

ISSUE 44:1 : JANUARY 2014

# why we believe in God

William Wilberforce

motives for medicine

God's sovereignty

in the beginning  
God created the heavens  
and the earth

luciferus

the student journal of the christian medical fellowship

plus: summer school 2013, spiritual care, Spain, cross-word, mission

# nucleus



A company limited by guarantee. Registered in England no. 6949436  
Registered Charity no. 1131658  
Registered office: 6 Marshalsea Road, London SE1 1HL

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**Design:** S2 Design & Advertising  
**Printers:** Partridge & Print Ltd.

**International distribution**

If you are the leader of an overseas Christian medical group and would be interested in receiving multiple copies of *Nucleus* please contact the editor

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'Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music' (Psalm 98:4)

**M**any of us will have sung *Joy to the World* during Christmas. Based on Psalm 98, the widely sung words are by hymn-writer Isaac Watts, best known for *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*. Christmas is often a time when we experience joy in the Lord; a camp or retreat is often another. Yet any Christian knows that it isn't all about mountain-top experiences. 'Life after the houseparty high' was a well-chosen seminar title at one weekend away during my CU days!

The first weeks of January at medical school are rarely a mountain-top experience. Many have exams, and the 6.30am start to arrive in time for theatre is even less appealing when it is dark and cold outside. We know we *should* still be joyful – but we don't feel it.

The reason for praise of Psalm 98 is that 'all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God' (Psalm 98:3). The praise isn't temporary. Yet we find writing from times of trial in scripture.

Psalm 142 finds David in a time of great trial (almost certainly because Saul was persecuting him). David tells God that he is in desperate need, weaker than those who persecute him. Yet he affirms that God is his refuge, and will be good to him. He has not lost his foundation in the Lord.

Paul wrote to the Philippians from jail; knowing he was likely to die for his faith. Though ready 'to depart and be with Christ', he sees why God keeps him on earth a while longer. But the purpose of his remaining is startling. We might expect him to stay to help the Philippian church grow in number, or in personal holiness, or in the knowledge of God. Yet it is all about joy.

*'I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.'* (Philippians 1:25-26, NIV 1984)

Paul expresses the same sentiment in 2 Corinthians 1:24, as well as twice more in Philippians (3:1, 4:4). And it isn't just Paul. Jesus also talks about joy (John 15:11, 17:13).

That joy is based on the everlasting promises of God. Being joyful in the Lord doesn't mean we will be 'happy' every day. We're not promised that. But it does mean that even at difficult times, we can be certain, secure, and contented in the promises of God. Making these central to our worship and prayer life will be key not only to our own joy in the Lord, but to sharing this joy with those around us.

Let's all pray that during 2014 we might know the joy of the Lord in all that we do, and that others will see this in us, bringing glory to God. ■

# summer school 2013

Ella Kim reflects on serving Christ in secular medicine

Christian medics often face difficult ethical issues, and as society becomes increasingly distant from Christianity, we need to be intentional about honouring God with our work. I don't want to go with the flow and be a people-pleaser with the way I practise medicine; I want to be salt and light, standing up for the truth and doing what is right!<sup>1</sup> I want to glorify Christ! As a minister at my church puts it, we should 'stick out like a healthy thumb in a world full of sore thumbs'.<sup>2</sup> To really stick out as a faithful Christian medic, I needed to find out what God actually has to say about medical ethics and so signed up for summer school.

Students and junior doctors travelled from all over the UK for two days of teaching and discussions on Christian medical ethics organised by the KLICE<sup>3</sup> and held at UCCF's Tyndale House in Cambridge, in early September.

We aimed to think deeply about serving Christ faithfully in the medical profession, and to tackle some of the ethical challenges we face in a secular society. How do we live and speak for Jesus as medics? And what does the Bible have to say about medical ethics?

We began by identifying challenges in contemporary healthcare, thinking about John Stott's concept of 'double listening' – listening to *God's Word*, and also to *today's world*.<sup>4</sup> We are to be both faithful to Scripture and sensitive to culture, and modern-day Christians act as bridges between the two.

When we think about ethics, there is no neutral ground to stand on. Our thoughts, beliefs, and actions will inevitably be based on our *worldview* – the fundamental presuppositions and assumptions we have about reality. And everyone is coming from

somewhere! What would others say ultimate reality is? What's a human being? What's the point of existence?

## personhood

One topic that particularly interested me was *personhood*. How do we define personhood? Is every living human being a person, or are there certain quality controls? Can a living body be non-personal?

The modern concept of personhood originates from the Renaissance movement with Descartes' famous maxim, '*I think, therefore I am*'. Consciousness and ability for self-reflection subsequently became a foundational element of the Western philosophical view of personhood. Personhood was regarded as a 'totality of impression, thought, and feeling that make up a person's conscious being'.<sup>5</sup> But hang on, does this mean that the unconscious patient in ITU is no longer a person? What about the 97 year-old patient on the ward with dementia, or the child with severe learning difficulties? Intellect, thought, reason, and even mind are capricious, changing from day to day. Surely the criteria for personhood cannot solely be defined by consciousness, attributes and abilities.<sup>6</sup> If some humans are deemed to be non-persons, are they worthy of the same respect and moral considerations? If the unconscious patient is considered a non-person, would it be permissible for a doctor to end their life? What makes life worth living anyway?

The word 'person' comes from the Greek *prosopon*, which literally means 'the face'. This word refers to the masks that actors wore to represent characters in plays – the face they





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showed the world; the role they played in society. We've kept this meaning in the word 'persona'.

God's ultimate being is in the form of three distinct persons in communion – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and the meaning of personhood is derived from that Godhead. To be a person is to be both unique and in communion with other persons.

So to be an autonomous individual, an isolated person, is actually a contradiction in terms! It is in relationship that we find our meaning. In Genesis, when God says 'Let us make man in our image',<sup>7</sup> the 'us' is the Godhead-in-community, and we are made in his image to be persons-in-community, reflecting his nature, created to give ourselves to God and to others in love.

Instead of 'I think, therefore I am', Prof John Wyatt suggests an alternative Christian version, 'You love me, therefore I am'.<sup>8</sup> My personhood doesn't come from my abilities but from the fact that I am known and loved by God himself, and by other human beings. And even if I'm rejected by other humans, I'm still a person because ultimately my personhood rests on the fact that God called me into existence and that he continues to know and love me. This gives a firmer, more stable basis for affirming the worth of all human beings that underpins the practice of medicine.

Descartes' philosophy suggests that personal worth arises not from human existence but from human attributes, which becomes confusing when these attributes are lost. According to this stance, those without such attributes are non-persons, unworthy of the same moral considerations as other persons. Taking this to the extreme, philosopher Peter Singer argues that a human with Alzheimer's

disease is 'worth considerably less than a normal adult pig or cow'.<sup>9</sup>

All human beings are made in God's image.<sup>10</sup> So God loves and cares for us, and gives us responsibilities to subdue the earth.

*'What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet.'* (Psalm 8:4-6)

Even though we humans made a mess and rejected God, Jesus willingly died for us to reconcile us to God and bring us into relationship with him.<sup>11</sup> Jesus paid the ultimate price; he thinks we're worth it!

## implications for us

Since all human beings are made in God's image, this should affect the way we view and treat our patients (and colleagues, and everyone else for that matter!). We should respect all people whatever their mental capacity, severity of disease, or conscious state. And we should have genuine empathy for critically ill and dying patients because they are equally valued and cherished by God. ■

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# our values: whole-person medicine

'To practise whole-person medicine which addresses our patients' physical, emotional and

Laurence Crutchlow explores the second of CMF's values

This second of CMF's values might at first glance appear relatively uncontroversial. After all, it is not that different from the World Health Organisation's (WHO) famous definition of health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'.<sup>1</sup> Spiritual care is embraced in at least parts of the NHS. Yet the world's definition of whole-person medicine, particularly when looking at spiritual care, is quite different from our own. Hence this CMF value is well worthy of thought.

## how does the world see whole-person medicine?

I remember seeing a *Tomorrow's World* programme as a child that tried to calculate the value of a human body – the answer was about 80p (in mid-1980s values), mostly derived from using body fat to create soap! Few medics see the human body in such mercenary terms, but we can easily just focus on the physical material of our bodies. Many drugs are best understood at molecular level, so it is not surprising that we try to reduce our bodies to the smallest particles we can understand. This is helpful in research, but how many of our patients (or us) really live as if the body was nothing more than a collection of atoms?

If humans are more than molecules, then medicine must be more than just physical. UK medical school curricula recognise this, with the GMC's *Tomorrow's Doctors*<sup>2</sup> requiring that students are able to apply to medical practice not only biomedical scientific principles, but also psychological, social health and population health ideas.

Although the original WHO definition doesn't

include 'spiritual', there is no shortage of reference to 'spiritual care' in the NHS. Questions about faith are routine in psychiatry and palliative care, but are increasingly asked in other areas as well.

## what is real whole-person medicine?

So does the 'whole-person medicine' that we see in the NHS bear any relation to whole-person medicine as we might understand it from the Bible? How might biblical whole-person medicine look?

The main tension is in defining spiritual health and care. Even respected Christian authorities agree that the term 'spirituality' itself is not easy to define.<sup>3</sup> Throughout Scripture, true spirituality cannot be separated from the Holy Spirit. Paul, writing to the Corinthian church, clearly differentiates between the spirit of the world, and the Spirit of God.<sup>4</sup> He goes on to say that those without God's Spirit see the things of God as foolishness, and only those who are truly spiritual – with the Holy Spirit – can 'make judgments about all things'.<sup>5</sup>

In the secular world, there are numerous (and often vague) definitions



of spirituality; one of the clearer is contained in a Royal College of Psychiatrists booklet:<sup>6</sup>

'Spirituality involves experiences of:

- a deep-seated sense of meaning and purpose in life
- a sense of belonging
- a sense of connection of 'the deeply personal with the universal'
- acceptance, integration and a sense of wholeness.'

There is nothing wrong with these things in isolation; indeed they may look 'Christian' to the casual observer. But they are at best a pale shadow of real spirituality

- of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, dwelling in us. 'A sense of belonging', for example, could be accepted by believers in almost any major religion, and could actually perpetuate beliefs that stand in the way of accepting Jesus. A patient may very well draw some sense of community from a Hindu temple for example. Indeed this might well benefit their health. But they are unlikely to be drawn to Jesus this way.

Care based around secular principles may well be helpful in the sense of counselling, and making patients feel valued. But it will not be

true spiritual care. Jesus himself made this explicit when he healed ten people of leprosy. Only one of these ten responded by praising God, and it is he alone of the ten that Jesus tells 'your faith has made you well'.<sup>7</sup>

## what are the challenges to true spiritual care?

There are two main problems. The first is obvious enough - people who feel that spiritual care of any kind has no place in the NHS, such as the Secular Medical Forum<sup>8</sup> (currently campaigning against NHS-funded hospital chaplaincy).

The second is more difficult. It is easy to think that because we have fulfilled NHS definitions of spiritual care, we have done enough. As the secular definitions do contain some element of Christian truth, this can happen easily. We can mistake well-meaning and patient-centred care for truly spiritual care. Real spirituality includes Jesus; other forms of care, however well-intentioned, cannot be called 'spiritual care' in any true sense.

## how might whole-person medicine look in practice?

It is easy to see how Christian spiritual care might work in an environment where many patients are Christians, and where biblical stories are still part of day-to-day life. In this kind of environment, a Christian doctor looking to bring true spirituality into a consultation would most of the time be welcomed.

This might have been the case in the UK a number of years ago. It is not now.

Patients and colleagues come from many differing faith backgrounds; some have no faith;



many are unsure; many are devoted followers of other religions. It is not surprising that to say true spirituality only comes from the Holy Spirit is met with hostility.

How then do we practise genuine whole person medicine? Does we have to talk about faith with every patient we meet? Do we have to ensure we get spirituality into every question we ask in a lecture?

This can be answered on two levels.

First, we do need to make sure that our faith really permeates every area of our life. We cannot be 'Sunday only' Christians who undergo a chameleon-like change as our church service ends. Our faith should be apparent in our conduct, our words, our attitude to those around us. This is important even for the pre-clinical student with no patient contact. In clinical practice such attributes may well lead to opportunities to talk about true spirituality; often with colleagues, sometimes with patients. So our own spirituality is present in everything we do.

Second, we must make sure we respond to the presenting complaint of the patient in front of us. Most clinical encounters don't go much beyond physical medicine; jumping straight from a question about how an ankle was twisted to a direct question about spiritual things would be disconcerting and probably unhelpful.

But suppose the ankle sprain occurred after a fall, which had occurred when the patient was drunk. Further questions reveal that this isn't just a one-off end of term night out, but that the patient is struggling seriously with loneliness and is developing a dependency on alcohol without realising it. A sensitively asked question about faith at this point may well provide an opportunity for real spiritual care – sometimes given by us, perhaps more often by a referral to someone else. Here we can meet

the need for whole-person medicine, and do more than just offer advice about the ankle.

Not every patient will want spiritual care; if the answer to a gentle question about faith is a clear no, then we should respect that and move on. We also mustn't forget patients' physical needs. I remember an old practice manager relating the story of a Christian who had worked in the surgery years ago. He had apparently been very keen to pray with patients, which the manager thought unusual but not necessarily wrong. A complaint had been received from a patient about him; not about the prayer offered, but because nothing had been done about the headache with which the patient presented! We must avoid the temptation to focus so much on a patient's spiritual need that we don't treat their physical ailments. But when we deal with their physical needs appropriately and compassionately, it may well open the door for more genuine whole-person medicine.

So in summary, as students do study well so that you can practise good quality physical medicine. Don't dismiss emotional and social aspects. To truly provide spiritual care, we must make sure that we are spiritually fed ourselves, and willing to share the joy in us with everyone we meet, patients included. =

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# manos que sanan

(hands that heal)



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Julia Darko reports on a Spanish Christian medical conference

This year the *Union Medica Evangelica*, a Spanish association of Christian medical students and doctors put on their first ever nationwide student and doctor conference, which took place from 18-20 October in Madrid. Several members previously attended CMF's National Student Conference in England and had loved it so much they were determined to see a similar event take place in their own country. It was an absolute honour to be able to witness and share in such a wonderful occasion which ended up exceeding all of my expectations.

The weekend comprised of a mixture of worship, prayer, talks tackling the practice of medicine from a Christian perspective and workshops providing practical advice for the clinical setting. I learned a lot and it was refreshing to gain so much teaching as well as prayer, worship and fellowship in a different cultural setting to the UK. In all there were around 40 people in attendance, a lot more intimate than the near 400 at our National Student Conference. However, what they lacked in numbers they certainly made up for in spirit!



There was a palpable desire for seeking God's heart and sharing the gospel in Spain. Many of those taking part were facing incredibly difficult circumstances, living and working in areas where they were alone in the Christian faith, but showed great perseverance in being salt and light in their workplace and community. I have to be honest, their zeal for Christ and desire to share him in their working environment was absolutely contagious and somewhat reflective of the spirit of the early church – a small gathering of people equipped with a life-changing vision and a big calling, excited about the gospel and desperate to find ways of sharing its good news. I was blown away

by the evidence of a God who is so wonderfully present in all corners of the world, and whose grace is so captivating it binds together people so varied in language, culture and social background. What an amazing God we serve! Our Spanish counterparts are deeply grateful for all the support provided by CMF towards making this event possible and ask that we keep them in our prayers as they keep us in theirs. ■

# apologetics 4

why believe in a creator God?

Chris Knight on how we 'do' apologetics

**M**any people grow up with the image of God as an old man in the sky, with white hair and beard – a celestial Santa Claus. When we realise that this picture is unrealistic, unscientific and totally lacking in evidence, it is easy to assume that the same must apply to any idea of God that we come across later in our lives. Certainly many people I talk to have never been presented with any reason to revise their views on God. So can we help them to change their minds?

in the beginning  
God created the heavens  
and the earth





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**W**e need to remember that our goal is to introduce our friends to a personal and saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. For some people, the journey to saving belief begins with belief in God after which they are prepared to consider the historical evidence for the saving death and resurrection of Christ. C.S. Lewis is an example of this. Others come to belief in the resurrection of Christ and hence to belief in the God who raised Christ from the dead. Frank Morison, for example, became a Christian as a result of a direct and initially sceptical investigation into the resurrection.<sup>1</sup>

Both routes to faith are legitimate, but some people do need to clarify the issue of God's existence before they will even consider the miracle of a resurrection. However, we must start where our friends are and with the questions that they are asking. We might encourage additional questions, but ultimately the issues and questions they raise are our starting point.

### making a difference

I would like you to consider for a moment why you believe in God (if you do). What evidence or arguments or experience led you to that belief? If you were asked, how would you reply?

Your reply would probably be based on some aspect of your experience of the world, for which you believe that God is the best explanation. In other words, a universe created by God would be different to one without a God. As Richard Dawkins says:

*'...a universe with a creative superintendent would be a very different kind of universe from one without.'*<sup>2</sup>

# apologetics 4

I agree with him that the existence of a 'creative superintendent', ie 'God', should make a difference to the universe in which we live – or at the very least the world should bear something of the imprint of God's hand behind it. If nothing in the world really needs God to explain why it is how it is, then why should we believe that God really does exist?

In this article, we will consider two arguments for belief in a creator God, both based on scientific findings. In the next article, we will look at some non-scientific reasons.

## where did the universe come from?

The first argument for a creator God is based on two fairly straightforward statements which most people would agree are reasonable. If you hear a loud bang from the room next door, and someone then walks in from that room, you're likely to ask 'What made that bang?' You might accept the reply 'I don't know', but you should definitely be unhappy with the response 'Nothing, it just happened'. Our consistent experience is that things don't just happen – they have a cause. The letter that comes through our letter box did not simply appear from nowhere – someone had written and posted it.

So we might say that all our experience of the world leads us to believe the principle: 'Whatever begins to exist has a cause' (statement 1).

Next, consider how scientists say that the universe came into being. The majority view is that our universe came into existence about 13.7 billion years ago with the 'Big Bang'. In other words: 'The universe began to exist' (statement 2).

But if we put these two statements together, we can see the conclusion that follows:

(1) Whatever begins to exist has a cause.

(2) The universe began to exist.

Therefore, (3) the universe has a cause.

It seems rather arbitrary to exclude the universe itself from statement (1). Everything else we know of follows this law. It is quite reasonable, therefore, to believe that the universe itself abides by it. So if the universe does have a cause, what could it be?

Clearly the cause needs to be 'something' very powerful and purposeful; something that existed outside of time and space (as scientists tell us that these only came into existence at the Big Bang). So the cause must be eternal, uncreated, existing outside of time and space, immensely powerful and acting with purpose – which sounds rather like a creator God to me. This is usually called the *Kalam* Cosmological Argument, developed and popularised by William Lane Craig.

Now although this argument is powerful, some sceptics will dispute it.<sup>3</sup> But, at the very least, most people would agree that belief in these statements (1) and (2) is reasonable – and so belief in the conclusion, that the universe has a creator, is also reasonable.

Interestingly, early in the scientific debate about the Big Bang, some atheists were very disturbed by it, because they realised that it was just the sort of evidence that went to support belief in a creator God. John Maddox was at one time editor of the scientific journal *Nature*, perhaps the most prestigious scientific journal in the world. He stated that the concept of the universe having a beginning was 'thoroughly unacceptable' because it implied an 'ultimate origin of our world', giving those who believe in a creator God 'ample justification' for this belief.<sup>4</sup> An interesting admission!

Let's return to the idea of this 'creator' being purposeful. The next argument looks at that in more detail and provides even more reason to believe that there is purpose behind the

creation of the universe – which strengthens the idea that this ‘something’ is really a ‘someone’ – a personal being.

## why is the universe ‘just right’ for life?

This is sometimes called the ‘Goldilocks effect’. Goldilocks explored the three bears’ house until she found the chair, porridge and bed that were ‘just right’ for her. Similarly, the universe is ‘just right’ to allow life to occur. But it exists on a knife-edge. The laws of nature that express how matter and energy interact with each other can be given in mathematical equations, using a number of constants determining the strength of each law. We might imagine the values of these constants being controlled by a series of controls on a complex machine.

If we slightly change one control, we might vary the constant determining the attraction between masses, changing the strength of gravity. Each control changes one constant. Physicists have found that there are all sorts of control settings that could produce a universe – but in the vast majority of cases the resulting universe does not produce a universe capable of sustaining life. This is usually called ‘fine-tuning’, by comparison with the need to make very fine adjustments on the tuning dial of an analogue radio to get the best reception.

As one example of fine-tuning, the laws that describe how stars develop involve the ratio between the electromagnetic force (that attracts electrons to protons in an atom) and the gravitational force. If that ratio *increased* by just one part in 10 to the power of 40, that is a 1 followed by 40 zeros or 1 in 10,000 million million million million million million, stars would all be very small. But if the same ratio *decreased* by just one part in 10 to the power of 40, stars

would all be very large. Astrophysicists tell us that in either case, no planets could form and hence there would be no life. This is just one of very many examples showing that the laws of nature are on a knife-edge that just allows a universe which can produce life.

Now, is this an accident or not? After all, one could argue, if the universe weren’t like that, we wouldn’t be alive to think about it. But we are here, so the universe has to be as it is!

This is a good point, but it still doesn’t stop us being surprised by the fact that our universe *does* allow life to exist, whereas the vast majority of universes with random settings of the constants *would* not allow life to develop. So it is still reasonable to seek an explanation. Consider an analogy. You are in front of a firing squad of 50 sharpshooters, all armed with fully loaded sub-machine guns. The commander shouts ‘Take aim!’ and all the guns are aimed at you. You hear the word ‘Fire!’ just as you close your eyes tight. You hear the sound of the guns being fired and hear the wall behind you being torn to shreds. You open your eyes and are unharmed. Is it reasonable to ask why you are still alive, when the firing squad should have killed you? Of course it is! It may be very, very unlikely that you did survive, but you will almost inevitably seek an explanation for your good fortune.<sup>5</sup> So it is with the universe – we should not expect to be here at all and so we have every right to ask why the fine-tuning of the universe ‘just happens’ to be as it is. As the atheist Fred Hoyle once remarked, ‘A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature.’<sup>6</sup>

Again, the sceptic can object with concepts such as the multiverse – the notion that our



# apologetics 4

universe is just one of a huge number of universes, and perhaps most of the others don't allow life. Now discussion on such matters can start to get technical and quite difficult – but also quite unscientific. I enjoyed Michael Hanlon's article 'Reality Check Required',<sup>7</sup> in which he states: 'When physicists whisk us into the realms of multiverses and universe-gobbling particles, it's time to ask whether there's something amiss.' A personal, purposeful creator God is the simplest explanation for fine-tuning, negating the need to postulate a trillion, trillion (or more) unobservable universes.<sup>8</sup>

## the limits of scientific arguments for God

In this article, we have looked at two arguments for the existence of God, which each use scientific data about the universe we live in to show that belief in a creator God is not only reasonable, but the best explanation of the evidence.

The arguments above provide neither a knock-down argument nor a scientific proof for the existence of God. But for many who consider that they approach the world in a scientific way, these arguments can start to unsettle their atheistic worldview. Wasn't science supposed to do away with belief in God? But now it seems to be supporting it!

But what else can we know about this creator God? Is this the Christian God or not? In the next article, we will look at other reasons to believe in God and how they support the arguments made above. The article after that will look at the evidence for the resurrection and see where that can take the sceptic on their journey to faith. ■

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## key points

- Remember the goal – introducing our friends to a personal and saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ
- There are many different reasons to believe in God
- This article gives two arguments based on current scientific findings
- The *kalam* cosmological argument shows the universe has a creator
- A personal creator is the best explanation for the fine-tuning of the universe
- We are using scientific findings with those for whom these are important
- There is still some distance to go in a journey to saving faith

## further resources:

- William Lane Craig. *On guard: defending your faith with reason and precision*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010. See especially Chapters 4 and 5.
- John Lennox. *God's undertaker: has science buried God?* Oxford: Lion, 2007
- Lee Strobel. *The Case for a Creator*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004
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## NEXT TIME – more evidence for God

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# motives for medicine

Chris Damant explores career choices



Chris Damant is a final year medical student at King's College, London



**Y**ou may have broken your arm when you were younger, but does that mean God is calling you to orthopaedics?!

Is obstetrics really your best option just because the staff were friendly during your week on labour ward?

Choosing a career is rarely easy. In fact, it may be so overwhelming or confusing that we settle for making arbitrary choices. However, I am convinced that God hasn't left us clueless for this important decision. But first, we need to get to the heart of the matter.

In choosing a career, it seems sensible to first decide our goals and then identify a career

which will meet them. Examples might include earning a certain amount of money, or choosing a field which you find particularly interesting. Which goals should we choose as Christians? Simply talking about money isn't particularly helpful, as there may be good or bad motivations for earning money: a prospective Porsche owner and a missionary working amongst the poor will both be on the lookout for cash! Rather, we must carefully assess our underlying motivations.

There are different ways to consider this problem, but one helpful way is to look at the distinction between selfish and selfless desires.

This contrast is used numerous times in the Bible. The apostle Paul says 'each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others' (Philippians 2:4). Similarly, when summing up the Law, Jesus says that we are to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40).

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**we should not look to medicine but to God to provide us with security, for it is he who is the source of our future hope**

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In fact, selfishness is at the very heart of sin. Martin Luther, the Reformer, described the human condition as 'being curved in on itself' (Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans* L515-516). While we were made to be with God and enjoy him forever, we have instead turned away from him; and turned towards ourselves.

We have gone so far as to create idols to serve ourselves and our felt needs. The secular world may often embrace these, and as Christians it can be difficult to resist. There are two idols which are particularly calling out to us as we think about career choices: security and comfort. Let's look at those now before hearing how God completely trumps these by offering himself to us.

## security

First, security. Life is dangerous and we are vulnerable to sickness, hunger, poverty and loneliness. These are not good things and even thinking about them can be scary. But how do we respond? We look to ourselves and build larger barns (Luke 12:13-21). The promise of God creating a new heaven and a new earth where

there will be '*no more death or mourning or crying or pain*' (Revelation 21:4), is barely heard as we foolishly proclaim '*You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry*' (Luke 12:19). This doesn't mean we shouldn't care about these things; the fact is that God has graciously taken care of them but we have refused in favour of our own plans.

It is quite possible that God won't provide for us in the precise way we were expecting, but that is perhaps because he knows that while material things are important, fundamentally what we need is him. Medicine is crying out to us to offer us this security and it is tempting to go for a specialty with quick career progression and a secure consultant job at the end. Alternatively, perhaps the security of being a medic is so tied up in our identity that we cannot even contemplate the idea of giving up medicine to serve Christ in a different area, perhaps working overseas or for a church. But medicine cannot provide the sort of security we really desire: God himself has already given it to us, in Christ! Whatever we do, we should not look to medicine but to God to provide us with security, for it is he who is the source of our future hope.

## comfort

Second, comfort. Hedonism, the pursuit of pleasure, is quite plainly the mindset of many individuals and probably underlies much of western culture. I once suggested to my paediatric consultant that I was thinking of being a GP. He raised his eyebrows, looking slightly offended and bemused, but then said 'It's ok, I understand... you just want a nice life.' (Thanks very much!) The desire for a comfortable life is common to all (though the

ideal of comfort varies between people), and it would be easy to look for that when choosing a career.

God does not ask us to lose all hope of comfort. However, we will not find true comfort in anything that medicine has to offer, any worldly possessions or experiences. Indeed, we may often have to give these up or experience hardships and persecutions. Instead, God offers us himself as the source of comfort. If we are sorrowful, he understands that; if we seek peace, he will provide that; if we desire friendship, he is with us. Let's not allow our career decisions to get side-tracked by false promises of security and comfort which no specialty in medicine can ever provide.

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we will not find true comfort in anything that medicine offers...  
Instead, God offers us himself as the source of comfort

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So, we have seen that not only are our desires selfish, but that we also turn to ourselves to meet those desires (Jeremiah 2:13). How can we turn from this? First, by acknowledging our wrong and gratefully receiving God's promise of forgiveness. Second, we need to understand the full extent of God's grace to us.

We might think that we need to shun our desires in an impressive feat of stoicism. But as we have seen, God actually enters into our deepest desires for security, comfort, (as well as affection, peace, meaning, dignity etc) and he fulfils them himself. Of course, we will only experience this in full when we live with him eternally in the new creation, but as Christians

now this begins to be a reality.

Once we stop trying to meet our desires by ourselves, they finally get fulfilled. We have been set free from the need to serve ourselves. What then shall we do? Paul implores us to 'not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love' (Galatians 5:13).

Each of us will differ in how we choose to serve God; there is no specialty holiness scale. Some possible guiding principles could be to look at the gifts he has given us and what we think we would be best at: not because that will mean quick career progression, but because we will be better able to serve our patients. In addition, we could be guided by our interests; again, not because we are seeking our personal intellectual satisfaction, but because that may help us to persevere during difficult times, or even inspire us to drive up standards in that area. Or, we could think about what specialty might offer us the best opportunities to graciously share the gospel with patients and colleagues, or allow us to support wider gospel work through the giving of our time or money.

By evaluating our underlying motivations, this will enable us to make godly decisions about our careers: we need to remember that we have already been catered for and it is now our privilege to serve others. We don't need to sacrifice our careers and lives at the idols of security and comfort; no, we can use our careers to serve God and others, to build his kingdom. ■



# is God a genocidal monster? (part 2)

a special correspondent examines a common apologetic question

In the first part of this series on the Canaanite wars, I argued that a God worthy of that name must take wrongdoing seriously. In fact, his anger is a sign that he cares for his creation. The real flesh and blood judgments we see in the Old Testament are grisly, but serve as reminders of what we have been spared. Perhaps the biggest reason we struggle with this question more than any generation previously is that we no longer believe that God has any right to judge his world. But it is sobering to remember that Jesus looked back to Noah to describe the future ‘days of the Son of Man’.<sup>1</sup> The Bible describes a God who rings the alarm bell so we might turn back before it is too late. He delays judgment out of patient mercy, as he gathers a worldwide family for eternity. This article will look in more detail at two other related questions:

- What about noncombatants, women and children in Canaan?
- Do the ‘holy wars’ of the Old Testament legitimise violence in the name of religion?

## what about noncombatants, women and children in Canaan?

Today we take it for granted that all parties will respect the Geneva Conventions,<sup>2</sup> and that only professional, usually male, combatants are targets in war. So how could God, the highest moral authority, sanction the wholesale slaughter of women and children?

## WAR CODE 1: seek peace where possible

Firstly, note that Israel had two codes of war. Let’s start with the easy one! When Israel went to war with enemies outside of Canaan (the promised land), peace treaties were offered,



and women and children were spared.<sup>3</sup> They were also commanded to abstain from the widespread practices of rape and pillage that accompanies war to this day:

*If you notice among the captives a beautiful woman and are attracted to her, you may take her as your wife...If you are not pleased with her, let her go wherever she wishes. You must not sell her or treat her as a slave, since you have dishonoured her.<sup>4</sup>*

However, the Bible does not treat women as passive doormats. Domestic life and teaching children was vital for Israel's future.<sup>5</sup> Numbers 25 tells the chilling tale of the Israelite men conspiring with Midianite women in idolatry. Phinehas, Aaron the priest's grandson drives a spear through one such couple at the tent of worship to end a plague of judgment. It's a graphic illustration of equal moral culpability, male and female together. So the battle for hearts and minds was not limited to soldiers on a battlefield.

## relentless anti-Semitism



Sadly, the Israelites were frequently forced into battle. Their mission to launch a new start for humanity under the liberating God of the Exodus

was opposed violently by several God-hating regimes, and the spiritual powers allied to them. For instance, the Amalekites, descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother, were arch enemies. They attacked Israel in the wilderness, whenever they planted crops in the land, and centuries later in the book of Esther.<sup>6</sup> They were (perhaps literally) hell-bent on Jewish genocide.

What if nations like the Amalekites, generation after generation, would stop at nothing until they had seen the utter destruction of the Israelites? What if this had to be stopped? It's a dilemma that godly pastors like Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrestled with in the Second World War and as a result resolved to assassinate Hitler. But suppose that the future of the entire human race depended on Israel's survival in Canaan at that one moment in history, and God's rescue plan through them. Then perhaps it would be justified for God (not man) to command Israel to destroy whole anti-Semitic families, children included, who were determined to sever God's pipeline of blessing to the world. Only God himself can know, and the rest of us are somewhat under-qualified to judge.

Even here, there are signs of God's mercy and faithfulness. Saul warned the Kenites, distant relatives of Israel via Jethro, to flee the coming judgment: "'Go away, leave the Amalekites so that I do not destroy you along with them' ... So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites.'<sup>7</sup>

Astute commentator John Allister notes that the Amalekites were not slaughtered indiscriminately. It wasn't race that was offensive to God:

'Now, that makes it look very much as if the Kenites are mingling with the Amalekites fairly freely. Suppose an Amalekite decided that they didn't want to fight against Israel. There doesn't seem to have been anything stopping them from deciding to be a Kenite – dressing themselves up as a Kenite and just slipping off. The Amalekites had a way out, if only they were willing to deny their identity as Amalekites. You see, the Amalekites' national identity is set up

against Israel and against God's plan to bless the world. But there is a way out – they just have to renounce that identity and join in with the people who worshipped and served God. They have to get rid of the thing that means they will be going against God. Maybe some of them did. But many of them didn't.<sup>8</sup>

### suffer not the children

What about the children? There is no easy way to square this command with the God who sides with the weak. And a God who took particular offence at child sacrifice to the god Molek.<sup>9</sup> But perhaps there was no other way to separate out children from the nations hostile to Israel and their God. Perhaps it was even a mercy to be rescued from the kind of society that would burn its children in exchange for some favour from their god Molek. We are so used to thinking that this life is all there is, and that death is the worst possible outcome. But that is a massive assumption! If God did command the killing of children, only he would know the relative merits of life under Molek compared with an eternity with a God who said children are 'the Kingdom's pride and joy'.<sup>10</sup> That's the God's-eye perspective we don't have. The man's-eye perspective is always going to be more limited and fragmented.<sup>11</sup> So we have to trust on the totality of what we know, and take each piece in proportion.

Imagine you are waiting for your childhood sweetheart to turn up for an expensive show. They are usually pretty punctual and considerate. You could jump to the conclusion that they have deliberately snubbed you, and gone off with someone else. Alternatively, from years of observing their outstanding character, you judge that something really major has come up to threaten your date. No need to

panic. You trust them. Likewise, our God can be trusted. We've observed him over centuries and know his good character, which is far better than ours. Even when we read things that at first glance, without knowing all the facts, might seem difficult.

### WAR CODE 2: a unique act of divine judgment

The second code of warfare applied uniquely to the seven nations of Canaan, which were to be 'given over' to God as *herem*, in judgment.<sup>12</sup> My previous article addressed the reasons why Canaan attracted God's particular wrath after 400 years of patient delay. Here we cannot avoid the unpalatable conclusion that God ordered warfare, potentially including women and children. But whilst the language is strong to modern ears, this is not genocide. My last article explored why God wants to cleanse our hearts, not our ethnicity. Here is some evidence that ethnic cleansing was never intended or practiced.

### rhetoric, military targets and gradual displacement

A headline reads 'Arsenal totally annihilated Liverpool!' but we don't take it literally. We understand that Liverpool were comprehensively beaten. Similarly, some stock phrases in the Ancient Near East were conventions. For instance, Moses told Joshua to 'utterly destroy' and not to 'leave alive anything that breathes'. Joshua 'left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses'.<sup>13</sup> Yet the same book states that Canaanites were very much around at the end of the wars.<sup>14</sup> Many of the battlegrounds such as Jericho or Ai are likely to have been small military installments guarding strategic routes. Civilians probably lived in the surrounding countryside. Although famous,



Jericho may only have held 100 soldiers.<sup>15</sup> The fact that Rahab was spared and became an ancestor of Christ suggests that literal annihilation was not demanded or anticipated. There are also more references to gradual displacement than destruction, such as:

*I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land.* (Exodus 23:28-30)

Archaeology corroborates gradual displacement from 1400BC, until 1000BC when Canaanites were no longer an identifiable entity, and town shrines had been abandoned.<sup>16</sup>

## do the 'holy wars' of the Old Testament legitimise violence in the name of religion?



The New Atheists claim that religions like Christianity or Islam breed intolerance and violence, because they are too exclusive and coercive.

Isn't the Canaanite destruction just an earlier version of Crusade or Islamic Jihad? The key question here is who our role model is. Is he exclusive? Is he coercive?

But first, a bit of history. It's crucial to see that biblical Israel's military was incredibly restricted. The Canaanite wars were a one-off, never to be repeated event. So after Joshua's generation, Israel was to demilitarize, and her sanctioned wars were defensive, and they were banned from land grabbing from their neighbours Moab, Ammon and Edom.<sup>17</sup> There was no standing army,<sup>18</sup> no conscription, and in

fact Israelites were encouraged not to sign up if they had domestic responsibilities.<sup>19</sup> God punished David for taking a census of potential fighting men, who were not at his disposal even as king! The army could not co-opt God like a lucky talisman, such as when they brought the Ark of the Covenant to battle. It soon backfired and they were routed.

Secondly, whilst the Crusades are a terrible stain on the history of the church, the comparison with Jihad is a mistaken one. The concept of Crusade was a late and aberrant development in Christendom. The Crusades were a reaction to the loss of limited lands of symbolic value, and were relatively brief. In contrast, Jihad started with Mohammed, who preached violence against non-believers and engaged in over 100 military campaigns.<sup>20</sup>

## FOLLOW THE LEADER: 'put your sword away!'

Let's summarise the biblical story of war, and put it in context. Initially God fights Israel's flesh and blood enemies, partly as a sign to the fake and detestable 'heavenly powers' such as Molek and Baal. Next, when Israel is faithless, God fights Israel and expels her from Canaan.<sup>21</sup> He shows no favouritism, and judges Israel perhaps more harshly than the Canaanites. But he promises that he will fight to establish his everlasting kingdom for his people, who would be gathered from every tribe and tongue.<sup>22</sup>

The next episode is a bit of a surprise, when Jesus defeats the spiritual powers by healing, preaching, exorcisms...and then dying, not killing! Calvary is the greatest battlefield, and the greatest victory described in the Bible:

*'He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has*

*taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.'* (Colossians 2:13b-15)

So Jesus' example to all his genuine followers is to put down our swords and love our enemies.<sup>23</sup> Today when the church follows its leader's example it is generous to outsiders and non-coercive as he was. He showed us that his new kingdom cannot be built by force.<sup>24</sup> You cannot win hearts and minds, or defeat spiritual powers<sup>25</sup> with sword or Semtex! And Jesus taught his family not to be territorial, as the new kingdom extends beyond Canaan<sup>26</sup> to the whole world.

Now we look forward to the day when Jesus will return not meek and mild but sleek and wild! He is a mighty warrior who will overthrow all opposing powers, human and spiritual, utterly, comprehensively, finally. Then there will be one kingdom under one king. And he will reign with his faithful family forever.<sup>27</sup>

## Conclusion

At the heart of this issue is God's way of dealings with our willful rebellion against him. We may not build physical fortresses against him like Jericho, but our hearts are like stone to the Lordship of Jesus. The Canaanites summed

## summary:

- The Canaanite wars were for one generation only in one place only
- They were God's judgment on Canaan and part of a rescue plan for all humanity
- They were likely small scale military clashes followed by gradual displacement
- After Joshua Israel was to be a demilitarised state
- Jesus models non-coercive love of his enemies: even us!
- Jesus is returning as a mighty warrior to defeat all opposing powers: sign up now!

up humanity's hostility to God and those who worship him. Their destruction is a wake up call to the seriousness of sin in God's eyes. However, Jesus became the personification of all opposition to God. In a sense, God made him a Canaanite in our place:

*'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.'* (2 Corinthians 5:21)

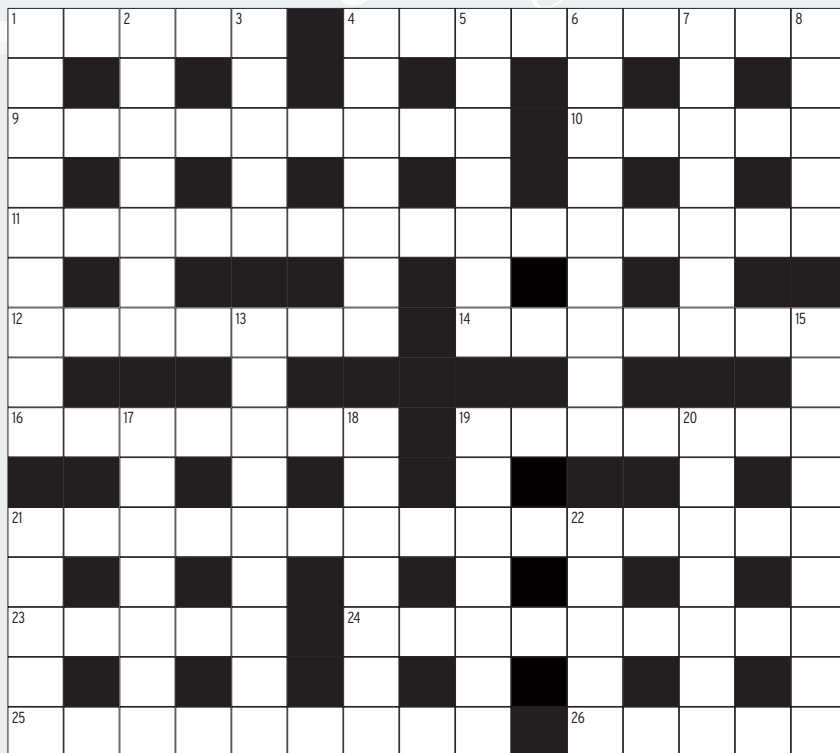
So Jesus became the person whom God destroys so that in him we can become the people whom God defends. He did that for us, for those who reject him and oppose him, so that we can know what it means to be part of God's true people. What a gracious and generous God! ■

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# cross-word 11 – word

by LACTOMETER (1 Peter 2:2)



The winner for cross-word 10 was **Jon Ripper** from Surrey.  
The runner-up was **Naveen Kumar** from Tamil Nadu.

All Bible references are to the NIV UK edition, 2011

## ACROSS

- 1 Another name for 26 across (5)
- 4 Sort of A&E triage (9)
- 9 Epistaxis (9)
- 10 Spinal cord covering (5)
- 11 see 21 across
- 12 In direction of frontal lobe (7)
- 14 Brain convolutions (7)
- 16 NSAID (7)
- 19 Someone who longs (7)
- 21 Part of 1 Peter 2.17 [NIV] (6,7,2,8,4,3)
- 23 A warrior of David [1 Chronicles 12] (5)
- 24 Vaccinate (9)
- 25 Caused to catch a cold (9)
- 26 An apostle (5)

## DOWN

- 1 Jewish council (9)
- 2 Followers of Mohammed (7)
- 3 Worthily (5)
- 4 Of the breastbone (7)
- 5 Indication of serious pathology (3,4)
- 6 Zovirax is one (9)
- 7 Inflammatory bowel condition (7)
- 8 God's unmerited favour (5)
- 13 Describing a knee-jerk (9)
- 15 Preacher (9)
- 17 It crowed after denials by 26 across (7)
- 18 Egotism (7)
- 19 Type of tumour (7)
- 20 Pull on wound edge (7)
- 21 Given by Jesus [John 14.27] (5)
- 22 Get someone ready (5)

Entries can be submitted by post to the office, or by email to [nucleus@cmf.org.uk](mailto:nucleus@cmf.org.uk). The deadline is 15 March 2014. The winning correct entry will receive a voucher worth £12 for books from the CMF website. If no entry is correct, the closest will receive a voucher worth £6.



# our beliefs

'God is sovereign in creation, revelation, redemption and final judgment.'

Giles Cattermole considers God's sovereignty



In the first article in this series we saw that God is love, perfectly and eternally in the trinity. In this article we will see that God is powerfully sovereign. If God were loving but powerless, we'd have no assurance he could help us or save us. There'd be little point in worshipping him. If he were powerful but loveless, he'd be a tyrant. We wouldn't want to worship him. The good news is that God is both loving and powerful, a God of mercy and majesty, saving and sovereign.

God's sovereignty means that he is dependent on nothing outside himself. Petty pagan gods were defined by their relationship with creation (a god of the sea, a god of war); they were dependent on something outside themselves. A solitary god who does not enjoy an eternal loving relationship as the trinity does, but who is nonetheless defined as

merciful, is therefore dependent on created beings in order to show mercy, in order to be who he's said to be. But the true and triune God does not depend on his creation in order to love or to be true, good or beautiful. These things are part of his eternal nature. He is utterly sovereign in his nature. And his sovereignty is unique:

*'We know that "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and that "There is no God but one". For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords") yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.'* (1 Corinthians 8:4-6)

God's sovereignty is his supremacy over all others. It's not just that he's superior to other



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powers, as though there's a battle of near-equals in which he's got the upper hand. He is the only God; Father, Son and Spirit. And he is utterly in control:

*'The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers*

*or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body,*

*the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.'* (Colossians 1:15-18)

God is supreme over creation. He made it from nothing simply by speaking it into existence (Genesis 1; Hebrews 11:3). Creation continues to be dependent on God, day by day (Hebrews 1:3). And day by day, God works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will (Ephesians 1:11). Nothing was made apart from God; nothing happens outside his control.

God's purpose is to bring all things together in Christ (Ephesians 1:10). Through his world he has revealed his power and majesty, so we're without excuse for rejecting him (Romans 1:20). And through his Word he has revealed his plan to save us through his Son (Acts 4:12). There is no other way for us to know God, no other way to be saved. God is sovereign in revelation and redemption. And it's all his work, not ours:

*'He has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but*

*because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.'* (2 Timothy 1:9-10)

It's God who's chosen us and called us, who's forgiven us and prepares us to be with him for eternity. And it's God who's sovereign in his final judgment. Everyone will stand before him, and no-one will be declared righteous according to their own efforts (Romans 3:19-20). God is the supreme judge; he alone will decide and his judgment is final (Revelation 20:11-15).

But what about free will? If God's will is sovereign, are human decisions meaningless? Far from it. We are very much responsible for the choices we make. From Genesis to Revelation, God calls us to choose to obey him, and holds us accountable for rejecting him. We often struggle to reconcile God's sovereignty and our responsibility, perhaps because we think of them as two parallel truths running alongside each other like railway lines which meet only in eternity. But instead, perhaps it'd better to think of these truths as asymmetrical. God's sovereignty is primary. And our responsibility flows from that. We are responsible because God is sovereign. Our responsibility is to the God who is creator, revealer, redeemer and judge. His Lordship demands my obedience, my repentance, my faith, my hope. His sovereignty creates my responsibility to love and worship him.

Because God is sovereign over creation, we are responsible to him to care for it. The earth is the Lord's, not ours (Psalm 24:1). This makes

the world of difference to our medicine. Studying and using God's world is part of what it means to rule over it (Genesis 1:27-28). Caring for others reflects God's character, and our responsibility is to bear the image of the sovereign God. But our medicine must be practised within God's moral limits, because he is sovereign both in creation and revelation: we rule over creation only as his servants; his Word tells us how we should live. It is God, not us, who decides what is right and wrong. A right understanding of God's sovereignty and our responsibility to him has huge implications for our understanding of areas such as what it means to be human, the value of unborn and vulnerable lives, and the purpose of medicine to demonstrate God's compassion.

*'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.'* (Romans 8:29-30)

Because God is sovereign, I can rest in him. If my salvation was down to me, I'd have no assurance. But those God has called, he will see through to the end. Their final glory is so certain Paul can describe it as a done deal! The doctrine of God's sovereignty is something to delight in, not to debate. If you're in Christ, rejoice that the loving ruler of the universe is working for your good, to make you like Jesus, to prepare you for heaven. His sovereign purpose and power are unshakeable.

And because it's God's work and not mine, I can also rest in the knowledge that my friends are in his hands too. It's not up to me to

convert them; God works that miracle through his Spirit. Sometimes we have the privilege of being the means by which our friends hear the good news of Jesus, and that's wonderful. But don't fall into the arrogance of thinking it's your own achievement if your friend becomes a Christian. And don't fall into the despair of thinking it's your fault if they don't. God is in control.

So too when you fail exams. When you don't get the FI job you wanted, God is in charge. None of this happened outside his control. God didn't blink. You're not in 'Plan B' struggling to sort out the mess. Instead, remember that God's plan for you is far bigger than exams and jobs. It's to be made like Jesus and to help others become more like him too, as God brings all things together in Christ. How he does that day by day, I'll wait and see – in faith. It might mean a job I didn't expect in a place I'd never heard of. It might even mean leaving medicine. But whatever it means, God is in control.

When your diagnosis and treatment are wrong. When your patient deteriorates despite all your efforts. When death seems to win. And when it's not your patient, but your loved ones. When it's you yourself, suffering or sick. God is in control. He doesn't promise health and wealth in this life; we're called to take up a cross and suffer for the gospel (Mark 8:34; 1 Peter 2:21). But God does promise a future hope without death, mourning or pain (Revelation 21:4). God is sovereign in final judgment, and he will ensure his people will be with him in eternity. Because that's his plan, and he will see his plan through to the end. ■

# medical missions

Paul Brand, CBE, FRCS, former Professor of Orthopaedics, Christian Medical College, Vellore, India

Paul Brand challenges us to be adventurers

Paul Brand was an orthopaedic surgeon who taught at Christian Medical College, Vellore. There he saw the horrors of untreated leprosy and the associated stigma. Through his experiences working with people affected by leprosy, he developed a Christian understanding of pain which he and author Philip Yancey wrote about in their book, *The Gift of Pain*. From 1993 to 1999, he served as President of The Leprosy Mission International. He died in 2003. This article was first published by CMF in the 1960s. Things have changed for the better in India now, but Brand's message is still relevant today.

Sick people came to our Lord Jesus Christ because they were conscious of their physical sickness and of the things that crippled their bodies. Jesus loved them. He understood them; he touched them; and as he touched them not only were their physical ills healed, but they realised that in that touch they had met the one that their souls needed. They found that the love which he gave them, the faith which he gave them, and the salvation which he gave them, were more important than the thing which they had come to him to have done.

Medical missions today, in following in the steps of our Lord, cannot but be concerned with the tremendous physical need in the countries where we work. Yet we have to remind ourselves that the real reason we are there is not to tackle illness, not primarily to attack germs – but to meet men and women with the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. We wish to pass on to them whatever we have, whether it is knowledge, skill, or the result of the various researches of other people in the understanding of disease. We have to give them also ourselves – and, more than

that, our Lord – through the words that we can speak and the love that we can show. In many parts of the world, where it is difficult for evangelists to go, there is still a crying need and an open door for those who will bring medical help. Hence doctors and nurses have a wonderful opportunity. I want to discuss with you that opportunity at three different levels.

## 1. teaching medicine

First of all, I will outline that with which I am personally concerned, which is the teaching of medicine, nursing, and the allied arts. It is a wonderful thing that in India, in Africa and other countries, there is a great number of fine, young national leaders coming forward with education and enthusiasm. They want to be taught medicine so that they can become doctors and nurses in their own countries. Here is an opportunity for some of our older and more experienced medical members of hospital and university staffs. I know that some people feel that youth is the only time in which to offer for the mission field. Some of us who are doctors have already passed that time, and may feel that it is now too late. Yet, in the overseas medical colleges, there is opportunity for those who have experience and skill, where the occasional grey hair or bald head is respected. There may also be an opportunity for those who have specialised training in things such as radiology, biochemistry, and some of the basic sciences. Such posts fall vacant from time to time in the Christian Medical Colleges at Vellore and Ludhiana and also in the many university medical colleges growing up in Africa and other countries. They may not be specifically sponsored by missions, perhaps. In them,



however, there is an opportunity for a Christian witness amongst medical students.

## 2. the mission hospitals

There is a tremendous opportunity generally in such colleges amongst the students, who are going to be the leaders in their own countries in the days to come. Yet in addition to the universities and colleges, there is the tremendous work in the mission hospitals in these countries. There are hundreds of these little hospitals built and founded by pioneer missionaries over the years. Each is the centre of medical work in its district, with up-stations and clinics in the villages. Many of them today, however, are almost entirely without doctors. I do not know what it is, but in this day of tremendous opportunity, in this day when the countries are calling out for doctors, one finds somehow here in this country, with all its devoted and earnest Christian people, a type of paralysis. I do not know whether it is the Welfare State which induces such paralysis. Perhaps it does. There is something paralysing about security. Yet here there is a wonderful opening overseas. We are calling out, particularly for women doctors and nurses; and also for young men doctors who are prepared to give their lives to working in these mission hospitals.

## 3. basic practice

Today I wish to emphasise that it is not just in the big institutions; it is out in the villages, it is in the places where ordinarily the qualified doctors – even the national doctors – do not go, where the Christian Church has its greatest message. I believe that we need to demonstrate the love of the Lord Jesus by doing the needed things that other people do not do. I can tell



you with pride and joy that the young church in India is demonstrating its strength and vitality by moving into the field of leprosy work where the other doctors shy away. It is also moving into the rural field. Yet the Christian national doctors available are woefully few. I believe that we need to go, not in competition with the indigenous doctors or in the big hospitals, but to accept the challenge of those places where there is no equipment, where there is no hospital, and where at present there is nothing to help those who are sick.

I have met many newly-qualified doctors and nurses who seem to indicate a feeling that, in order to practise their profession, they must have an environment similar to that in which they have been trained. I want to suggest to you that there is still adventure before us who are in the Christian Church in the medical field. Although we would like to have electrocardiographs and big operating rooms, and all the other ancillary things of medical science, it is a wonderful thing to go into a village where there is nothing of this kind and where the sick people need basic medicine. For us in the West there may be a choice between working in a well-equipped environment and one that is less well-equipped. For a sick person in the native village there is no choice. Either he





has got to be treated by somebody who is prepared to accept the conditions or he will not be treated at all. Here, again, I must emphasise the wonderful leadership that is being given by our national Christians. I think today of two young men and a young woman who have gone into a Christian fellowship without capital, without salary, and without any resources. They work in a village where they knew that they could not get any money. They have just settled down to live together in an 'ashram' to serve the people in the medical field. The villagers have risen up around them and have built them a hospital with their own hands. Mud and thatch? Yes! – but what a wonderful spirit to find that their love and devotion in the name of our Lord has been answered by a sweeping devotion from the people whom they are serving!

## the challenge

The Church needs adventurers. The Church needs those who will go out leaving everything behind them, burning all their bridges and devoting themselves to the need of those who suffer. Just before I came home, I met my aged mother who has been working for many years amongst five mountain ranges where there is not one single doctor. There used to be one, and in those days she was employed as a

missionary. Then the doctor left, and after she had already retired at the age of 65, she went up those mountains again on horseback with her medical box tacked on to the back of her saddlebags. She started medical work at the age of 65, because there was no doctor. She took these five mountain ranges as her 'parish' – I was going to say – but as her medical field. That was 20 years ago. There are still no doctors there. Old 'Granny Brand' still has the same horse. She has now broken her leg on one side and got paralysis on the other side. She can no longer walk except with two sticks to support her. She still has no helpers and she still has no hospital. But every day on her horse, with her medical box behind her, she goes amongst the villages. She camps in the cow-sheds sometimes. She continues to bring relief to those who need her help and her love. As I left this time to come on furlough, I said: 'Mother, it's time you had a rest! Come and have your 85th birthday at home with your family in England. You have not been away on a holiday for 20 years'. She replied: 'I cannot leave my people. They need me. But go home and tell them in England that there are five mountain ranges with thousands of villages that have never had a doctor. Tell them that I am getting old and so is my horse.'

Let us take a new look at the Master's words: 'He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal' (John 12: 25). Let us remember that those who lose their life and professional standing, perhaps, for the sake of Jesus Christ, shall find them both. ■

**J. Hudson Taylor:****A Man in Christ**

Roger Steer

Learning about a great Christian's life is thoroughly uplifting. Their devoted, sacrificial service testifies to God's transformative power and his desire to use us despite ourselves.



James Hudson Taylor was born in Yorkshire in 1832 to faithful Methodist parents but was filled with doubts about

God in his youth. However, God raised him up into one of the most effective and pioneering missionaries in history. He founded the China Inland Mission, and worked tirelessly in China for 51 years, often at his great peril. His ministry led to many thousands of conversions, and his strategies still have much to teach about effective missions.

Taylor was famously sensitive to Chinese culture: he adopted the Chinese native dress and hairstyle which caused quite a stir but did much to ingratiate him with the Chinese. He wisely befriended locals and, of course, learnt local languages. Also, his practices were quite forward-thinking: China Inland Mission was a non-denominational organisation, welcoming anyone willing to give up everything for Christ's sake, including, rather unusually for the time, single women.

Though his methods and cultural sensitivity were new, his message was the age-old gospel – a gospel he preached with bold candidness. The book recounts a time when a priest asked Taylor to kneel on a stool before Buddha.

Taylor, without hesitation, proceeded to stand on the stool, denounce idolatry and preach the gospel.

Medical students in particular will find Taylor's life interesting. He had only partially completed his medical studies before he first set sail for China. This would come to cause him difficulty, something which mission-ready medical students should consider.

*A Man in Christ* describes the life of a godly man who faithfully obeyed God's commands and calling. However, his life was hard; in fact it was filled with danger, hostility, ill-health and heartbreak (Taylor lost two of his children and his wife). Despite these struggles, Taylor persevered and made great headway for Christ in China.

This fascinating book will do much to spur you on to mission. You will be awed and humbled by this great man's faith, obedience and holiness, and you will share in his sorrows and joys. His methods were unorthodox, but the gospel he preached was true, and his legacy persists as the Overseas Missionary Fellowship International.

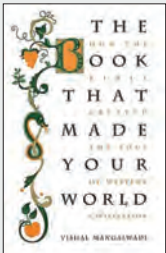
When alive, Taylor sought Christians who were willing to forgo a comfortable life to reach China's lost. Were he alive today he would exhort us with these words: 'The highest service demands the greatest sacrifice, but it secures the fullest blessing and the greatest fruitfulness'.

**Toni Saad** is a medical student in Cardiff

## The Book that Made Your World: how the Bible created the soul of Western Civilization

Vishal Mangalwadi

This bold and intriguing title immediately caught my attention. Written by Vishal



Mangalwadi, a native of India, I was interested to read an Eastern perspective on the Bible and Western thought.

This engagingly readable book is in seven parts. Part I reviews today's secular culture in the West.

Mangalwadi outlines the ways in which Western countries founded on Christian values no longer comprehend these roots. In place of a Christian understanding of the world and humanity, a secular worldview of nihilism and hopelessness has developed, and the West has lost its soul.

Part II presents Mangalwadi's personal history. He became a Christian as a child, but later, while attending a secular university in India he found himself surrounded by contradictory teaching about the nature of truth and knowledge. Some friends held a pantheistic worldview, but his professors taught that truth was unknowable. He was also struck by the way a fatalistic belief in reincarnation trapped people in poverty. Turning to the Bible for answers, he found a common thread running throughout; God's desire to bless all nations through his Word.

Parts III to VI cover the striking impact of the Bible on areas such as: rationality, technology, languages, education, science, morality, family life, medical practice. Mangalwadi makes clear,

rational points using historical, secular, and biblical sources. He argues that biblical truth has not only *affected* these aspects of culture, it is their source and soul.

The final part of the book examines present day society. Mangalwadi argues that as society embraces moral relativism, biblical values such as equality and universal human rights cease to be self-evident truths. Throughout the book Mangalwadi outlines the Bible's power to liberate through the reality of God's redemption. His final chapter examines the impact of past nations and people groups rejecting God's Word. He concludes by looking to the future and asking which way the West will chose.

One of the extraordinary things about this book is the author's perspective. Born into oriental culture, surrounded by Hinduism and Buddhism, he sees clearly the hope that flows from 2,000 years of Christian history. It is, at the same time, a personal narrative, and a rigorous study of the impact of the Bible on Western civilisation. Mangalwadi challenges the reader to take seriously the claims of the Bible and to examine their impact.

**Fiona MacCormick** is a palliative medicine registrar in Newcastle

# HEROES + HERETICS

Melody Redman considers William Wilberforce

## HEROES 12: WILLIAM WILBERFORCE (24 AUGUST 1759–29 JULY 1833)

Many of us will have seen *Amazing Grace* (2006), the critically-acclaimed movie which recounted Wilberforce's campaign to abolish slavery.<sup>1</sup> Wilberforce is now considered a hero, but to achieve his goal Wilberforce endured years of severe adversity, with no guarantee of success. Let us review Wilberforce's life and consider how it may teach us today.



Images: Walden Films

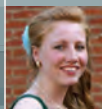
### early life

Born in Hull in 1759, Wilberforce had some early Christian influences in his life. Despite this, he grew up to be uninvolved with the church and was under little pressure to work due to his family's wealth.<sup>2</sup> After developing a friendship with William Pitt the Younger (who later became Prime Minister of Great Britain in 1783), Wilberforce also joined the political world when he was encouraged to stand as a Member of Parliament for Hull in 1780, at the age of 21.<sup>3</sup> Sometime during his political career, he cultivated an intellectual interest in Christianity. From this interest grew a sincere faith around

the age of 26, despite a lack of support from Pitt and distressing questions around the effect his faith would have on his life.<sup>4</sup> It certainly did have a significant effect on his life! A diary entry from Wilberforce (aged 28) in 1787, states: 'God Almighty has placed before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners [morals].'<sup>5</sup> Wilberforce clearly believed the calling for these two issues was from

God. We also may feel stirred by God to deal with issues around us.

A couple of months after reflecting on this calling, Wilberforce informed the House of Commons that he would soon propose the slave trade's abolition.<sup>6</sup> In 1789, speaking to the House of Commons, he said: 'Let the consequences be what they would, I from this time determined that I would never rest until I had effected its abolition.'<sup>7</sup> In Proverbs 31:8-9, we can see the Christian principles which Wilberforce was supporting: 'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights



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is clinical medical student at HYMS

of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.' This was the beginning of a long battle during which Wilberforce spoke up and defended slaves, whatever the consequences.

The slave trade was seen by many as crucial to the economy and the financial implications of losing it meant that abolition was not a popular cause; Wilberforce's life was threatened and



Images: Walden Films

friendships were lost.<sup>8</sup> Wilberforce wrote: 'The Word of God teaches us we can profess without offense those doctrines and precepts of Christianity concurrent with worldly principles... Yet at times, the Christian will find himself opposing and differing with those values in the world.'<sup>9</sup> Wilberforce fought against society's acceptance of slavery because God had placed it on his heart; this conflicted with the world around him and he was persecuted. Wilberforce endured a long and challenging battle. It was not until 18 years later, on 24 February 1807, that the majority in Parliament voted for the abolition of the slave trade.<sup>10</sup> His friend noted, '[Wilberforce] attributes it to the immediate interposition of Providence.'<sup>11</sup> Wilberforce recognised that God was involved. This wasn't

the end of the matter; it was another 26 years until slavery itself was prohibited by law, three days before Wilberforce's death in 1833.<sup>12</sup> The abolition of slavery cost four decades of his life, with many serious difficulties along the way. Yet, Wilberforce persevered in his obedience to what God had placed on his heart.

### other causes

Wilberforce married at the age of 37 and his

wife had six children;<sup>13</sup> family life brought its own challenges and difficulties. Although he is best known for his battle against slavery, he also contributed to other causes around social justice and evangelism, including 'The Church Missionary Society, [and] the Society for the Manufacturing Poor'.<sup>14</sup> Besides this, he was also a generous man, giving away over a quarter of his income.<sup>15</sup>

In 1797, Wilberforce published *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians, in the Higher and Middle Classes in This Country, Contrasted with Real Christianity*. This has since been edited and re-published.<sup>16</sup> A recent editor noted that it showed 'Wilberforce to be first a Christian and then a politician'.<sup>17</sup> It could be inferred that his



faith was the driving force behind his ultimate success. Perhaps one of the most obvious declarations of his willingness to serve God despite all costs is written in his book:

‘The real issue is still whether our representation of what Christianity requires is consistent with the Word of God, is it not? If it is, then surely it is a small matter to sacrifice a little worldly comfort and prosperity during the short span of our existence in this life in order to secure a crown of eternal glory and the enjoyment of those pleasures that are at God’s right hand forevermore... our blessed Saviour warned us that it would often be required of us to make such a sacrifice. He exhorted us therefore to have a loose grip on all worldly possessions and enjoyments.’<sup>18</sup>

I cannot help but imagine that when faced with threats to his life, loss of friendships and the battle that lay before him, he took comfort in knowing that his sacrifice would be rewarded after this life. Matthew 25 includes a parable whereby God rewards those who responded to the needs of oppressed people. Verse 40 states: ‘The king will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”’ Wilberforce acted to save those oppressed by slavery as an act of service to God, following his calling. He wrote, ‘If indeed, real Christianity should come to prevail, the world would become a better place of general peace, prosperity and joy.’<sup>19</sup> This gives great insight



Chronology:

- 24 August 1759 - Birth of William Wilberforce
- 1780 - William Wilberforce elected as MP for Hull
- 24 February 1807 - Parliament votes to abolish the slave trade
- 26 July 1833 - Parliament votes to abolish slavery
- 29 July 1833 - Death of William Wilberforce

into the driving force behind Wilberforce’s political life, and the challenge remains today; as Christian medics who care for our colleagues and patients, do we really believe Christianity can be a positive influence on our world? Is this demonstrated through our actions and relationships? Wilberforce exhibited patience, commitment and dedication despite all costs but aware of his calling, purpose and eternal reward. It took him to the point of death to see the result. Are we focused enough to be the people God wants us to be, and to fulfil that which is asked of us?

We may not all be politicians like Wilberforce, but as medics we are well placed to protect some of the vulnerable of society. Whether a daily demonstration of integrity and compassion, or a calling to deal with a specific issue in society today, such as human trafficking, what is it that you or I can do?

1. <a href="http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0454776">www.imdb.com/title/tt0454776</a>	7. Pollock J. <i>Op Cit</i> :56	13. <i>Ibid</i> :28
2. Piper J. <i>Amazing grace in the life of William Wilberforce</i> . Nottingham: IVP; 2007:27	8. Piper J. <i>Op Cit</i> :37	14. <i>Ibid</i> :41
3. <i>Ibid</i> :28	9. Wilberforce W, Houston JM (ed). <i>Real Christianity</i> . Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries; 2005:106	15. <i>Ibid</i> :30
4. <i>Ibid</i> :29,31	10. Piper J. <i>Op Cit</i> :38	16. Wilberforce W, Houston JM (ed). <i>Op Cit</i>
5. Pollock J. <i>Wilberforce</i> . London: Constable and Company, 1977:69	11. Pollock J. <i>Op Cit</i> :212	17. <i>Ibid</i> :14
6. Piper J. <i>Op Cit</i> :36	12. Piper J. <i>Op Cit</i> :39	18. <i>Ibid</i> :149
		19. <i>Ibid</i>

# cost of a coffee

## CMF's new fundraising challenge!

**E**ach year in the week before Student Conference, CMF hosts a small conference in London for students from across Europe and Central Asia. Many of them wouldn't be able to come without the financial support we provide to cover flights, visas, and the cost of the conferences in London and Swanwick. This year, the International Christian Medical and Dental Association (ICMDA) is holding its World Congress, in Rotterdam. Similarly, many students from poorer countries will not be able to attend without the bursaries provided in part by the generosity of CMF members.

So this year at conference a collection will be taken to raise money to help medical students from other countries come to these events. To our own conference, to the ICMDA congress. If everyone at conference gave £5, we'd raise twice as much as we've ever raised. We'd raise enough to pay for several flights from Eastern Europe, or to pay the congress fees for 16 students from the poorest countries.

£5. It's the cost of a coffee.\* The price of a pint.\*\* Next time you're about to buy a coffee, how about deciding not to? Instead, could you give that money to CMF so we can help those students come to these events? If you don't buy coffees, then how about forgoing that next pint or two? If you never do either of those, how about just giving a fiver anyway?!

**£5. It's not much. But together, we could make a big difference to a lot of students.**



\*with a cake!  
\*\* in London!



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