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the privilege of prayer

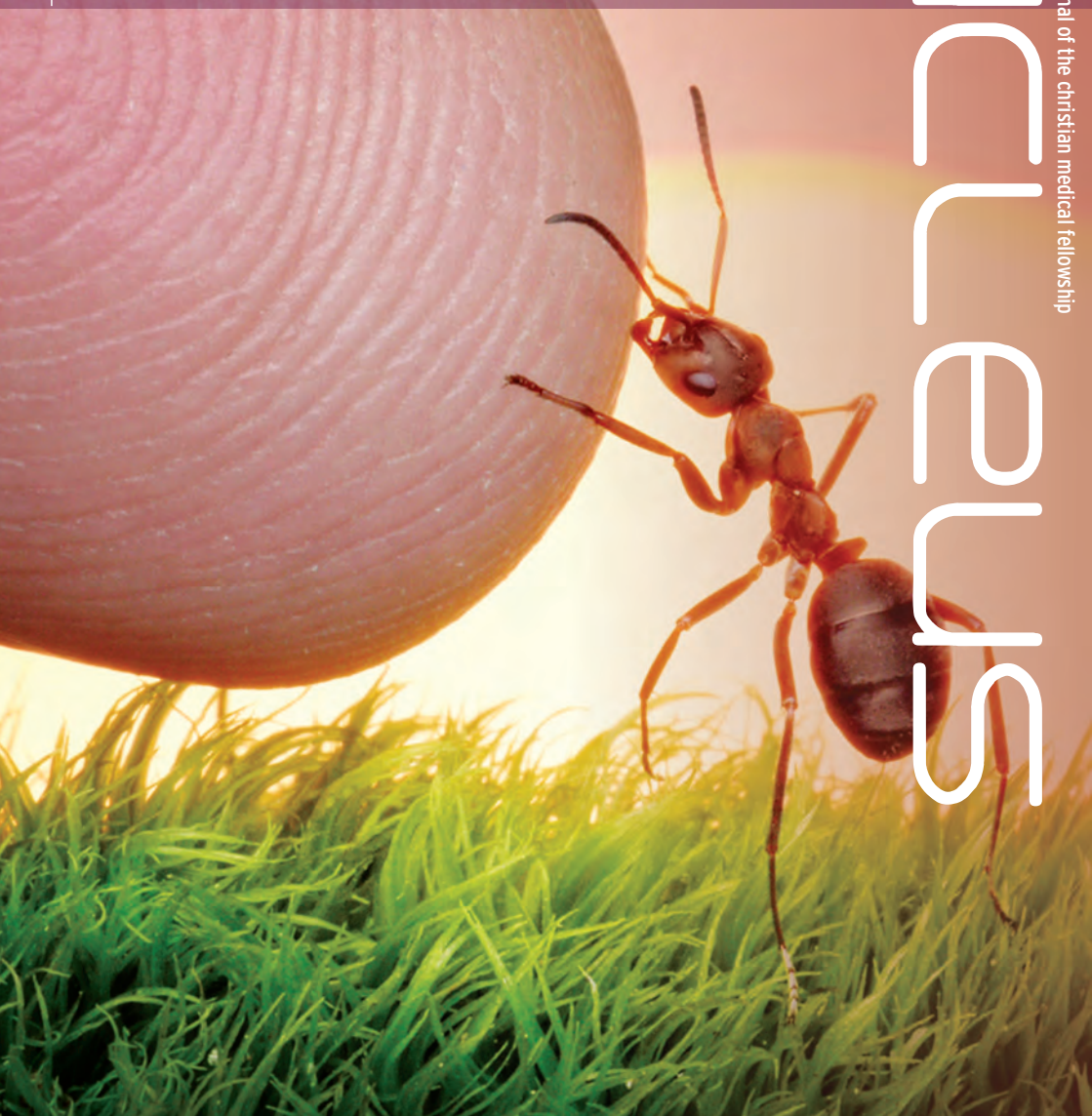
life as a medical missionary

sacrificial care for all

the poor man's earl

nucifers

the student journal of the christian medical fellowship



plus: waiting with a purpose, the resurrection, the human journey

NUCLEUS



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We spend so much of life looking forward; racing towards the next event. Christmas might have been spent working hard for upcoming exams, or arranging an elective. Our minds might (hopefully!) be taken up by looking forward to CMF Student Conference, but then the week after we quickly turn our minds to an upcoming medical school dinner, then three weeks later another exam takes over.

Often our society wants everything *now*, with no tolerance for waiting. Some patients have come to expect that they should be seen the same day, even for a problem that is clearly non-urgent to both them and their doctor. Online companies strive to provide the fastest possible delivery service, with some now offering same day deliveries in certain major UK cities for those willing to pay for them.

It can often be the same with major festivals. We have been putting together this edition of *Nucleus* during Advent, when Christians traditionally focus on awaiting and preparing for Christmas celebrations. Yet for much of society, Christmas seems to be celebrated throughout Advent. Christmas music is everywhere, parties are frequent, and any sense of preparation is lost.

Hundreds of years separate Isaiah's 'prepare the way for the Lord, make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God' (Isaiah 40:3) from the very first Christmas. God's promises often have a waiting period before fulfilment. The exiles in Babylon were clearly promised a return to Jerusalem, but there would be a seventy-year delay before it happened (Jeremiah 29:10).

Yet times of waiting are there for a purpose. Having remembered Jesus' first coming over Christmas, we also are reminded to wait for his second coming. We do not know the time and date (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2). But we can be sure it will happen. Much as we might hope it will be very soon, more people are believing and trusting in Jesus during this period of waiting.

So of course we should look forward; to the day when we ultimately use as doctors the skills we've learnt at medical school; to big occasions with friends and family; and ultimately to that final day when Jesus comes again. But our wait for that day is for a purpose. We hope that this edition of *Nucleus* will be one of many tools that help you and those around you who don't know Jesus yet to be prepared for that day, ready to meet Jesus when he comes in glory. =

Many readers will already be aware from CMF News and emails that Giles Cattermole left CMF in December 2014 after five years as Head of Student Ministries. The *Nucleus* team wish to record our thanks for all the good work Giles has done during his time at CMF, not least for many articles written for *Nucleus* which we're sure will continue to be a blessing for years to come.

We're pleased to announce that John Greenall, a past chair of CMF Student Council who has been working in paediatrics, will join CMF as Head of Student Ministries in February 2015. =

apologetics 7

the resurrection

Chris Knight outlines a 'minimal facts' approach

In this article we will consider further the case for the resurrection of Jesus, based on what is generally called the 'minimal facts' approach. We will then respond to some of the alternative theories which are intended to cast doubt on the resurrection.



former research scientist
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The minimal facts approach to the resurrection is generally associated with Gary Habermas and Mike Licona.¹ Its strength lies in the fact that it seeks to establish a small number of historical facts surrounding the death of Jesus, each of which has strong historical evidence and is therefore accepted not only by Christian scholars, but also by the vast majority of non-Christian scholars. The historical evidence is the key factor – the ‘fact’ needs to be established by scholarly historical examination, using a number of independent sources or lines of argument. The scholarly acceptance generally follows.

Once this list of minimal facts is established, we can consider the conclusions that follow. Which proposed theory best accounts for all of the facts?

the minimal facts

So what are the minimal facts? Different people have used slightly different lists, largely dependent, it would seem, on how much scholarly agreement they insist upon before adding a ‘fact’ to the list. We will first consider three ‘minimal facts’ and then one more which appears to receive less universal agreement.

a. Jesus died by crucifixion

This is a basic assertion which we find many times in the New Testament but is also stated by various non-Christian sources, such as Tacitus (a first century Roman historian), Josephus (a late first century Jewish historian), the Jewish Talmud (first to second century) and Lucian of Samosata (a second century Greek satirist).² It meets the

historical criterion of multiple independent sources, including ‘hostile’ witnesses and is therefore to be deemed a reliable ‘minimal fact’.

That Jesus was buried after his crucifixion is suggested by the account of Joseph of Arimathea asking for the body of Jesus. We are told that Joseph was a member of the Jewish Council (Luke 23:50), which had been instrumental in having Jesus condemned (Luke 22:66). It seems unlikely that such a story about a member of the Council which had condemned Jesus would be invented.

The burial also occurs in what would appear to be a very early credal statement quoted by Paul (1 Corinthians 15:3–5):

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve.

The short, stylised phrasing of these statements suggests that this is an early creed (imagine saying ‘We believe’ before each use of the word ‘that’). Paul’s use of technical rabbinic terminology for ‘receiving’ and ‘passing on’ this teaching implies a formal process of learning which would fit the suggestion that he learnt this from his visit to Cephas (Peter) and James a few years after his conversion (Galatians 1:18–19). What is clear is that various statements summarising key parts of Christian belief were formalised early on, including affirmations about Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection and appearances.

b. soon after his death, his followers had experiences of meeting the risen Jesus

There is widespread agreement with the 'fact' that, shortly after his death, Jesus' disciples reported various meetings with the resurrected Jesus. Paul's list in 1 Corinthians is one early source, with the independent Gospel accounts of the resurrection appearances confirming the appearance to Peter (Luke 24:34) and to the Twelve (Luke 24:36ff; John 20:19ff).

The fact that the Gospels record that it was female followers of Jesus who first saw the risen Jesus is highly significant. No-one in the first century would concoct a resurrection story where the first appearances were to women, whose testimony would be rejected by most people out of hand. Josephus states that women's testimony was inadmissible in Jewish courts.³

The first pagan critique of Christianity, by Celsus in about AD 175, dismisses the women's testimony (indirectly confirming its centrality and persistence in the Christian account of the resurrection), citing hysteria.⁴ The credal statement in 1 Corinthians 15 does not mention appearances to women, perhaps because they would not generally be credited as reliable, suggesting that the creed served an apologetic, as well as a doctrinal, function.

The relevant historical criterion here is that of embarrassment. Authors will only record events which are difficult or problematic for them if they are sure they are true.

c. some years later, Saul of Tarsus also reported seeing the resurrected Jesus

Like the other disciples, Saul's resurrection experience turned his life around. Like them, he

was prepared to suffer and die because he was so convinced of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus. His experience of the risen Jesus was so real that nothing would be the same for him again. He turned from persecuting Jesus to proclaiming Jesus.

Paul was certainly not expecting to meet with Jesus. Neither were the earlier disciples. Jews did not have a concept of a dying and rising Messiah. The resurrection was to be a universal event at the end of time. Nevertheless, Paul and the other disciples came to believe firmly that Jesus had risen from the dead. Their experience of the risen Jesus had to be certain enough to overcome their expectations. A vague feeling that Jesus was present 'in spirit' would not seem to fit the bill.

d. the empty tomb

Although sometimes not included as a 'minimal fact', the historical evidence for the empty tomb is strong and it seems that the majority of scholars do accept it as true. Its strong link with the women coming to the tomb on the third day after the crucifixion argues for it. With the Jewish expectation of an eventual bodily resurrection, the presence of a decaying corpse in the tomb would have totally undermined the disciples' suggestion that Jesus had already risen from the dead.

The Gospels report that the Jewish authorities concocted a plan with the guard at the tomb to say that the disciples had stolen the body in the night (Matthew 28:11ff). This could be dismissed as a fabrication, but if it has an element of truth in it, it is an acknowledgment that the tomb was indeed empty and shows that a more elaborate story was required to explain why it was not possible simply to retrieve the body from the tomb.

possible explanations

Having agreed some basic facts relating to the death of Christ, the question remains how best to explain them. There are a number of possibilities:

a. Jesus was not dead but revived in the tomb

This is refuted by the first minimal fact. Crucifixion was an efficient and cruel killing method. Even if Jesus did somehow manage to survive it, we need to ask how a weakened Jesus in such a state could convince his early disciples that he had truly risen from the dead and that they should then risk their lives based on the claim that Jesus had defeated death.

b. the disciples had hallucinations about Jesus being risen

There are many problems with hallucination theories, especially where collective experiences are proposed. The last three minimal facts undermine the claim. The early disciples and Paul were in very different psychological states and yet claimed a similar experience of the risen Jesus. Why did the hallucinations not continue for all who expressed faith, rather than cease after 40 days? And hallucinations, of course, do not account for an empty tomb. A tomb containing a corpse would have been highly problematic for the first preaching of the resurrection in and around Jerusalem. Gary Habermas presents further critiques of hallucination theories.⁵

c. the disciples lied

One question to ask about this proposal is 'Why?'. What could have motivated the disciples to lie about the resurrection and continue that lie through torture and death? We would also have to suggest that those disciples were very

poor liars – forgetting, for example, that having women as the first witnesses would do nothing for the credibility of their lie. There is also, of course, the empty tomb to consider, unless we go with adding body-stealing to blatant deception. And again, we come to Paul's own independent experience of the risen Jesus. It seems likely that he discussed his own experience of the risen Jesus with that of Peter and James when they met (see above), and yet there is no indication of any disagreement.

d. the resurrection stories arose as legends in the early church

Legends take time to arise and replace any historical foundation, typically a minimum of two generations. And yet the creed Paul cites in 1 Corinthians 15 probably dates from no more than a few years after the death of Jesus, and certainly no later than his visit to Corinth in around AD 50. The first Gospels also date from this same general period and certainly in the lifetimes of the first eyewitnesses. There is no time for legend to arise. If the accounts are legends, it is again difficult to understand why the women are given as the first witnesses.

e. Jesus rose from the dead

Having seen that alternative explanations fail to explain the agreed facts, we can consider the explanation given in the early New Testament documents and throughout Christian history. When we consider just the facts which are historically well-supported and accepted by the vast majority of non-Christian and Christian scholars, the explanation that best accounts for them is that Jesus rose from the dead. It is not that we've exhausted any alternatives so have to fall back on the resurrection, but that this is a good, straightforward explanation for those facts.

conclusion

There is much more that could be said on this topic – both on the minimal facts themselves, the arguments for the facts given, as well as for further facts which might be included (see *further resources* to explore further). What I hope to have illustrated, however, is a method that we can adopt with enquirers. It will not matter to most people that the majority of scholars accept certain facts – but the underlying historical reasons that they are so widely accepted can be recognised as valid by most people. So we can ask what ‘facts’ our friend would accept concerning the death of Jesus and suggest that we begin thinking together from that starting point about what really happened. What explanation would best fit our agreed upon facts?

We can certainly suggest, for example, that Jesus died by crucifixion and that his early followers believed that they saw him again – giving the reasons we believe those to be highly probable. But let our friend determine the starting point. If the best explanation of your agreed ‘facts’ seems to be that Jesus rose from the dead, with alternative explanations failing in various ways, then they will be open to further discussion. That may be the time to suggest looking more deeply at the source documents and the person of Jesus.

One of the implications of our minimal facts is that lives were transformed. The early disciples of Jesus preached the good news of the resurrection of Jesus and the Christian church has continued ever since. Something needs to account for the disciples’ experiences which turned defeat into victory and fear into boldness. NT Wright concludes: ‘As a historian, I cannot explain the rise of early Christianity unless Jesus rose again, leaving an empty tomb behind him’.⁶ ■

key points

- The resurrection of Jesus is the best explanation for a small number of historically probable facts concerning the death of Jesus
- What facts about the death of Jesus can you agree on with your friend?
- What is the best explanation of those facts?

further resources

- Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), especially part 3.
- William Lane Craig, *On Guard* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010), especially chapter 9.
- J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity: A homicide detective investigates the claims of the Gospels* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013).
- A host of talks and articles can be found at www.bethinking.org/did-jesus-rise-from-the-dead

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Life as a medical missionary in Ukraine

Jim Peipon describes his ministry.



Jim Peipon is a medical missionary, and president and medical director of Ukraine Medical Outreach, Inc.



What is a medical missionary? I have asked this question many times to people interested in what God has called me to do in Ukraine. The most common reply is someone who goes to some rural, seemingly God forsaken part of the world to care for people who have limited access to medical care, limited resources and limited knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. When called to serve in Ukraine in 1998, the initial goal was to help start a clinic, which eventually would become a Christian hospital and a beacon of hope. Then someone asked me, 'What is a Christian hospital?'

After pondering this question and making several short term mission trips to Ukraine, I defined a Christian hospital as a place where patients receive true hope. Not only would physical needs be met, but each physical need would point to a greater spiritual need that could only be met by receiving Jesus, by faith,

as Lord and Saviour. By receiving healing for their souls, ultimately physical healing would be achieved despite our frequent failure to do so through medicine.

It did not take long after arriving in Ukraine to realise that another hospital was not what was needed. The ones they had required modernisation, yes, but what was really needed was the transforming grace of Christ in the patients, doctors, nurses and administrators. If this could be done in hospitals all over Ukraine, they would become Christian not only in name, but in deed as well.

I began to view medical professionals as an unreached people group. I could spend my time caring for patients or developing relationships within the medical community, modelling and teaching what it means to care for the whole person – body and soul. I prayed the medical system would become more competent, compassionate and Christ-like.

a challenging culture

Ukraine Medical Outreach began in 2001. I sold our comfortable home and the paediatric practice I had begun 20 years previously and moved to Kiev from a small American town of 20,000 to a European capital of five million. Our three children were 18, 18 and 16 years old at the time. What seemed like a drastic change was mitigated by knowing this was the call of God upon all of our lives.

When I first arrived in Ukraine there were only four MRI scanners in the whole country. Now it is relatively easy to access such technology. I knew I did not have the financial resources to provide modern technology, so I began to study and learn how their medical system worked. One of the biggest challenges for patients is finding doctors who are trustworthy. Because of the corruption at all levels of life, patients do not know whether doctors earned their degree or bought it. Patients do not know the real cost of their care, they only know that they have to pay more in order to receive good care. I am quick to add there are many good medical professionals in Ukraine, but it is difficult to survive without receiving additional payments from patients or being employed at three or four clinics. This means practising with integrity can be challenging for Christian medics.

building relationships

Relationships became the key to unlocking the hearts of people, whether medical professionals or patients. The American pastor and counsellor Paul Tripp wrote:

Personal ministry is not about always knowing what to say. It is not about fixing everything in sight that is broken. Personal ministry is about connecting people with Christ so that they are

able to think as he would have them think, desire what he says is best, and do what he calls them to do even if their circumstances never get 'fixed'. It involves exposing hurt, lost, and confused people to God's glory, so that they give up their pursuit of their own glory and live for his.¹

In order to build relationships within the medical community, we have used the Ukrainians' enthusiasm for learning about new treatments and developing critical thinking skills by organizing educational conferences where they are exposed to a biblical worldview of medicine.

As a paediatrician, these conferences are often aimed at improving the care of children with disabilities. The attitude in Ukraine was that only children with practical value to society were worth investing in and caring for. We teach that all were made in the image of God, therefore having inherent value received from their creator.

Another avenue of approach is teaching medical English. English is currently the language of the world. By discussing journal articles, Ukrainian doctors learn new information while improving their English, which is necessary to stay up to date and to be part of medical conferences around the world. Often the discussion turns to ethical issues and spiritual topics. These are great opportunities to get to know my Ukrainian colleagues in a less formal way.

While I teach English at the inpatient centre for paediatric HIV/AIDS in Kiev, my wife Marianna builds relationships with the children and their relatives while playing games and giving what I call 'hug therapy'. One day a *babushka* (a local term for a grandmother) came up to me said, 'I know what your wife does, but what do you do?' I told her I help doctors to become more

competent and share with them the importance of faith in medicine. Her response was 'If we have doctors, why do we need God?' What a great question! I in turn asked her, 'Where do you think the knowledge and ability to care for your granddaughter comes from?' She was not impressed. Then I asked, 'When doctors have done all they can do what hope can they give to their patients?' As the tears began to stream down her face, she said, 'I understand'.

From these relationships grow opportunities to share the gospel. We then use the Saline programme² to teach and encourage Ukrainian medics to share their faith with their patients with sensitivity, respect and permission. We have worked with the CMA Ukraine (the Ukrainian equivalent of CMF) in training its members to make the Saline Process their own.

An unanticipated ministry of Ukraine Medical Outreach is our work with medical students. It seems God has brought the world to Ukraine to study. There are 10,000 foreign medical students representing 77 countries, mainly Africa, the Middle East and Asia, and 100,000 Ukrainian students. We have encouraged the development of Christian Fellowships at the 17 medical institutes in Ukraine. Each year two conferences are held to encourage growth both professionally and spiritually. In the spring the conference is for Ukrainian nationals, with the main languages being Ukrainian and Russian. In the autumn, the conference is for those foreign students studying in Ukraine. The main language is English. We have enjoyed welcoming students from England at both of these conferences.

opportunities in uncertain times

Sadly, Ukraine has been in the news a lot over the past year. The political turmoil has created

great uncertainty. The people of Ukraine are peaceful and hospitable. They desire an end to corruption in their lives and a better economic opportunity for their children. Ukrainians seek justice and respect. The issues involved are complicated, having their roots deep in history, politics, economics, religion and cultural tradition. But with every challenge there is an opportunity. What man means for evil, God uses for good. The prayer is that God would change hearts and minds, indeed our souls. Only then will peace come. It is written, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge' (Hosea 4:6) and 'the truth will set you free' (John 8:32). May the truth of the gospel indeed set people free.

Despite the challenges, the uncertainties, the financial insecurity we have faced as missionaries our lives have been full and blessed. It is a calling God has placed upon our lives to represent him in a land not our own. We now enjoy friendships from all over the world. The key word is calling. There is much work to be done everywhere. Whether you are called to go or called to stay, God is calling you to use your talents and resources for his glory. Missionaries are not super spiritual, super people or super Christians. They are just obedient to God's call upon their lives. Whatever call God places on your life, 'may you work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters' (Colossians 3:23). =

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1. Tripp PD. *Instruments in the redeemer's hands: People in need of change helping people in need of change*. Presbyterian and Reformed, 2002:184
2. Find out more about Saline: www.ihsglobal.org and read the Saline Process article in the Spring 2014 issue of *Triple Helix*: cmf.li/SalineProcess

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THE HUMAN JOURNEY

THINKING BIBLICALLY ABOUT HEALTH

On 17 November, CMF launched **The Human Journey**, a new course that will help you to engage with health-related issues wisely, sensitively and with confidence.

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- **End of Life:** How should life end?
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prayer: the privilege of approaching God

Matt Lillicrap asks 'Why don't we pray?'





Matt Lillcrap a former doctor, now at Oak Hill Theological College training for pastoral ministry.

When you pick up an article or book, or hear a talk addressing prayer, what's your usual reaction? Many of us soon feel guilty. Guilty that we don't pray as much as we should or as widely as we should. Guilty that we simply don't pray.

As we speak to ourselves, our immediate reaction may sound like good resolve. Repeat after me: *'You've got to pray more.'* Then, as the book or sermon progresses, the cry gets louder and louder, until it's all we're hearing: *'You've got to pray more. You've got to pray more. You've got to pray more.'*

This is certainly my experience. But as I look back over my prayer life I recognise an uncomfortable pattern. My prayerlessness is punctuated by short episodes of increased activity before the inexorable slide back into old habits which seemed so dissatisfying a few days earlier.

Why does this happen? It isn't that my guilt lacks foundation. I feel rightly dissatisfied about my prayer life, rightly guilty before the God who commands prayer. But guilt alone is ineffective. When we feel guilty we don't often want to get to the heart of the matter. Instead, we search for some new technique until that guilty feeling goes away, a journal or a new form of prayer diary for example. We want a quick fix instead of looking at ourselves and asking the next question: *'Why don't I pray?'*

But that is precisely the question we must ask. What's the problem here? Where is my view of prayer going wrong? What is it about my view of God, or of myself as I pray that needs adjusting?

It is even evident in the way we view that supreme lesson in prayer, the Lord's Prayer.

Jesus teaches us how to pray, and what do we do with it? We turn it into an incantation, words to be uttered thoughtlessly, as if they were a magic spell. But that is not Jesus' intention at all. The precise words are not the issue. Jesus introduces this very prayer model by decrying the 'babbling' of pagans who 'think they will be heard because of their many words' (Matthew 6:7). Instead, what Jesus gives us here is exactly what we need. This is not a quick fix to help us suppress guilt, but a pattern of prayer that gives us such wide scope it recalibrates our entire vision of who God is and who we are.

The aim of this reflection is to get us asking ourselves 'why don't I pray?' Which means the old application 'you've got to pray more' is barred! If you're hearing that at this point, stop reading – it will do you little good. But if you want to ask the next question, to contemplate who the God you pray to is, and who you are as you kneel before him, then read on!

1. the Lord's Prayer: resetting our vision of God

Read Matthew 6:9–13 slowly. As you do, notice the structure of this prayer. There are two quite distinct parts. First the focus is entirely on God: 'Hallowed be *your* name...*your* kingdom come... *your* will be done' (Matthew 6:9–10, emphasis added). Then we are taught to pray for ourselves in light of who God is: 'Give us today *our* daily bread, and forgive us *our* debts...lead us not into temptation but deliver *us* from the evil one' (Matthew 6:11–13, emphasis added). These two parts give us a vision of who we pray to, and who we are before him. Wonderfully, these visions run far deeper than any guilt-derived motivation to drive us to our knees in prayer.

the king whose name is to be hallowed

This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' (Matthew 6:9-10)

Instinctively we want to start with the title 'Father'. We need to hear this, but we can miss the overwhelming thrust of these opening lines if we do. This God, to whom we pray is the one whose name is to be *hallowed*, whose kingdom is to come, whose *will* is to be done. There is no getting away from it; he is the God who is king, the God who is firmly in charge.

'Hallowed' is an unfamiliar word. What does it mean? Imagine yourself on an access all areas tour of Lord's cricket ground. You see the changing rooms, the showers, the umpires' offices. You wander into the players' dining room. Then, you walk through the famous 'long room', following the footsteps of countless great cricketers down the pavilion steps and out onto the field. Imagining thousands of spectators clapping you to the middle you approach the 22 yards of grass that make up the centre of the pitch, when your daydream is interrupted by the tour guide: 'I'm sorry, I can't allow you to step on there, that's *hallowed turf*.'

Which is to say, it's special. It's set apart. It isn't accessible in the same way as the rest of the tour has been. You can't let just anyone wonder onto the pitch at Lord's. It must be treated with special respect.

And when we pray 'hallowed be your name', we mean God is set apart, to be treated with special respect. He is 'other', he is *holy*. This is firmly emphasised throughout the Bible. Whether we're reading of the Israelites being burned up by 'the consuming fire' (Deuteronomy 4:24),

Ezekiel's vision of 'the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God' (Ezekiel 1:28), or John's vision of God's throne surrounded by terrifying thunder and lightning, celestial beings, and a great unbridgeable sea (Revelation 4). The message is clear: our God is holy. He is to be feared. And for us in our sin, he is inaccessible. His throne room is *hallowed turf*. Which is why we are taught to pray that his name be hallowed – that he be treated with the respect and fear he deserves.

Added to this, he is the *king*, whose will is to be done. In our culture we have long forgotten what it is to live in fear of an absolute ruler. Given human sinfulness, it is a great blessing that we no longer suffer such rulers, although many in the world still do. But has this affected our vision of God's rule? Do we see him more like our current monarch – a figurehead for us to rally around when we want to do pomp and circumstance, but lacking absolute authority? Why *would* we pray to a god like that, who has little real authority and power?

If this is our view of God we need to think again, because Jesus is giving us a different vision entirely. As we approach God in prayer, we are coming before the holy, unapproachable, sovereign king who is all powerful and rules absolutely.¹

We mustn't miss what a privilege this is! The God we pray to is *the king*. He has absolute power and authority and his will is perfect. In short, he is a God worth praying to!

So why *don't* you pray? Have you made God too small? Have you made him a figurehead ruler? Worse, has he become a cosmic vending machine existing to give you what you want? Jesus wants us to see the unapproachable, holy God, that we would approach him on our knees with reverence and humility. We do not merely 'wander' into his presence.

the God we call Father

This, then, is how you should pray:

'Our Father in heaven...' (Matthew 6:9)

And yet... It is in this context that the opening words of this prayer become simply astounding. There is a wonderful story about Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War. For his son's birthday he had given him a goat, which he subsequently harnessed to a kitchen chair as a makeshift chariot and rode through the White House. On the day of a war cabinet meeting the president had been delayed over an hour, leaving his generals waiting. At last he was available and the meeting began. To the generals' dismay, within a few minutes the door burst open and in rode Lincoln Junior, on his goat. What was his father's reaction? Chide his son and dismiss him? Not at all. Rather, the president jumped to his feet, whooping with delight and chased his son out of the room. He wasn't seen again for a further hour.

That is the access of a son to his father. No waiting around until he might just be free to see you. Just ride on in there with your goat!

And Jesus wants us to see that this is the access we have to God. Even the unapproachable, holy God. What was it that drove Lincoln to welcome his son's interruption? He *loved* him. He *delighted* in him. Which is where this understanding of God really makes a difference. Yes, we are sinful, yes, we deserve separation and judgment at the hands of the sovereign king, but because of all that Jesus accomplished on the cross, dying in our place so that we could take his, we can enter the throne room with confidence (Hebrews 10:19). The rights Jesus has as *the Son* are ours as we trust in him. We are adopted as God's children (Galatians 4:1-7). We are to call him 'Father' because we truly are his children.

Can there be a greater motivation to prayer than this? We will never come to God and find him too busy or too preoccupied. He never thinks our concerns are insignificant. Yet we readily think our anxieties, about work or finances or families or whatever, are too trivial compared to running a universe. Why would he care about me? The answer is because, trusting in Jesus, you are God's *child*. He *delights* in you.

So, why *don't* you pray? Is your view of God too distant? Has he become a far-off deity dealing with the important matters of running the universe? You might even be happy with the arms-length, distant God. But the God who comes alongside, who welcomes you as child? That can get uncomfortable because it's then that you might have to start involving your emotions in prayer.

In the first half of this prayer, then, Jesus is 'resetting' our vision of God. What a privilege prayer is! The character of our God surely has to be a key motivation for prayer. *Why do we pray? Because God, the king whose name is to be hallowed, is the God we call Father!*

2. the Lord's Prayer: resetting our vision of ourselves

The second half of this prayer causes us to drop our eyes from the majesty of God to ourselves in his light. Who are we to approach this God?

dependent creatures before our creator

Give us today our daily bread (Matthew 6:11)

In other words, 'give us what we need for today'. Immediately there are two barriers to us hearing these words properly.

First, do we really understand what they mean? When did you last think about what you

need each day? Not what you *have*. Not what you bought last week and might cook tomorrow. Genuinely what you need for just one day. The problem is that we are pretty well stocked most of the time. Even in post-financial crisis 2014, compared to the vast majority of the world we are very rich. Which means we quickly forget just how dependent on God's provision each day.

And, secondly, that extends into the future. Where are you in life right now? How did you get there? You worked hard. You did well at school, passed the exams, worked hard out of school – all those extracurricular activities that made your UCAS form practically sing to the admissions office. Right now you have a house to live in and food to eat – maybe even a menu planned for the next week. This means that after forgetting how dependent we are now, we fool ourselves into thinking we're *independent* for the future as well. But all of it is from God.

You may work hard. Who gives you the discipline? Who gives you the intellect? Who gives you the time you spend working? Who keeps the world turning and your heart pumping, who holds it all in his hands so completely that one word from him and the whole thing would end?

All of it is from God. We are utterly dependent on him. Yet how often do we forget or ignore that? How often do we act as if we don't need him? How often do we struggle with prayer because we are far too self-reliant? Look at someone struggling with prayerlessness and you'll see someone struggling to understand how much they need God, thinking they're doing fine by themselves.

And yet we must look out for a more subtle symptom evident even when we do pray. We rightly claim that we should pray because when we do, God acts. But how quickly can that



become 'God won't act *unless* I pray' or even 'God *can't* act *until* I pray.' All of a sudden we're left with a God who's more like a frustrated genie – locked up in a lamp until we rub it the right way. All of a sudden we're left with a God who is dependent on us.

So why don't you pray? Is your view of yourself too big? Have you forgotten how dependent on God you really are? Instead, Jesus wants us to see ourselves as dependent creatures on our knees before our almighty, independent, creator. We need him, and the gift of prayer, allows us access to the one who meets our needs.

sinner before the throne of grace

And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Matthew 6:12-13)

This final petition is one we're perhaps more familiar with. We don't have to look far to find something reminding us of debt. Whether it's the country's debt, or individual debt being higher than ever before, student debt rising all the time or house prices climbing, taking mortgages with them. Every so often a letter from the bank or the student loan company lands on the doormat as if to say, 'just to let you know, this isn't getting any better.'

But what about spiritual debt? How aware are we of our debt to God? God is the sovereign king; this means we owe him total, unflinching loyalty and service. So every sinful thought and act is essentially a failure to pay, so a catastrophic debt piles up. The Bible speaks about sin in many different ways: law-breaking, missing the mark, rebellion, pollution, idolatry – but here Jesus forces us to see our sins as unpaid debts. Jesus wants us to see ourselves



as debtors to God as we pray. The question is, just how much do we owe? Are we nearly-acceptable creatures with little blemishes we could consolidate and pay off in one easy monthly repayment? No. We are sinful to the core. The debt we owe God is one we can never pay off.

Imagine you received a monthly statement on your spiritual debt. Every month it hits your doormat. 'This really isn't getting any better.' Yet Jesus *commands us* to pray 'forgive us our debts'.

Imagine you called the Student Loans Company saying, 'I was reading this book the other day and it told me I should ask forgiveness for my debts. So how about I say sorry and we call it quits.' How would that go? They would laugh at you! Forgiving debt just isn't what they do.

But Jesus tells us to pray 'forgive us our debts'. Surely if we understood this, we would find ourselves inextricably drawn to prayer. But here we often get our view of ourselves wrong in two different ways. First we make our sin too small. If this is you, then you don't realise how much debt you're in. You take God for granted, waltzing in and out of his presence as if he was just a housemate, not recognising the enormous slight on his character, his holiness that you make by even presuming to approach him as a sinner. You are not a pretty good person with a few blemishes. You are utterly sinful and your debt is one you could never pay. You need to understand you *must* pray 'forgive us our debts' because you desperately need forgiving.

Secondly, though, we can make sin too big. If this is you, then you already know you *need* to pray this. You need to hear that you *can*. If this is you, then you'll have had those moments when you tell yourself you can't pray.

Maybe you've committed that same old sin *again*. Don't listen! Wasn't Jesus' death enough? Didn't he pay off that part of the debt too?

So why don't you pray? Have you made your sin too small, as if it matters little, or too big, as if it's unforgivable? Jesus tells us to pray 'forgive us our sins' because we *must* and we *can*. The price really has been paid, you really are forgiven and you really are a child of the Father who is the king of the universe!

the privilege of approaching God

So, how is your vision? As you reflect on this incredible prayer, do you have eyes to see the holy unapproachable God whose name is to be hallowed, to whom you pray? Do you have confidence in his promise of adoption by the death of his Son, such that you approach him as Father? And what of yourself as you pray? Do you recognise your complete dependence on him for everything you have and are? Do you understand the immense weight of your sin, and trust the fully paid price of the cross?

I pray that as you reflect on the Lord's Prayer, your heart will be drawn to exercise the wonderful gift of approaching this wonderful God. =

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our values: sacrificial care for all

Laurence Crutchlow on serving those in need



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'To care sacrificially for the poor, vulnerable and marginalised.'

who are the 'poor, vulnerable and marginalised'?

Sometimes it is obvious enough. A patient with severe learning difficulties is likely to be vulnerable and probably marginalised as well. A homeless patient in the emergency department is probably all three.

Yet it isn't always so simple. How are we to define poverty? A lack of certain necessities would be one definition, but if these are things like electricity and running water, then there is precious little poverty in the UK. Politicians often use relative definitions of poverty, where people below a certain proportion of median income are defined as poor.

These may give more idea of inequalities, but of course mean that people defined as 'poor' in the UK may seem very rich to those in other parts of the world.

Even with a clear definition, many elderly people who, on paper, appear very rich because of rising property values may be cash poor, as they struggle with the cost of running large homes. Even if financially well off, they may be vulnerable because of their frailty and poor health (particularly to those who might be trying to obtain their money), and marginalised by society. Age UK suggest that a million older people regularly go for a month without speaking to anyone.¹

The word 'vulnerable' often conjures up images of abused children, sex industry workers, or those with severe psychiatric problems. But surely anyone who is seriously ill is vulnerable to an extent; any hospital inpatient is vulnerable just by virtue of being away from their home environment.

So although we might feel we should focus on these groups, we might well miss vulnerabilities not obvious to us, and should aim to care sacrificially for all those who we see.

what is 'caring sacrificially'?

To give any care at all, we give something of ourselves, whether it is our time, energy, or emotions. Most healthcare professionals do this, probably without realising it, every time we see a patient. Of course lots of healthcare professionals of any faith and none do this, so it cannot be said to be distinctively Christian. There are of course limits to this for everyone; we can become tired and burnt out if we overwork.

Our tolerance for more difficult patients can

become frayed; particularly patients who we think may have caused their own illness in some way, or who repeatedly present to hospital with needs that are really social rather than medical. This is when caring sacrificially can become a challenge. Such care may not always result in giving the patient what they want, but the right (rather than easy) answer often needs a considerable sacrifice of time – for example it is a lot more effort to contact an emergency social worker than it is to admit a patient for the night in some settings.

In Jesus, Christians see the ultimate example of sacrificial care; he gave not just his emotions or energy but his life for us. It is only as we reflect Jesus, and grow more like him, that we understand the full nature of caring sacrificially.

why the 'poor, vulnerable and marginalised'?

Isn't everyone entitled to equal care, as the fourth CMF value suggests? Don't these fourth and fifth values conflict? The point is that sometimes we will need to do more for the poor, vulnerable or marginalised to ensure that they receive the same care as others. For example, even if someone with no fixed address uses a temporary hostel address to register with a GP, they may have moved on from there by the time a hospital appointment arrives. They may not have a mobile phone to enable the surgery to find them. More time is needed to ensure that they get the same care as others – which is given sacrificially as there is rarely specific funding for this work.

We see the same emphasis throughout the Gospels. The way of salvation is the same for everyone, but Jesus spends a large amount of time talking about the poor, and the concern that his followers should have for them.

Much of this is obviously about the materially poor, but the poor in spirit are also said to be blessed (Matthew 5:3). It may well be that some of our materially rich patients are poor in spirit.

how does this look today?

A lot of the working out of this value is in our attitudes, wherever we are studying or working. How do we feel and act towards the malodorous and intoxicated patient who appears in the emergency department, or the patient in bed 23 marginalised on the ward because he speaks no English? Are we demonstrating Jesus' love to them in the same way that we do to that delightful old lady in bed 19 who tells such good stories, and whose relatives brought really good chocolates to the ward yesterday?

Sometimes students can do more than anyone else on the ward for lonely and vulnerable patients; many need someone to listen and show an interest far more than they need physical medicine.

Later on in our careers, we can ensure that the services we run really are accessible to everyone, and think about how we might ensure everyone can use them. Do we need a system for getting interpreters? Can we put an outpatient clinic in a room at a GP surgery, saving patients the expense of travelling to a hospital?

Of course we can all care for the poor, vulnerable and marginalised in our church lives as well. It doesn't have to just be in the medical part of our life. Can we make time to talk to those who come to church alone? What does our congregation do for members in financial difficulty? Do we (however unintentionally) exclude certain types of people from our meetings?

what else might change?

We've so far applied this value to our current study and work setting. But we might also be led to think about where we work later in our careers. With 2.7 doctors per 1000 people according to the World Health Organisation, the UK has more than twenty times as many doctors per head as some African countries. Although relative poverty exists between different groups within the UK, there are clearly places in the world where people have much less.

Some specialist areas of work also lend themselves particularly to working with marginalised groups. GPs might develop a special interest in drug and alcohol patients, or undertake surgeries in prisons.² Paediatricians might choose to work in the increasingly difficult area of child protection; and of course caring for the elderly is a much neglected thing in Western society.

But whatever our location or specialism, there are opportunities to protect the poor, vulnerable and marginalised. My own practice area is comparatively affluent, but we still look after a number of lonely and vulnerable elderly patients, a significant number who are very short of money given the high costs of housing locally, and many patients with learning difficulties.

The reality is that we don't have a lot of choice over our placements as students, or over the exact location of our early jobs. So as we discern God's will for our careers and where we will live and work later on, we should also remember that wherever we are, we can live out this value today, among the people God has called us to serve now. ■

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HEROES + HERETICS

Alex Bunn looks at the poor man's earl

HEROES 15: LORD SHAFTESBURY (1801–1885)

What links Piccadilly Circus, scrotal cancer, a Prime Minister's love child and Zionism? The clue is in the title, so read on!

You probably recognise the famous statue in Piccadilly Circus in London's West End, also the logo for a major newspaper. The crowds of theatre-goers are likely to call him Eros (or his Roman equivalent Cupid). But he is in fact Anteros, Eros' brother. The angel of Christian charity¹ points his bow down Shaftesbury Avenue, to celebrate the Victorian by this name. But why have we (literally) put an evangelical on a pedestal in the heart of London?

the God of all comfort: the making of a hero

On 3 August 1833, Anthony Ashley-Cooper, the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, attended the funeral of another great hero at Westminster Abbey. William Wilberforce² had been a tireless champion of the abolition of slavery, and a great model for Victorian evangelicals who



saw that faith entailed social action:

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.

(Proverbs 31:8)

But although born into wealth and influence, Anthony the boy was an unlikely hero. He was neglected and bullied by his father. Bringing him to one of the boarding schools which he would attend, his father knocked down the

sensitive boy at the door and advised the tutor to do the same.³ Ashley carried scars of depression with him all his life. Yet out of an evil, God brought good.⁴ His empathy was a strange kind of gift:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)



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Thankfully, the deficiencies of his distant parents were compensated by the kindness of a maid called Maria Millis⁵ who warmed his heart to gospel faith, with a huge impact on the nation later. Likewise who knows what impact you might be having in your Sunday school or youth work without any immediate visible reward?

sheer madness

Shaftesbury was elected as a Tory MP, and used his maiden speech to press for reform of the Lunacy Laws. In 1828 an inspectorate was commissioned to visit a 'madhouse' in Bethnal Green. Inmates were penned like animals, toileting in their beds, washed by dousing in freezing water and dried with a single towel used for 160 people. It was described as 'a mere place for dying' with no attempt at treatment. The subsequent bills required licensing and inspection of mental institutions, and were a major milestone towards compassionate holistic care. Given to bouts of depression himself, perhaps his empathy caused him to reflect 'there but by the grace of God go I'.

Life wasn't much better for the sane: Dickens' novels were based on observation not



imagination. Children routinely worked punishing hours, but Shaftesbury was a tireless campaigner for working hours reform, something that junior doctors have only latterly benefited from! In 1833, his Factory Reform Bill proposed that children should be at least nine to work in cotton or wool industries, and that under eighteens could not work more than ten hours per day, eight on Saturday. Like Wilberforce before him, he faced powerful vested interests, and his motion was watered down to

an age limit of 13, and eventually defeated. He also had to wait patiently another 14 years to see teenagers protected from what seems obvious today as exploitation. Likewise in 1842 he managed to outlaw the employment of women and children below ground in mines.

climbing boys

Another cause close to his heart was chimney sweeps or 'climbing boys'. Perhaps we remember them as loveable rogues from Mary Poppins, but their plight was less rose-tinted. Many were illegitimate, white slaves sold by their parents who had few routes out of poverty.

The exposure to hot soot caused scorched skin, eyes, throat, occasional suffocation and (medical students should know) cancer of the scrotum. In 1840, Shaftesbury outlawed employing boys as chimney sweeps, but many firms exploited the cheap labour and ignored the ban. Shaftesbury formed the London Climbing Boys' Society, and brought in licensing that finally eradicated the practice.



I should die of a broken heart'.⁶

gospel and social justice both

But no one could accuse Shaftesbury of social action eclipsing gospel proclamation. He was the leading evangelical layman in the church of England, and passionate about sharing the gospel through his high profile sponsorship of societies such as

It wasn't merely a distant cause like fair trade in Africa, or a campaign to gain political capital. Shaftesbury discovered a climbing boy living behind his house in Brock Street and sent him to Union School at Norwood Hill 'where under God's blessing and special merciful grace, he will be trained in the knowledge and love and faith of our common saviour'.

the Church Missionary Society, the Religious Tract Society, Bible Society and the Church Pastoral Aid Society.

ragged schools

Education was a massive deficit for children who had been seen only as a source of cheap labour. Shaftesbury wanted to change that, and in 1844 he formed the Ragged School Union. Over the next eight years, over 200 schools were established to provide free education for poor children for the first time. He helped raise funds for a total of 350 ragged schools before a national educational system was finally established in 1870. Shaftesbury wrote that 'if the Ragged School system were to fail I should not die in the course of nature,

family connections and Jewish restoration

Shaftesbury had married into some powerful connections. His wife Emily Cowper was officially the stepdaughter, but probably the natural daughter, of Lord Palmerston, who had married her mother after her birth. Her uncle was Lord Melbourne. Both in-laws became Prime Ministers! He used his influence for others wherever he could.

In 1838 Shaftesbury persuaded Palmerston, then Foreign Minister and otherwise sceptical of evangelicals, to send a British consul to Jerusalem. He argued for a Jewish return because he believed that it was God's will, and entailed political and economic benefits to Britain. He provided the first proposal by a major politician to resettle Jews in Palestine:

It is surely a high privilege reserved to our Church and nation to plant the true cross on the Holy Hill of Zion; to carry back the faith we thence received by the apostles; and uniting, as it were, the history, the labours, and the blood of the primitive and Protestant martyrs, light such a candle in Jerusalem, as by God's blessing shall never be put out.

This quote refers to a previous *Nucleus* hero, Hugh Latimer, whose 'candle' was his own body set alight for the gospel in England.⁷ Shaftesbury also challenged Christians to see God's activity in contemporary history, and his concern for his first chosen people:

No sooner had England given shelter to the Jews, under Cromwell and Charles, than she started forward in a commercial career of unrivalled and uninterrupted prosperity; while Spain, in her furious and bloody expulsion of the race, sealed her own condemnation...it may be reckoned among the most effective causes of the decline of Spanish greatness.

We oftentimes express our surprise at the stubborn resistance they oppose to the reception of Christianity; but Christianity in their view is synonymous with image-worship, and its doctrines with persecution...It well imports us to have a care that we no longer persecute or mislead this once-loved nation; they are a people chastened, but not utterly cast off; 'in all their affliction He was afflicted.' For the oppression of this people there is no warrant in Scripture; nay, the reverse; their oppressors are menaced with stern judgments.⁸

funeral

Although offered the honour of a tomb in Westminster Abbey, he declined. But on 8

Reflection on Shaftesbury's life

- God turned his sensitivity to compassion. Which patients do you identify with most, and how will that affect your career choices?
- Shaftesbury was a voice for the voiceless, restraining the exploitation of the poor and vulnerable before we had 'human rights'.
- But he was passionate about gospel proclamation as well as social justice. How can we do both today?

Further reading

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October 1885, the streets along from Grosvenor Square to Westminster Abbey were rammed to witness his funeral cortege. Not the usual crowd for a state occasion: costermongers, flower-girls, boot-blacks, crossing-sweepers, factory-hands and similar workers who waited for hours to pay their respects. Due to his constant advocacy for the poor and marginalised, Shaftesbury became known as the 'Poor Man's Earl'. Not a great image! ■

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