



Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? (Mark 12:14, ESV)

This was a cleverly devised question asked to our Lord by the infamous pharisees. Crafted in such a way that no matter which way he answered, he was going to get into trouble, or so it seemed. If he said 'Yes', the pharisees would have said to the people that Jesus was a traitor to the country as he was colluding with the Romans against them. If he said 'No', the teachers of the law would have reported this immediately to the Romans, saying that Jesus was stoking up the people to rebel against the Roman Empire. Then Jesus would have been arrested and likely executed. Yet, he answered this in the most stunning and wise way.

Our Lord Jesus had a clear and sober view of the world. He knew the trials and challenges that come from living in this world and the pressure it exerts on his people. He was no stranger to these tests. Throughout his earthly life, he was tested with further difficult questions from the pharisees¹ and others. And he forewarns us that we, as his people, will be put under similar pressure and difficult circumstances. But rest assured, he doesn't leave us alone to cope. He is sovereign and he will be with us even in the valley of the shadow of death.² And he also gives us the means to grow in wisdom to navigate such situations.³

One of those means is Christian encouragement, building each other up in Christ - which is one of the main aims of *Nucleus*. In this edition, we have articles written by CMF Staff tackling tricky topics such as the role of conscience in medicine and public life by Laurence Crutchlow and Rick Thomas; my own piece on how we formulate our moral beliefs in medicine; and consideration of speaking with patients about God by Ashley Stewart. Head of Student Ministries Rachel Owusu-Ankomah writes on speaking in hostile environments, useful when discussing COVID-19 vaccines in the church, which is explored by Laurence Crutchlow.

My Student Co-editor Liz Birdie Ong writes about the beauty of God's grace; Galway student Isaiah Michael Rayel looks at how our identity in Christ gives us purpose; FY1 Thulasi Daniel looks at church leadership and broken trust, and our 'just ask' column by GP Abigail Randall focuses on 'do not resuscitate' orders.

Lockdown has affected many travel plans; Annika Wilder-Smith reflects on a virtual Nepalese elective as part of CMF's Elective Lite. There are great encouragements to be had nearer to home with Eleanor Sture writing on her experiences in going to Forum 2021 with hundreds of other students.

Finally, we have a book review of John Lennox's '2084', written by Jennie Pollock on the topic of artificial intelligence and what that means for humanity and a news review updating us with what's going on in the world.

2021 has been a year full of difficulties and personal challenges. The freedom we hoped for hasn't materialised, and all of us have experienced first-hand the trials of the pandemic with family, friends, and patients. We've missed out on learning opportunities, and many are not coping well with the prolonged restrictions.

We understand this to be the result of a fallen world, which has lost touch with God. However, we also have a sovereign Lord who is in control of all things, redeeming us from our fallenness and is using earthly catastrophes for good. Therefore, we can go forth in the name of Jesus and serve him in this world with full confidence and assurance.

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. (John 16:33) ■

REFERENCES

1. Mark 11:27-33, Mark 12:18-27, John 8:4-5
2. Psalm 23:4
3. Matthew 7:7-11, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, James 1:5