyway). Even so, a wide range of possible approaches seems permissible. Such freedom is often uncomfortable for us. Despite the fact that we live under grace, how many of us when truly pressed, find it easier if there is a set of rules to follow?

It may be that a diversity of practice on this issue was God's intention all along. In the New Testament, exact practice over wealth seems to vary with circumstances. Mary's extravagance is commended when she anoints Jesus at Bethany,²⁴ yet the disciples are sent out with 'nothing for the journey' when they go to teach about Jesus.²⁵

planning ahead

In the midst of this tension, how might we discern which approach we are called to currently? Although these things may seem hard to think through as students when we have apparently little money, attitudes formed now will stay with us. Without planning now, it will be all too easy to take the line of least resistance when the first pay cheque arrives.

We should already be thinking through our major life choices. Are we committed to always working in medicine? Will that be full or part-time? Do we want to marry, or remain single? Are we likely to work in the developing world? Are we likely to struggle without some of the trappings of a middle class lifestyle, or are we able truthfully to manage with less? Our answers to all these questions will play a part in determining how we manage

money, and may have implications very early on. If we are committed to working in the developing world, is it really worth accumulating the extra debt incurred whilst intercalating if the subject we're studying will be of no use there? If we intend to take time out soon after graduating to go to Bible college, we need to be especially careful of unsecured loans for items like cars, which may tie us down. But if we are expecting to stay in the UK and in one place, we may benefit considerably from spending to buy property early on, and reducing any mortgage borrowings prior to having a family.

Who will actually decide our standard of living? So often our pay scale determines this - yet should we not think about this independently? It is very easy for spending to rise to absorb any increase in income.

Living within our means is vital to help us realise the choices we have made. This is often easiest to learn now as a student when we have relatively little money, and limited facility to borrow. Debt is expensive - and whilst many of us will need to borrow to buy a home, we need to examine carefully any other

planned borrowing and be clear of its purpose before taking it on.

We also need to pay off debts! Even as a student we might choose to use any unexpected income to reduced debt - especially if it is debt not owed to the Student Loans Company. It is surprising how many people actually take on *more* debt soon after graduation rather than pay it off - as evidenced by the cars parked outside many junior doctors' accommodation blocks.

Even on a limited student budget, it is possible to prioritise people over property in our spending. Simple things like sharing meals are not expensive. After graduation, when we are often rich in money but poor in time, we may want to use money to effectively 'buy time' - for example by employing a cleaner, or getting shopping delivered.

Our use of money is a key part of our witness as believers. Ostentatiously rich believers are rarely a good witness - but neither is obvious financial recklessness. Our ultimate response to how we handle our money won't be determined by our financial understanding, or even by our views on some of

the questions discussed here. As in all things, we need to ask whether Jesus is truly at the centre of our lives - and if our use of money is suggesting that he is not, we need to repent and turn back to him.

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HEROES + HERETICS

NEW NUCLEUS SERIES: **Alex Bunn** encourages us to learn from history

HERO 1: HIPPOCRATES

We evangelicals rarely know much history. We are wary of venerating the lives of 'saints', but as a result we forget the trail blazers and role models, who fought key battles for gospel truth and values. The Bible encourages us to learn from history, as often 'these things happened as examples and were written down as warnings for us'.¹

I have called this series *Heroes and Heretics* because we need to celebrate the heroes, but also to oppose heresy. You may think that heresy is too strong a word, but the stakes are high. Jesus himself warned against the false teachers and bad shepherds of his day who 'shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces'.² Maybe the concept of heresy is shunned due to the violence of the medieval church, which at times hunted down the unorthodox. Whilst not every cherished Christian belief or church tradition is a gospel truth worth fighting

over, there are primary issues,³ such as the lordship of the risen Christ,⁴ on which the church stands or falls. More subtly, there are heretics who distract us from gospel priorities⁵ which can be equally damaging. So I am not advocating witch hunts, simply pointing out that the Lord and his Apostles warned us to be alert, to 'test everything', but also to 'hold on to the good',⁶ to be critical of heresy, but also to applaud and emulate the heroes.

Let's start with a hero from the pagan context into which Jesus and his followers launched the church. Imagine you are a medical student doing your paediatric attachment in the ancient Roman Empire. As you do your newborn baby checks, you are guided by the authorities of the day. You have read the textbook by Soranus, the top Roman physician who describes the routine for a baby check:

*'The newborn infant is examined to see if it is perfect in all its parts, members and senses; that its ducts, namely of the ears, nose, pharynx, urethra and anus, are free from obstruction; that the natural functions of every member are neither sluggish nor weak; that the joints bend and stretch; that it has due size and shape and is properly sensitive in every respect...'*⁷

So far so good. You will have identified any significant anatomical, neurological or developmental abnormalities. But the purpose of the exam was very different to today:

*'...and by conditions contrary to those mentioned, the infant not worth rearing is recognised.'*⁸

Screening for abnormalities was performed not to identify need, but to weed out defective children to be discarded. The ancient pagans had little regard for human life until it had proved its worth to society.

heroes + heretics

If the child was disabled in any way, it was regarded in the same way as a troublesome animal:

*'Mad dogs we knock on the head; the fierce and savage ox we slay; unnatural progeny we destroy; we drown even children who at birth are weakly and abnormal.'*⁹

Infanticide was so accepted as to be routine. Here is a letter from a travelling father to his expectant wife at home, in which his command to kill is quite casual:

*'If you are delivered of a child [before I come home], if it is a boy, keep it, if a girl, discard it. You have sent me word "don't forget me". How can I forget you? I beg you not to worry.'*¹⁰

The modern equivalents to pagan attitudes are clear; much prenatal screening can be defined as a 'search and destroy' policy. Those humans who are least developed are sacrificed for the interests of the strong. Peter Singer has even revived the idea that infanticide is merely an ethical extension of modern abortion policy.¹¹ The assumption underlying this is that the value of human life is on a sliding scale (see diagram).

THE PAGAN SCALE OF HUMAL VALUES

INTELLECTUAL



ATHLETE



SICK OR DISABLED



HEALTHY ANIMAL



INFANT OR
FRAIL ELDERLY



LIFE IN THE
WOMB



HERO 1: Dr Hippocrates

Dr Hippocrates made a radical departure from pagan tradition. His now famous oath bound doctors to show unconditional respect for all human life, wherever it was on the scale of pagan value. His followers swore that they would never abort or intentionally kill their patients, which would have been totally unnecessary had not the contemporary culture practised this routinely:

*'I will not give poison to anyone, though asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a plan. Similarly I will not give a pessary to a woman to cause abortion.'*¹²

Interestingly, our first hero was not a Christian. There was no way he could have been, as he was born 400 years before Christ. So it is strange that the idea of the sanctity of life is now seen as religious dogma, when it was a pagan medic who first taught it! This should not surprise Christians, though, as the God of the Bible gives all men 'general revelation', in the form of conscience, so that we all recognise what has been called 'natural law':

*Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.*¹³

Doctors no longer swear oaths, preferring instead to recognise merely a code. But Hippocrates recognised the need for 'transcendent values', accountability to a higher power than themselves:

*'I swear by Apollo, Asclepius, Hygieia, and Panacea, and I take to witness all the gods, all the goddesses, to keep according to my ability and my judgment, the following Oath.'*¹⁴

The church later embraced Hippocrates' ethics as fitting with the Judeo-Christian tradition. Hippocrates was simply recognising the image of God in man that separates man from other animals:

*Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.*¹⁵

What did it cost Hippocrates personally to practise a radical new ethic? Did he lose business by rejecting the standard business model of the ancient physician? Was he pressurised by relatives with an interest to break his oath? Was he ridiculed by the establishment? We will never know, but we can thank him for laying the foundations of Western medical ethics for over two millennia. His ethical code transformed Western medical practice to become distinctively patient-centred, professional, radically egalitarian and compassionate. His ethical code and personal example is still a high standard for Christians to aspire to. But thanks to this Greek physician who followed his conscience against the prevailing culture, our profession today mostly practises medicine fitting with the image of God in each of our patients.

Alex Bunn is CMF Acting Head of Student Ministries and a GP in London

SUMMARY

HIPPOCRATES' RADICAL CONTRIBUTION

- Recognised the doctors' accountability to a higher power
- Rejected the pagan scale of human value
- Introduced the sanctity of life into medical practice
- Made the patient's interests his first concern

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how to read the Bible for all its worth

Rob Radcliffe helps us to apply the Law

between God and his people Israel. In return for benefits and protection, Israel was expected to keep the many commandments contained in the law. But it's not our covenant. We are not necessarily required to keep these laws,² however, it is important for understanding God's relationship with Israel.

the Law(s): covenant stipulations for Israel

This series is summarised from Fee G, Stuart D. *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth* (3rd ed). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003

It is difficult for us to grasp the enormity of what God did for the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai. Here were a people that had known only slavery in Egypt for hundreds of years. Not only had God delivered them from this slavery in the exodus and his presence was with them – distinguishing them from all other nations – but God was also forming them into a community that he would lead victoriously into the land he was giving them. So the people needed direction as to how they were to be God's people. It was in this context that the Law was given to Israel.

what is the law?

Here we will consider the law in terms of the specific commands given to the Israelites in the first five books of the Bible. Some also use the term to mean the whole of

the Old Testament (OT) religious system, whilst in the New Testament (NT) the 'law' sometimes refers to the interpretation of OT law given by rabbis.

christians and the OT law

Do the OT laws apply to us as Christians? If so how? There is no longer a temple, nor an altar on which to offer the sacrifices. So what does Jesus mean by 'I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished'?¹ Four guidelines help us answer the question of how the OT law functions for us as Christians:

1. *The OT law is a covenant*

2. *Part of the old covenant is explicitly not renewed in the new covenant.* Many parts of the law dealt with Israel's civil law. As none of us are citizens of ancient Israel, they don't apply directly to us. Other parts of the law refer to the rituals that the Israelites were required to carry out as part of their worship. Jesus' one-time sacrifice for our sin means that the old sacrificial system and the laws regarding its practice are obsolete too.
3. *Part of the old covenant is explicitly renewed in the new covenant.* Some parts of the OT law are restated in the NT and are applicable to us as Christians; they support the two basic laws of the new covenant.³ For instance, the Ten Commandments are cited in various ways in the New Testament as still relevant to us today.⁴ This is not to say that we are still bound by the

OT law. Paul says ‘But now righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.’⁵

4. *The OT law is still God’s word even though it isn’t God’s command to us.* God still wants us to know about it, and speaks to us through it. ‘Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk’⁶ seems like a strange commandment, but when we understand that this was one of the practices of the Canaanite fertility cult, then we see that God was concerned that his people didn’t become like the other nations around them. If you want to cook a goat in its mother’s milk, then the OT law doesn’t forbid you from it – but God forbidding it to Israel tells us something about what he’s like.

the role of the law

Even though the OT law is not our law, it is still an important part of the Bible. Paul tells us that the law leads us to Christ (Galatians 3:24) and helps us to understand Israel’s relationship with God. Nowhere in the OT is it said that people are saved by keeping the Law, rather in the Law, God set his people

The authors of the book provide a reminder of principles for understanding the law:

| Do... | Don’t... |
|---|--|
| ...see the Old Testament law as God’s fully inspired word for you. | ...see the Old Testament law as God’s direct command to you. |
| ...see the Old Testament law as the basis for the old covenant, and therefore for Israel’s history. | ...see the Old Testament law as binding on Christians in the new covenant except where specifically renewed. |
| ...see God’s justice, love, and high standards revealed in the Old Testament law. | ...forget to see that God’s mercy is made equal to the severity of the standards. |
| ...see the Old Testament law as a paradigm – providing examples for the full range of expected behaviour. | ...see the Old Testament law as complete. It is not technically comprehensive. |
| ...remember that the essence of the law (the Ten Commandments and two chief laws) is repeated in the prophets and renewed in the New Testament. | ...expect the Old Testament law to be cited frequently by the prophets or the New Testament. |
| ...see the Old Testament law as a generous gift to Israel, bringing much blessing when obeyed. | ...see the Old Testament law as a grouping of arbitrary, annoying regulations limiting people’s freedom. |

apart, and showed them how they were to love him and their neighbours. Israel’s problem was not their inability to follow the law, but rather their choosing not to. They chose to reject God and entertain other ‘gods’.

Praise God that we are not bound by the OT law, that ‘it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God’⁷. Praise him

also, that we can learn from the way we see God relating with his covenant people through the OT.

Rob Radcliffe is a clinical medical student in Nottingham

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fearfully and wonderfully made:

service

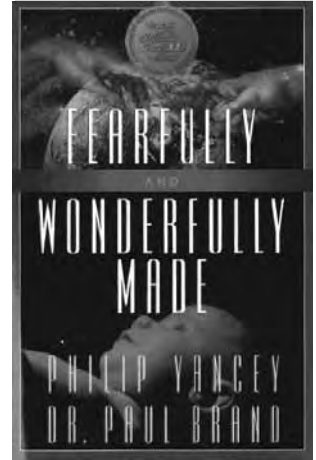
I cannot help but try to think of my own happiest moments. In spite of being a young man, my greatest moments of personal fulfillment have been those spent in sacrificial service of others. The tasks undertaken were in no way noble or grand in the eyes of the world, but still felt like they were exactly what God wanted from me. It is in those rare moments when one truly experiences what being part of one body in Christ is like.

Paul urges us to offer ourselves as 'living sacrifices'.¹ He talks about how he 'gladly gives up everything' for his companions² and encourages us to do 'nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves'.³ Yet our Western culture exalts self-fulfillment and autonomy. Success and happiness are pursued through the accumulation of wealth and goods, often at the expense of others. Living sacrificially opposes the core of what our society dictates as the path to contentment; a path that echoes principles of self conservation and survival of the fittest above the interests of others.

The body of Christ must work together, much like our human bodies. The body works in harmony when individual cells adhere to their purpose in serving the rest of the body, even at times when such purpose might demand sacrifice. The macrophage may engulf enough bacteria to cause its own demise; the adipocyte dispenses rich and much valued sources of energy to the rest of the body in times of need. The list is seemingly endless, and the consequences of cells not acting as they should - be it denying the body of an essential function or acting in disunity - form a large proportion of the pathology we may encounter in our future patients.

Paul reminds us it is the Lord we are serving,⁴ and that he, rather than men, should be our motivation. Jesus said 'whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'.⁵ It is a sobering thought that should be kept in mind for when we get to treat patients: each one of them was made in the Creator's image and whatever we do for them should be done in a manner fit for him. Moreover, this attitude

This article is inspired by a chapter from Yancey P, Brand P. *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. The authors expand on the New Testament analogy of the Body of Christ, linking it to the human body.



should not be one that we seek to maintain exclusively in our future professional lives. It should be present throughout every act of service, no matter how insignificant or negligible it may seem to us.

Karim Fouad Alber is a second year medical student at University College London

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The Screwtape Letters

C S Lewis



Fount 1982

£5.99 Pb 133pp

ISBN 0-00-626527-8

My dear Wormwood. My letters to you have been exposed and are now circulating among the entirety of humankind! How could you have let this happen? Your incompetence as a junior tempter has caused a detrimental impact on the works of the demons in the Lowerarchy serving Our Father Below.

My letters to you reveal millennia worth of our innermost secrets and tactics in tempting our patients to sin and eternal damnation. Details explaining the extreme, subtle manipulation of modern society are of particular concern since they are so relevant to contemporary readers. Disclosure of this information will allow our patients to become more aware of our presence in their lives, making it easier for them to escape our sinful influence and ever more vigilantly follow the ways of the Enemy Above. The publication is not only clear enough to be understood by the dimmest of humankind, but has been shared amongst friends, and more pressingly, non-Christians, revealing to them the methods we have employed to shield them from the presence of the Enemy Above.

The publishing of my letters will set us back centuries of temptation and will cost us many souls to the Enemy Above. I fear your next stay in the House of Correction for Incompetent Tempters will be a long one.

Your affectionate uncle, Screwtape

Chee Yeen Fung is a second year medical student at University College London

www.blueletterbible.org

This free and interactive website facilitates in-depth Bible study through a number of tools and features. It is attractive, informative and user-friendly. Fourteen different Bible translations are supported.

There are introductions to, and summaries of, the books of the Bible, commentaries from over 20 sources (including audio and video), a number of maps and images, and a list of scriptures that commonly cause confusion with their intended meanings. There is a choice of three devotionals, a Daily Bible Reading Program (with links to study aids), and the opportunity to listen to passages in your preferred translation of the Bible.

The search tool allows searches by word and phrase, Strong's concordance¹ number, and for original Hebrew or Greek roots of English words.

It's worth noting that some of the explanations come from differing theological perspectives, and there are undoubtedly things some would disagree with - such as the timeline describing the events of Revelation. However, this does not devalue the excellent search and referencing tools on the site.

The website is easy to use and navigate, and has the Help Tutorial guides to enable you to gain more from it. Perhaps you are used to your hard-copy Bible but why not give the website a try? You may be surprised at how much it will enhance your Bible study.

Abigail Brempah is a third year medical student at University College London

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letters...

Editor,

I appreciated Alex Bunn's recent article on 'the myth of secular neutrality', which was generally very helpful.

However, I was concerned that his comment about a doctor's moral condemnation 'being reserved for disciplining those in the church family' with its reference to 1 Corinthians 5:11-13 might be misunderstood as a biblical ban on dissuasion or warning to non-Christians who are acting in sinful ways. If this was the meaning of this verse, then it would have been wrong for John the Baptist to rebuke publicly Herod about his immoral relationship with Herodias (Matthew 14:4) or for Paul to talk to Felix about 'righteousness, self-control and the judgement to come' (Acts 24:25). Instead, the word 'judge' or 'condemn' in 1 Corinthians 5:11-13 (depending on the translation) specifically refers to the role of Christians in excommunicating sinful fellow believers – a role that they do not have for those outside the church.

Though it is not always appropriate to warn our patients about their sin within the clinical setting, there are occasions when we need to do so. We have to choose the time very wisely - and it is more likely to be appropriate when a sinful activity is directly causing the illness that we

are treating. We find it easier to warn our patients of sinful practices where there is perceived societal permission to do so, such as drug or alcohol misuse, than of sexual immorality where there is no such perceived permission. Are we not in danger of practising medicine more mindful of the things of men than the things of God (Matthew 16:23) when considering what we say to our patients?

Chris Richards
*Consultant Paediatrician
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Author's response

Chris Richards raises a key issue for Christians living in a pagan society. When should we confront our unbelieving neighbours and condemn immorality? He is right that 1 Corinthians 5:12-13 does refer to church discipline. This is not therefore a proof text against any kind of moral challenge, but we need to be wise about where and when.

Christian doctors have a unique responsibility to speak out on issues where we have expertise, such as euthanasia or addiction, and to prevent the state from legalising practices that break the most basic commandments, and put the sick and vulnerable at risk. We also have a responsibility to

individual patients whose lifestyles are destructive.

However, I would distinguish between these evils and the many other behaviours which, although immoral, are no responsibility of ours when they occur outside of the church family. Condemnation can be very counter-productive. A recent example would be civil partnerships, which are disapproved of by Bible-believing Christians, and likely to lead to harm to those consenting individuals. Christians are unlikely to convince secularists on this issue and condemning them only adds to the impression that Christianity is about rules and morality, religion not rescue.

Paul himself seems to have changed tactics in Athens, when although distressed by pagan idolatry, he decides not to condemn but to persuade. One advantage Christians have as a prophetic minority is that we do not have the legal responsibility to police society. This leaves us free to concentrate on our primary calling, which is not condemning a world that already stands condemned, but in winning the lost. (John 3:18, 1 Corinthians 9:19-21)

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student services

These include literature, conferences, elective advice, international links and Christian Union support.

Reps can supply joining forms, literature, extra copies of *Nucleus* and information about conferences and activities. Further information is on the CMF website: www.cmf.org.uk or from students@cmf.org.uk.

Ideas or feedback can be sent to the National Students' Committee through its chair, Lloyd Thompson, on lloyd@cmf.org.uk

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